

The Vocabulary of Film

The Words and Phrases

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Static Framing Elements

Iris Shot – *Expressly isolating, extreme attention, unique identity.* Rarely found in contemporary films, the majority of the image is black as a large frame around a circular reveal of the subject or object of interest.

One Shot – *Isolating.* Typically a portrait-like image.

Two Shot – *Embracing, joining.* Typically a group-like image.

Reverse (or over-the-shoulder) Shot – *Isolating with perspective.* The camera becomes the observer from the perspective of, and conspiring with, the unseen *other*.

Tight Shot (or Close Up) – *Isolating, very personal.* Typically a partial face or faces.

Extreme Close Up – *Intimate, dehumanizing.* Sometimes unidentifiable without the viewer knowing the context.

Extreme Long Shot – *Epic, grandeur.* Focus is in the far distance without a prominent foreground.

Establishing Shot – Narrative context is set, typically in a long shot of a place like a city.

Panorama – *Leveling.* Similar to the Establishing Shot, but in a panavision or widescope movie, the deliberate use as a frame builds tensions of opposites in a precarious balance.

Long Shot – *Distance, remote.* Used to emphasize action in the background where the foreground is out of focus and thus dominated by external forces out of control.

Deep Focus Shot – *Multilayered, democratic.* Less tension than in the Long Shot description by giving the foreground equal weight.

Full Shot – *Normal.* Complete view of a standing person – the European cultural norm.

Medium Shot – *Normal.* View of a person from the knees or from the waist up – the American cultural norm.

Dynamic Framing Elements

Dolly Shot – Drawing in, or away from subject

Tracking Shot – Following, leading, or joining with

Panning Shot – *Discovery*

Tilting Shot – Rising or falling with subject (sometimes used for the opposite effect)

Crane Shot – Descending toward or ascending away from subject

Interpretive Framing Elements

God's Eye View – *Omniscient, commanding, dominating, impersonal*

Extreme High Angle View – *Perspective of the powerful, usually the nemesis*

High Angle View – *Paternal/Maternal*

Eye Level View – *Democratic, realistic*

Subjective View – *Point of view, camera as protagonist*

Low Angle View – *Adoration, awe, reverence*

Extreme Low Angle View – *Perspective of the submissive*

Glass Floor View – *Dominated, impersonal*

Interpretive Lighting Elements

High Contrast – *Menace, drama, operatic*

High Key – *Commercial, culturally bland, bright and even light*

Low Key – *Exotic, dramatic, mysterious, shadowed and diffuse light*

Available Light – *Natural, evocative, documentary*

Three Lights – *Staged, culturally normal* (standard full, side, and back)

Back Lit – *Contrasting*

Northern Lighting – *Flat features with notable exceptions, glamor shots of the 30's, 40's*

Bottom Lighting – *Menace, melodramatic, farce*

Interpretive Lens Elements

Telephoto Lens – *Impersonal, extreme close up, flattening, sometimes portraiture*

Normal Lens – *Realistic, for full and medium shots*

Wide Angle Lens – *Distorted*

Selective Focus – *Attention, contrarily withholding information in the out-of-focus field*

Rack Focus – *Shifted attention, drama, discovery, shock*

Gauze or Vaseline Filter – *Romantic, historical revery, farce*

Cross Hatch Filter – *Dramatic, edgy, manufactured, unnatural* (star-burst effect)

Red Filter (for Black & White) – *Dramatic, makes the sky very dark, and the clouds very white giving a high contrast known as **Western Skies** (Cowboys & Indians genre)*

Interpretive Continuity Changes

Continuous Take – *captivating, sometimes natural, sometimes staged, **editing in the camera**, a complete scene, or a portion of a scene is shot in real time without camera changes*

Cut – *Attention shift, change from one point of view to another, also a scene change*

Cross cut – *Tension, simple change in point of view and back (more than one cut)*

Jump Cut – *Revolution, discordant, chaos, a radical change during a camera movement like a pan shot*

Iris in, Iris out – *Exceptional isolation, an iris shot is dynamically drawn down on the old image and drawn out with a new image*

Dissolve – *Confusion, change by reducing the focus or image acuity*

Cross Dissolve – *reducing image acuity of one scene and increasing the image acuity of the following scene at the same time*

Fade – *Death*, reducing the image to black

Cross Fade – reducing the image of one scene to black and then drawing the image of the following scene out of the black

Wipe – *destruction*, a black field is drawn horizontally across the image

Cross Wipe – a new image is drawn horizontally across the old image

Blackout – *Death*

Interpretive Motion Changes

Stop Motion – *Dramatic, suspenseful, impersonal*, holding an image through repeating a still, and not just running the camera in front of a stationary subject or object

Stop Motion Animation – *Comedic, fantastic*, film shot by repositioning an image through successive stills and then projected normally to present apparent action

Slow Motion – *Dramatic, impersonal*, film shot at high speed and then projected normally

Fast Motion – *Comedic, impersonal*, film shot at a slow speed and then projected normally

Reverse Motion – *Impersonal, remote, unrealistic*