

A Film Grammar Glossary

3 Point Lighting	three-point lighting uses: (1) a fill (or filler) light - an auxiliary light to soften shadows and areas not covered by the key light, (2) a back light behind to add depth to a subject, and (3) a bright key light
180 Degree Rule	a screen direction rule that camera operators must follow - an imaginary line on one side of the axis of action is made (e.g., between two principal actors in a scene), and the camera must not cross over that line - otherwise, there is a distressing visual discontinuity and disorientation.
angle	a. refers to the perspective from which a camera depicts its subject; see camera angle, and other specific shots (high, low, oblique, etc.) b. Also refers to the focal length of the lens, wide angle, telephoto angle
aperture	refers to the measurement of the opening in a camera lens that regulates the amount of light passing through and contacting the film.
aspect ratio	How the image appears on the screen based on how it was shot; refers to the ratio of width (horizontal or top) to height (vertical or side) of a film frame. 1.33:1 (the same as 4:3 on a TV screen); normal 35mm films are shot at a ratio
back light	A type of spotlight that illuminates a subject from behind and helps to separate them from their background. Used in 3 point lighting.
breakdowns	Preproduction worksheet in which each scene is broken down into each of the components that need to be considered or planned before the scene can be shot EX: characters, props, costume, effects
background light	A spotlight that is aimed from above and behind the talent's head in order to dileniate him/her from the background.
camera movement	the use of the camera to obtain various camera angles and perspectives. (See motion picture camera shots below, including the pan, tilt, track, and zoom; also boom/crane shots, Steadicam, or hand-held)
character description	A description of a character, including sex and age, that indicates the role in the show and general motivation and characteristics. In casting, it assists actors in deciding if they are a possible fit for a role they might want to play.
climax	The highest point of anxiety or tension in a story or film in which the central character/protagonist confronts and deals with the consequence(s) of all his/her actions, or faces the antagonist in a climactic battle or final engagement.
close-up CU	A shot in which the scale of the subject appears relatively large and fills the entire frame to focus attention and emphasize its importance; i.e., Usually actor's head from the shoulders or neck up. Viewer is drawn into subject's emotional state, acting to engage us in their world.
composition	Refers to the arrangement of different elements (i.e., colors, shapes, figures, lines, movement, and lighting) within a frame and in a scene

continuity (editing or cutting)	The system of editing that developed to provide a continuous and clear movement of events/images in a film. It refers to the final edited structure of a completed film where the events or scenes/sequences are arranged as if they had occurred continuously, when they were shot out of sequence. A continuity cut takes the viewer seamlessly, unobtrusively, and logically from one sequence or scene to another.
contrast	Refers to the difference between light and shadow, or between maximum and minimum amounts of light, in an particular image; can be either high contrast (with a sharp delineation between the bright and dark areas) or its opposite low
coverage	All the shots, including closeups and reverse angles, that a director takes in addition to the master shot, to make up the final product; to have proper coverage means having all the proper scenes, angles, lightings, close-ups, and directions.
cross-cutting	The editing technique of alternating, interweaving, or interspersing one narrative action (scene, sequence, or event) with another - usually in different locations or places, thus combining the two. This method suggests parallel action (that takes place simultaneously).
cut or cutting	Editing. A change in camera angle, location, placement, or time, from one shot to another. A transition from one scene to another (a visual cut) or from one soundtrack to another (a sound cut).
denouement	The events following the climax of a drama or novel in which such a resolution or clarification takes place.
cutaway shot	A brief shot that momentarily interrupts a continuously-filmed action, by briefly inserting another related action, object, or person (sometimes not part of the principal scene or main action), followed by a cutback to the original shot; often filmed from the POV of the character.
depth of field	The area of the image that is in focus: within the foreground, middle-ground, and background of the image.
diegetic (diegesis)	That which realistically or logically exists in that world for the characters, what they experience. Example: music that plays on a character's radio in a scene, spoken dialogue, events in the backstory. The opposite is non-diegetic elements, such as the musical score or a voice-over.
dissolve	An edit between two shots, in which the visible image of one shot or scene is gradually replaced, superimposed or blended (by an overlapping fade out or fade in and dissolve) with the image from another shot or scene.
dolly (shot)	Refers to a moving shot taken from a camera that is mounted on a wheeled camera platform (sometimes referred to as a truck or dolly) pushed on rails and moved smoothly and noiselessly during filming while the camera is running. A pull-back shot (or dolly out) is the moving the camera closer or farther away from the subject. Dollying along with (or 'tracking within') refers to the camera moving beside the subject; also known as tracking shot, trucking shot, follow shot, or traveling shot.

establishing shot	Usually a wide-angle shot at the beginning of a scene (or a sequence) that is intended to show things from a distance and to inform the audience with an overview in order to help identify and orient the locale or time for the scene and action that follows.
Extreme wide -shot	A camera framing of an object or character from a considerable distance so that it appears relatively small in the frame, e.g., a person standing in a crowd of people or a horse in a vast landscape.
eyeline match	A cut between two shots that creates the illusion of the character (in the first shot) looking at an object (in the second shot).
Fade	Editing transition: Dissolve from a shot to black or from black into a shot.
fill light	Softer and less intense than the Key light. The Fill provides illumination for the areas of the image that are in shadow. In a 3 point lighting setup, the fill light is placed roughly perpendicular to the key light.
focus	Refers to the degree of sharpness or distinctness of an image (or an element of an image.) As a verb, it refers to the manipulation or adjustment of the lens to create a sharper image.
following shot	A shot with framing that follows a moving figure or subject onscreen; also known as a type of tracking shot.
foreground	Objects or action closest to the camera. As opposed to background. (f.g.)
format	The size or aspect ratio of a film frame
frame	Refers to a single image, the smallest unit of a film's structure, captured by the camera onto film or video tape or card. In video 29.97 frames create one second of a shot. Also refers to the rectangular area within which the film image is composed by the film-maker - a frame is what we see (within the screen).
frames per second or fps	The number of frames that create one second of film/video. Video is generally 29.97 (or 30 fps) and film is generally 24 fps. Adding or eliminating frames creates Fast Mo or Slo mo.
f-stop f/x	The scale measurement of the size of the opening of the iris on a lens; common f-stops are 1.4, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, and 22; the smaller the number, the smaller the opening. Abbreviation for special (or visual) effects
genre	A French word meaning "kind" or "type", it refers to a class or type of film that shares common, predictable or distinctive artistic and thematic elements or narrative content, plot, and subject matter, mood and milieu (or setting) or characters. Examples: Westerns, Sci Fi, Costume Dramas.
high-angle shot	A shot in which the subject or scene is filmed from above and the camera points down on the action.
high-definition	A screen resolution that is higher than a Standard Definition and, as a result, has more visual information for sharper images, and wider aspect ratios.

ID (lower third ID)	Text composited over the image of someone, usually an interview subject, identifying who they are and what their position is. Usually at the bottom right or left of the frame.
incidental light	On a film shoot, the any lamp, candle or other source of light in the scene that provides illumination and is visible as part of the diegesis.
insert shot	A shot that occurs in the middle of a larger scene or shot, usually a close-up of some detail or object, that draws audience attention, provides specific information, or simply breaks up the film sequence (e.g., a wristwatch face, a
intercut shots	A series of shots, consisting of two simultaneous events, that are cut together, alternating events from both scenes. Often used to cover phone conversation, and to build suspense.
iris effect	A technique or wipe effect, in the form of an expanding or diminishing circle, in which a part of the screen is blacked out so that only a portion of the image can be seen by the viewer.
J Cut	Editing transition wherein the Video of the first shot overlaps the audio of the next.
jump cut	An abrupt, disorienting edit of two shots. Often due to interrupting a continuous shot in which the action is noticeably advanced in time and/or cut between two similar scenes, either done accidentally or purposefully.
juxtaposition	Editing together of two images, characters, objects, or two scenes in sequence, in order to compare and contrast them, or establish a relationship between them.
key light	the main or primary light on a subject, often angled and off-center, or from above) that selectively illuminates various prominent features of the image to produce depth, shadows, etc.;
kicker light	A light that illuminates part of the subject and helps defines 3 deminsionality, usually positioned from the side.
L Cut	Editing transition wherein the audio of the first shot overlaps the video of the next.
lens	The glass elements in a camera through which light passes; various types include wide-angle lens, telephoto lens, normal, etc.;
lock-down shot	A shot in which the camera remains immobile, on sticks.
log sheets	Formatted worksheet with columns for time code and shot descriptions. Used after footage is shot, in order to identify strongest shots.
long take	A shot of lengthy duration.
looping	The process in which dialogue is re-recorded by actors in the studio during post-production. The actors lip sync to their previously recorded dialogue on screen. aka ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement); contrast with dubbing; loop refers to a length of film joined from beginning to end for repeated continuous running.

low-angle shot	a shot in which the subject is filmed directly from below and the camera tilts up at the action or character.
mask	Covering up or blocking out a portion of the frame with blackness or opaqueness; most masks are black, but can be white or some other color
master shot	a continuous shot or long take that shows the main action or setting of an entire scene (most scenes are shot with one or two master angles and then broken up into a series of smaller or tighter angles during editing (such as one-shots, two-shots, close-ups, and reaction shots)); a master refers to a positive print made especially for duplication purposes
match cut	A cut between two shots (outgoing and incoming) that are joined, matched, or linked by visual or other similarities. There can be audio matches, segues and visual match-cuts of various kinds.
matte shot	the optical process of combining (or compositing) separately-photographed shots (usually actors in the foreground and the setting in the background) onto one print by masking off (or makes opaque and blank) part of the frame area for one exposure and the opposite area for another exposure.
medium shot	A conventional camera shot filmed from a medium distance. Usually refers to a human figure from the waist up.
mise en scène	A French term for "putting into the scene or shot"; it refers to all the elements placed (by the director) before the camera and within the frame of the film - including settings, decor, props, actors, costumes, makeup, lighting, performances, and character movements and positioning.
montage	A French word literally meaning "editing" or "assembling shots". A form of movie collage, consisting of a series of short shots or images that are rapidly put together into a coherent sequence to create to suggest meaning or a larger idea. A montage is usually not accompanied with dialogue. Examples: "Falling in Love", "Growing Up" "Mastering something" montages.
narration	The telling of a story and the supplemental information given to the film audience by an off-screen voice. Sometimes the narrator is a character in the film, who provides information in a flashback.
off camera	Refers to action or dialogue off the visible stage, or beyond the boundaries of the camera's field of vision or depicted frame; aka off-screen.
overexposed	An image that has more light than normal, causing a blinding, washed-out, whitish, glaring effect. Bright areas are so bright they lose detail.
overlap	the carry-over of dialogue, sounds, or music from one scene to another; occurs when the cut in the soundtrack is not at the same time as the cut in the image.
over-the-shoulder (OTS) sh	A commonly-used medium camera angle or view in a dialogue scene, mostly with alternating shot/reverse-shot editing, in which the camera records the action from behind the shoulder and/or head of one of the characters, thus

pace	The speed/tempo of the dramatic action, which is usually enhanced by the soundtrack, the speed of the dialogue and the type of editing, etc.
pan (panoramic)	A camera move in which the camera rotates left or right from a fixed axis (tripod). Types: Swish Pan, Flash Pan Blur Pan.
P.O.V. shot(or point-of-view shot) rack focusing	a subjective shot made from the perspective of one of the characters to show the audience the scene as it would look through the character's eyes; usually coupled (before and/or after) with a reaction shot (or a three-shot sequence) On-screen film technique. While filming, focus is changed from one focal plane to another, forcing the viewer's eye to travel to those areas of an image that remain in sharp focus. the focus changes from an object in the foreground to an
reaction shot	Quick shot that records a character's or group's response to someone or something; often accompanied with a POV shot.
real time	Actual time it would take for an event to occur in reality, as contrasted to filmic time (time can be sped up or slowed down).
release form	A legal document that talent signs to release their image and voice to be used in your show. Without a signed release form, the talent can decide later not to allow use.
reverse angle shot	A basic camera angle: a shot photographed from the opposite side of a subject to provide a different perspective; in a dialogue scene between characters, a shot of the second participant.
rough cut	An early edit of a film or video with all the pieces assembled in continuous, sequential order, but without any fancy editing.
scene	A series of shots that together comprise a single, complete and unified dramatic event or block (segment) of storytelling within a film. The end of a scene is often indicated by a change in time, action and/or location.
screen direction	The direction that characters or objects are moving in a film's scene or visual frame.
sequence	A connected series of related scenes that are edited together and comprise a single, unified event, or story within a film's narrative. A sequence usually refers to a longer segment of film than a scene and are often grouped into
shot	The basic building block or unit of film narrative. A single, constant take made by a motion picture camera uninterrupted by editing, from the time the camera is turned on to when it's turned off.
sides	Scenes or portions of scenes that include dialogue, chosen by directors for actors to read during auditions. Sides are often given to the actors in advance of casting.
shot, scene, and sequence	a shot, scene, and sequence together make up the larger dramatic narrative of film; scenes are composed of shots, sequences are composed of scenes, and films are composed of sequences.
split-screen	The combination of two actions filmed separately by editing them to appear side-by-side within a single frame.
static shot	An unmoving camera shot that is stationary, due to the use of a tripod

still	A single, static image, either (1) a frame still (possibly enlarged) from a finished film, (2) a production still taken from an unfinished film (3)A photograph
storyboard	A sequential series of illustrations and/or captions of events of the narrative, as seen through the camera lens. A visual outline of the various shots that provide a synopsis for a proposed film story.
subjective	Point-of-view shot that not only shows what a character sees, but reveals their state of mind or perception (often altered or addled.) Ex: What character sees as she comes out of coma.)
point-of-view (POV)	A shot which reveals what a character sees from their point of view or sightline . subjective camera is a style of filming that allows the viewer to look at events from the POV of either a character or the author, when the camera position is close to the line of sight of the character
superim-pose	In editing, blending 2 images together, on image on top of another, sometimes composed as a double exposure. Titles are also superimposed over an image.
telephoto	A camera lens with a very long focal length and narrow angle of view - the effect is to compress or condense depth in space, thereby bringing distant objects closer to the viewer (without moving the camera), but it also flattens the depth of the image; it has the opposite of the effect of a wide-angle lens.
tilt	Camera move wherein the camera tilts up or down on a diagonal along a vertical axis. Can be also known as a Reveal.
Tracking shot	A smooth shot in which the camera moves alongside ('tracking within') the subject, usually mounted on a dolly, in a side-to-side motion (relative to the action.)
transition	A way of editing one shot or scene to the next, including such transitional effects or shots as a cut, fade, dissolve, and wipe; a transition focus between two scenes means the current scene goes out of focus and the next scene comes into focus.
two-shot	A medium or close-up camera shot of two Characters in the frame (often in dialogue with each other), framed from the chest up.
underexposed	An image that has less light than normal, causing an indistinct, dimly-lit, unclear image. Dark areas are so dark that they loose detail.
voice-over(or v.o.)	Recorded dialogue, usually narration, that comes from an unseen, off-screen voice, character or narrator. Heard by the audience but not by the film characters themselves. A type of voice-over; v.o. often conveys the character's thoughts, either as a 'voice' heard within one's head, or as other narrative information and commentary to explain the action or plot.
wide-angle shot(WS)	A shot (often abbreviated WS) taken with a lens that is able to take in a wider field or range of view (to capture more of the scene's elements or objects) than a regular or normal lens. Wide-angle shots exaggerate the distance and create great depth of field.

- wipe Editing technique in which one shot appears to be "pushed off" or "wiped off" the screen by another shot replacing it and moving across the existing image; also called a push-over.
- zoom shot A single shot taken with a lens that has a variable focal length, rapidly move from a wide-angle shot to a telephoto shot in one continuous movement.