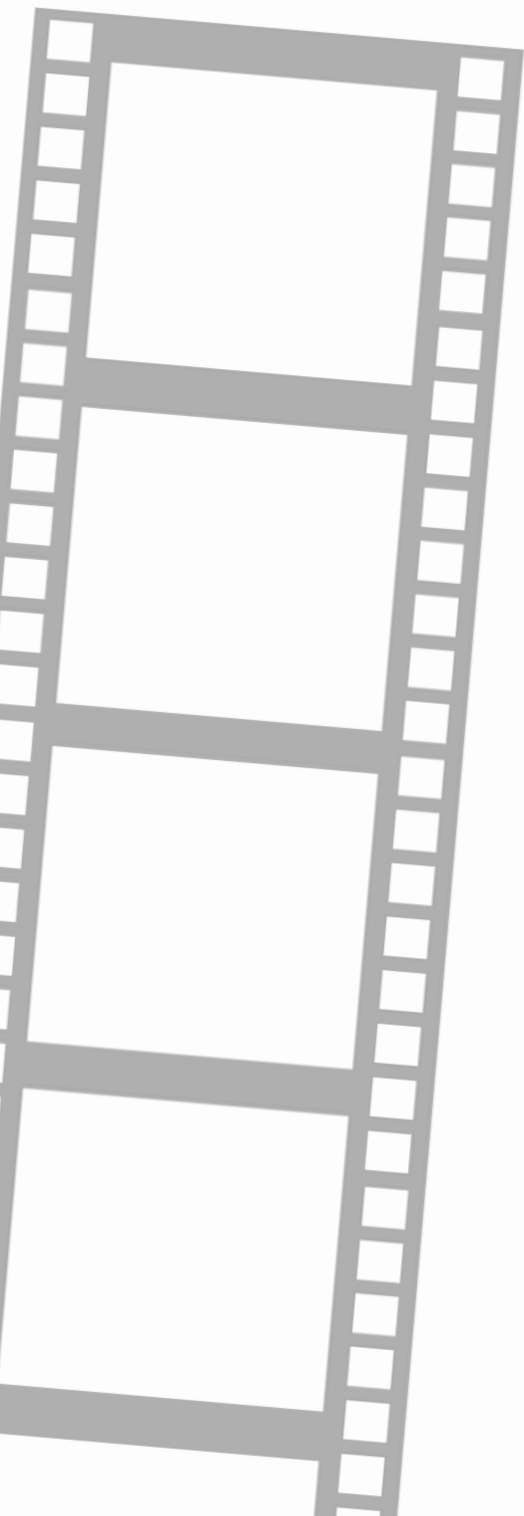


## FILM SCHOOL GLOSSARY



Below are terms related to this curriculum and to the film industry. The \* indicates that the term has a video example associated with it - check out the Multimedia Glossary on the IFC Film School web site to see them.

**180 Degree Rule\*** - a screen direction rule that camera operators must follow - an imaginary line on one side of the axis of action is made (e.g., between two principal actors in a scene), and the camera must not cross over that line - otherwise, there is a distressing visual discontinuity and disorientation; similar to the axis of action (an imaginary line that separates the camera from the action before it) that should not be crossed

**Adaptation** - the presentation of one art form through another medium; a film based upon (or adapted from) a stage play (or from another medium such as a short story, book, article, history, novel, video game, comic strip/book, etc.) which basically preserves both the setting and dialogue of the original; can be in the form of a script (screenplay) or a proposal treatment

**Aerial Shot** - a camera shot filmed in an exterior location from far overhead (from a bird's eye view), as from a helicopter (most common), blimp, balloon, plane, or kite; a variation on the crane shot; if the aerial shot is at the opening of a film, it's also known as an establishing shot

**Aperture** - refers to the measurement of the opening in a camera lens that regulates the amount of light passing through and contacting the film

**Arc Shot\*** - a shot in which the subject(s) is photographed by an encircling or moving camera

**Art Director** - refers to the individual responsible for the design, look, and feel of a film's set, including the number and type of props, furniture, windows, floors, ceilings dressings, and all other set materials; a member of the film's art department (responsible for set construction, interior design, and prop placement)

**Audio** - refers to the sound portion of a film

**Available Light** - the naturally-existing light in an off-set location; a film's realism is enhanced by using available light rather than having artificial light

**Backlighting\*** - this phenomenon occurs when the lighting for the shot is directed at the camera from behind the subject(s), causing the figure(s) in the foreground to appear in semi-darkness or as silhouettes, or highlighted; with backlighting, the subject is separated from the background.

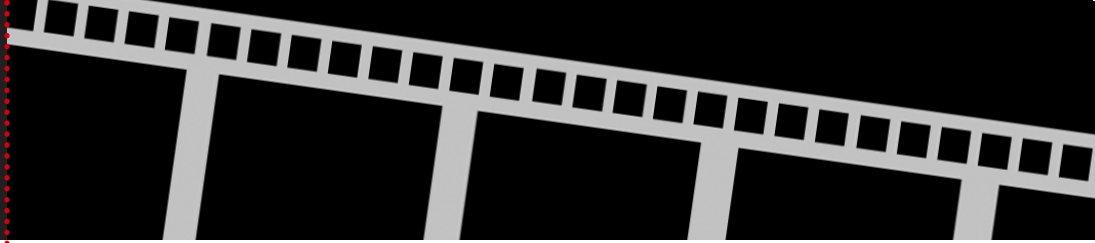
**Boom Shot\*** - a continuous single shot made from a moving boom, assembled like a montage, and incorporating any number of camera levels and angles

**Bridging Shot** - a shot used to cover or 'bridge' a jump in time or place or other discontinuity

**Camera Angle** - the point of view (POV) or perspective (including relative height or direction) chosen from which to photograph a subject. Various camera angles, compositions, or positions include: front, behind, side, top, high (looking down), low (looking up), straight-on or eye-level (standard or neutral angle), tilted (canted or oblique), or subjective, etc.

**Camera Movement** - the use of the camera to obtain various camera angles and perspectives. (See motion picture camera shots below, including the pan, tilt, track, and zoom; also boom/crane shots, Steadicam, or hand-held)

**Cinematographer** - specifically refers to the art and technique of film photography, the capture of images, and lighting effects, or to the person expert in and responsible for capturing or recording-photographing images for a film, through the selection of visual recording devices, camera angles, film stock, lenses, framing, and arrangement of lighting; the chief cinematographer responsible for a movie is called the director of photography (or D.P.), or first cameraman; one of the earliest movie-picture machines, patented by the Lumiere brothers in 1895, was termed a *Cinematographe*.

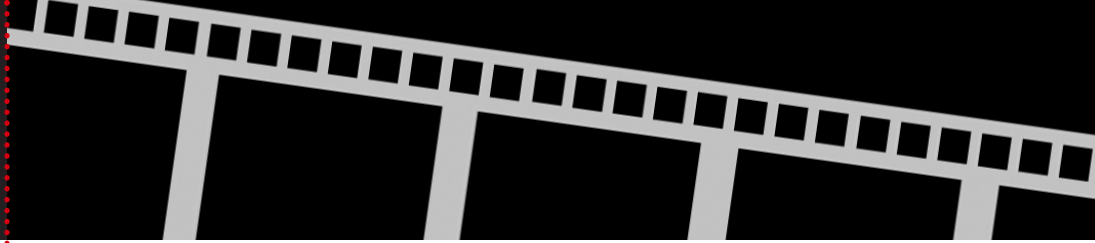


**Cinema Verite'** - a French word that literally means "true cinema" or "cinema truth"; a method or style of documentary movie-making with long takes, and little or no directorial or editing control exerted over the finished product; usually made without actors, and often with a minimum of film equipment, a small film crew (camera and sound), impromptu interview techniques, and a hand-held camera and portable sound equipment; sometimes used to loosely refer to a documentary-style film or minimalist cinema; popularized in the 1950s French New Wave movement; now widely used (often inappropriately) to refer to the popular, artsy trend of using hand-held camera techniques; also termed free cinema (UK) or direct cinema (US)

**Close-up (CU)\*** - a shot taken from a close distance in which the scale of the object is magnified, appears relatively large, and fills the entire frame to focus attention and emphasize its importance; i.e., a person's head from the shoulders or neck up is a commonly-filmed close-up; a tight shot makes the subject fill almost the entire frame; also extreme close-up (ECU or XCU) is a shot of a part of a character (e.g., face, head, hands) to emphasize detail; also known as detail shot or close on; contrast to long-shot (LS)

**Crane Shot** - a shot taken from a large camera dolly or electronic device, resembling a extendable mechanical arm (or boom), that can raise the camera up in the air above the ground 20 feet or more; the crane allows the camera to fluidly move in virtually any direction (with vertical and horizontal movement), providing shifts in levels and angles; crane shots usually provide some kind of overhead view of a scene.

**Cross-cutting\*** - the editing technique of alternating, interweaving, or interspersing one narrative action (scene, sequence, or event) with another - usually in different locations or places, thus combining the two; this editing method suggests parallel action (that takes place simultaneously); often used to dramatically build tension and suspense in chase scenes, or to compare two different scenes; also known as inter-cutting or parallel editing

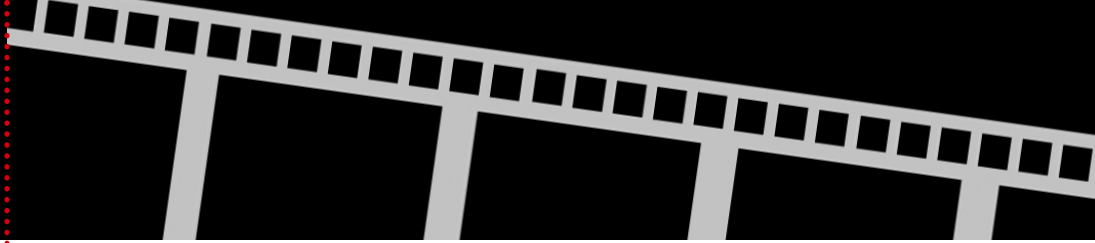


**Cut** - an abrupt or sudden change or jump in camera angle, location, placement, or time, from one shot to another; consists of a transition from one scene to another (a visual cut) or from one soundtrack to another (a sound cut); cutting refers to the selection, splicing and assembly by the film editor of the various shots or sequences for a reel of film, and the process of shortening a scene; also refers to the instructional word 'cut' said at the end of a take by the director to stop the action in front of the camera; cut to refers to the point at which one shot or scene is changed immediately to another; also refers to a complete edited version of a film (e.g., rough cut); also see director's cut; various types of cuts include invisible cut, smooth cut, jump cut, shock cut, etc.

**Cutaway Shot\*** - a brief shot that momentarily interrupts a continuously-filmed action, by briefly inserting another related action, object, or person (sometimes *not* part of the principal scene or main action), followed by a cutback to the original shot; often filmed from the POV of the character and used to break up a sequence and provide some visual relief, or to ease the transition from one shot to the next, or to provide additional information, or to hint at an impending change; reaction shots are usually cutaways; cross-cutting is a series of cutaways and cutbacks indicating concurrent action; a cutaway is different from an insert shot.

**Day-for-night Shot** - a cinematographic technique for using shots filmed during the day to appear as moonlit night shots on the screen, by using different lenses, filters, special lighting and underexposure; very common during the 50s and in the 60s, but rarely used in present-day films

**Deep-focus Shot** - a style or technique of cinematography and staging with great depth of field, preferred by realists, that uses lighting, relatively wide angle lenses and small lens apertures to simultaneously render in sharp focus both close and distant planes (including the three levels of foreground, middle-ground, and extreme background objects) in the same shot; contrast to shallow focus (in which only one plane is in sharp focus)



**Depth of Field** - the depth of composition of a shot, i.e., where there are several planes (vertical spaces in a frame): (1) a foreground, (2) a middle-ground, and (3) a background; depth of field specifically refers to the area, range of distance, or field (between the closest and farthest planes) in which the elements captured in a camera image appear in sharp or acceptable focus; as a rule of thumb, the area 1/3 in front of and 2/3 behind the subject is the actual distance in focus; depth of field is directly connected, but should not be confused with focus.

**Director** - the creative artist responsible for complete artistic control of all phases of a film's production (such as making day-to-day determinations about sound, lighting, action, casting, even editing), for translating/interpreting a script into a film, for guiding the performances of the actors in a particular role and/or scene, and for supervising the cinematography and film crew. The director is usually the single person most responsible for the finished product, although he/she couldn't make a film without support from many other artists and technicians; often the director is called a helmer (at-the-helm); the assistant director is known as the a.d.; the director of photography (or cinematographer) is known as the d.p.

**Dissolve\*** - a transitional editing technique between two sequences, shots or scenes, in which the visible image of one shot or scene is gradually replaced (by an overlapping fade out or fade in and dissolve) with the image from another shot or scene; for an instant, one image is superimposed on or gradually blended with the other; often used to suggest the passage of time and to transform one scene to the next; lap dissolve is shorthand for 'over'lap dissolve; also known as a soft transition or dissolve to

**Dolly Shot\*** - refers to a moving shot in which the perspective of the subject and background is changed; the shot is taken from a camera that is mounted on a hydraulically-powered wheeled camera platform (sometimes referred to as a truck or dolly), pushed on rails (special tracks) and moved smoothly and noiselessly during filming while the camera is running; a pull-back shot (or dolly out) is the moving back ('tracking back') of the camera from a scene to reveal a character or object that was previously out of the frame, dolly in is when the camera moves closer ('tracking in') towards the subject, and dollying along with (or 'tracking within') refers to the camera moving beside the subject; also known as tracking shot, trucking shot, follow shot, or traveling shot; contrast with zoom shots

**Dubbing** - the act of putting a new soundtrack on a film or adding a soundtrack (of dialogue, sound effects, or music) after production, to match the action of already-filmed shots; also refers to adding translated dialogue to a foreign-language film; as opposed to direct sound, which is sound recorded when filming a scene; contrast to looping

**Dutch Tilt\*** - a shot made with the camera leaned to one side and filming at a diagonal angle; see also *camera angle*

**Editor (editing)** - the process (performed by a film editor) of selecting, assembling, arranging, collating, trimming, structuring, and splicing-joining together many separate camera takes (includes sound also) of exposed footage (or daily rushes) into a complete, determined sequence or order of shots (or film) - that follows the script; digital editing refers to changing film frames by digitizing them and modifying them electronically; relational editing refers to editing shots to suggest a conceptual link between them; an editor works in a cutting room; the choice of shots has a tremendous influence upon the film's final appearance.

**Establishing Shot\*** - usually a long (wide-angle or full) shot at the beginning of a scene (or a sequence) that is intended to show things from a distance (often an aerial shot), and to inform the audience with an overview in order to help identify and orient the locale or time for the scene and action that follows; this kind of shot is usually followed by a more detailed shot that brings characters, objects, or other figures closer; a re-establishing shot repeats an establishing shot near the end of a sequence.

**Fade (out/in)\*** - a transitional device consisting of a gradual change in the intensity of an image or sound, such as from a normally-lit scene to darkness (fade out, fade-to-black) or vice versa, from complete black to full exposure (fade in), or from silence to sound or vice versa; a 'fade in' is often at the beginning of a sequence, and a 'fade out' at the end of a sequence.

**Filters** - glass, plastic, or gelatinous substance placed before or behind a camera lens to change the effect and character of the lighting within the film's frame

**Fourth Wall** - refers to the imaginary, illusory invisible plane through which the film viewer or audience is thought to look through toward the action; the fourth wall that separates the audience from the characters is 'broken through' when the barrier between the fictional world of the film's story and the "real world" of the audience is shattered. ;when an actor speaks directly to the viewers by making an aside

**Frame** - refers to a single image, the smallest compositional unit of a film's structure, captured by the camera on a strip of motion picture film - similar to an individual slide in still photography; a series of frames juxtaposed and shown in rapid succession make up a motion (or moving) picture; also refers to the rectangular area within which the film image is composed by the film-maker - in other words, a frame is what we see (within the screen).

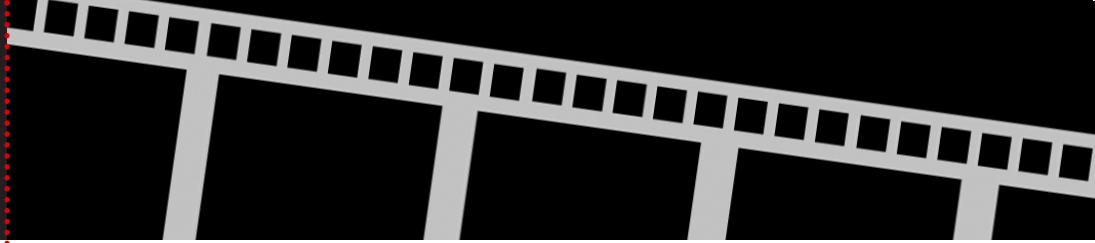
**Freeze-frame\*** - an optical printing effect in which a single frame image is identically repeated or replicated over several frames; when projected, a freeze frame gives the illusion of a still photograph in which the action has ceased.

**F-stop** - the scale measurement of the size of the opening of the iris (the opening that lets light in) on a lens; common f-stops are 1.4, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, and 22; the smaller the number, the larger the opening, and the more light that is allowed

**Handheld Shot** - a shot taken with a handheld camera or deliberately made to appear unstable, shaky or wobbly; often used to suggest either documentary footage, 'realism,' news reporting, cinema verite', or amateur cinematography.

**High-angle Shot\*** - a shot in which the subject is filmed from above and the camera points down on the action, often to make the subject small, weak and vulnerable; contrast to low-angle shot

**Jump Cut\*** - an abrupt, disorienting transitional device in the middle of a continuous shot in which the action is noticeably advanced in time and/or cut between two *similar* scenes, either done accidentally (a technical flaw or the result of bad editing) or purposefully (to create discontinuity for artistic effect); also contrast with an ellipsis and match cut



**Key Light** - the main or primary light on a subject, often angled and off-center (or from above) that selectively illuminates various prominent features of the image to produce depth, shadows, etc.; high-key lighting (with everything evenly and brightly lit, with a minimum of shadows) is termed realistic (and often used in musicals and comedies), while low-key lighting (with less illumination, more shadows, and many grayish, dark areas) is termed expressionistic (and often used in *film noir*); three-point lighting uses: (1) a fill (or filler) light - an auxiliary light to soften shadows and areas not covered by the key light, (2) a back light behind to add depth to a subject, and (3) a bright key light

**Long-shot (LS)\*** - a camera view of an object or character from a considerable distance so that it appears relatively small in the frame, e.g., a person standing in a crowd of people or a horse in a vast landscape; variations are the medium long-shot (or mid-shot) (MS) and the extreme long-shot (ELS or XLS); also called a wide shot; a long shot often serves as an establishing shot; contrast to close-up (CU); a full-shot is a type of long shot that includes a subject's entire body (head to feet).

**Low-angle Shot\*** - a shot in which the subject is filmed directly from below and the camera points up at the action, to make the subject appear larger, more formidable and menacing, or perhaps tall and regal; contrast to a high-angle shot

**Master Shot** - a continuous shot or long take that shows the main action or setting of an entire scene (most scenes are shot with one or two master angles and then broken up into a series of smaller or tighter angles (such as one-shots, two-shots, and reaction shots)); a master refers to a positive print made especially for duplication purposes.

**Match Cut\*** - a cut in which two shots are joined or linked by visual, aural, or metaphorical parallelism or similarities.

**Medium Shot (MS)\*** - refers to a conventional camera shot filmed from a medium distance; although it is difficult to precisely define, it usually refers to a human figure from the waist (or knees) up; between a close shot and a long shot; abbreviated as m.s.



**Montage\*** - literally, "putting together"; refers to a filming technique, editing style, or form of movie collage consisting of a series of successive short shots or images that are rapidly juxtaposed into a coherent sequence to suggest meaning; dissolves, fades, superimpositions, and wipes are often used to link the images in a montage sequence; an accelerated montage is composed of shots of increasingly-shorter lengths.

**Pan\*** - abbreviation for panorama shot; refers to the horizontal scan, movement, rotation or turning of the camera in one direction (to the right or left) around a fixed axis while filming; a variation is the swish pan (also known as flash pan, flick pan, zip pan, blur pan, or whip pan), in which the camera is purposely panned in either direction at a very fast pace, creating the impression of a fast-moving horizontal blurring of images across the screen; often confused with a dolly or tracking shot

**Point-Of-View (POV) Shot\*** - the perspective from which the film story is told; also refers to a shot that depicts the outlook or position of a character

**Producer** - the chief of a movie production in all logistical matters (i.e., scheduling, budgeting) save the creative efforts of the director; raises funding and financing, acquires or develops a story, finalizes the script, hires key personnel, and arranges for distributors of the film to theaters; serves as the liaison between the financiers and the film-makers, while managing the production from start to finish.

**Rack Focus\*** - refers to a film technique - an on-screen focus change from an object in the foreground to an object in the background or vice versa, to direct, shift, and steer the attention of the viewer forcibly from one subject to another; also known as selective focusing

**Reaction Shot\*** - a quick shot that records a character's or group's response to another character or some on-screen action or event; often accompanied with a POV shot; reaction shots are usually cutaways.

**Reverse Angle Shot\*** - a basic camera angle composed of a shot photographed from the opposite side of a subject to provide a different perspective; in a dialogue scene between characters, a shot of the second participant is commonly composed as an over-the-shoulder shot; sometimes known as an 180 degree angle shot or change in perspective; the alternating pattern between two characters' points of view is known as shot/reverse shot; a reverse motion (or reverse action) shot is created by running film backwards in the camera or during optical printing.

**Rough Cut** - an early edited (or 'cut') version of a film - with all the pieces of the film assembled in continuous, sequential order, but without any fancy editing; also sometimes known as first cut; one of the stages toward the final cut; often used in a focus group screening

**Scene** - usually a shot (or series of shots) that together comprise a single, complete and unified dramatic event, action, unit, or element of film narration, or block (segment) of storytelling within a film, much like a scene in a play; the end of a scene is often indicated by a change in time, action and/or location

**Screenplay** - a script or text for a film production written by a scripter or screenwriter(s) (or scribe), written (scribbled, scripted, or penned) in the prescribed form as a series of master scenes, with all the dialogue provided and the essential actions and character movements described; screenplays are often adaptations of other works; known archaically as a photoplay during the silent era

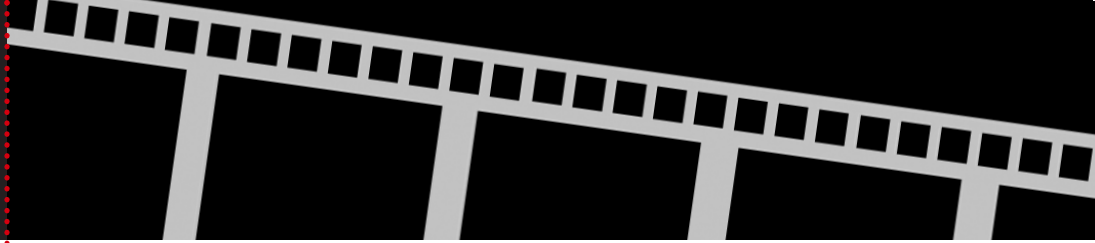
**Script** - refers to the written text of a film - a blueprint for producing a film detailing the story, setting, dialogue, movements and gestures of actors, and the shape and sequence of all events in the film; in various forms, such as a screenplay, shooting script, breakdown script (a very detailed, day-to-day listing of all requirements for shooting, used mostly by crew), lined script, continuity script, or a spec script (written to studio specifications); a screenplay writer is known as a screenwriter; a last-minute script re-writer is known as a script doctor; a scenario is a script that includes camera and set direction as well as dialogue and cast direction; a shooting script is a detailed version of the screenplay with the scenes arranged in proper sequence, and used by the cast.

**Shot** - the basic building block or unit of film narrative; refers to a single, constant take made by a motion picture camera uninterrupted by editing, interruptions or cuts, in which a length of film is exposed by turning the camera on, recording, and then turning the camera off; it can also refer to a single film frame (such as a still image); a follow-shot is when the camera moves to follow the action; a pull-back shot refers to a tracking shot or zoom that moves back from the subject to reveal the context of the scene; see also scene and sequence; shot analysis refers to the examination of individual shots; a one-shot, a two-shot, and a three-shot refers to common names for shooting just one, two, or three people in a shot.

**Soft Focus\*** - a cinematographic effect in which a filter, vaseline or gauze-like substance placed over the camera lens reduces the clarity or sharpness of focus, blurs the image, and produces a diffused, hazy light; often used to enhance romantic or dreamy scenes, or to remove wrinkle lines from an actor's face; common in the films of the 1930s

**Special Effects (F/X)** - a broad, wide-ranging term used by the film industry meaning to create fantastic visual and audio illusions that cannot be accomplished by normal means, such as travel into space. Many visual (photographic) or mechanical (physical) filmic techniques or processes are used to produce special illusionary effects, such as optical and digital effects, CGI, in-camera effects, the use of miniatures/models, mattes, rear-camera projections, stop-motion animation, bluescreens, full-scale mockups, pyrotechnics (squibs (miniature explosions, i.e. a gunshot)), stunt men, animatronics (electronic puppets), rain/snow/wind machines, etc.; F/X are coordinated by the visual effects and the special effects supervisors; known negatively as trick photography

**Stock Footage** - previously-shot footage or film of common elements or scenes, such as canyons or deserts in the American West, or travelogue shots (e.g., skylines, airplane takeoffs/landings, famous places, etc.) that are kept in a film archive and used to fill in portions of a movie in different film productions, thereby saving the time of re-shooting similar scenes over and over; a stock shot refers to an unimaginative or commonplace shot that looks like it could be stock footage.



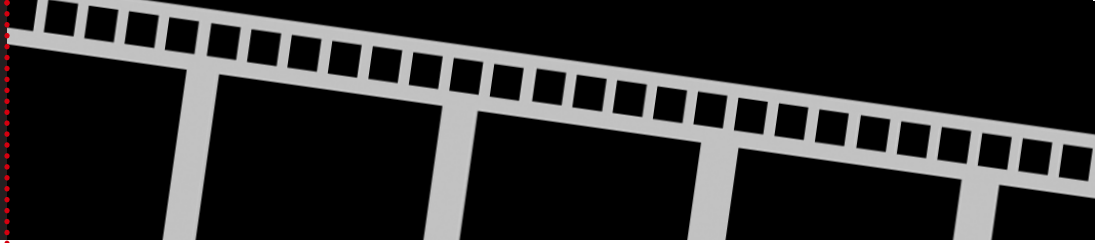
**Storyboard** - a sequential series of illustrations, stills, rough sketches and/or captions (sometimes resembling a comic or cartoon strip) of events, as seen through the camera lens, that outline the various shots or provide a synopsis for a proposed film story (or for a complex scene) with its action and characters; the storyboards are displayed in sequence for the purpose of visually mapping out and crafting the various shot divisions and camera movements in an animated or live-action film; a blank storyboard is a piece of paper with rectangles drawn on it to represent the camera frame (for each successive shot); a sophisticated type of preview-storyboard (often shot and edited on video, with a soundtrack) is termed an animatic.

**Take** - a single continuously-recorded performance, shot or version of a scene with a particular camera setup; often, multiple takes are made of the same shot during filming, before the director approves the shot; in box-office terms, it also refers to the money a film's release has made.

**Tilt Shot\*** - a camera tilted up or down on a diagonal along a vertical axis; a vertical camera movement from a fixed position often used to suggest an imbalance, or strangeness; also known as tilt pan or vertical pan, although not technically the same as "pan up" or "pan down"; a dutch angle is filmed at an extreme diagonal tilt.

**Tracking Shot\*** - a smooth shot in which the camera moves alongside ('tracking within') the subject in a side-to-side motion (relative to the scene or the action); also known as following shot; sometimes used interchangeably with dolly shot, pull back shot, track back or track in, or zoom shot

**Trailer** - a short publicity film, preview, or advertisement composed of short excerpts and scenes from a forthcoming film or coming attraction, usually two-three minutes in length; often presented at the showing of another film. Historically, these advertisements were placed at the end of a newsreel or supporting feature and so "trailed" them, hence the name; also commonly known as preview(s); also, another name for the tail - a length of blank leader (strip of film) at the end of a reel; a teaser is basically a very short trailer (of 15-30 seconds in length) that only provides a few hints about the film (a web address, a few bars of music, a quick sequence of images, specially-shot footage, etc.)



**Treatment** - a detailed literary summary or presentation of a film's story, with action and characters described in *prose* form, often used to market and/or sell a film project or script; a completed treatment is a late stage in the development of a screenplay after several story conferences have incorporated changes into the script; contrast to a synopsis which is a brief summation of a film

**Voice-over\*** - refers to recorded dialogue, usually narration, that comes from an unseen, off-screen voice, character, or narrator (abbreviated as o.s. meaning beyond camera range), that can be heard by the audience but not by the film characters themselves; narration is a type of voice-over; v.o. often conveys the character's thoughts, either as a 'voice' heard within one's head, or as other narrative information and commentary; often a technique in film noirs; the abbreviation is used as an annotation in a script.

**Wide-angle shot\*** - a shot (often abbreviated WS) taken with a lens that is able to take in a wider field of view (to capture more of the scene's elements or objects) than a regular or normal lens; a wide-angle shot exaggerates the distance or disparity between foreground and background planes; an extreme or ultra-wide-angle lens giving a 180 degree view is called a 'fish-eye' lens.

**Wipe\*** - a transitional technique or optical effect/device in which one shot appears to be "pushed off" or "wiped off" the screen by another shot replacing it and moving across the existing image; also called a push-over; a flip-over (or flip) wipe is when one scene rotates or flips-over to the new scene; wipes were very commonly used in the 30s.

**Zoom Shot\*** - a single shot taken with a lens that has a variable focal length, thereby permitting the cinematographer to change the distance between the camera and the object being filmed, and rapidly move from a wide-angle shot to a telephoto shot in one continuous movement; this camera technique makes an object in the frame appear larger; movement towards a subject is known as zoom in or forward zoom, or reversed is known as zoom out/back or backward zoom

*Glossary terms and definitions provided by [filmsite.org](http://filmsite.org)*