

Chapter 4 – Production

WAYS OF SEEING

- The way we shoot says a lot about how we see the world and how we convey information about what we are filming.
- Be aware of the resulting look of your shot when you shoot – pay attention to the composition, what is on/off camera, the exposure (day lighting or night) and the angle of the shot. Be creative!

YOU BEHIND THE CAMERA

- If you are shooting in a sensitive situation, you want to draw as little attention to yourself as possible.
- Also, don't start shooting immediately, let whatever is happening start to happen and then slowly move into it.
- Slow means quiet and calm - don't race around making noise and drawing attention to yourself.
- When possible (depending on the situation), ask permission to shoot, introduce yourself and offer some information about what you are doing.

BEFORE TURNING ON THE CAMERA

- Observe the activity taking place, the surroundings, the people involved. This will allow you to start seeing “shots” – a high angle shot from the top of the building, or a low angle shot on your knees looking up. The effects of changing your scene's perspective can be slight or dramatic, but it is always worthwhile taking the time to look.
- If it is a character-driven story, observe your character and figure out how you can follow him/her then start shooting. It's always good to get more shots of a person's environment to lay over their sound bytes from an interview because this helps display more about their personality.
- Notice the space between you with the camera and the subject or activity you are shooting. In real life, it may not seem that huge of a gap but when you look into the camera, there is a lot of empty room. Go ahead and once you are rolling, go in for a tighter shot. This does not mean using the zoom function necessarily but physically getting closer.

SHOOTING TERMINOLOGY

SHOT – a single run of the camera.

SCENE - A dramatic unit composed of a single or several shots in which a character or event plays out in the same setting and period of time.

In order to create scenes, you have to shoot lots of shots and put them together.

MAGNIFICATION OF SHOTS - The amount of space the subject/character occupies in proportion to the entire frame.



VLS - Very Long Shot



LS - Long Shot



MCU - Medium Close Up



CU - Close Up



MLS - Medium Long Shot



MS - Medium Shot



BCU - Big Close



ECU - Extreme Close Up

Long Shot (LS) - Shot which shows all or most of a fairly large subject (for example, a large building) and usually much of the surroundings.

Full shot - In the case of a standing actor, s/he fills the frame, head reaching top, and feet the bottom of frame.

Extreme Long Shot (ELS) - In this type of shot the camera is at its furthest distance from the subject, emphasising the background.

Establishing shot - frequently an exterior 'general view', used to set the scene.

Close-up (CU) - A picture which shows a fairly small part of the scene - such as a character's face - in great detail so that it fills the screen. Close-ups may be used to focus attention on a person's feelings or reactions.

Mid CU (Mid Close-up) - The setting can still be seen. The lower frame line ends around the chest of the actor.

Tight CU (Tight Close-Up) - forehead to chin.

Extreme Close up (XCU) - going really tight, till a detail fills the screen. Eg: hands or eyes shot.

Medium Shot or Mid-Shot (MS) - In such a shot, the subject or actor and its setting occupy roughly equal areas in the frame. Half of the body is in the shot so there is space for hand gestures to be seen.

Mid-Long Shot (MLS) - In the case of a standing actor, the lower frame line cuts off mid thigh or knee downwards.

CAMERA MOVEMENTS –be slow and gentle. Make sure to stay on the shot for 10 seconds.

Zooms - Changing the lens from wide to telescope. It looks very harsh and you should set your zoom instead of changing it during the shot. Another reason not to zoom while shooting is that editors can create a zoom effect while editing. If you must zoom, be slow and steady.

Pans - shifting camera horizontally (from left to right, right to left)

Tilts - shifting camera vertically (up to down, down to up)

CAMERA ANGLES - The direction and height at which the camera is placed at in relation to the subject determines the Shot angle.

There are 3 basic angles – eye level, low angle, high angle.

Eye-level shot - camera is placed at the eye level of the subject.

High angle shot - places camera above the character and looks down at it.

Low angle shot - places camera below the character and angles it upwards.

Overhead shot - is one made from a position directly above the action, bang overhead.

Point-of-view shot (POV) - A shot made from a camera position close to the line of sight of a performer who is to be watching the action shown in the point-of-view shot.

PLANNING WHAT TYPE OF SHOT

One shot – A shot of just one person.

Two-shot - A shot of two people together.

Wide shot - A shot of a broad field of action taken or taken with a wide-angle lens.

OTS or OSS – Over the shoulder shot. Shot of a person / situation / action, with the back of another's shoulder in the foreground. Useful when two / many people are conversing, as it helps establish the space between them.

BASIC CAMERA TIPS

- When you are shooting a person speaking to the camera, change the zoom from mid shot to close up and back, every two sentences or so, so that there's variety of shot options when you edit.
- Also make sure you get enough variety in your shots, so you can make an interesting edit. For example, if you're shooting a profile of a person, make sure you also shoot, their home, family, walking, work place, normal routine, etc.
- Use a tripod whenever possible, especially you plan to interview someone. Since you will be pointing the camera at your interviewee for a long time, your hand can get shaky and the picture quality will suffer. If you find the lightweight tripod shaky, you can place heavy bags such as a bag of sand, rice or potatoes against the three legs of the tripod, which will prevent the tripod from shaking.
- Make sure the knobs on the tripod are loose before you pan or tilt the tripod.
- When shooting handheld, hold the camera close to your body, with your arm supported so your shots are more steady.
- Don't shoot pointing at the sun, particularly not a person standing in front of the camera with the sun behind them. If you do, the person's face will appear in silhouette or darker. Instead, request that they move. Similarly, if you shoot someone sitting in front of a window, you will have the same problem.
- Test your equipment to make sure it works before you go out to shoot. Make sure you have all the cables, mic adapter, battery, memory card, manual guide. This should all be in the camera kit.
- Charge your batteries.
- Take an extra memory card if you can.
- Try not to zoom in too much as the picture becomes extremely shaky when you do.
- Leave a few seconds of gap in the beginning and end of the shot, to avoid cutting the clip in the middle of an action. Also, if you're shooting a person or object that is in motion, let them complete the action before you stop recording.
- It's best to record in SP (or standard quality) format.
- Carry headphones and make sure you are getting clear sound. If there is noise in the background, move your subject or wait until the noise passes.

CAMERA SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE

- Never ever leave a camera unattended. Someone must be clearly & responsibly taking care of it at all times.
- Never take the camera close to water, things which spray water, fire, spark emitting machinery, etc. Shoot these from a distance.
- Do not let it get exposed to dust. Avoid dusty surfaces.
- Avoid touching the lens. Also make sure it's clean before you shoot by using a soft cotton cloth.