

Tocino Glossary of Film Terms

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180-degree rule

A continuity rule that camera operators must follow - an imaginary line on one side of the action is drawn (for instance, between two principal actors in a scene), and the camera must not cross over that line and shoot from the other direction. If it did, the audience would get disoriented, seeing something like a mirror image. Of course, this rule has been bent and sometimes broken to great effect.

acting style

Simply put, the way an actor plays his or her part. An important aspect of mise-en-scène, acting style, like costumes and lighting, helps create the tone of a film. Does the acting seem artificial? Does it feel natural? What might be the reason for a particular style? How well does it help develop the characters?

actors

The human beings whose job it is to play roles in a film. Not to be confused with characters, actors are paid employees who are not actually involved in the story being told. Of course, good acting often makes us forget this important distinction. If you wanted to critique a performance in the film, you would talk about the actors, but if you wanted to criticize the choices made by individuals in the story, you would talk about characters.

allegory

A type of storytelling in which the characters and events stand for other ideas; in other words, there is a figurative meaning above and beyond the literal appearance of the story. Sometimes allegory is obvious; imagine a character named "Hope" who is attempting to escape an abusive family situation. Other times, the allegorical meaning is difficult to see without breaking down the elements of the story. Of course, not all stories are allegorical, so we need to be careful not to look for allegorical meanings when we should be more interested in the literal meaning. You can think of an allegory as an extended simile. Instead, of just one comparison, there is a whole string of comparisons that together tell a universal story through a particular situation.

ambiguity

A situation, sequence of events, scene, character, line of dialogue, etc. that does not have a clear meaning. If something is ambiguous, it is difficult to interpret with certainty. However, ambiguity is a good way to enrich a story; in real life, we are not always sure what is going on around us, so we should not expect to know exactly what is going on in a film either. At the same time, if every part of a story were ambiguous, we might have good reason to throw up our hands. Ambiguity can leave us confused and asking questions, and it can inspire us to think about different possibilities. When there is more than one interpretation, after all, then we have something to talk about with our friends. If a director uses ambiguity, for instance, to help us see the world through a character's eyes or to challenge our minds, we should embrace the difficulty.

angle

The position of the camera or point of view (including height or direction) in relation to the subject being filmed. We must consider the angle at which the camera frame shows us the action. High angle, shot from above, looking down; low angle, shot from below, looking up. What other angles are possible? front, behind, side, top, straight-on or eye-level (the standard, neutral angle), tilted (crooked or oblique). What do these various angles suggest about the action in the frame? Framing a shot requires thought about the angle of vision.

catharsis

The purging of emotional tension that an audience is meant to experience at the climactic moment of a film. This experience can provide relief and, at the same time, allow us to think more clearly about the consequences of a character's decisions, our sympathy with them, and our concern that we might find ourselves in a similar situation if we are not careful. The emotions we feel during this purging experience are generally pity and fear, pity for the suffering of the character and fear that we might be just as vulnerable in our own lives. Catharsis, therefore, is an occasion to engage our ethical sensibility. This release of tension is usually associated with tragedy, in which the main character suffers from his own weaknesses; however, comedies, which always end happily, can produce emotional tension as well.

characters

The individuals who appear in are part of the narrative of the films we watch. What motivates a character and how he or she changes over time are important concerns in analyzing the story of a film. Are the characters meant to be realistic or are they cardboard cutouts for a formula film?

climax

In a film, the highest point of anxiety or tension in the story being told. The climax is an element of the plot and is usually placed near the end of the movie, but not right at the end. Following a climax, which sometimes leads to catharsis, is a period of restoration of order and stability. At the climactic moment, however, the central character confronts and deals with the consequences of all actions and choices or faces the antagonist in a battle or conflict. The easiest way to identify the climax in a film is to ask yourself, "when does the main character change?" Leading up to this climactic moment is usually a crisis during which tension and anticipation build.

close-up

An image in which the distance between the subject and the boundaries of the frame is very short. Often used to show only a character's face, a close-up shot can give a detailed view of any object.

composition

The arrangement and relationship of the visual elements within a frame. Not to be confused with mise-en-scène, composition refers to the image that ends up on film, not what sits outside the camera waiting to be captured. The shot, the frame, and the editing process are all involved. The composition of a scene on a moving image is what separates film from live theater.

continuity

The principle guiding a particular editing style. The most common principle is to follow a linear and chronological movement forward, as if the image is simply recording the action. Because it creates the illusion of reality, this approach is often called invisible editing. The impression that the action on the screen flows smoothly without interruption requires continuity with respect to both time AND space. To keep our attention on the story, a filmmaker will use cuts and transitions between images that do not stand out. Other types of continuity might link shots based on psychological or symbolic connections.

crane shot

An image captured by a camera mounted on a mechanical device or structure that can reach heights that no human alone could reach; allows for "impossible" points of view and long fluid takes. When looking down on the action from a great distance, a crane shot can mark a dramatic shift in point of view.

cross-cutting

An editing technique that alternates between two different actions or scenes. Often used to establish parallel action, especially in different locations.

cutaway shot

A brief shot that interrupts a continuously-filmed action. This cutaway shot, which usually shows a related action, object, or person but does not have to be part of the main action around it, is followed by a cutback to the original shot; often filmed from the point of view of a character (an eye-line match), the cutaway can be used to break up a scene and provide some visual relief, to ease the transition from one shot to the next, and to provide additional information or hint at an impending change. A common type of cutaway shot is the reaction shot; cross-cutting is a series of cutaways and cutbacks that help the audience see parallel action. Not to be confused with an insert shot.

cutting

Changing from one image to another; a version of this linkage is sometimes referred to as montage. Part of the editing process, the cut is a basic way to create the sensation of motion in film. It can establish rhythm, build suspense, or release tension. Cutting can help maintain continuity across different shots (cutting to continuity) or it can deliberately disrupt time-space continuity to make a point (thematic montage). Ask yourself, how close together or far apart are the cuts, and how do the images on either side of the cut relate to each other?

deep focus

A perspective that allows the audience to see objects and people in the background, far back, as sharply as it sees them in foreground, close up.

depth of field

Refers to the visual depth of an image in the frame. An image can have several planes of view: (1) a foreground, (2) a middle-ground, and (3) a background. Depth of field is the range of distance or area between the closest and farthest planes in which the image is in sharp or acceptable focus. If the foreground is the only plane in focus, as in shallow focus, the depth of field is small. When the entire image is in focus, from foreground all the way to background, as in deep focus, the the depth of field is large. Not to be confused with focus, depth of field is not a measure of clarity but a measure of the range of distance in which the image is clear.

diegetic

On the simplest level, diegetic means "realistic" or "logically existing"; for instance, music that plays on a character's radio in a scene is diegetic sound. More generally, it refers to elements of the film (dialogue, sounds, action) that naturally originate within the content of the frame; the opposite is non-diegetic elements, such as sounds (e.g., background music, the musical score, a voice-over, or other sounds) that originate outside the frame itself. Diegetic elements are captured by the camera at the time of filming; non-diegetic elements are added during the editing process.

direct sound

Elements of sound recorded at the same time as the image is filmed. Can include dialogue, music played on the set, incidental noises related to the action being filmed, artificial sounds, silence, etc. Diegetic sound is usually direct sound.

dissolve

An editing transition whereby one image fades out while another fades in. The two images are briefly superimposed, gradually shifting from one to the other, leading the viewer to make a connection.

dramatic irony

An effect created when the viewer, and perhaps another character in the film, knows something that another character does not know. The difference in knowledge creates tension that helps the story gain momentum toward the climactic moment. The tension is released when the oblivious character learns what we already know. If the character discovers something that we did NOT already know, we will be just as surprised at that moment as the character. Dramatic irony creates anticipation because we are looking forward to the character's discovery, but we are not shocked when the discovery happens. The classic Hollywood example is a staple of the slasher film: we know the killer is upstairs, and we start to yell at the character who goes up there completely oblivious.

dubbed sound

Dialogue or other sound effects recorded during the editing of a film, after the image has been photographed. Very commonly includes background music and voice-over narration.

editing

Basically, linking two different pieces of film, the joining of one shot to another. More extensively, the process after filming through which shots are combined into larger units of meaning: sequences and scenes. Using a variety of cutting techniques, editing can create a variety of effects: time-space continuity, time-space disruption, thematic montage, etc. In narrative films, editing shapes the plot and tells the story.

ellipses

Indicates when periods of time have been left out of the narrative. The ellipsis is marked by an editing transition, which, while it leaves out a section of the action, none the less signifies that something has been skipped over. The fade out to fade in or dissolve could indicate a passage of time, or a wipe could indicate a change of scene. However, sometimes there is no warning at all, and the viewer must infer that time has been skipped over.

epiphany

A moment when a character in a film experiences a sudden insight, whether emotional or spiritual, that usually leads to a change in action or attitude. This moment usually occurs just before or after the climax because it is associated with a significant change in character that usually changes the direction of the story. Not to be confused with the simple discovery or deduction that, for example, the guy who seemed so nice is actually the serial killer, an epiphany refers more specifically to self-discovery; we can imagine a character saying to himself, "Oh! that's what I've been doing!" or "Oh! That's the kind of person I am!" An epiphany helps us know a character deeply because it is a pivotal change in self-awareness.

establishing shot

A shot that locates a scene clearly in a certain place before the rest of the action unfolds. Used for time-space continuity to orient the viewer. For instance, a shot of the exterior front of a house before cutting to the dinner party happening inside provides a logical transition from outside to inside that is familiar to the viewer. Establishing shots are not always necessary and are sometimes left out purposely to allow for more stark juxtapositions between scenes.

exposition

The explanation (usually by dialogue or action) of important background information for the events of a story. An exposition sets up the story of a film, including where and when the action is taking place, the main crisis to be played out, and what's at stake for the characters. In Hollywood films, exposition tends to happen while the opening credits are shown, gradually, one at a time. But exposition can be handled in

more indirect, subtle ways, so that we might feel a bit disoriented in the first ten minutes of a film (or longer) until the pieces start to fit together and we gain a sense of the story being told. As we get to know characters, get a feel for the setting, notice the rising conflict, exposition is taking place.

fade in

An editing transition in which an image gradually appears on a blackened screen. Usually occurring at the beginning of a new scene, it gently reveals the image in the frame, unlike the more jarring approach of "switching on the light" from black to full exposure.

fade out

An editing transition in which an image gradually disappears onto a blackened screen. Usually occurs at the end of a scene to indicate that time is going to pass.

flashback

An image, scene, or sequence that appears in a narrative in "present time" to describe a past action or event. The past tense of a film, a flashback is a plotting technique. Used less frequently, a flashforward is the future tense of a film.

focus

The clarity and detail of an image, produced by the type of lens used and the distance between the camera and the object being filmed. Manipulating what the viewer can see, focus is an aspect of perspective in the frame.

formalism

A critical approach that attends mainly to the structure and style of a movie or a group of movies. Topics of discussion are the various elements of a film related to narrative, mise-en-scène, composition, and editing. Though discussed with the major themes of a film, of chief interest are patterns in the narrative structure, meaningful repetition or variation in camera work, or the connections between different shots and sequences.

fourth wall

The imaginary, invisible window through which the audience looks to watch the action unfold in a film; this fourth wall separating the audience from the fictional world of the film's story usually remains intact. However, some directors experiment with breaking through this barrier. When an actor speaks directly to the viewers, for instance, we become involved in the film as if we were characters. The effect is quirky and can be unsettling because we are used to feeling separate from the film and free to watch it in private. But breaking the fourth wall has a long tradition behind it in theater, where actors make asides to the audience all the time.

frame

The borders separating an image from the darkness of a theater within which the elements of the mise-en-scène are composed. The main features of a frame to consider are angle, height, balance, distance, boundary, and motion. Because it offers a point of view, how the frame itself behaves is often as significant as what is happening in the frame.

full shot

A sub-type of long shot that shows the whole body of the individual being filmed. Far enough back from a medium shot to show both head and feet in the frame.

genre

A critical category for organizing films according to shared themes, styles, and narrative structures; examples are "horror films" and "gangster films." Genres change over time, and different genres usually call for different shooting and editing techniques.

hand-held shot

An image filmed from the shoulder of a cameraperson, usually creating the subjective point of view of a character. If used for tracking, the shot may be deliberately jerkier to suggest documentary footage that in some ways seems more realistic.

high angle

Point of view in a shot captured when the camera is above the subject being filmed, aiming down. Often used to emphasize the vulnerability or weakness of a character, who will appear to cower beneath us in the frame.

ideology

The main focus of some analytical approaches to film, ideology is the stated or unstated social and personal values that inform a movie or group of movies. To discuss the ideology of a film, try to find the messages that a film communicates about the world it shows through story and structure.

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 special attention from the audience, provides more detailed information, or simply breaks up the action. Examples include close-ups of a gunfighter's hand, a letter being read by a character, a doorbell button just before a character rings it, a newspaper headline, a clock face when time is of the essence. An insert shot is filmed from a different angle and/or focal length from the master shot but is always logically related to the main action, unlike a cutaway shot, which can show us action not covered in the main scene.

jump cut

Created by splicing out the middle part of a continuous shot, creating a jump in time. What makes a jump cut so startling is that the perspective on the action on either side of the jump cut is almost identical. So moving objects will appear to shift instantaneously. The frame itself remains the same, but the content of the frame jumps slightly. This technique is obvious when it is used, unlike the invisible editing that dominates most mainstream Hollywood films.

juxtaposition

In a film, the placement of two images, characters, objects, or scenes next to each other in order to contrast them or show some other kind of relationship. This contiguous arrangement might occur between objects within the frame or be established through the editing process. For instance, if a finely dressed woman walks through a dark alley in the slums of a city, we might say that the director is juxtaposing two symbols, one of wealth and one of poverty. How we interpret this juxtaposition is another matter.

lighting

An element of mise-en-scène, lighting refers to how actors or objects are illuminated, by the sun, moon, lamps, or other artificial sources. Different lighting effects, different patterns of light and shadows in the frame help support the mood or feeling of a film.

long shot

An image in which the distance between the subject and the boundaries of the frame is great, used to show full bodies and wider areas of view.

loose frame

A perspective in which the image in the frame is spacious or open. If there is copious space between objects or characters in the image or if the principal character can easily move and look around, we can describe the frame as loose. A loose frame can signify freedom (a walk on the beach), but it could also communicate a sense of vulnerability (a battle on the beach).

low angle

Point of view in a shot captured when the camera is below the subject being filmed, aiming up. Often used to emphasize the power or authority of a character, who will appear to loom over us in the frame.

match cut

General term for an edit that links two shots by a continuous sound or action. While a match cut is not always used for continuity, it always shows a relationship between two objects or scenes. A common example is the eye-line match: the editing or joining of different shots by following the logic and direction of a character's glance or look. Often used in conjunction with reaction shots and shot/reverse shot editing.

medium shot

An image that shows an individual from the knees or waist up. Between a close-up and full shot. Perhaps the most common type of shot in cinema history.

mirror shot

An image that reveals a character or action through its reflection. This technique makes the viewer more aware of point of view because an image is essentially captured twice, first by the surface reflecting light and then by the camera.

mise-en-scène

The arrangement of visual elements and movement and the way they are actually filmed, including sets, lighting, costumes, props, actors, and camera positioning. Not to be confused with composition, mise-en-

scène refers to the physical reality in front of the camera, not the illusion of reality that ends up on the screen. As opposed to editing, which happens after filming, the term refers to the part of the cinematic process that takes place on the set. Translated from the French, it literally means "what is put in the scene."

montage

A specific kind of editing in which objects and figures are linked in a variety of creative or unexpected ways. The production of a rapid succession of images in a motion picture, this kind of editing usually aims to generate certain effects or illustrate certain ideas. Originally used by directors who held that editing is the essential ingredient of film. By artistically juxtaposing apparently unrelated images, the director could put a new idea in the mind of the viewer. Hollywood often uses montage in a sequences where the action is elliptical. Sometimes such sequences are used to bridge long time spans or a rapid succession of events; more recently they have been used for decorative or emotional effect. So across history, montage has been used not only to disorient or challenge the viewer but also to maintain coherence of story over large gaps of time or to make fast action sequences fit together.

motif

A thematic element in a film that is repeated in some memorable way, sometimes to the point of creating a pattern. A motif could arise through a symbol, an image, an editing technique, a camera movement, or a line of dialogue, as long as it is repeated and points to a theme of the story. Filmmakers use motifs to help the audience see the message of a film; we tend to think in patterns, and repetition is a good way to appeal to pattern thinking. Of course, some filmmakers will point to motifs in more subtle ways than others (such as camera work instead of objects in front of the camera).

motion

There are three kinds of motion in a moving picture: (1) motion of the subject (mise-en-scène); (2) motion of the camera (composition); and (3) motion conveyed by the cut (editing). The cut is the basic element of motion in film. It creates sensation of motion and can establish rhythm, build suspense, or release tension. Given the same film footage, poor editing can render a dull, boring, or lifeless movie. All three kinds of motion are important, but a good editor makes them work together, like an orchestra conductor.

narrative

The construction or telling of a story through a particular point of view and arrangement of events. The components of a narrative are the story and the plot, not to be confused with one another. A narrative film tells a story, but not all films that tell a story follow the conventions of classical narrative. Some films do not tell a story at all, but almost all films that do also use camera and editing techniques that are not necessarily related to telling a story.

off-screen space

Areas that are not shown by the image but sometimes suggested by actions or words within the image. More specifically, off-screen space contains events or sounds from outside the boundaries of the frame. Sometimes we can keep track of what is off-screen because it was once on the screen. If the camera frame is moving, for instance, then off-screen space and on-screen space will gradually change. But even if the camera frame is still, objects and figures can move to off-screen space. The pan and scan video format (turns a widescreen into a fullscreen) introduces another moving frame, essentially re-editing the film and creating off-screen space that was never intended by the director.

panning shot

An image captured when the camera pivots horizontally from left to right or right to left without changing its position. One way to create a moving frame, this type of shot can simulate the point of view of a character surveying a landscape by turning his head.

parallel action

A plot technique in which two or more actions are linked by the film to appear simultaneous, often achieved with cross-cutting. Such actions are simultaneous in the story of the film, not in our experience viewing it, so the viewer must reorganize the sequences mentally. Movies that contain a lot of parallel action are often confusing because the act of watching a film is always chronological, but the effect is often interesting and helps the viewer make connections between different threads of the same story.

perspective

Perspective of the image refers to the spatial relationships between the different objects and figures in the frame. Different lenses can be used to create different kinds of focus, for instance. But perspective also refers to the type of space shown within the frame. Are the objects and figures crowded together in a tight frame, suggesting confinement? Is there a wide open space surrounding the figure, a loose frame, suggesting freedom of movement? Does your vision stretch back to the horizon or is it contained by the

walls of a room? Not to be confused with point of view, which has more to do with angle and direction of vision.

plot

A component of narrative, plot is the arrangement of events in a story in a certain order or structure. Not to be confused with the story itself or the events themselves (which are always chronological), a plot can mix up the events, put them in order, reverse their order, layer them in parallel fashion, etc. A plot can begin and end with the same event, but a story cannot. The distinction is important because the plot of a film can reveal meaning that the events themselves do not expose.

point of view

The position from which an action or subject is seen, often determining its significance. Just as plot is different from story, point of view is different from looking at something. Plot refers to the way a story is told, and point of view refers to the way something is seen. Also not to be confused with perspective. Point of view is important to think about because films are often about seeing the world a certain way. The camera creates the point of view in a film. This point of view is frequently objective, but scenes may be shot in such a way to suggest that the point of view is subjective, belonging to particular character in the film.

rack focus

A quick change of focus within a shot so that one object appears suddenly out of focus and another appears suddenly in focus. This is a common manipulation of perspective that can simulate a shift in attention.

reaction shot

A shot that cuts from an object, character, or action to show the reaction of a character who sees it or hears it. Often put in a scene for the sake of continuity, the reaction shot confirms that the viewer is not the only one looking or reacting. This type of shot can help show the significance of the thing being reacted to and either suggest what the viewer's reaction should be or reveal the personality of the one reacting.

realism

An approach to storytelling that attempts to show how the world really is. The important word here is attempts. What the viewer sees on the screen is not reality, obviously, but the illusion of reality is strong in most films. It makes us believe that the images are from a world we are familiar with. Standards of realism change over time, so it is important not to be distracted by what you happen to think is "realistic"; instead, analyze how the film works. If you think it is realistic, look at how the film creates that effect for you.

scene

A space of time within which a narrative action takes place. Constructed during the editing process, a scene is a series of shots carefully joined together to create an action that is usually confined to one place and time, focused on a single concern. Each scene is complete unit of film narration alone, but multiple scenes can make up a sequence.

screenplay

The literary description of film that may be a description of characters, dialogue, and actions or may contain instructions for exact shots and scenes. It is the content of a film written in detail and separated into numbered sequences by the screenwriter. Reading a screenplay, or script, can help the viewer watch a film more carefully. Produced before shooting begins and used as a guideline in the filming process, it is the verbal form of the finished visual product.

sequence

A series of scenes unified by a shared action or motif. This longer unit of narrative describes more action than a scene and can take place in more than one location. One way to create a sequence is to show parallel action between two simultaneous scenes using cross-cutting.

set

The place or location used for a specific scene or shot in a film. An element of *mise-en-scène*, a set can be an actual location or natural setting or it can be constructed. A set can function as much more than a background for telling a story. It can contain objects and props, arranged in strategic ways, that are significantly related to the theme or characters of the film. Particularly if it is constructed, a set can be carefully designed to complement every scene in interesting, even unexpected, ways.

shallow focus

A perspective that allows the audience to see only objects and persons in the foreground of the image clearly. Shallow focus sharpens only one layer of the image to highlight only certain characters or actions.

shot

The basic division of a film, a shot is a continuously exposed and unedited image of any length. It could be composed of a single run of the camera from "action!" to "cut!" In this case, the shot would be the equivalent of a take. But a shot can vary in length anywhere from one frame upwards. Sometimes a single unedited run of the camera (a take) can provide material for several shots between different cuts in the editing process; each interval between two cuts is a shot. The longer a shot, the more difficult it is to make it cohere as a single, uninterrupted unit. Try counting the seconds between cuts in a finished, edited film. Very rarely does an image run for much longer than a few seconds. Components of a shot include photographic properties, film speed, perspective, frame, and length.

shot/reverse shot

An editing pattern that cuts between individuals according to the logic of their conversation. Also known as shot/countershot, this pattern is fundamental to time-space continuity: shots are connected to make an exchange between two characters (or a character and an object) appear natural. A shot of a person speaking or looking at an object is linked to a shot 180 degrees opposite. And then again, in an alternating pattern.

situational irony

An effect created when something happens that the viewer does not expect to happen. The difference between what actually happens and what is expected (or not expected) creates surprise that makes some stories compelling and memorable. Not all films use situational irony, but it is fairly common in Hollywood, such as when a monster jumps out from behind a door or the bad guy turns out to be the person you'd least suspect. If a character is surprised by something that we already know, then built-up tension will be released, but we will not be shocked. When an unexpected event occurs, we enjoy the twist, partly because we are left asking ourselves why we did not see it coming. In the end, if a twist fails to surprise, because we see it coming, situational irony is not achieved.

sound

The audible dimension of a film that most of us notice (dialogue and sound effects) but hardly ever analyze, but sound editing can be as rigorous and complex as visual editing. The two main types of sound are direct sound and dubbed sound. Sound can be used to link images, underscore patterns in the narrative, indicate off-screen action, intensify the dramatic feel of a sequence, etc.

sound effects

Any number of uses of sound other than music or dialogue, usually recorded during the editing process. Sound effects are the reason we all want awesome home theatre systems with Dolby Digital.

special effects

A term used to describe a range of technological additions to the film to manipulate or alter what has been filmed. In recent years most commonly done with computers, which digitally enhance images and sometimes account for most of what you see on the screen, these effects are used when normal filming cannot achieve (as cheaply) the desired visual image. Used in conjunction with "blue screen" filming, in which actors will perform in front of a blue background that will later be filled with a digitally created setting. It is difficult to say for sure whether some of these effects are not part of the *mise-en-scène*, even when they are only imagined to be present during the filming.

story

A component of narrative, the story is all the events shown to us on the screen or that we have assumed to happen in the parts left out. If you list these events in their chronological sequence, you have the story. Not to be confused with the plot, which is the arrangement of those events in the narrative, the story is simply what happens. In other words, there really is no such thing as a plot summary, only a story summary. The distinction is important because the story of a film is often not nearly as interesting as the way it is told. Most of the time, a film captivates us because it has arranged the events of a story in a way that helps us see its meaning.

take

Similar in meaning to the term shot, a take is the recording of an image on film, usually used in writing as a temporal measure, such as a "long take" or a "short take." A long take, for instance, is a shot that remains on a scene or object for a long time; such a shot can have a moving frame, but as long as the camera is still rolling, the take becomes longer and longer. It can be left intact during the editing process or broken up into smaller shots using the cut.

tight frame

A perspective in which the image in the frame is crowded or confined. If there is not much room between objects or characters in the image or if the principal character is surrounded by other framing objects (walls, doors, people, etc.), we can describe the frame as tight. A tight frame can signify entrapment (a jail cell), but it could also communicate a sense of security (a soft couch with blankets).

tilt shot

An image captured when the camera pivots vertically up or down without changing its position. One way to create a moving frame, this type of shot can simulate the point of view of a character moving his or her eyes from low to high or from high to low.

tracking shot

An image captured by a camera that changes position during the take; the camera could be mounted on a dolly secured to a track, attached to an adjustable crane, or mounted on a cameraperson's shoulder. A tracking shot creates a mobile point of view, often simulating the movement of a character through a room.

voice-over

The voice of someone not seen in the narrative image who describes or comments on that image (if the narrator is in the image during the voice-over, he or she will not be seen saying the words). Non-synchronous with the visual image, voice-over is a common technique in classical narrative that resembles the type of narration we are used to when we read. Often used to convey a character's thoughts. Not to be confused with dialogue heard in off-screen space.

wipe

An editing transition whereby a line crossing (or "wiping") one image replaces it with another image. A wipe commonly suggests a change in place, not necessarily time, and therefore is a good way to establish parallel action.

zoom shot

An image in which the size of an object in the frame changes according to focal adjustments of the lens, without moving the camera at all. This change in perspective creates a moving frame as the borders appear to move in or move out. This camera technique makes an object in the frame appear larger (zoom or forward zoom) or smaller (zoom out or backward zoom). Not to be confused with a change in focus, which is a shift in clarity. A zoom is a shift in size of a particular object or figure in an image.