

GLOSSARY: Film terminology

Shot types

Shot type	Explanation and effect
Establishing shot	Places the characters and action in a context
Long shot	Shows the whole subject, with room to spare at the top and bottom of the frame
Medium shot	Shows the figure from the waist up
Two shot	Shows two people in medium-long shot to show conversations
Medium close-up	Shows the figure from head to chest
Close-up	Shows head (and shoulders); reveals emotion
Extreme close-up	Shows a minute amount of the subject, for example, a tear on a face, a finger on a trigger; used to create tension or emphasise emotion
POV (point-of-view)	Shows a scene from a particular character's viewpoint; the viewer becomes that character
Over the shoulder	A kind of two-shot where the camera views the scene from behind one character's shoulder; creates some tension and a sense of expectation

Camera angles

Angle	Camera placement	Effect
Eye-level shot	Camera is set horizontal to the subject	Realistic, usual shot
Low-angle shot	Camera is below the subject, looking up	Makes characters appear larger, more imposing, threatening
High-angle shot	Camera looks down on the subject	Makes character vulnerable, insignificant or small
Bird's eye view/overhead	Camera is at an extreme high angle	Shows an overall view of the situation

Camera focus (the sharpness or definition of the image)

Type of focus	Effect
Sharp	Gives good clarity and definition
Deep focus	Subjects in the foreground and background are in focus
Shallow focus	Focus is on the foreground objects
Background focus	Focus is on the background objects
Soft focus	The lens or light source is adjusted to make the edges of the subject softer; often seen in romantic moments or soap operas (in the early days of film, Vaseline was smeared on the lens to create this effect)

Camera movements

Camera movement	Explanation
Tracking	Camera and entire support are moving either alongside the subject or forwards and backwards
Panning	Camera support remains fixed while camera moves from side to side (horizontally)
Tilting (or a tilt)	Camera support remains fixed while camera moves up and down (vertically)
Zooming	(This refers to the movement of the lens) zoom in to close-up or zoom out to long-shot
Handheld	Camera is not on a steady support; gives a sense of action or uneasiness; increases intensity

Lighting

Lighting term	Technique and effect
Exposure	Correct exposure: image appears normal Over-exposure: image appears whiter owing to more light Under-exposure: image appears darker

Lighting term	Technique and effect
Source	Natural, for example, real daylight from the sun Artificial light effects are created using lighting equipment
Direction	Top: the subject appears angelic, innocent, good Bottom: conveys sinister nature of subject Front: neutral Back: the subject is silhouetted; appears threatening; can produce halo effect Side: there is a contrast between lit and unlit sides; the subject can appear untrustworthy
High-key lighting	Fully lit, generally bright-looking scene; no shadows; often used in comedies and romances
Low-key lighting	Partially lit scene; lots of shadow; creates feelings of suspense or sensuality

Colours

Term	Colour	Effect	Case study
Cool colours	Blues, greens, purples	Suggest tranquillity, aloofness, serenity	<i>Big Blue, Three Colours: Blue, The Matrix</i>
Warm colours	Reds, yellows, oranges	Suggest aggression, violence, stimulation	<i>The Village, Red Dust, Tsotsi</i>
Desaturation	Colour is drained from the shot so colours are paler	Creates a sense of bleakness	<i>Forgiveness</i>
Sepia tones	A brownish tone	Gives the film an historic, period feel	<i>The Hours</i>

Arrangement of shots

Term	Meaning and effect
Continuity	Suggests continuous action with respect to angles, props and positioning of actors
Cut	Instant change between frames
Mix/Dissolve	Image on screen appears to dissolve/fade away while another scene is appearing; originally done by overlaying several frames when splicing celluloid
Superimposition	Similar to mix but lasts for longer so both shots are actually visible at once
Fade in/Fade out	Image fades into blackness before the next appears or a scene emerges from blackness
Wipe	One scene pushes another off the screen sideways, in order to replace it

Film movement

Term	Technique	Effect
Regular speed	24 frames per second	Gives a sense of reality
Slow motion	Filmed at a faster rate than 24 frames per second but played back at regular speed	Gives the effect of slow motion when played at normal speed; gives a sense that time is suspended; creates tension, excitement, romance
Fast motion	Pictures taken at very high speeds (128 frames per second or more)	Movement is speeded up; creates tension, excitement, anxiety, comedy