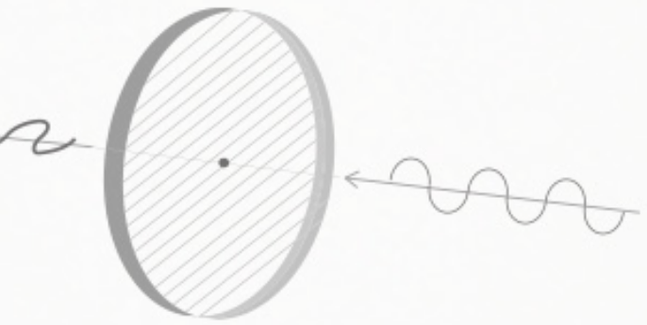
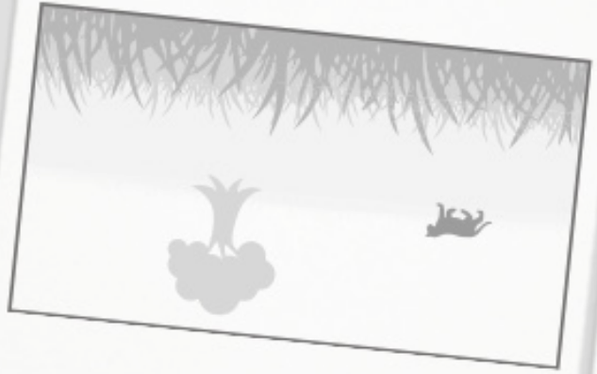
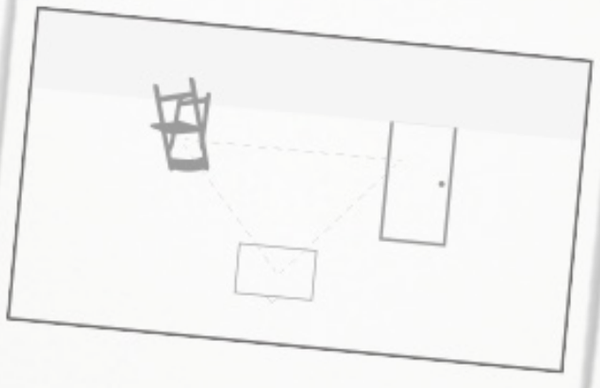
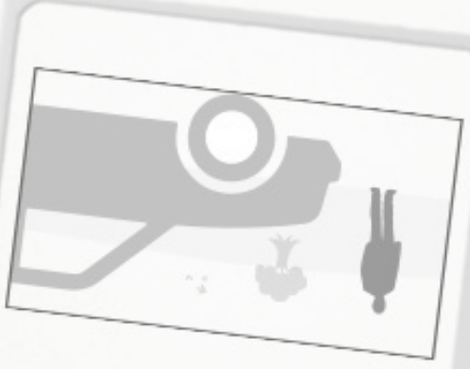
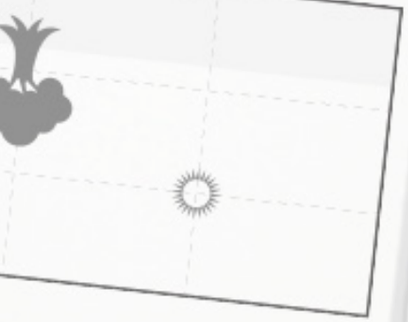
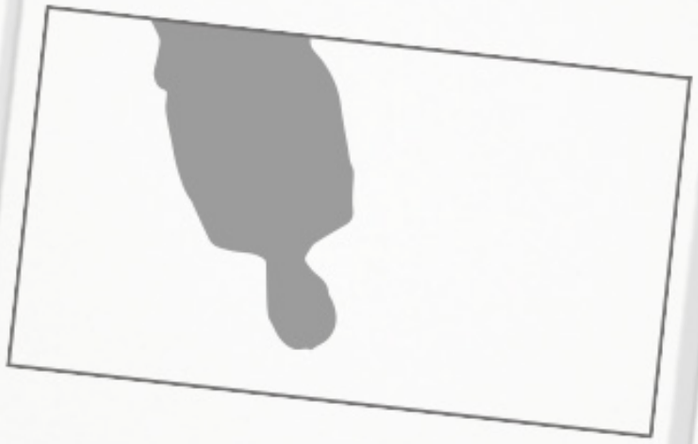
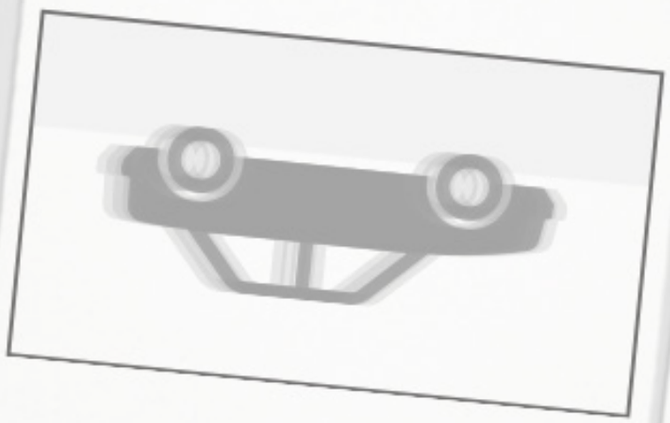
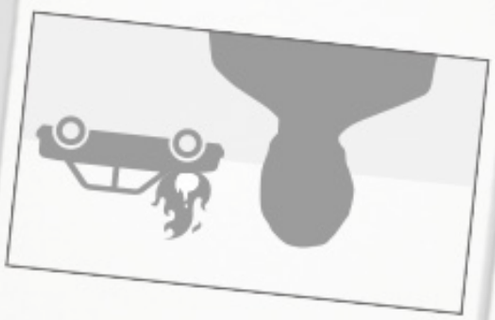
glymt

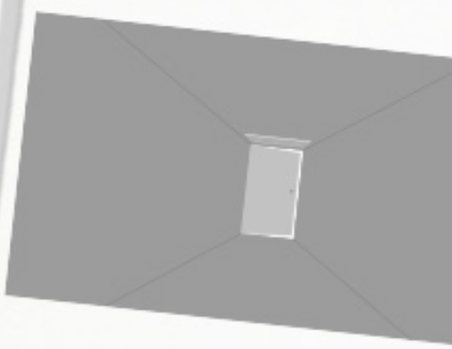
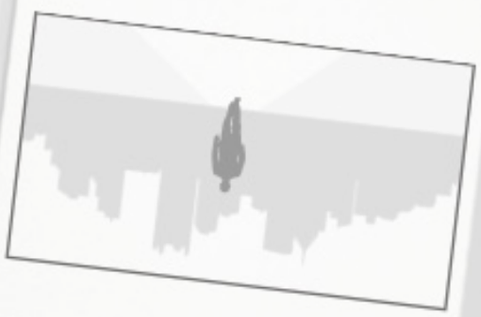
FILMMAKING TIPS



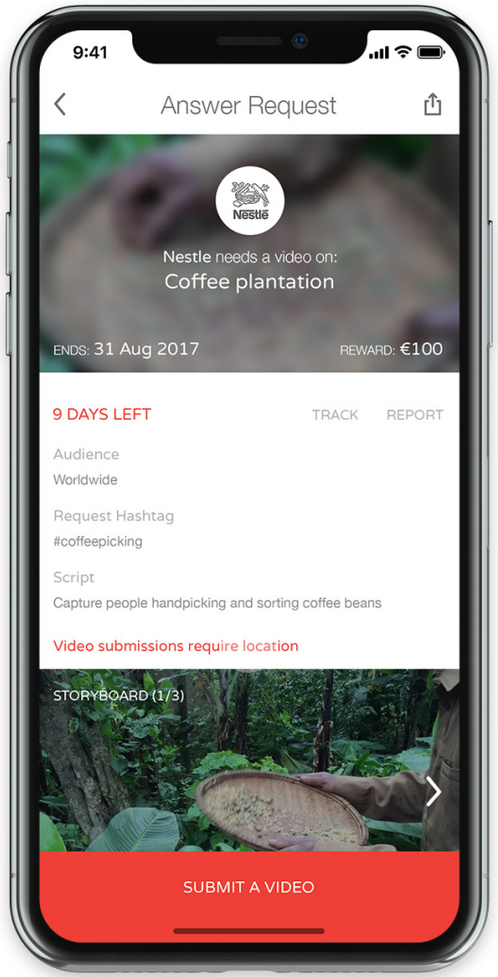




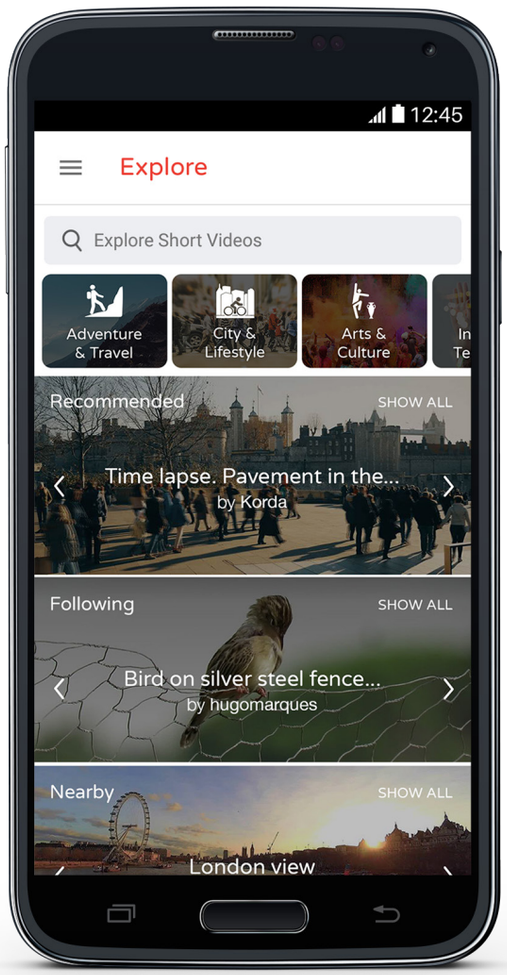



glymt is a video crowdsourcing Platform and Marketplace that helps creators monetize short clips from their passions and interests.

We want to help you improve your skills, so here are some important and helpful tips to discover or revisit.





MOBILE APP

Are you an everyday filmmaker looking to make money with your videos?

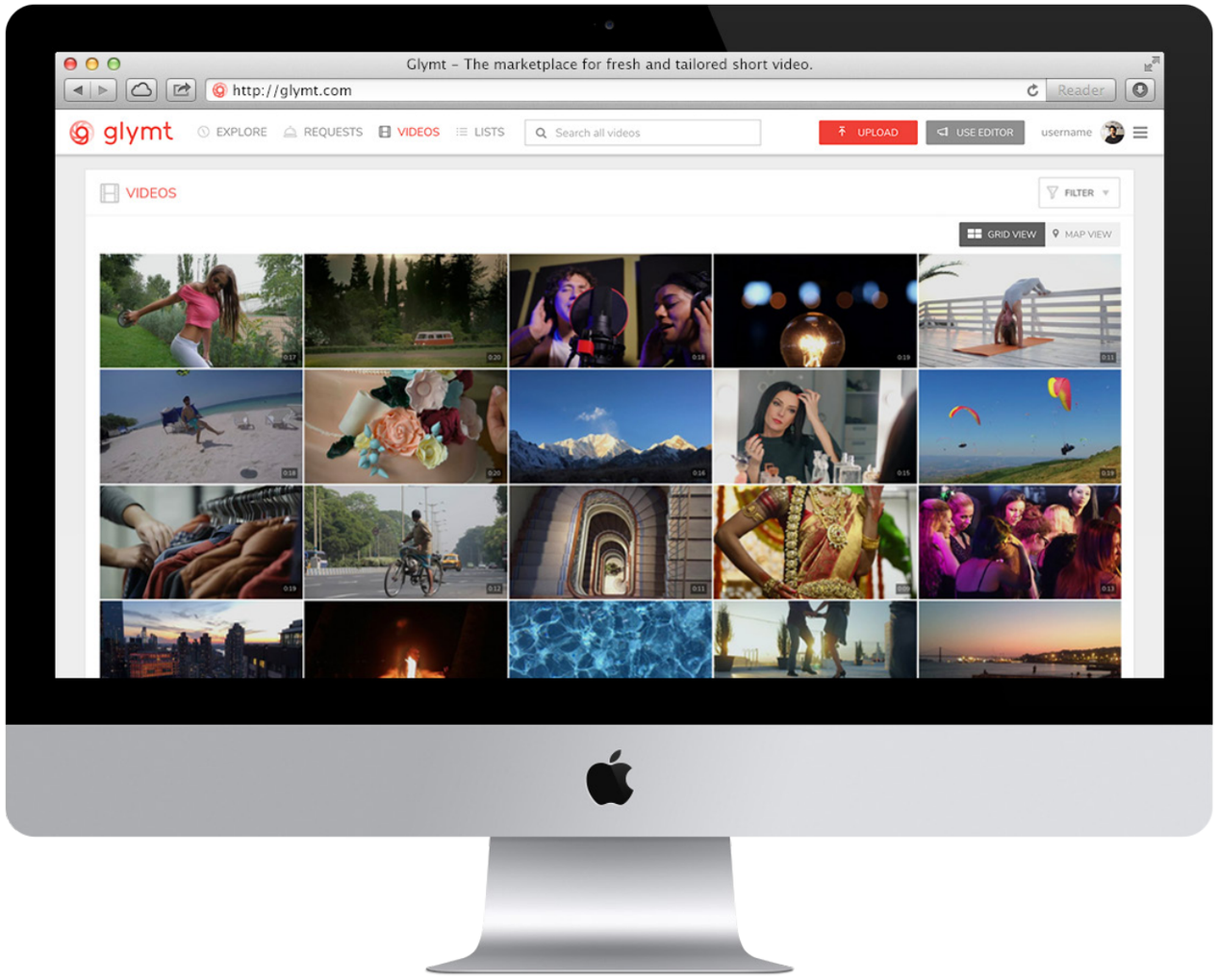
Download on the App Store

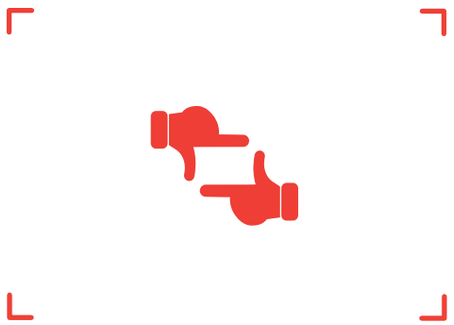
GET IT ON Google Play

WEBSITE

Do you need fresh, tailored made videos to engage your audience at great prices?

WWW.GLYMT.COM



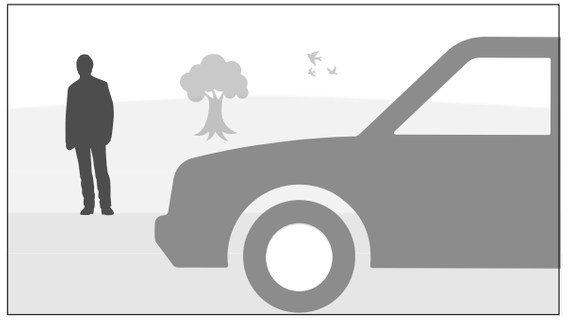


FILMMAKING TIPS

COMPOSITION

COMPOSITION

COMPOSING

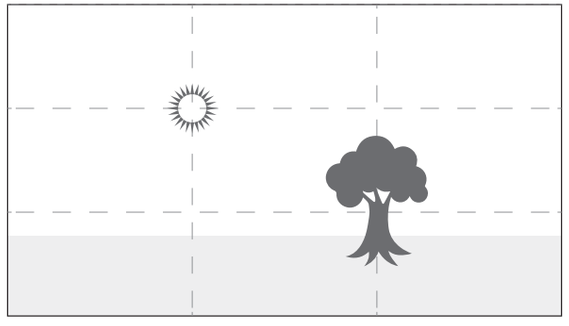


Composing is the art of establishing relations between the objects in a shot, and between those objects and the frame.

Controlling these relative positions and distances is the most direct and easy way to highlight intentions and elements, establish hierarchies between those elements, and establish the direction of the movement in a scene.

COMPOSITION

THE RULE OF THIRDS

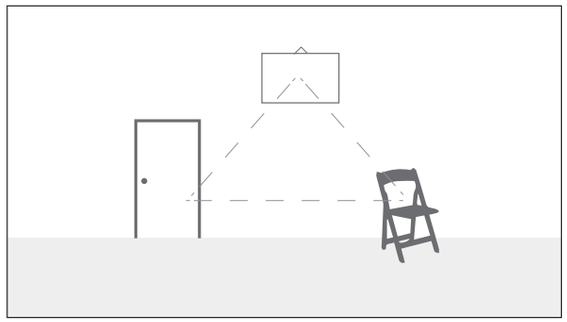


This is one of the most crucial rules in composition.

With an imaginary grid you divide the image into three rows and three columns. The basic way to use the grid is to place the most important objects in a shot in the points where the lines from the imaginary grid intersect. These hot spots should be used diagonally, with the closer objects being placed in the lower spots and vice-versa.

COMPOSITION

FINDING THE TRIANGLES

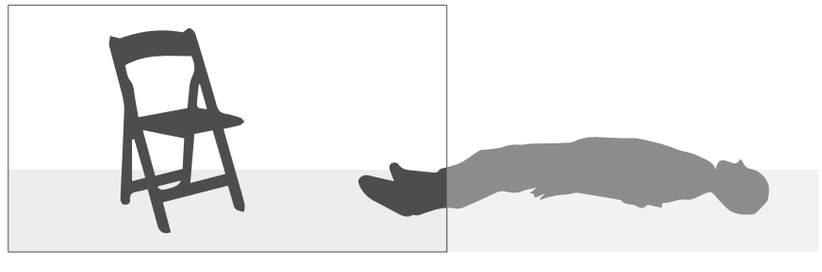


Another important rule of composition is placing the key objects on the frame, in a way that they form imaginary triangles.

These triangles help us keep the composition balanced, and give it a sense of direction, intention and movement.

COMPOSITION

EXCLUDING AND IMPLYING

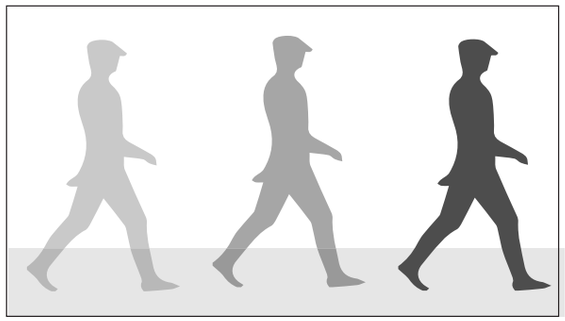


Anything that is not essential to tell the story should in principle be left out of the frame.

Allowing the audience to imply hidden elements from what is visible on the screen can be a powerful way to keep them interested and alert.

COMPOSITION

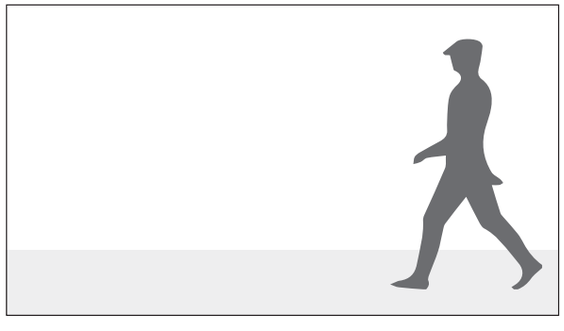
MOVEMENT IN THE SHOT



To give the scene credibility, it’s important to keep the direction and speed of moving objects in line with the reality we experience everyday.

COMPOSITION

EMPTY SPACE



The amount of space in the frame left around the character should not be left to chance.

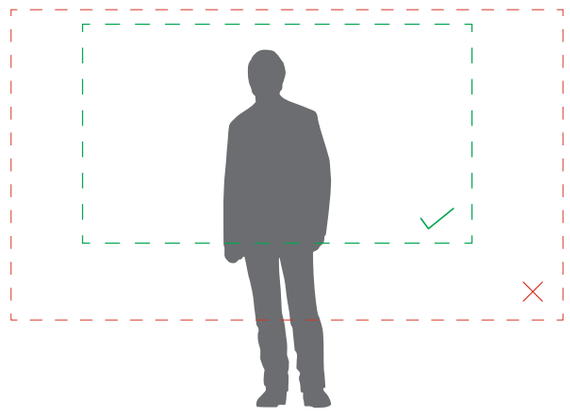
You should try to leave more empty space on the side towards which the character is moving or looking.

The height of the face relative to frame is also important. Compressing the space above the head will create an atmosphere of tension and drama, while leaving too much space above the head, gives the impression the character is sinking. The eye level should be placed at the top third of the frame’s height.

COMPOSITION

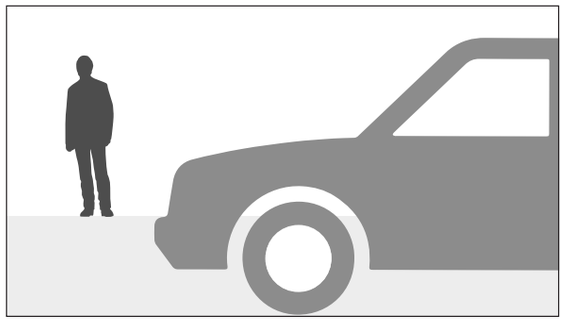
CROPPING BODIES

Whenever a character's body is cropped in a frame, avoid making the crop on natural joint like elbows and knees. The audience might sub-consciously feel a sense of pain, and become uncomfortable.



COMPOSITION

USING THE FOREGROUND



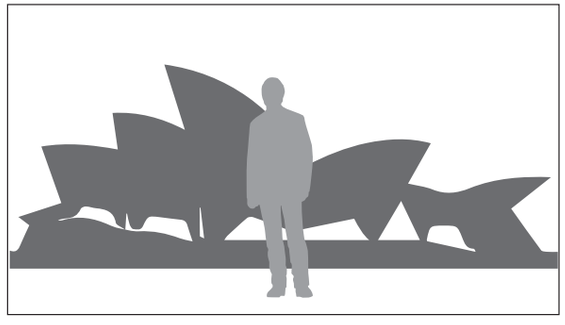
You can exploit objects as obstructions on the foreground, usually by keeping them out of focus, to hide part of the action or the background.

Visual obstructions can be used to keep the audience interested in a part of the action they perceive but cannot see, giving a sense that the camera is spying on the action.

Objects in the foreground can also be skillfully used to hide ugly details or highlights and shadows that you don’t want to deal with.

COMPOSITION

WIDE ANGLES SHOT



Wide angles capture a broad field of view by using short lenses. They are commonly used in establishing shots where they often shrink the character and give grandeur to the surroundings. They are also very useful to shoot in tight spaces like interiors, or when you want to make backgrounds look more distant.

Beware that wide angles can dramatically distort both spaces and faces.

COMPOSITION

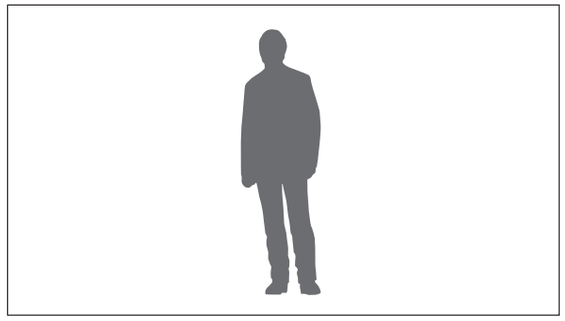
LONG SHOT

Long Shot or Telephoto captures a narrow field of view and is used to zoom on distance objects or characters.

Usually this shoot shows the entire figure standing, and also allows us to see some of the surroundings. It also tends to slow movement in general.

COMPOSITION

FULL SHOT

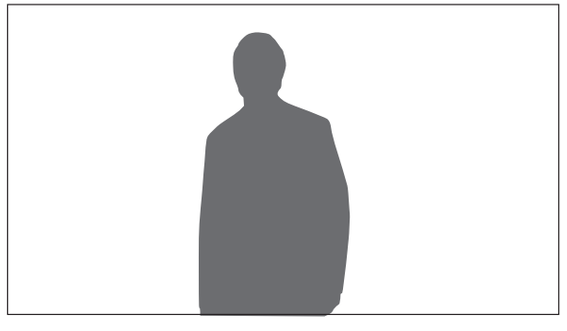


Full Shots or Body Shots capture the entire body of a character on the frame, without leaving too much space above the head or below the feet.

It is widely used when a character is entering or leaving a scene.

COMPOSITION

THE MEDIUM SHOT



The Medium Shot captures characters from the waist up and it is widely used when capturing conversations between multiple characters.

Remember that dialogues are not real speech, they have to be more emphatic, without hesitations and with the characters speaking closer than in real life.

COMPOSITION

CLOSE-UP

Close-Ups are shots that focus on a person's face, or on the details of an object, as a way to show its importance.

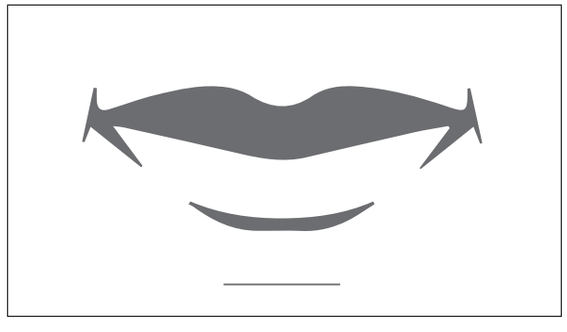
Characters are showed from the neck up so that that the audience can see the character's emotions and reactions.

Faces should not be shot from a distance because they will look flat, the ideal distance being from 1.5 to 2.5 meters away.

COMPOSITION

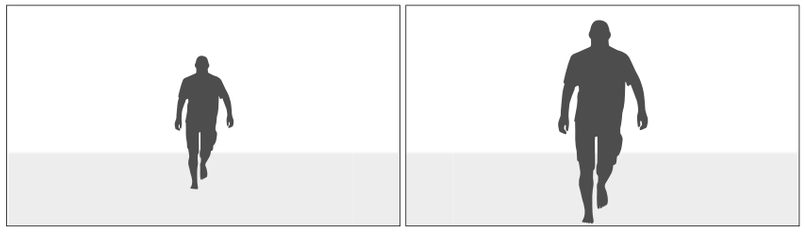
EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Extreme Close-Ups are an exaggeration of the traditional close-up that focuses on a single feature, like the eyes or mouth of a character, to transmit emotions or reactions in a very dramatic way.



COMPOSITION

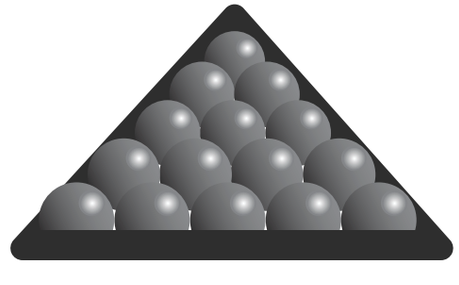
HEAD ON SHOT



The Head on shot captures the action moving directly towards the camera. It is often used in high speed action shots like races and dangerous situations like battles.

COMPOSITION

ADDING THE THIRD DIMENSION



For a 2D Image to feel like a 3D scene it is crucial to provide visual clues.

The notion of perspective can be easily transmitted with converging lines, objects obstructing one another and by playing with the relative size of well-known objects.

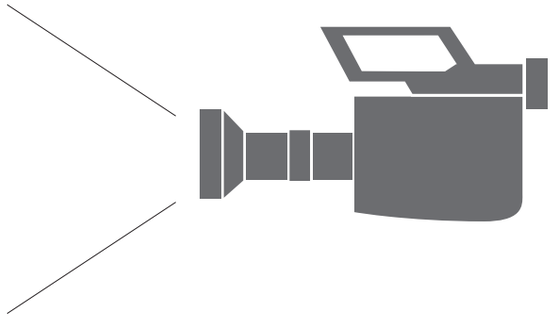
Another crucial element of a 3D world is texture which can be reinforced by casting highlights and shadows on an object.

FILMMAKING TIPS

TECHNIQUE

TECHNIQUE

ZOOMING



With zoom you can manipulate the distance between the optics in your lenses to bring distant objects closer.

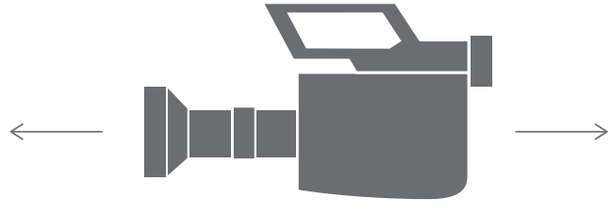
It is not recommended to zoom while shooting because the lack of an identifiable point of view can feel very unnatural. If you want to approach a distant object it is preferable to cut directly into a long shot.

Shooting across many layers of atmosphere can affect the brightness and colors, and it’s harder to do using low end lenses.

Always remember that digital zoom (unlike optical) is merely enlarging the image and will add noise. Using a tripod or any improvised support is also highly recommended.

TECHNIQUE

DOLLY SHOT

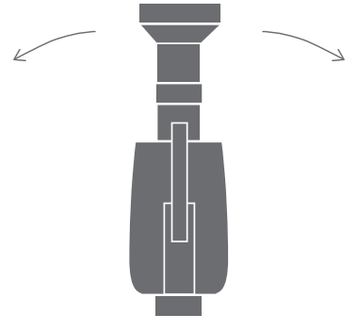


A Dolly shot involves placing the camera on tracks or moving it carefully in a straight line, so it can approach or follow along the action very smoothly.

TECHNIQUE

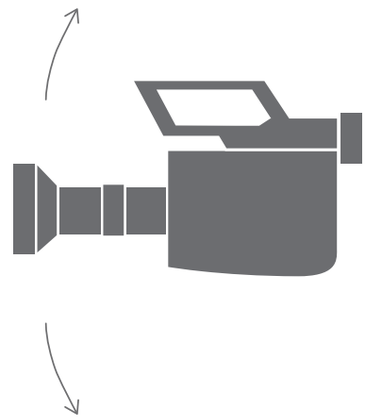
PANNING

Panning involves shooting while rotating the camera left or right. It is often used to follow and emphasize the movement of the action.



TECHNIQUE

TILTING



Tilting involves shooting while rotating the camera up or down.

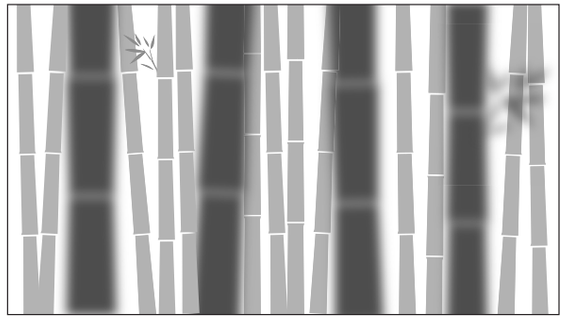
It is used to show the height of a character, tree or building.

It can be used to show the character’s point of view when it’s looking at something very large or very small.

It is also often used when a character is in high places to show the danger of the situation.

TECHNIQUE

FOCUSING



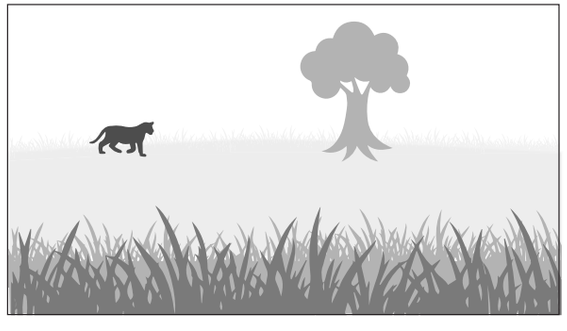
The optics in the lenses allows you to control the depth of field, which is the distance between the closest and farthest planes where everything appears in sharp focus. This focal distance is controlled by the aperture and is inversely proportional to the amount of light that is allowed in the camera.

Focus is crucial to isolate and highlight important characters or objects. However it is often used to keep the backgrounds blurred when they are uninteresting or as a way to give a scene more depth. In point of view shots, manipulating the focus can also be an effective way to transmit the state of mind of a character.

It is preferable to use manual focus when shooting video to avoid unwanted automatic adjustments during the shot.

TECHNIQUE

DEEP FOCUS



Deep Focus is a technique where the depth of field is extended so that both close and distant objects are kept in focus. This effect is useful to emphasize the distance to the objects that are further away.

TECHNIQUE

CHOOSING THE FRAME RATE

You should choose the frame rate according to the function of the scene and light conditions you are shooting in.

Higher frame rates (like 60 or 120 fps) will have the effect of slowing down movement, making it feel heavier (as seen in slow motion) and have an overall documentary feel. On the other hand, lower frame rates (like 24 or 30 fps) will produce faster motion that can feel very light and gives an overall cinematic feel.

Also remember that shooting at higher frame rates will lower the camera's sensitivity to light so it is recommended to use lower frame rates at night and in dark interiors.

TECHNIQUE

SHOOTING WHILE MOVING

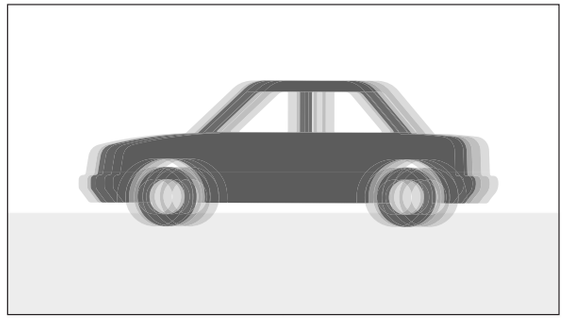
There is a problem that arises with the limited processing speed of digital cameras when the camera is moving at high speeds while shooting.

If the objects move in relation to the camera faster than all the lines in the sensor can be read, the vertical objects like trees and poles will appear bended.

TECHNIQUE

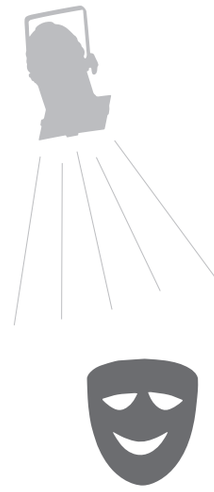
MOTION BLUR

Motion Blur happens naturally with images taken while moving at high speeds. But this effect can be created by recording at lower shutter speeds.



TECHNIQUE

SETTING THE MOOD WITH LIGHT



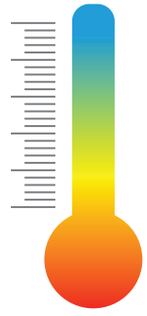
The way in which light creates highlights and shadows is perhaps the most important aspect of setting the mood and atmosphere in a scene.

Likeable characters tend to have well lit faces with glinting eyes, while sinister characters have dark unfilled eyes and faces.

Using under exposure tends to add drama and mystery to a scene, while over exposure can be used to show the situation as very peaceful.

TECHNIQUE

COLOR TEMPERATURE



We usually describe what “white light” means by its “temperature”. This measures the temperature that a black body must reach to emit the light with that particular color.

Contrary to how we usually describe colors, yellow light has a much lower temperature (2700 K) than blue light (7000 K) and what we take for a white light bulb has a temperature around 4000 K.

TECHNIQUE

WHITE BALANCE

Each genre, mood and theme is associated with a given color. Documentaries are usually shot with very vivid colors, while film works with softer colors. The blacks also play a very important part in creating the drama and atmosphere of a scene. Filming at dawn and dusk is supposed to feel red, filming with artificial light is supposed to feel green.

The White Balance settings in your camera can be manipulated to give a desired temperature to the image. Setting the white against a blue surface, will make the images feel warm while setting the whites against a red surface will instill a cold effect.

You should periodically reset the automatic black balance to clear it of residual color.

TECHNIQUE

SHOOTING WITH ARTIFICIAL LIGHTS

When shooting under artificial lights, flickering can occur because electric lights operate under AC currents that alternate at a given frequency. In order to stop this effect and record under stable artificial light it is crucial to adjust the shutter speed to match the AC current frequency (usually 50 or 60 Hz).

Artificial light also brings a green tint to the image which can be corrected by adjusting the white balance settings in the camera.

TECHNIQUE

SHOWING THE TEXTURE

Texture is a crucial part of our three dimension reality and as such it is essential to give credibility to a scene.

Light can be skillfully used to emphasize the texture of an object. Adding shadows, highlights and reflections can go a long way in convincing the audience than an object is real. They are also useful to isolate and emphasize the importance of an object in the story.

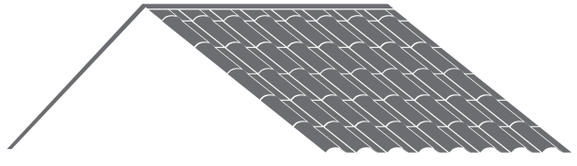
TECHNIQUE

HIDING IMPERFECTIONS

Cleverly placed highlights and shadows can be very effective at hiding objects partially of entirely on a shot. The audience will dislike seeing clipped highlights and shadows without details, so if they are noticeable you should keep them out of focus.

TECHNIQUE

AVOIDING THE MOIRÉ



Moiré is a visual artifact that can appear on your footage when you shoot a pattern with very tight parallel lines.

These artifacts are a result of insufficient processing power leading the codec to skip lines as it compresses the footage.

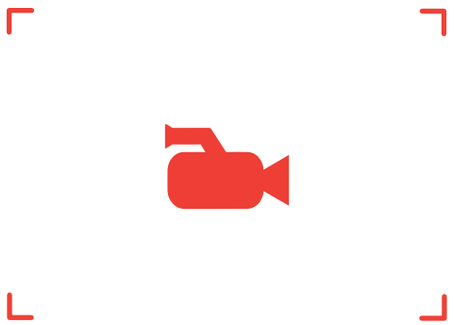
Unfortunately you can’t trust the camera viewer when looking for moiré because the compression will only happen later. It is also a hard problem to fix in post-production. So it is important to predict where this problem might appear and keep those textures out of focus.

TECHNIQUE

MODEL RELEASE WAIVERS

There is generally no problem to shoot images of people in public places, without a signed model release if you are using the footage for personal or editorial projects.

However if you are shooting for commercial uses, with recognizable faces, on a private location and especially if you are shooting a sensitive scene, it is highly recommended that you ask for permission and get a signed model waiver. Otherwise many potential buyers won't be interested in your material and you may face legal consequences if it is broadcasted in the wrong context.

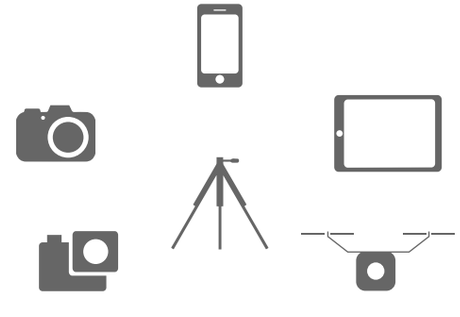


FILMMAKING TIPS

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT

CHOOSING YOUR EQUIPMENT



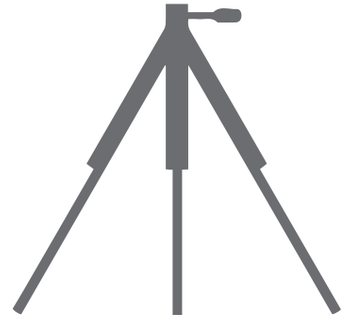
There is no equipment set that will be perfect for every situation.

All technical decisions, including the choice of camera, lenses and gear should be dictated by the story of the scene you are shooting, and by the way you want to shoot it.

Today’s affordable equipment already offers great quality and flexibility, but it is important to understand its limitations, which can be easily overcome with tricks and techniques.

EQUIPMENT

CAMERA SHAKE



Some shots, like vehicle pursuits or crowd turmoil, require some camera vibration to look authentic. However the majority of situations, especially when shooting from a distance, really benefit from shooting with stability.

To achieve a stable image simply requires some ingenuity in using the surroundings for support or the purchase of a tripod.

Shooting with a small focal distance is also helpful to minimize vibration.

Software available today can stabilize the image in post-production to a point, but bear in mind it crops the edges of the video.

EQUIPMENT

DYNAMIC RANGE

The dynamic range is the number of brightness steps that a camera can distinguish (usually 8bits or 256 values). Because this is perhaps the main limitation of low end equipment, it is important to prevent shooting situations where there are both deep shadows and strong highlights at the same time, since the equipment won't be able to capture the detail in these areas. This problem is known as clipping and retrieving detail on these areas can be very hard to do in post-production.

One easy way to deal with low dynamic ranges is to avoid shooting at midday and shoot instead close to sunrise and sunset. You can also mitigate this effect by using polarizer filters, by hiding clipped areas out of focus, and by using fill light to capture the detail in dark shadows.

EQUIPMENT

THE APERTURE

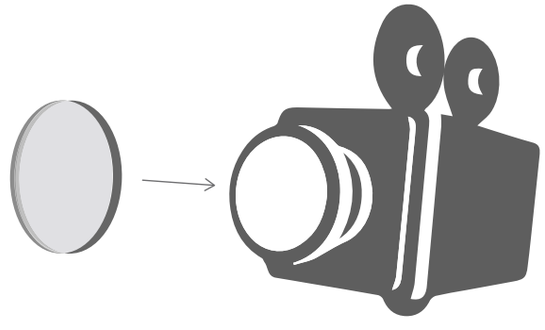
Lenses are featured with an iris inside them that can be turned and closed to control the amount of light that hits the sensor. The aperture is measured in f-stops, with lower values meaning a larger aperture and therefore more light.

Controlling the aperture is an essential technique to control the light exposure and therefore the brightness of your shot. However the aperture also plays a key role in controlling the depth of field that is in focus. The more light you let in by lowering the f-stop value the thinner the distance between the planes that define what is in focus in the image.

EQUIPMENT

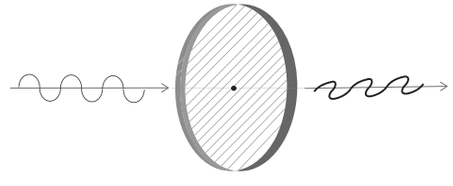
USING FILTERS

Physical filters attached in front of the lenses are a very effective and easy way to optimize the contrast and the detail in your footage.



EQUIPMENT

POLARIZERS



A polarizer is a filter that has been treated to work as a grid for light. After being reflected by a surface, light rays arrive to the lenses with a particular orientation (polarized). By rotating the polarizer ring you can control which reflections you want to remove from your footage. Be careful not to remove reflections that are essential to the story.

Polarizers are widely used in exterior shots to stop overcast skies from clipping. They also have the effect of increasing contrast and detail, so it is important to remember when shooting close objects or faces that they can reveal unwanted imperfections.

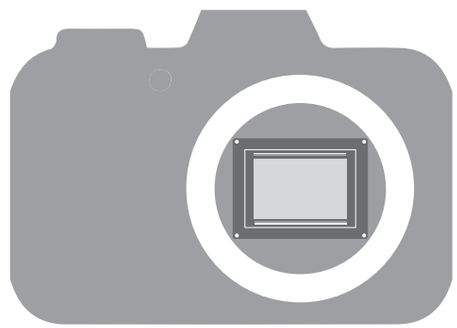
EQUIPMENT

DIFFUSION FILTERS

Diffusion filters will lower the contrast and get you back within the dynamic range of the camera, helping to prevent highlight clipping. However be careful not to take too much contrast since it will make the image feel lifeless.

EQUIPMENT

SENSOR SIZE MATTERS



The resolution (in Megapixels) is not enough to determine the performance of a camera.

Because you are converting an analog signal (light wave) to a digital one the actual size of the sensor and ultimately of the pixels is crucial to determine the light sensitivity and therefore the dynamic range of the camera.

Cameras with small sensors like those in mobile devices and low end DSLR’s can have high resolutions but still face problems like contrast loss and noisy shadows.

EQUIPMENT

CODECS

A Codec is the piece of software responsible for taking the data from the sensor and compressing to a more manageable size to fit in the memory card.

Codec compression involves discarding the data that is less relevant. Most codecs take advantage of the fact that the human eye is much more sensitive to brightness than color so they discard color information, in a process called croma sub sampling.

Codecs tend to discard the details in low lit regions, so it is advisable to raise the exposure and make the original image brighter. Making it darker and adding contrast afterwards can be easily achieved with post processing software.

4:4:4
4:2:2
4:2:0

EQUIPMENT

BIT DEPTH

00101101

256

Because most cameras operate 8-bit processors they can only represent individual values like brightness or color hue in 2^8 or 256 values, which does not seem like a lot. However when you combine the possibilities of all the values for Red, Green and Blue you get 16777216 possible colors to work with.

EQUIPMENT

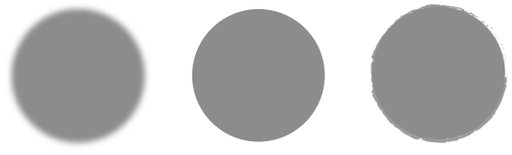
COLOR GAMMA

The Gamma measures the range of tones available for coloring the image. By raising the Gamma level, contrast can be increased and the footage gains a surreal expression.

By lowering the Gamma the images become flatter and lifeless but it allows us to capture more details in the shadows.

EQUIPMENT

IMAGE DETAIL



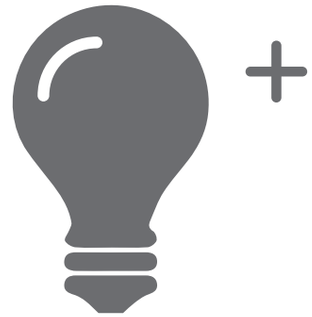
The sharpness of the image you can capture depends on the quality of your optics. However it is possible to boost the level of detail within your camera’s settings.

Detail and sharp edges are important to make your image look alive. However excessive detail will reveal ugly edges and give the image an electronic look. Lower detail levels on the other hand will make your image feel flat but also more organic.

Remember that the larger the screen the video is meant to be shown on, the less detail it will be able to support.

EQUIPMENT

ADDING LIGHTS TO A SCENE

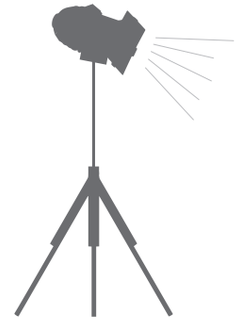


When studying how to light a scene, it is a good practice to exclude light before adding it and working as much as possible with the natural conditions.

The goal is to reinforce the light that is already there in a way that helps you tell the story.

EQUIPMENT

ADDING SET LIGHTS

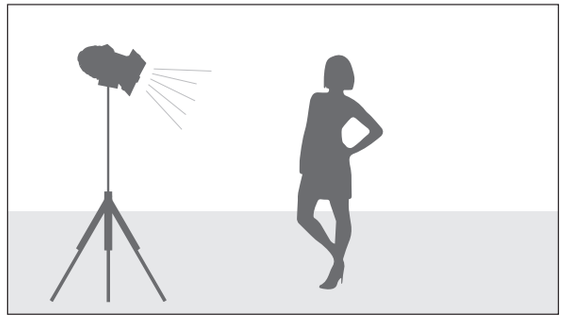


Additional Set Lights allow you to bring attention to parts of the background that are important for the story and help set the mood.

Using shadow patterns projected on walls can also be an alternative when you don’t have an interesting background to work with.

EQUIPMENT

THE KEY LIGHT



The Key Light is the main light used to illuminate the subject. Its position and intensity must fit the surroundings, time of day and seasons and also the mood of the scene. Remember to place it behind and above the camera and slightly to the side of the axis between the subject and the camera.

EQUIPMENT

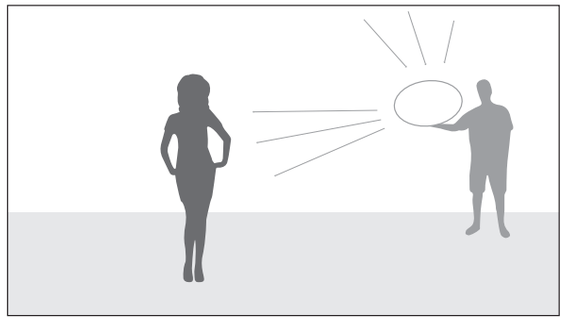
THE BACK LIGHT

The Back Light is used to light the subject from behind, with the goal of preventing the subject from being blended with the background.

It is usually used with dark backgrounds, placed above the subject and pointing to the hair. It is important that the back light is not seen being reflected by the background.

EQUIPMENT

THE FILL LIGHT

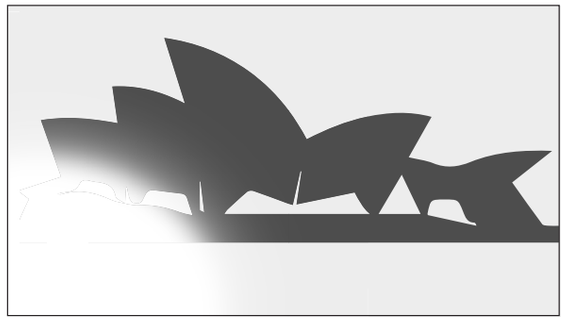


The Fill Light is used as support, to eliminate unwanted and unfavorable shadows cast by the key light on the subject's face. It can also be used to eliminate impenetrable shadows and to reveal the details in dark places.

The more fill light you use, the "softer" the subject will appear to be. The less you use it, the more dramatic it will look.

EQUIPMENT

AVOIDING FLARES



Flares occur when light enters the lenses from unwanted angles. To avoid this effect it is important to use some kind of light protection on the lenses when shooting in daylight or near artificial lights.

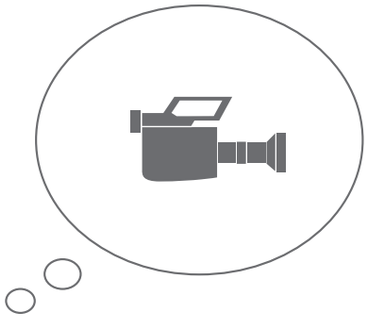
You can use purposely built mate boxes, improvise a cover or simply use your hands. The protection should ideally be a black surface to minimize reflections and tinting the footage with unwanted colors.

FILMMAKING TIPS

STORYTELLING

STORYTELLING

PLANNING THE SHOT



The act of shooting video should be both planned and experimental. By creating a shot list and storyboards you can select your equipment and locations more effectively and shoot your scenes in a more efficient order. But just because you have a plan you shouldn't avoid the detours.

Complicated and highly coordinated shots are hard to accomplish without rehearsing. Good practices also include repeating a shot even if the first time seems perfect, and never trusting the image you see on a small visor, checking it as soon as possible on a large screen.

STORYTELLING

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCATION

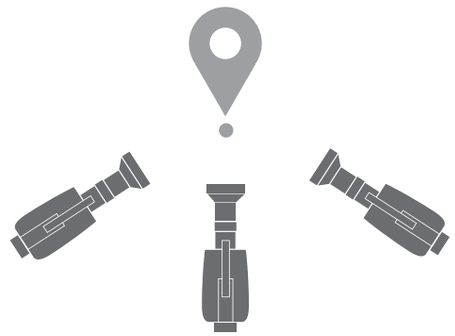
Whenever you find a location to shoot, it is important to first reflect on how the location wants to be shot.

Some locations are ideal for wide angles, while others for close-ups. Environments can feel 2D or 3D, spaces can be horizontal or vertical. Locations can be more interesting to shoot during the day or at night. Their colors can feel either hot or cold and their mood can be light or heavy.

Also remember that shooting in private locations, monuments and some landmarks may require that you ask for permission to shoot.

STORYTELLING

MANIPULATING THE LOCATION



The same location can be shot from different directions, at different times under different lights and with diverse equipment, to create completely different shoots.

It is crucial to understand the geography of the location, the relative position of the characters regarding that location and the direction of movement.

It is easy to make an empty place look very busy and vice-versa by cleverly placing characters and objects and shooting from favorable angles.

STORYTELLING

REMEMBER THE BACKGROUND

Always be mindful of the objects, textures and movement going on in the background. In many situations, the background reveals more about a story than the characters in the front. Its accuracy is also crucial for the credibility of a scene.

However if you are working with a background that is either distracting or uninteresting, you can either keep it out of focus or make it interesting by exploring patterns of shadow and light.

STORYTELLING

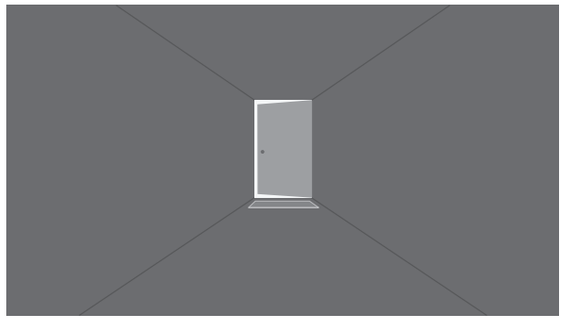
SOUND VS. VISUALS

The audience cannot pay equal attention to what it sees and what it listens to.

By attenuating the audio track you can make sure that the viewer stays focused on the image. If however you place an empty and uninteresting image on the screen you can force the audience to listen.

STORYTELLING

CREATING SUSPENSE



Suspense is crucial to keep the audience alert. It can best be achieved by slowing down the pace of events that are inevitable.

The speed of a scene can be controlled by the number of cuts and shots used.

Faster scenes are more exciting, but slower ones allow the audience to take in the details and wonder about the meaning of the objects in the shot.

STORYTELLING

CUTTING

A story is propelled by the point of view shown by the camera. However it is rarely a good idea to cut straight to the action. Instead try to keep the viewer challenged by approaching the action through a series of takes with interesting angles.

A moving camera gives the sense of spying while a fixed camera gives the sense of eavesdropping.

STORYTELLING

ESTABLISHING SHOT

The Establishing Shot is usually a wide angle shot used to place a character on a scene, showing the relations and hierarchies between characters, objects and the background.

STORYTELLING

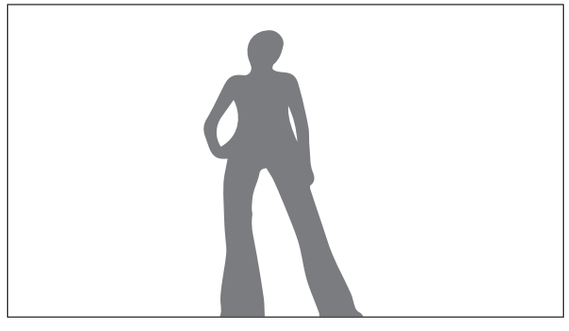
THE HIGH ANGLE

A High Angle is captured by looking down on the character, with the effect of making it appear weak and insignificant.

STORYTELLING

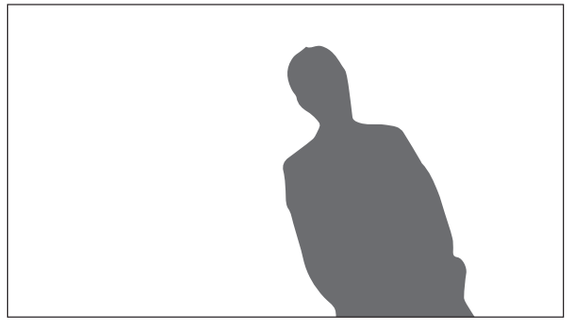
THE LOW ANGLE

A Low Angle, also called the Hero Shot, is captured by looking up to the character, with the effect of making it appear more important and powerful.



STORYTELLING

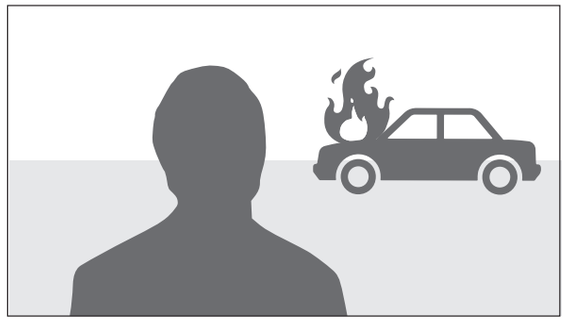
THE TILTED ANGLE



The Tilted Angle, also called Dutch Angle, is captured with the camera rotated slightly. It is used to show the situation as dangerous and to suggest that the character has an imbalanced and sinister personality.

STORYTELLING

OVER THE SHOULDER SHOT



The Over the Shoulder Shot shows what a character sees while at the same time showing the back of the character's head in the foreground. It is useful to show the distance between an observer and the action.

It is often used to show that two characters are interacting without showing the face of an unimportant character. It can also be used to show vulnerability, being often used when a character is being chased.

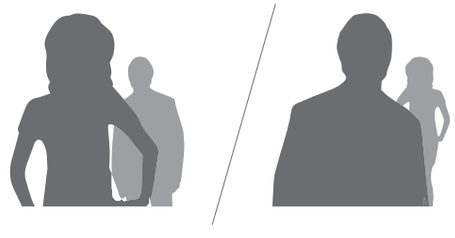
STORYTELLING

POINT OF VIEW SHOT

The Point of View shot is captured at eye level to show precisely what a character sees. It is used to transmit the subjective view that a particular character has on the action.

STORYTELLING

THE REVERSE SHOT



The Reverse Shot is the result of alternating the camera position to show two characters in close ups while they have a conversation. Remember to watch where the eyes are pointing, to avoid the feeling that there are hidden characters.

STORYTELLING

THE 180º RULE

When shooting a conversation between characters, and alternating between them, the cameras always have to be placed on the same side of an imaginary line that goes from one character to the other.

This is crucial to prevent that the character's eyes from looking in odd directions, in a way that gives the impression that there are hidden characters in the conversation.