



For more detailed definitions visit www.wikipedia.org or check out the glossary of the *Video for Change* book (<http://www.witness.org/training/video-for-change>), the sources for the vast majority of these entries.

Aperture

The opening in the lens through which light is admitted. The aperture determines the cone angle of the bundle of light rays that come to a focus in the image plane. The aperture determines how collimated the admitted rays are, which is of great importance for the appearance at the image plane. If the admitted rays also pass through a lens, highly collimated rays (narrow aperture) will result in sharpness at the image plane, while uncollimated rays (wide aperture) will result in sharpness for rays with the right focal length only. This means that a wide aperture results in an image that is sharp around what the lens is focusing on and blurred otherwise. The aperture also determines how many of the incoming rays that are actually admitted and thus how much light that reaches the image plane (the narrower the aperture, the darker the image). The size of the aperture is one factor that affects depth of field. Smaller apertures produce longer depths of field, allowing objects at a wide range of distances to all be in focus at the same time. The lens aperture is usually specified as an f-number, the ratio of focal length to effective aperture diameter. A lens typically has a set of marked "f-stops" that the f-number can be set to. A lower f-number denotes a greater aperture opening which allows more light to reach the film or image sensor.

B-roll

Additional (non-interview) footage, which will serve to complement interviews and help tell your story. In any filming situation you should always be looking to gather images/footage relevant to the story—e.g. if an interviewee is talking about life in a refugee camp you would take shots of the living conditions, of people working, of people preparing meals, of the conditions in the schools. These will be used to “cover” (i.e. provide visuals while someone speaks) both interviews and narration.

Backlight

The process of illuminating the subject from the back. In other words, the light source and the viewer are facing towards each other, with the subject in between. This causes the edges of the subject to glow, while the other areas remain darker.

Close-up

(CU) A shot framing with the subject of the shot very large in the frame, revealing a detail only (i.e. the human face, or hands).

Continuity

A film technique that dictates that a series of shots should be physically continuous, as if the camera simply changed angles in the course of a single event. For instance, if in one shot a beer glass is empty, it should not be full in the next shot. Live coverage of a sporting event would be an example of footage that is very continuous.

Coverage

The amount of film footage shot and different camera setups used in filming a scene. When editing, the more coverage shot means that there is more footage the editor can work with in assembling the final cut.





Depth of Field

(DOF) The portion of a scene that appears sharp in the image. Although a lens can precisely focus at only one distance, the decrease in sharpness is gradual on either side of the focused distance, so that within the DOF, the blurriness is imperceptible under normal viewing conditions. For some images, such as landscapes, a large DOF may be appropriate, while for others, such as portraits, a small DOF may be more effective. The DOF is determined by the subject distance (that is, the distance to the plane that is perfectly in focus), the lens focal length, and the lens f-number (relative aperture). Except at close-up distances, DOF is approximately determined by the subject magnification and the lens f-number. For a given f-number, increasing the magnification, either by moving closer to the subject or using a lens of greater focal length, decreases the DOF; decreasing magnification increases DOF. For a given subject magnification, increasing the f-number (decreasing the aperture diameter) increases the DOF; decreasing f-number decreases DOF.

Dutch Angle

Also known as a Dutch tilt, oblique angle, German angle, canted angle or Batman Angle, this camera setup is often used to portray the psychological uneasiness or tension in the subject being filmed. A Dutch angle is achieved by tilting the camera off to the side so that the shot is composed with the horizon at an angle to the bottom of the frame.

Establishing Shot

(ES) A shot used near the beginning of a scene to establish the interrelationship and context of elements to be shown subsequently in closer shots. Also termed a general view (abbr. GV), which is an establishing shot that places you in the environment. It is often a wide shot of an exterior of a building or of the location the scene is about to take us into next, and is also used as a transition shot from one location to another alongside music or narration.

Exposure

The total amount of light allowed to fall on the photographic medium. The "correct" exposure for a photograph is determined by the sensitivity of the medium used. Exposure time is controlled in a camera by shutter speed and the illumination level by the lens aperture. Slower shutter speeds (exposing the medium for a longer period of time) and greater lens apertures (admitting more light) produce greater exposures. Ultimately there is no such thing as "correct exposure", as a scene can be exposed in many ways, depending on the desired effect a photographer wishes to convey. An important principle of exposure is *reciprocity*. If one exposes the film or sensor for a longer period, a reciprocally smaller aperture is required to reduce the amount of light hitting the film to obtain the same exposure

Extreme Close Up

(ECU) A shot framing in very close to the subject (closer than would be necessary for a close-up), revealing extreme detail (e.g. part of the human face).

Iris

The eye of the lens, which opens and closes, and decides and controls the exposure.



Lavaliere Microphone

Made for hands-free operation, these small microphones are omnidirectional (they record sounds coming from all directions equally) but generally have a shorter range than shotgun microphones. These microphones are worn on the body and held in place either with a lanyard worn around the neck or a clip fastened to clothing. The cord may be hidden by clothes and either run to a radio transmitter connected to the subject (for wireless lavalieres) or run directly to the mixer/camera (for wired lavalieres).

Long shot:

(LS) A shot framed so that the subject and their surroundings can be seen. Often the long shot serves as an establishing shot.

Medium shot:

(MS) A shot between a long shot and a medium closeup (e.g. a human figure taken from the waist up).

Over the shoulder

shot: (Also over shoulder, OS, OTS, or third-person shot) an over the shoulder shot is a shot of someone or something taken over the shoulder of another person. The back of the shoulder and head of this person is used to frame the image of whatever (or whomever) the camera is pointing toward. This type of shot is very common when two characters are having a discussion.

Pan

To turn the camera left to right or right to left on a horizontal axis.

Point of view shot:

(POV) Point of view (sometimes given with hyphens) describes the perspective from which a video is being told. It is also a term for a shot taken from a person's point of view (as if in their shoes).

Reaction shot:

A basic unit of film grammar in which a person is shown reacting to another person's action or words, or to an event supposedly witnessed by the reacting person(s). The assumption behind the logic of the reaction shot is that the emotional reaction of the person being depicted will either reveal something of the person's personality or move the story forward in some way (or both). A completely unemotional reaction may also be important if it provides information to the audience or is unexpected in the context of the scene.

Reflector

An object used while filming to reflect or "bounce" light. Reflectors can be used to reduce contrast, warm skin tones, eliminate shadows and/or soften light in general.





Room Tone¹

Every room has a distinct presence of subtle sounds created by the movement of air particles in a particular volume. A microphone placed in two different empty rooms will produce different room tone for each. Room tone is recorded during the sound recording of a film production. It is used to match the production sound track so that it may be intercut with the track and provide a continuous-sounding background. Use of room tone smooths out edit points. The soundtrack "going dead" would be perceived by the audience not as silence, but as a failure of the sound system.

Rule of Thirds

The rule states that an image can be divided into nine equal parts by two equally-spaced horizontal lines and two equally-spaced vertical lines. The four points formed by the intersections of these lines can be used to align features in the photograph. Proponents of this technique claim that aligning a photograph with these points creates more tension, energy and interest in the photo than simply centering the feature would.

Shotgun Microphone

A directional microphone that attaches to the top of the camera.

Shutter Speed

The term shutter comes from still photography, where it describes a mechanical "door" between the camera lens and the film. When a photo is taken, the door opens for an instant and the film is exposed to the incoming light. The speed at which the shutter opens and closes can be varied — the faster the speed, the shorter the period of time the shutter is open, and the less light falls on the film. Shutter speed is measured in fractions of a second. A speed of 1/60 second means that the shutter is open for one sixtieth of a second. A speed of 1/500 is faster, and 1/10000 is very fast indeed. Video camera shutters work quite differently from still camera shutters, but the result is basically the same. The shutter "opens" and "closes" once for each frame of video; that is, 25 times per second for PAL and 30 times per second for NTSC. Thus, if a camera has its shutter set to 1/60, each frame will be exposed for 1/60 second. If the speed is increased to 1/120, each frame will be exposed for 1/120 of a second. The main effect of higher shutter speeds is that individual frames appear sharper, due to the minimization of motion blur. Motion blur occurs when the subject moves within the frame while the shutter is open. The less time the shutter is open (i.e. the faster the shutter speed), the less movement will take place. One side-effect of higher shutter speeds is that movement appears jerkier. This is because motion blur tends to smooth consecutive frames together. Higher shutter speeds are common in sports coverage. As a result of the reduced exposure time with high shutter speeds, the image may appear darker unless the aperture is opened to compensate.

Tilt

A shot movement tilting the camera up or down.

UV Filter

A camera lens filter that absorbs ultraviolet rays without changing the exposure. With most images, people will not see a difference when a UV filter is used. Transparent to visible light, UV filters can be left on the lens for nearly all shots.

¹ <http://filmsound.org/terminology/roomtone.htm>



White Balance

A function on a video camera, which is set to make sure that colors are represented accurately. It is set by pointing the camera at something that is pure white and pressing a white balance button for a few seconds. Wide shot (abbr. WS)— A shot that shows the full context of a scene. Similar to an establishing shot, but used more integrally within a sequence rather than at the beginning of the scene.

Wide Shot

(WS) A shot that shows the full context of a scene. Similar to an establishing shot, but used more integrally within a sequence rather than at the beginning of the scene.

Zoom

Increasing or decreasing the magnification of a lens, making it look as though you are getting closer/further away (zooming in/zooming out).