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## Framing

Shots are all about composition. Rather than *pointing* the camera at the subject, you need to *compose* an image. As mentioned previously, framing is the process of creating composition.

### Notes:

- Framing technique is very subjective. What one person finds dramatic, another may find pointless. What we're looking at here are a few accepted industry guidelines which you should use as rules of thumb.
- The rules of framing video images are essentially the same as those for still photography.
- For more details, see [camera shot types](#).

## Basic shot types

There is a general convention in the video industry which assigns names to the most common types of shots. The names and their exact meanings may vary, but the following examples give a rough guide to the standard descriptions. The point isn't knowing the *names* of the shot types (although it's very useful), as much as understanding their *purposes*.

Basic shots are referred to in terms relative to the subject. For example, a "close up" has to be a close up *of* something. A close up of a person could also be described as a wide shot of a face, or a very wide shot of a nose.

The subject in all of the following shots is a young girl standing in front of a country house.



### EWS (Extreme Wide Shot)

In the EWS, the view is so far from the subject that she isn't even visible. The point of this shot is to show the subject's surroundings. The EWS is often used as an *establishing shot* — the first shot of a new scene, designed to show the audience where the action is taking place.



### VWS (Very Wide Shot)

The VWS is much closer to the subject. She is (just) visible here, but the emphasis is still on placing her in her environment. This also works as an establishing shot.



### WS (Wide Shot)

In the WS, the subject takes up the full frame. In this case, the girl's feet are almost at the bottom of frame, and her head is almost at the top. Obviously the subject doesn't take up the



whole width and height of the frame, since this is as close as we can get without losing any part of her. The small amount of room above and below the subject can be thought of as safety room — you don't want to be cutting the top of the head off. It would also look uncomfortable if her feet and head were exactly at the top and bottom of frame.



### MS (Mid Shot)

The MS shows some part of the subject in more detail, whilst still showing enough for the audience to feel as if they were looking at the whole subject. In fact, this is an approximation of how you would see a person "in the flesh" if you were having a casual conversation. You wouldn't be paying any attention to their lower body, so that part of the picture is unnecessary.



### MCU (Medium Close Up)

Half way between a MS and a CU. This shot shows the face more clearly, without getting uncomfortably close.



### CU (Close Up)

In the CU, a certain feature or part of the subject takes up the whole frame. A close up of a person usually means a close up of their face.



### ECU (Extreme Close Up)

The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail. For people, the ECU is used to convey emotion.



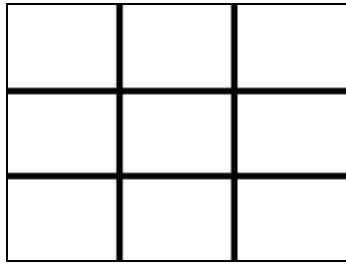
### CA (Cutaway)

A cutaway is a shot that's usually of something other than the current action. It could be a different subject (e.g. this cat), a CU of a different part of the subject (e.g. a CU of the subject's hands), or just about anything else. The CA is used as a "buffer" between shots (to help the editing process), or to add interest/information.

## Some Rules of Framing

- Look for horizontal and vertical lines in the frame (e.g. the horizon, poles, etc). Make sure the horizontals are level, and the verticals are straight up and down (unless of course you're purposely going for a tilted effect).
- The [rule of thirds](#). This rule divides the frame into nine sections, as in the first frame below. Points (or lines) of interest should occur at 1/3 or 2/3 of the way up (or across) the frame, rather than in the

centre.



- "Headroom", "looking room", and "leading room". These terms refer to the amount of room in the frame which is strategically left empty. The shot of the baby crawling has some leading room for him to crawl into, and the shot of his mother has some looking room for her to look into. Without this empty space, the framing will look uncomfortable.

Headroom is the amount of space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame. A common mistake in amateur video is to have far too much headroom, which doesn't look good and wastes frame space. In any "person shot" tighter than a MS, there should be very little headroom.



- Everything in your frame is important, not just the subject. What does the background look like? What's the lighting like? Is there anything in the frame which is going to be distracting, or disrupt the continuity of the video?  
Pay attention to the edges of your frame. Avoid having half objects in frame, especially people (showing half of someone's face is very unflattering). Also try not to cut people off at the joints — the bottom of the frame can cut across a person's stomach, but not their knees. It just doesn't look right.

Once you're comfortable with the do's and don'ts, you can become more creative. Think about the best way to convey the meaning of the shot. If it's a baby crawling, get down on the floor and see it from a baby's point-of-view (POV). If it's a football game, maybe you need to get up high to see all the action.

Look for interesting and unusual shots. Most of your shots will probably be quite "straight"; that is, normal shots from approximate adult eye-level. Try mixing in a few variations. Different angles and different camera positions can make all the difference. For example; a shot can become much more dramatic if shot from a low point. On the other hand, a new and interesting perspective can be obtained by looking straight down on the scene. Be aware that looking up at a person can make them appear more imposing, whereas looking down at a person can diminish them.

Watch TV and movies, and notice the shots which stand out. There's a reason why they stand out — it's all about camera positioning and frame composition. Experiment all the time.

## Basic Camera Moves

As with camera framing, there are standard descriptions for the basic camera moves. These are the main ones:

**Pan:** The framing moves left & right, with no vertical movement.

**Tilt:** The framing moves up & down, with no horizontal movement.

**Zoom:** In & out, appearing as if the camera is moving closer to or further away from the subject. (There is a difference between zooming and moving the camera in and out, though. There'll be more about that in the intermediate tutorial.)

When a shot zooms in closer to the subject, it is said to be getting "tighter". As the shot zooms out, it is getting "looser".

**Follow:** Any sort of shot when you are holding the camera (or have it mounted on your shoulder), and you follow the action whilst walking. Hard to keep steady, but very effective when done well.

*Note:* Most camera moves are a combination of these basic moves. For example, when you're zooming in, unless your subject is in the exact centre of frame, you'll have to pan and/or tilt at the same time to end up where you want to be.

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