

SHOT COMPOSITION

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CAMERA ANGLES

Eye-Level

This is the most common view, being the real-world angle that we are all used to. It shows subjects as we would expect to see them in real life. It is a fairly neutral shot.

High Angle

A high angle shows the subject from above, i.e., the camera is angled down towards the subject. This has the effect of diminishing the subject, making them appear less powerful, less significant or even submissive.

Low Angle

This shows the subject from below, giving them the impression of being more powerful or dominant. (Douglas MacArthur directed his PR people to use this a lot.)

Bird's Eye

The scene is shown from directly above. This is a completely different and somewhat unnatural point of view which can be used for dramatic effect or for showing a different spatial perspective.

Slanted/Dutch Tilt

This is where the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle. This creates an interesting and dramatic effect. Famous examples include Carol Reed's *The Third Man*, Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, and the *Batman* series.

RULES OF FRAMING

The Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds is a concept in video and film production in which the frame is divided into nine imaginary sections. This creates reference points which act as guides for framing the image. Important subjects within the frame should be aligned with the lines of the grid and at points where they cross. Horizons can be placed along the lower or upper horizontal lines.

One Point Perspective

Usually highly symmetrical and centrally aligned, one point perspective places the subject in the center of the frame. One point perspective also often includes dynamic perspective lines to give depth to the image. This technique is famously used to great effect by Stanley Kubrick and Wes Anderson.

Head room

Headroom is the amount of space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame. A common mistake in amateur video is to have far too much headroom, which doesn't look good and wastes frame space. In any "person shot" tighter than a MS, there should be very little headroom.

Looking/Leading Room

This term refers to the amount of room in the frame which is strategically left empty. Shots that include a subject looking out of the frame should include space for them to look into. In shots where a subject is moving through the frame, space should be left for the subject to move into. Without this empty space, the framing will look uncomfortable.

SHOT TYPES

Extreme Wide Shot (EWS)

The view is so far from the subject that he isn't even visible. Often used as an establishing shot.

Very Wide Shot (VWS)

The subject is visible (barely), but the emphasis is still on placing him in his environment.

Wide Shot or Long Shot (WS or LS)

The subject takes up the full frame, or at least as much as comfortably possible.

Mid Shot (MS)

Show some part of the subject in more detail while still giving an impression of the whole subject.

Medium Close Up (MCU)

Half way between a MS and a CU.

Close Up (CU)

A certain feature or part of the subject takes up the whole frame.

Extreme Close Up (ECU)

The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail.

Cut-In

Shows some (other) part of the subject in detail.

Cutaway (CA)

A shot of something other than the subject.

Two-Shot

A shot of two people, framed similarly to a mid shot.

Over the Shoulder Shot (OSS)

Looking from behind a person at the subject.

Noddy Shot

Usually refers to a shot of an interviewer listening and reacting to the subject.

Point of View Shot (POV)

Shows a view from the subject's perspective.