

## Editing Techniques

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**Cut.** Sudden change of shot from one viewpoint or location to another. On television cuts occur on average about every 7 or 8 seconds. Cutting may:

- change the scene;
- compress time;
- vary the point of view; or
- build up an image or idea.

There is always a reason for a cut, and you should ask yourself what the reason is. Less abrupt transitions are achieved with the fade, dissolve, and wipe

**Matched cut.** In a 'matched cut' a familiar relationship between the shots may make the change seem smooth:

- continuity of direction;
- completed action;\*
- a similar centre of attention in the frame;
- a one-step change of shot size (e.g. long to medium);
- a change of angle (conventionally at least 30 degrees).

\*The cut is usually made on an action (for example, a person begins to turn towards a door in one shot; the next shot, taken from the doorway, catches him completing the turn). Because the viewer's eye is absorbed by the action he is unlikely to notice the movement of the cut itself.

**Jump cut.** Abrupt switch from one scene to another which may be used deliberately to make a dramatic point. Sometimes boldly used to begin or end action. Alternatively, it may be result of poor pictorial continuity, perhaps from deleting a section.

**Motivated cut.** Cut made just at the point where what has occurred makes the viewer immediately want to see something which is not currently visible (causing us, for instance, to accept compression of time). A typical feature is the shot/reverse shot technique (cuts coinciding with changes of speaker). Editing and camera work appear to be determined by the action. It is intimately associated with the 'privileged point of view' (see narrative style: objectivity).

**Cutting rate.** Frequent cuts may be used as deliberate interruptions to shock, surprise or emphasize.

**Cutting rhythm.** A cutting rhythm may be progressively shortened to increase tension. Cutting rhythm may create an exciting, lyrical or staccato effect in the

viewer.

**Cross-cut.** A cut from one line of action to another. Also applied as an adjective to sequences which use such cuts.

**Cutaway/cutaway shot (CA).** A bridging, intercut shot between two shots of the same subject. It represents a secondary activity occurring at the same time as the main action. It may be preceded by a definite look or glance out of frame by a participant, or it may show something of which those in the preceding shot are unaware. (See narrative style: parallel development) It may be used to avoid the technical ugliness of a 'jump cut' where there would be uncomfortable jumps in time, place or viewpoint. It is often used to shortcut the passing of time.

**Reaction shot.** Any shot, usually a cutaway, in which a participant reacts to action which has just occurred.

**Insert/insert shot.** A bridging close-up shot inserted into the larger context, offering an essential detail of the scene (or a reshooting of the action with a different shot size or angle.)

**Buffer shot (neutral shot).** A bridging shot (normally taken with a separate camera) to separate two shots which would have reversed the continuity of direction.

**Fade, dissolve (mix).** Both fades and dissolves are gradual transitions between shots. In a fade the picture gradually appears from (fades in) or disappears to (fades out) a blank screen. A slow fade-in is a quiet introduction to a scene; a slow fade-out is a peaceful ending. Time lapses are often suggested by a slow fade-out and fade-in. A dissolve (or mix) involves fading out one picture while fading up another on top of it. The impression is of an image merging into and then becoming another. A slow mix usually suggests differences in time and place. Defocus or ripple dissolves are sometimes used to indicate flashbacks in time.

**Superimpositions.** Two or more images placed directly over each other (e.g. an eye and a camera lens to create a visual metaphor).

**Wipe.** An optical effect marking a transition between two shots. It appears to supplant an image by wiping it off the screen (as a line or in some complex pattern, such as by appearing to turn a page). The wipe is a technique which draws attention to itself and acts as a clear marker of change.

**Inset.** An inset is a special visual effect whereby a reduced shot is superimposed on the main shot. Often used to reveal a close-up detail of the

main shot.

**Split screen.** The division of the screen into parts which can show the viewer several images at the same time (sometimes the same action from slightly different perspectives, sometimes similar actions at different times). This can convey the excitement and frenzy of certain activities, but it can also overload the viewer.

**Stock shot.** Footage already available and used for another purpose than the one for which it was originally filmed.

**Invisible editing:** See narrative style: continuity editing.