

Film Terms & Concepts

Mis en Scène (everything captured within the camera's frame—that which shows up on screen)

- setting: the visible environment, whether on location, on set, or created digitally
- subjects: characters and their actions, reactions, and appearances
- composition: the *arrangement* of subjects, setting, lighting, etc. relative to one another

Primary Aspect Ratios [in chronological order]

- 1.33:1 (4:3): original silent film format, and TV format until HD.
- 1.37:1 (Academy Ratio): slightly larger than 1.33 to accommodate audio track alongside video frame; affects picture shape only slightly; first used in 1932.
- 2.35:1 (CinemaScope): wide image squeezed onto standard 35mm film, then re-expanded when projected. First used in 1953 by 20th-Century Fox.
- 1.66:1 (5:3) / modern European standard. First used in 1953.
- 1.85:1 / modern U.S. film standard
 - 1.85 (VistaVision): standard 35mm film rotated 90 degrees, allowing for larger image & higher quality picture. First used in 1954. Modern U.S. standard. Requires special camera.
 - 1.85 (Anamorphic Widescreen): image squeezed to fit into a storage medium w/ narrower aspect ratio, then re-expanded using compatible equipment.
- 2.76:1 / the widest aspect ratio available
 - 2.76:1 (Super Panavision 70): a 70mm film format. First used in 1959.
 - 2.76:1 (MGM 65). Another 70mm format. First used in 1957. Used by Christopher Nolan.
- 1.78 (16:9): current standard for HDTV as of late 1990s.
- Others [not on quizzes]
 - 2.2 (Todd A-O): 70mm film allows wider projected image at high resolution. First used in 1955.
 - 2.59 (Cinerama): projecting three standard 35mm images next to one another. First use in 1952.
 - 1.43 (IMAX): runs 70mm film *horizontally*. First used in 1970.
 - 1.9 (IMAX): created w/ high-def, digital proprietary cameras and projectors. First used in 2008.

Focus & Depth

- depth of field: the amount of space between foreground and background which is actually in focus
- deep focus: much of a subject's surroundings are also in focus; wide-angle lens achieve this
- soft focus: subject slightly out of focus; used to grant subject an idealized appearance
- imprecise focus: neither foreground, midground, or background in clear focus
- rack focus: altering focus in midst of a single shot, either from background to foreground or vice versa, while retaining the same amount of material in the frame (as opposed to *zooming*, which alters both)

Camera Lenses

- normal lens: approximates what the eye sees when gazing at an object from a given distance. Example: fixed 55mm lens
- wide-angle lens: has a shorter focal length and bends light rays more visible within frame, all planes in sharp focus (deep focus), curvature bends edges; movement across frame appears ultra-quick
- telephoto lens: frame is tighter—less is visible, and only some planes are in focus (shallow focus)
- fish-eye lens: entire image is curved, as if bent around a glass sphere
- lensbaby lens: creates a very small, in-focus focal point; other objects increase in blur the further away they lie from the focal point
- diffuser: material (e.g. frosted glass, mesh, etc.) placed in front of lens or light source to soften image
- filters: filter added to lens to alter tone, contrast, and sometimes color itself

Framing & Composition

- tight framing: focuses attention primarily on the subject
- loose framing: captures central subject w/ much surrounding space
- symmetrical composition: two subjects appear on opposite sides of a single frame
- asymmetrical composition: one or more subjects are not balanced by others within the frame
- split-screen technique: conveying two or more frames/images on the same screen at the same time
- cut: shifting from one shot to another during editing process

Lighting

- key light: primary lighting source striking subject
- fill light: soft light fills in yet unlit areas of subject and dissolves shadows
- hard light: direct, strong light, often from a single direction like the sun; can create stark shadows
- soft light: light reflected off another surface before it hits a given subject
- high-key lighting: light covers most of the subject and the surrounding space; minimizes contrast between dark and bright areas; often suggests ease and comfort
- low-key lighting: the subject receives little illumination, leaving much of the subject in darkness; allows for greater contrast between dark and light areas of image; sometimes ominous
- side lighting: subject is lit from one side, creating contrast between halves of the face
- back lighting: single light source illuminates character from behind, casting subject's features and perhaps identity or motivations into doubt
- bottom lighting: subject lit from below; think campfire ghost stories—can be frightening
- top lighting: subject lit from above; can signal youthfulness or spirituality
- catch light: a reflection of a light source caught or reflected in a character's eyes or some other surface

Camera Shots

- extreme long shot: subject appears small, at a distance within the frame; helps establish setting
- long shot: subject still visible in its entirety, close enough to register bodily & facial reactions to setting
- medium shot: only part of subject is visible (often knees or waist up, if human); setting still a variable
- medium close-up: subject fills most of frame; if human subject, frame captures shoulders & head
- close-up: virtually no setting visible; if human subject, tight focus on most of face
- extreme close-up: part of subject fills entire frame; could be part of a person's face or limb
- zooming: changing depth of focus *and* amount of subject in frame in the midst of a given shot
- establishing shot: a shot that introduces the broader contours of a particular space, indoors or outdoors, before cutting to a shot that draws us closer to the subjects within that space
- shot-reverse shot: the process of alternating between shots of two different characters in a conversation
- over-the-shoulder shot: capturing the face of one character from over the shoulder of another person
- masked shot: altering a frame's contours as if seen through a particular shape (keyhole, binoculars, etc.)

Camera Angles

- bird's-eye/God's-eye view: shot from directly above subject (often w/ help of crane which lifts camera)
- low-angle shot: shooting from below a subject; grants sense of power and influence to subject
- eye-level shot: brings viewer into scene by placing audience on same visual level as subject
- high-angle shot: shot from higher plane than subject; potentially diminishes agency of subject
- canted angle ("Dutch" or "German" angle): camera is tilted; can capture or create unsettling emotion
- Bavarian angle: angle is changed by ninety degrees, making horizontal lines *vertical*

Camera movement

- tracking shot: shot in which camera follows a moving subject within frame, often for a considerable time
- dolly: filming while camera is affixed to a moving, wheeled platform (as on train tracks)
- tilting: moving a camera up or down while affixed to a given point (tripod, etc.)
- crane shot: footage shot from high up, often from a crane that can move fluidly in three dimensions
- panning: pivoting mounted or relatively fixed camera sideways around a central axis (as on a tripod)
- swish pan: panning so fast that it creates blurred images

Color

- saturated color: intense, dense color which can capture emotional intensity, etc.
- desaturated color: duller color scheme which can convey the absence of emotion or energy
- warm color: reds, oranges, yellows
- cool colors: greens, blues, violets

Editing Cuts

- straight (direct) cut: a transition to a new location or moment in time without any visual transition
- cut-in: a quick jump from a long shot of a given subject to a closer shot of that same subject
- cross cutting: an editing technique that interweaves separate actions, often in separate locations, intended to take place simultaneously in the story.
- parallel cutting: a type of cross cutting that forms such a strong parallel between different actions that it encourages comparison and contrast between these different situations. The two actions could connect two characters directly—as when they're interacting—or in more symbolic fashion.
- match cut: connecting two scenes from different locations which contain similarly shaped and/or colored objects that provide visual connective tissue
- contrast cut: a jarring transitioning between scenes of discordant thematic or stylistic material
- J-cut: the audio from a subsequent scene begins while the video of the preceding scene remains visible
- L-cut: the audio from the first of two scenes carries over into the video footage of the second scene
- invisible cut: connecting two shots with similar frames by hiding the transition, as with the camera panning across a barrier that obscures audience visibility for an instant. Alfred Hitchcock does this to create the illusion of a single, very long take in *Rope* (1948)
- jump cut: a transition that interrupts temporal continuity, often purposefully. Jean Luc-Godard does this famously—and seemingly erratically—in *Breathless* (1960).
- smash cut (“Gilligan Cut,” from *Gilligan's Island*): a sudden transition that ties two scenes together by means of behavioral, dialogic, or tonal contrast, as when a character claims they will never do a thing—and then is shown doing it (though the contrast need not concern the same character in both scenes).

Transitions

- fade out: illumination decreases until screen becomes wholly black (or wholly one color); fades indicate the conclusion of a particular sequence/idea
- fade in: begins with solid black (or color), and next scene gradually appears
- iris in: a type of masking shot in which part or all of a shot is obscured, with an illuminated circle of the next shot gradually growing till it fills the rectangular frame
- iris out: darkness seeps into the frame until a closing circle of an illuminated image shrinks all together
- dissolve: a previous and subsequent image become translucent and overlap briefly the latter replaces the former; dissolves suggest some sort of thematic or topical connection between the two cuts
- form dissolve: a transition that briefly overlaps shots containing different subjects *with similar shapes*
- wipe: a transition usually involving a vertical line traveling horizontally to swap one scene with another; swifter than a dissolve but more connected than a cut; used to present events succeeding one another

Soundtrack

- spoken word: spoken lines (dialogue, monologue), narration
- sound effects: non-verbal sounds made by characters, sounds made by objects, ambient sound (background noise: wind, surf, etc.)
- diegetic sound: sounds traceable to a source present in the film's storyline, whether visible or not
- non-diegetic sound: sounds that cannot be explained by film action (e.g. narration, musical score)
- score: singing, instrumental music, laugh track, clapping, much narration; usually *non-diegetic* sound
- foley sound: ambient, familiar sounds added in post-production (e.g. wheels squeaking, doors opening)

Select Schools & Genres

- German Expressionism: such films employ exaggerated, sometimes distorted set design and costuming, and the atmosphere reflects extreme emotional states, cognitive differences, and strange situations.
- French New Wave: independent filmmakers sidestepped major studios, freeing them to experiment with provocative, complex themes and experimental styles; many such films rebelled against tradition.
- Dogma 95: Lars von Trier & Thomas Vinterberg present in 1995 a "vow of chastity" requiring Dogma 95 films to shoot on location w/ handheld cameras, recording the sound & color actually present—no use of camera filters or later dubbing. Such films must be set in the present and *avoid* "superficial" (sensational) action like that inserted in adventure films to ensure box office success.

EXTRAS: NOT ON QUIZZES

Montage [categories as defined by early Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein]

- Metric montage: cuts determined by exact measurements
- Rhythmic montage: continuity editing
- Tonal montage: similar motif, image, aural cue, or other element connects subsequent shots
- Overtone montage: complex tonal connections that sometimes abandon logic and plot
- Intellectual montage: connecting shots by way of sounds, images, and overtones related to an idea, rather than characters' physiology and placement

Miscellaneous

- Anamorphic lenses: designed to fully employ the film area of 35 mm frames in wide format imagery. (Without this, wide format imagery would have left the top and bottom of the frame unused, and required masking/cropping these using mattes in the projector: Anamorphic lenses improved image quality by sharpening vertical resolution and reducing the appearance of visual noise. For example, using a standard spherical lens to capture 2.40:1 imagery on 35 mm film only uses 50% of each frame's area. With anamorphic lenses, 100% of the frame area contributes to the final product.
- Under-cranking: in the silent era, under-cranking recorded fewer frames per second than normal, allowing a given scene to appear hyper fast when played at the normal rate as the rest of the film.
- Talkies & frames per second: when studios began updating their equipment between 1927-30 to accommodate sound, the rate of 24 fps became standard for 35 mm films.
- Silent film fps: given cost of celluloid, most silent films shot at 16-18 fps instead of 20-24 fps.
- focal length: the distance in millimeters between the film (or sensor) and the focal point of a given lens
 - short focal length: wide angle of view but low magnification power (as w/ wide-angle lens)
 - long focal length: narrow angle of view but high magnification power (as w/ telephoto lens)
- aperture: lens opening size, expressed in f/stops; determines depth of field & relative brightness.
 - wide aperture = lower f/stop (e.g. f/1.4): results in brighter image, shallower depth of field w/ blurry background; allows for faster shutter speed
 - narrow aperture = higher f/stop (e.g. f/16): results in dimmer image, deeper depth of field; requires slower shutter speed