

Persuasive Camera

Use the camera to present your subject effectively, interpret the scene and tell the story

Fundamental decisions to be taken:

- Which is best viewpoint? Can action be seen clearly there?
- Which feature do you want to emphasise?
- Do you want audience to concentrate on a particular aspect of the action?
- Do you want to create a certain impression?

Advantages and disadvantages of particular shots:

Very long shots

Distant, allows audience to take a detached view (objective) without personal involvement

Long shots

- Show where action is taking place
- Allow audience to follow broad movements
- Show relative positions of subjects
- Establish mood
- Set location and broad provides overall atmospheric effect

As shots tighten people, gestures and facial expressions become more important.

Medium Shots

- Largely bodily gestures can be contained.
- Interaction between people can be shown – hand shakes, fights, stand-offs, etc.

Closer shots

- Show detail
- Emphasise
- Reveal reactions
- Dramatise

But too many close shots are restrictive and claustrophobic. Sometimes the audience needs a break.

Close-ups

- Concentrate the interest
- Draw attention to reactions, responses and emotions
- Reveal information that might be overlooked

Deep focus/shallow focus techniques:

Allows cameraperson to compose in depth (but are quite difficult to achieve on semi-pro/domestic video equipment)

Camera movement

Cameras can replicate the moving eye and evoke associated responses in the audience. The audience can become more involved in the action

- The Following Pan. Commonest pan showing subject in surroundings.
- The Surveying Pan. Camera slowly searches the scene allowing audience to look round at choice. Can be dramatic.
- The Interrupted Pan. Smooth movement that is suddenly stopped or reversed.
- Track – where camera moves alongside the action. Evokes a more subjective response in the viewer – he/she becomes more involved in the action.
- Tilt (up or down) – as pans above – usually used to reveal hitherto hidden elements of the scene or to follow a moving actor.

The power of composition

Composition is influenced by: design of setting, lighting, viewpoint selected, tonal quality of the film.

Composition can create anticipation, unease, apprehension, excitement or calm. Mood can be depressed or expansive.

Composition is achieved by design, arrangement or selection.

Selection is most usual form via framing, lens angle, camera position and proportions.

Pictorial balance. Shots should be balanced but if they are too geometric they can be boring.

The length of shots

How long you hold a shot depends on the amount of information you want viewer to assimilate and how easily discerned the information is.

Do you want to give a general impression or reveal minute detail?

It will also, to some extent depend on the familiarity the audience has with the subject.

The length of a shot may also be dictated by the action being played out or a change of position of the actors or movement within the shot.

Picture quality (some pictures hold more interest) may also be a factor but you should be careful not to let your love of the subject come before the essential story telling process.

Look for INTRINSIC RHYTHMNS in the shots and in the edit which will often dictate a natural length. Watching a film is like listening to music, the final result should have a natural flow, rhythm and structure.