

Video production notes  
U3A – Digital Photography Group  
Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022

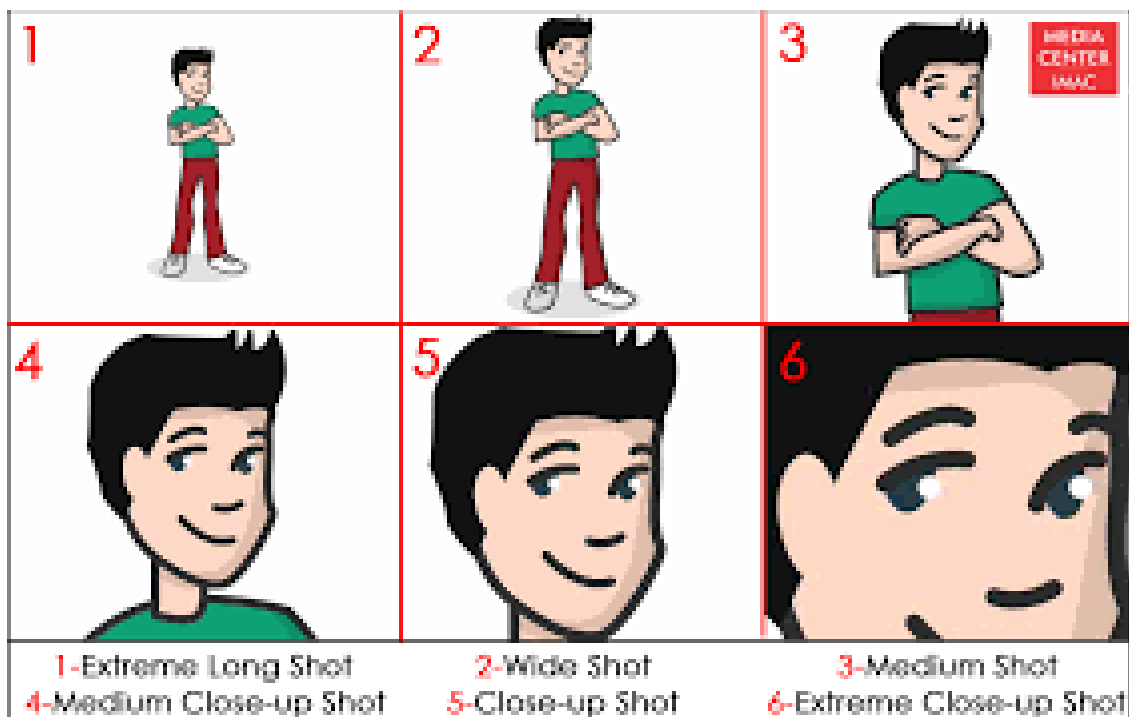
These notes are a guide to creating good-quality video productions at the shooting stage. Frederic's notes then deal with editing and post-production.

### EQUIPMENT

Many people use mobile phones to shoot video footage. While these are convenient and great for capturing spontaneous events and personal records, a DSLR with video recording facility or a camcorder will provide much more overall control (exposure, focus, etc). A tripod is essential, the sturdier the better, preferably with a video or fluid head, to give the smoothest possible camera movement. A camera-mounted LED light panel such as the Lume Cube is very useful. A directional ('shotgun') on-camera microphone is good for general sound recording. For interviews and when you need the best quality voice recording, use clip-on personal microphones such as those by Rode and Sennheiser, either wired or best of all wireless.

### TYPES OF SHOT

Camera shots are described with names that are used throughout the video and cinematography industries, with a little bit of variation here and there! This enables camera operators and directors to 'speak the same language' when setting shots up. The illustration below is a good guide. The Extreme Long Shot or Wide Shot (WS) is good for opening a scene, to establish geography. The Medium Shot (MS) is a good general talking shot for interviews, presenters speaking direct to camera, etc.



The Medium Close-Up (MCU) is more dramatic and the Close-Up (CU) is seriously dramatic. These would be used in shooting an amateur dramatic production, for example, and are often seen in soap operas, particularly towards the end of an emotional scene! The Extreme Close-Up (which is a little too close for my taste in the illustration) can be unflattering, and should therefore be used sparingly.

Other types of shot include:

**Pan.** Moving the camera horizontally left and right.

**Tilt.** Moving the camera up and down.

**Tracking shot.** Moving the camera physically towards, away from or parallel to your subject. This is normally achieved using a 'dolly', a wheeled camera platform on tracks (metal or plastic pipes). The operator sits or stands on the dolly and a camera technician or 'grip' pushes the dolly to match the action. This is the best way to move a camera, as it is very smooth and the change of perspective, particularly when 'tracking in' to or 'tracking out' from your subject looks natural (see 'Zoom'). The slider is a good alternative to the dolly. It is mounted on a tripod and the operator slides the camera smoothly on the track. WEX in Norwich has a number of affordable sliders and tracking dollies on its website.



**CAMERA DOLLY**

**SLIDER**

**Steadicam/gimbal shots.** Steadicam is a professional camera support system worn by the operator. Using spring-loaded gimbal arms it mechanically isolates the camera from the operator's movement, allowing for a smooth shot, even when the operator moves over an irregular surface. This gives great tracking shots following the action and actors. The film *1917* is a fine example. Small, affordable hand-held gimbals are now available for amateur camcorders and DSLRs.

**Zoom.** You make your subject larger or smaller in the frame using the zoom lens. Zooming in optically magnifies the subject, perhaps for dramatic effect, but the perspective does not

change. Remember that the human eye cannot zoom, so in order to see something in more detail, we need to move physically closer to it. This is why tracking shots, where there is a natural change of perspective, are preferable (if you have the gear and the time!)

**Over-The-Shoulder.** Used in drama and interviews, this is a Medium Shot of the person speaking but it includes the back of the head and shoulder of the person being spoken to in the foreground. This technique helps connect the two people's positions before cutting to single shots.

**Point-Of-View (POV).** This shot uses the camera as your own personal view of a scene as if the camera is you, and should be hand-held with people in the shot looking directly down the lens as if they are looking at you. Very dramatic.

**Dutch angle.** The Dutch angle shot got its name from the word 'Deutsch' (German for 'German') and was a popular film technique in Germany during the First World War. The camera is tilted at an angle from the horizontal to give dramatic effect. *The Third Man* makes good use of Dutch shots, but these should be used sparingly as they can easily look like a tripod mistake!

**Bird's Eye shot.** A high, extremely wide shot used to establish geography and setting, useful in editing as an opening or closing shot on which to overlay credits. Now achieved by drones – ask Frederic for more information, as he uses drones for stills photography.

Finally, don't 'hosepipe', a shot where you just move the camera randomly around the subject in order to get it all in shot, as if spraying it with a hosepipe. An example might be a large mural on a wall. Use a static Wide Shot, Pan or Tilt gently across the subject, and pick out Close-ups of your subject, and these will edit together nicely.

## COMPOSITION

Being photographers, you will all know about good composition and the rule of thirds. The screen shot below illustrates some video and cinematography terms.

**Look (or Looking) Room.** This is the space between the subject's eyes and the edge of the frame. In an interview or dramatic situation, the person you are shooting should have more space to look into in front of them than behind them, usually using the rule of thirds to frame your subject. This makes the shot comfortable to watch and gives the impression of them talking to an off-screen interviewer. Placing the person in the middle of the frame can look a bit unsettling, and is only used if the person is talking direct to camera. If the looking room is less than the space behind the person ('negative space'), this can be distracting, so tends to be used for dramatic effect only.

**Head room.** The example also shows head room, i.e. the amount of space between the head and the top of the frame. Allow a reasonable space for head movement, but don't let the head touch the top of the frame or give too much head room with the head near the middle of the frame, as these both look awkward.

**Eyeline.** Try to have your subject facing camera as much as possible so that you can see both eyes and their facial expressions. Profile shots are good and can be dramatic, but framing

somewhere inbetween ('off the eyeline') can be uncomfortable. Remember to have people looking the correct way (left to right, right to left) in interviews or dramatic situations, or the viewer may become confused. Logically, therefore, the complementary Medium Shot of the person interviewing the man below will have the interviewer looking left to right.



I hope these notes, in conjunction with Frederic's post-production tips, will help you achieve great results with your video productions!