

## Shot Types Identified

Refer to: <http://www.mediacollege.com/video/shots/>

There is a convention in video and filmmaking that assign names and guidelines to common types of shots, framing and picture composition. The list below briefly describes the most common shot types. The exact terminology often varies between production environments but the basic principles are the same.

Shots are usually described in relation to a particular SUBJECT.

1. EWS (Extreme Wide Shot) / Establishing Shot  
The view is often on the level of showing the entire landscape. The view is so far from a human subject, for example, that s/he isn't even visible. Often used as an establishing shot.
2. An establishing shot is used to show the location or environmental context of the action shot that follows.
3. VWS (Very Wide Shot) / Wide Angle  
The human subject is visible, but barely noticeable in the frame. The emphasis is on placing him/her in context/environment.
4. WS (Wide Shot)  
The subject takes up the full frame, or at least as much as comfortably possible. *AKA:* long shot, or full shot. The subject is shown from head to toe.
5. MS (Medium Shot)  
Shows some part of the subject in more detail while still giving an impression of the whole subject. Usually shows the subject from the hips or waist to the top of the head.
6. MCU (Medium Close Up)  
Half way between a MS and a CU.
7. CU (Close Up)  
A certain feature or part of the subject takes up the whole frame.
8. ECU (Extreme Close Up)  
The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail.
9. Cut-In  
Shows some (other) part of the subject in detail.
10. CA (Cutaway)  
A shot of something other than the subject. This shot is used in editing to show another detail of the scene.

11. Two-Shot

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

12. (OSS) Over-the-Shoulder Shot

Looking from behind a person at the subject.

13. Point-of-View Shot (POV)

Shows a view from the subject's perspective.

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## Camera Angle

The term *camera angle* means slightly different things to different people but it always refers to the way a shot is composed. Some people use it to include all camera shot types, others use it to specifically mean the angle between the camera and the subject. We will concentrate on the literal interpretation of camera angles, that is, the angle of the camera relative to the subject.

1. 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.

2. 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

3. Low Angle

This shows the subject from below, giving them the impression of being more powerful or dominant.

4. 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. It can be used to show the positions and motions of different characters and objects, enabling the viewer to see things the characters can't.

5. Slanted

Also known as a *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.

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## Camera Movement

1. Arc Shot

An *arc shot* is a camera move around the subject, somewhat like a tracking shot.

In mathematics, an arc is a segment of the circumference of a circle. A camera arc is similar — the camera moves in a rough semi-circle around the subject.

## 2. Dolly Shot

A *dolly* is a cart that travels along tracks. The camera is mounted on the dolly and records the shot as it moves. Dolly shots have a number of applications and can provide dramatic footage.

In many circles a *dolly shot* is also known as a tracking shot. However, some professionals prefer the more rigid terminology that defines dolly as in-and-out movement (i.e. closer/further away from the subject), while tracking means side-to-side movement.

Most dollies have a lever to allow for vertical movement as well (known as a pedestal move). In some cases, a crane is mounted on the dolly for additional height and flexibility. A shot that moves vertically while simultaneously tracking is called a *compound shot*.

Some dollies also operate without tracks. This provides the greatest degree of movement, assuming of course that a suitable surface is available. Special dollies are available for location work, and are designed to work with common constraints such as doorway width.

The dolly faced serious competition when the *Steadicam* was invented. Most shots previously only possible with a dolly could now be done with the more versatile Steadicam. However dollies are still preferred for many shots, especially those that require a high degree of precision.

## 3. Follow Shot

*The Follow shot* is fairly self-explanatory. It simply means that the camera follows the subject of the action. The following distance is usually kept more or less constant.

Dollying or tracking can achieve the movement, although in many cases a Steadicam is the most practical option. Hand-held follow-shots are quite achievable in many situations but are not generally suited to feature film cinematography.

## 4. Camera Pan

A *pan* is a horizontal camera movement in which the camera moves left and right about a central axis. This is a swiveling movement, i.e. mounted in a fixed location on a tripod or shoulder, rather than a dolly-like movement in which the entire mounting system moves.

To create a smooth pan it's a good idea to practice the movement first. If you need to move or stretch your body during the move, it helps to position yourself so you

end up in the more comfortable position. In other words you should become more comfortable as the move progresses rather than less comfortable.

#### 5. Camera Tilt

A *tilt* is a vertical camera movement in which the camera points up or down from a stationary location. For example, if you mount a camera on your shoulder and nod it up and down, you are tilting the camera.

Tilting is less common than panning because that's the way humans work — we look left and right more often than we look up and down.

#### 6. Tracking Shot

The term *tracking shot* is widely considered to be synonymous with dolly shot; that is, a shot in which the camera is mounted on a cart which travels along tracks.

However, there are a few variations of both definitions. Tracking is often more narrowly defined as movement parallel to the action, or at least at a constant distance (e.g. the camera which travels alongside the race track in track & field events). Dollying is often defined as moving closer to or further away from the action.

Some definitions specify that tracking shots use physical tracks; others consider tracking to include hand-held walking shots, Steadicam shots, etc.

#### 7. Zoom Shot

A *zoom* is technically not a camera movement, as it does not require the camera itself to move at all. Zooming means altering the focal length of the lens to give the illusion of moving closer to or further away from the action.

The effect is not quite the same though. Zooming is effectively magnifying a part of the image, while moving the camera creates a difference in perspective — background objects appear to change in relation to foreground objects. This is sometimes used for creative effect in the dolly zoom. Zooming is an easy-to-use but hard-to-get-right feature of most cameras. It is arguably the most misused of all camera functions.

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### Video Camera Zooming

The *zoom* is the function that moves your point of view closer to, or further away from, the subject. The effect is similar to moving the camera closer or further away.

The two most common zoom mechanisms are:

#### 1. Manual zoom (ring)

This is a zoom ring on the lens housing, which is rotated manually, typically by

the left thumb and index finger. *Advantages:* Speed (you can do super-fast zooms); doesn't require power (so no drain on your battery). *Disadvantages:* More difficult to control, harder to get smooth zooms.

## 2. Servo zoom (lever)

This is a lever that sits on the lens housing. It's usually positioned so that when you slide your right hand into the grip belt, the servo zoom will be sitting under your first two fingers. Pressing the front part of the lever zooms in, while pressing the rear part zooms out. Cheaper cameras usually have a constant zoom speed, whereas a good servo zoom will have variable speed -- the further you depress the lever, the faster the zoom. The lever may have labels such as T and W (telephoto and wide angle). *Advantages:* Easy to use in most situations; nice smooth zooming. *Disadvantages:* Uses battery power; may be limited to fixed speeds.

## Movement

The further you zoom in, the more difficult it is to keep the picture steady. At very long zooms, a tripod is essential. If you're having trouble keeping your shot steady, it may be possible to move yourself closer to the subject and then zoom out. This way you'll have essentially the same framing, but much steadier.

Zooming is the function everyone loves. It's easy and you can do lots with it, which is why it's so over-used. The most common advice we give on using the zoom is to *use it less*. It's a great tool in moderation, but when most of your shots are zooming in and out, your audience will feel nauseous.

As a rule, don't zoom unless there is a reason to. If you want to show both the whole scene as well as some close-up details, you don't need to have a zoom in. Instead, shoot a wide shot, stop recording, zoom in to a close up, and then start recording again. The result is one shot which cuts cleanly and quickly to another, portraying the same information as a zoom, but more efficiently