

## Film Terms

**Cutaway** - A shot, usually a closeup of some detail, or landscape, that is used break up a matching action sequence, and is often very helpful in editing to rescue you from an impossible break in continuity or coverage. A cutaway, as the name implies, is a shot that does not focus on some detail of the shot before or after it but cuts away from the action at hand, unlike an **Insert Shot**. However, the two terms are sometimes used vaguely or interchangeably, although this is not always a useful practice. The best cutaways are the ones that have some logic to them, that relate to the scene.

**Dissolve** - A transition between two shots, where one shot fades away and simultaneously another shot fades in. Dissolves are done at the lab in the printing phase, but prepared by the negative cutter, who cuts in an overlap of the two shots into the A&B rolls. Labs will only do dissolves in fixed amounts, such as 24 frames, 48 frames, etc.

**Dolly Shot** - A dolly shot is one where the camera is placed on a dolly and is moved while filming. Also known as a tracking shot.

**Edit - 1.:** The cutting and arranging of shots. **2.:** In the different stages, or at the completion of editing the edited film itself can be referred to as “the cut” or “the edit.”

**Fade** - A transition from a shot to black where the image gradually becomes darker is a **Fade Out**; or from black where the image gradually becomes brighter is a **Fade In**. Fades are done at the lab in the printing phase, but prepared by the negative cutter, who cuts in an overlap of black into the A&B rolls. Labs will only do fades in fixed amounts, such as 24 frames, 48 frames, etc.

**Follow Focus** - A shot where focus is changed while shooting to correspond with the moment of the subject (or the camera).

**Handheld** - Shooting without a tripod, but with the camera held by the cameraperson.

**Insert Shot** - A close-up of some detail in the scene. (Sort of like a cutaway without the “-away” aspect.)

**Jump Cut** - Basically, two similar shots cut together with a jump in continuity, camera position or time.

**Locked Cut** - The so-called final cut of a film when there are to be no more changes to picture.

**Long Shot** - a camera view of an object or character from a considerable distance so that it appears relatively small in the frame, e.g., a person standing in a crowd of people or a horse in a vast landscape.

**Master Shot** - A single shot, usually a wide shot, that incorporates the whole scene from beginning to end. Typically a master shot will be filmed first, and then all the close-ups and other shots afterwards.

**McGuffin** (or **MacGuffin**) - Alfred Hitchcock’s term for the device or plot element (an item, object, goal, event, or piece of knowledge) that catches the viewer's attention or drives the logic or action of the plot and appears extremely important to the film characters, but often turns out to be insignificant or is to be ignored after it has served its purpose.

**Mise en Scène** - a French term for “staging,” or “putting into the scene or shot”; in film theory, it refers to all the elements placed (by the **director**) before the camera and within the frame of the film—including their visual arrangement and composition; elements include settings, decor, props, actors, costumes, makeup, lighting, performances, and character movements and positioning; lengthy, un-cut, unedited and uninterrupted sequences shot in real-time are often cited as examples of *mise-en-scene*; contrast to **montage**.

**Mix** - This is the process of combining all your soundtracks into one, with all the sounds blended together at their correct volumes, together with any equalization, filtering, and effecting of the sound to give you the desired end result.

**Montage** - a French word literally meaning “editing,” “putting together” or “assembling shots”; refers to a filming technique, editing style, or form of movie collage consisting of a series of short shots or images that are rapidly put together into a coherent sequence to create a composite picture, or to suggest meaning or a larger idea; a montage is usually not accompanied with dialogue

**Nose Room** - When a subject is in profile, nose room is the space between their face and the edge of the frame, similar to **Head Room**. In a profile shot, nose room is considered “good” when a little extra room in front of the person’s face, rather than behind their head. The general rule is that the space around the subject should be apportioned to 2/3rds in front of the subject’s head, and 1/3rd behind.

**Pan** - A horizontal camera move on an axis, from right to left or left to right. In a pan the camera is turning on an axis rather than across space, as in a dolly shot. Not to be confused with **Tilt**, technically it is not correct to say “pan up” or “pan down,” when you really mean tilt.

**Parallel Editing** - The technique of intercutting between two simultaneous stories or scenes.

**P.O.V. Shot** - Point of View Shot. A shot from the perspective of one of the characters, as if the audience were seeing the scene from their eyes. It is often important to get a **Reaction Shot** to establish that any given shot really is a P.O.V.

**Rack Focus** - A shot where focus is changed while shooting. Unlike a **Follow Focus** shot, a rack focus shot is usually done not from the necessity of keeping someone in focus but to shift attention from one thing to another.

**Reaction Shot - 1.:** A shot of someone looking off screen. Used either to lead into a **P.O.V. Shot** (and let the viewer know that it is a P.O.V. shot), or to show a reaction right after a P.O.V. shot. **2.:** A reaction shot can also be a shot of someone in a conversation where they are not given a line of dialogue but are just listening to the other person speak.

**Red Herring** - an instance of foreshadowing that is deliberately planted to make viewers suspect an outcome--but the audience is to be deceived - the opposite happens and the false clue 'plant' is irrelevant; often done for humor, irony, or for other thematic reasons; contrast to **McGuffin**.

**Reverse Shot** - A shot from the other side of the previous shot (though preferably on the same side of the **180° Line**), such as cutting between two characters talking, a person exiting and entering through a doorway, a reaction shot and P.O.V. shot, etc.

**Revisionist(ic)** - refers to films that present an apparent **genre** stereotype and then subvert, revise, or challenge it; a.k.a. **deconstruction**.

**Scene** - A scene is really just a single shot. But often scene is used to mean several shots, which is more to do with the word’s origin in theater. It is sometimes clearer to say “sequence” for several shots, so as not to confuse the filmic and theatrical meanings of the word.

**Shot** - A shot is the film exposed from the time the camera is started to the time it is stopped. Shot and **Scene** are interchangeable terms.

**Specifics** - In sound editing, these are any effects that directly relate to the picture, where we see a thing happen and hear it too. Backgrounds, ambiance and speech are not specifics.

**Tilt** - A vertical camera move on an axis, up or down. Not to be used interchangeably with pan. It is not really correct to say "pan up" or "pan down," when you really mean tilt.

The material on these pages may be printed out for personal use **only**. Use as course handouts only with proper acknowledgment of authorship and the New School's Film Production Department.

[http://cepa.newschool.edu/~schlejoj/film\\_courses/glossary\\_of\\_film\\_terms/glossary.html](http://cepa.newschool.edu/~schlejoj/film_courses/glossary_of_film_terms/glossary.html)

© 1999 Joel Schlemowitz All Rights Reserved

This list from New School has been augmented with terms from <http://www.filmsite.org>