

Glossary of Film Terms*

* This glossary was adapted from materials distributed to film students by the Film Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dartmouth Writing Program. *Materials for Students: Writing in the Humanities: Writing about Film*. 12 July 2005. <<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml>> (March 15, 2007)

- * *Accelerated Motion*: Representing a shot as taking place at a higher speed than it did in reality. Also known as Fast Motion.
- * *Aspect Ratio*: The height-to-width ratio of the projected screen image.
- * *Back Lighting*: Lighting which comes from directly behind the subject, placing it in silhouette.
- * *Camera Angle*: The position of the camera in relation to the subject determines the camera angle. High angle means that the camera is looking down at the subject. Low angle means that the camera is looking up at the subject.
- * *CinemaScope*: 20th Century Fox's trade name for their widescreen process, which uses a ratio of 1:2.35. The term is commonly used to refer to similar widescreen processes.
- * *Cinema Verite*: A way of filming real-life scenes without elaborate equipment, playing down the technical means of production (script, special lighting, etc.) and emphasizing the "reality" of the screen world.
- * *Close-Up*: A shot in which a face or object fills the frame. Close-ups might be achieved by setting the camera close to the subject or by using a long focal-length lens.
- * *Composition*: The arrangement of all the elements within the screen image to achieve a balance of light, mass, shadow, color, and movement.
- * *Continuity Editing*: A style of editing that maintains a continuous and seemingly uninterrupted flow of action.
- * *Crane Shot*: A moving shot taken on a specially constructed crane, usually from a high perspective.
- * *Cross-Cutting*: Jumping back and forth between two or more locations, inviting us to find a relationship between two or more events.
- * *Cut*:
 1. Noun: A transition made by editing two pieces of film together.
 2. Verb: To edit a film by selecting shots and splicing them together.
- * *Cutaway*: In continuity editing, a shot that does not include any part of the preceding shot and that bridges a jump in time or other break in the continuous flow of action.
- * *Day for Night*: Simulating night through use of filters and under-exposure.
- * *Decelerated Motion*: Representing a shot as taking place at a slower speed than it did in reality. Also known as Slow Motion.
- * *Deep Focus*: A technique in which objects in the foreground and the distant background appear in equally sharp focus.
- * *Depth of Field*: Distance between the nearest and furthest points at which the screen image is in reasonably sharp focus.
- * *Dissolve*: Editing technique in which one shot is gradually merged into the next by the superimposition of a fade-out or fade-in.
- * *Dolly Shot*: A shot taken while the camera is in motion.
- * *Dub*: To record dialogue or sound to match action in shots already filmed.
- * *Dutch Tilt*: A wildly tilted image, in which the subject appears on the diagonal or off-balance.
- * *Edit*: The splicing together of separate shots.
- * *Establishing Shot*: A shot showing the location of the scene or the arrangement of the characters. Often the opening shot of a sequence.
- * *Extreme Long Shot*: A shot notable because of the extreme distance between camera and subject.
- * *Eye-Level Shot*: A shot taken at the height of normal vision.
- * *Fade*: An optical event used as a transition, in which the image on screen gradually goes to black (fade-out) or emerges from black (fade-in).
- * *Fast Motion*: See Accelerated Motion.
- * *Flat Lighting*: The distribution of light within the image so that bright and dark tones are not highly contrasted.
- * *Flashback*: A shot or sequence that takes the action of the story into the past.
- * *Flash-Forward*: A shot or sequence that takes the action of the story into the future.
- * *Form Cut*: A cut from one scene to the next on the basis of a similar geometrical, textural, or other compositional value.
- * *Frame*:
 1. Noun: One single picture on a piece of motion picture film.
 2. Noun: The boundaries of the screen image.
 3. Verb: To compose a shot to include, exclude, or emphasize certain elements.
- * *Freeze-Frame*: An optical effect in which the action appears to come to a dead stop, achieved by printing a single frame many times in succession.
- * *Glass Shot*: A shot in which part of the background is painted or photographed in miniature on a glass lid and placed in front of the camera so as to blend in with the rest of the image.
- * *Hand-Held Shot*: A shot made with the camera held in hand, not on a tripod or other stabilizing fixture.
- * *High-Angle Shot*: See Camera Angle.
- * *High-Key Lighting*: Distributing light within the image so that the bright tones predominate.
- * *Iris*: A decorative transition in which the image seems to disappear within a growing or diminishing circle. Commonly used in silent films.
- * *Jump Cut*: A cut that jumps forward within a single action, creating a sense of discontinuity.
- * *Long Shot*: A shot taken with the camera at a distance from its subject.

- * *Mask Shot*: A shot in which a portion of the image is blocked off by means of a matte over the lens, altering the shape of the frame.
- * *Medium Close-Up*: A shot taken with the camera at a slight distance from the subject. In relation to an actor, "medium close-up" usually refers to a shot of the head, neck, and shoulders.
- * *Medium Long Shot*: A shot taken with the camera at a distance from the subject, but closer than a long shot.
- * *Medium Shot*: A shot taken with the camera at a mid-range point from the subject. In relation to an actor, "medium shot" usually refers to a shot from the waist or knees, up.
- * *Mise-en-Scene*: A term used in the theater to refer to the staging of a scene, in relation to the setting, the arrangement of the actors, the lighting, etc. In film, the term is used to describe the arrangement of elements within the frame of a single shot.
- * *Montage*:
 1. French: The joining together or splicing of shots or sequences - in a word, editing.
 2. American: A rapid succession of shots assembled, usually by means of super-impositions and/or dissolves, to convey a visual effect, such as the passing of time.
 3. Russian: The foundation of film art. "The building up of film from separate strips of raw material," or "An imagist transformation of the dialectical principles, montage as the collision of ideas and cinematographic conflicts." (Quoting Pudovkin and Eisenstein, respectively.)
- * *M.O.S.*: "Mit Out Sound." These initials are written on the clapboard and are briefly filmed at the beginning of a shot to designate shooting without synchronous sound recording.
- * *Opticals*: Any device carried out by the film laboratory and requiring the use of an optical printer. Dissolves, fades, and wipes fall under this category.
- * *Panning Shot*: A shot in which the camera remains in place but moves horizontally on its axis so that the subject is constantly re-framed.
- * *Parallel Shot*: When two pieces of action are presented alternately, to suggest that they occur simultaneously.
- * *Process Shot*: See Rear Projection.
- * *Reaction Shot*: A shot of a person reacting to the main action as a listener or spectator.
- * *Rear Projection*: A trick shot in which the subject is filmed against a background that is itself a motion picture screen. Upon this screen another image - either moving or still - has been projected as a backdrop. Also known as a process shot.
- * *Reverse-Angle Shot*: A shot taken by a camera positioned opposite from where the previous shot was taken.
- * *Score*: Music composed for a film.
- * *Set*: An artificially constructed environment in which action is photographed.
- * *Slow Motion*: See Decelerated Motion.
- * *Soft Focus*: A strategy whereby all objects appear soft because none are perfectly in focus. Used for romantic effect.
- * *Sound Track*:
 1. A recording of the sound portion of a film.
 2. A narrow band along one side of a print of film in which sound is recorded.
- * *Split Screen*: The division of the projected film frame into two or more sections, each containing a separate image.
- * *Stock Shot*: A shot taken from a library of film footage, usually of famous people, places, or events.
- * *Subjective Shot*: A shot that represents the point of view of a character. Often a reverse angle shot, preceded by a shot of the character as he or she glances off-screen.
- * *Superimposition*: A shot in which one or more images are printed on top of one another.
- * *Swish Pan*: A shot in which the camera pans so rapidly that the image is blurred.
- * *Telephoto Shot*: A shot in which a camera lens of longer-than-normal focal length is used so that the depth of the projected image appears compressed.
- * *Three-Shot*: A shot encompassing three actors.
- * *Tilt Shot*: A shot in which the camera remains in place but moves vertically on its axis so that the subject is continually re-framed.
- * *Titles*: Credits. In silent film, "titles" include the written commentary and dialogue spliced within the action.
- * *Tracking Shot*: A shot in which the camera moves parallel to its moving subject.
- * *Travelling Shot*: A shot taken from a moving object, such as a car or boat.
- * *Two-Shot*: A shot encompassing two actors, often in close-up.
- * *Voice-Over*: Commentary by an unseen character or narrator.
- * *Wide-Angle Shot*: A shot in which a camera lens of shorter-than-normal focal length is employed so that the depth of the projected image seems protracted.
- * *Widescreen*: Any aspect ratio wider than the 1:1.33 ration which dominated sound film before the 1950s and the introduction of CinemaScope, Techniscope, VistaVision, Panavision, and so on.
- * *Wipe*: A transition from one shot to another in which one shot replaces another, horizontally or vertically.
- * *Zoom*: The simulation of camera movement toward or away from the subject by means of a lens of variable focal length.