CHAPTER 6
CAMERA SHOTS AND MOVEMENTS

TYPES OF SHOTS

There are a variety of camera shots available to the videographer. The list could be quite long. For all intended purposes, the list can be put into four basic shot categories. The following are explanations of the four categories and the intended uses of each type of shot.

WIDE SHOTS

The wide shot is often called a long shot or **wide-angle shot**. The lens is at its widest focal length and the angle of view is large. Wide-angle shots show an entire area whether it is indoors or outdoors.

The wide shot is used to show the location where the action will take place. The location could be as small or as large as you wish. The size does not matter. This shot is also used to set the atmosphere of the scene. Is it a warm sunny day, a gloomy rainy day, a tense social situation, or a happy birthday party? A slow wide angle shot moving from left to right across a foggy dark cemetery definitely establishes an atmosphere and mood. Because of this use, the long shot is often referred to as an **establish shot**.

Another use for the wide shot is to cover a broad range of action and show the interrelationships among the subjects in the scene.

Wide shots should be used occasionally during a production to reestablish the location of the scene in the viewer's mind.

Establish shots are not on the screen for a long time. Three or four seconds is a good time.

MEDIUM SHOTS

Medium shots can also be called medium close-ups, waist shots, or bust shots. This shot can provide ample coverage of a scene and hold more of the viewer's interest than the wide shot. A medium shot should show a portion of the background, but the image size should be large enough to keep the focus of attention on the action taking place.

Medium shots are great for showing two people standing and talking; for showing a person doing a table top demonstration; or for

showing a person leaving a room through a doorway. In each these situations, the medium shot would provide a location and yet be close enough to reveal the details of the action.

CLOSE-UP SHOTS

The **close-up** is generally not known by any other name. With the close-up, details are magnified. The viewer is provided with smaller detailed bits of action that is taking place in the scene. Close-ups of a person delivering a speech would place emphasis on that part of the speech. A close-up of one person listening to another person will provide the listener's reaction to the speaker.

The close-up is an important tool to the videographer. Television requires close-ups due to the lack of picture **resolution**. (Resolution is the ability to deliver detail. The higher the resolution, the greater the detail in the picture.) Details are often lost due to this technical drawback. The camera must move in close or the lens zoomed in to show the details of the image and create an emotional response. The emotional tears of a happy bride dancing with her father at the end of a wedding reception would be lost in a wide angle or medium shot. A close-up provices the details and creates the emotion.

Even when TV resolution increases, this type of scene will demand a close-up. The close-up brings the emotions of the scene to the screen better than any other shot. Remember, TV is a close-up medium. It demands close-ups to deliver messages. Therefore this shot is used often.

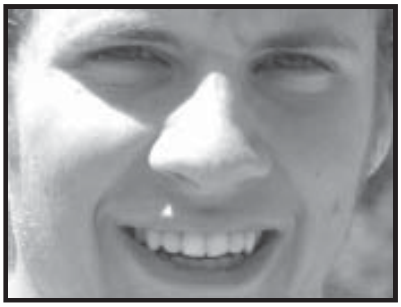
Be careful with close-ups. They can create different or undesirable impressions of an object or person. An object can look bigger than it actually is or an individual can become overpowering or overbearing.

Close-ups greatly exaggerate the movements of a subject and this will make the action hard to follow and difficult to watch. Viewers have gotten dizzy from watching continuous movements on the screen in close-up shots. Close-ups can also cause appropriate and necessary movements of the subject to be lost out of frame.

Finally, close-ups, have very little depth of field, which makes focusing critical. The slightest change in distance from the camera to subject will defocus the image. Constant attention must be given to focus with either a manual or auto-focus lens.

EXTREME CLOSE-UPS

The best way to define this shot is to give an example. A person's eye, the dial on a watch face, or a hand turning a doorknob would all be extreme close-up shots.



The extreme close-up is a extremely powerful shot. Generally, it has twice as much of an effect on the viewer as does an ordinary close-up. It is a shot that carries visual impact. Since this is so, use it cautiously and wisely.

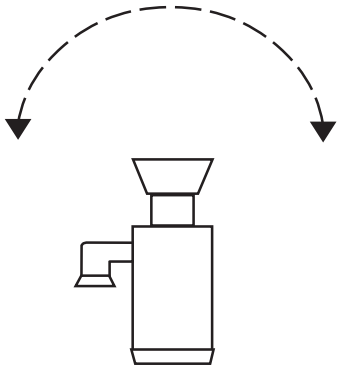
DO IT

Practice creating the different types of camera shots. Use a large outdoor location to create all the shots. Use a person seated at a classroom desk to create all the shots. Write a few paragraphs explaining the shots for each locaton.

CAMERA MOVEMENTS

Video cameras are meant to move. A stationary, static camera is dull and boring. The following paragraphs name and explain the different camera movements.

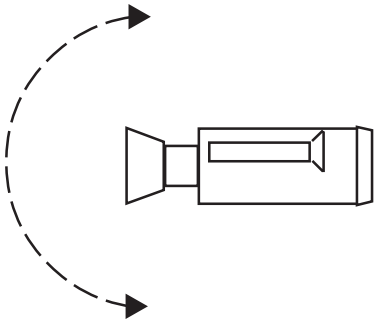
PANNING



When a camera is moved from side to side, this is known as **panning**. Here the lens scans the scene to provide the viewer with elements of a scene that cannot be included in a wide-angle shot. A pan can also reveal information as needed. It can follow a moving object.

Panning should be smooth. It should not start with a jerk or end with a sudden stop. Adjusting the tension and drag on your tripod head will insure smooth pans and tilts.

TILTING



The movement of the camera head up or down is know as **tilting**. Tilting the camera up can show height. Tilting it down can show depth. It can also show relationships. For example, the tilt of the camera from a man standing on a rocky ledge with a coiled rope on his shoulder to a man standing alone at the base of the cliff presents the situation.

Tilts can also generate emotional responses. Tilting upward can causes feelings of rising interest, expectation, hope, or anticipation. Tilting downward can lower interest and create feelings or disappointment or sadness.

TRUCKING

To **truck** a camera is to move the camera along with a moving subject or to move it parallel with the scene. If a camera were to move along with a person walking along a sidewalk this would be trucking. The person would seem stationary in the picture, but the background would appear to be moving.

Trucking creates a feeling of observation or inspection.

DOLLYING

Moving a camera towards or away from the subject is **dollying**. The direction of the dolly draws different types of attention from the viewer. When the dolly moves toward the subject, the viewer's interest is increased.

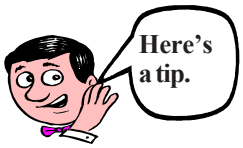
A camera dollied toward a sleeping young lady on a dark stormy night in a horror movie indicates that something is about to happen. (Add the scary music and we know something is definitely about to happen).

When the camera is dollied away interest in the subject is lowered and tensions are relaxed. Take the same sleeping girl in the horror movie and dolly the camera away from the bed and out of the bedroom, and we know that we can stop biting our nails.

ZOOMING

With today's modern computer designed lenses, the camera can have a zoom lens that will enable the videographer to be closer or further away from the subject without moving the camera. With the push of a bottom or the moving of a lever, the lens can be **zoomed in** and become a telephoto lens, or when **zoomed out** it will become a wide-angle lens. The ability to zoom a lens in and out gives a tremendous amount of creativity to the videographer.

This capability has also created zoom monsters. The sign of an amateur videographer is the excessive use of zooms. Ins and outs, ins and outs, ins and outs are sickening to watch. These "yo-yo" zoomers can cause viewers to take motion sickness pills.



When possible, use different camera shots to replace zooms. Going from an establish shot to a medium shot and then to a close-up will make for interesting video.

Zooms can be used as dollies but not in all instances. Changing the focal length of a lens also changes what is included in the frame. This means, as you zoom in, the lens changes from wide-angle to telephoto and this changes the angle of coverage of the lens. When the angle of coverage decreases, this eliminates elements in the frame. Dollying does not change the focal length and therefore, the frame elements are not changed as much. This difference between dollying and zooming must be understood because it is an important creative tool.

The speed at which zooms take place have a definite bearing on the viewer. Fast zooms bring emphasis and excitement. Slow zooms remove emphasis and are calming.

A very slow zoom in or out can take a long boring static shot and make it seem short. For example, you are taping a speech with one camera. You cannot take the camera off the speaker. This is not too interesting. However, by using a very, slow zoom the shot is constantly altered to create a more interesting version.

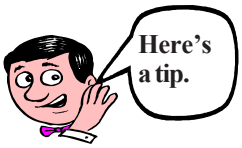
Be careful with this technique because slow zooming during a speech could indicate what is being said is becoming important.

MAKING CAMERA MOVEMENTS

The video camera can take small movements by the videographer and magnify them greatly. If the camera is not held rock - steady, every little wiggle, bump, jerk, sway, step, or move of any kind will seem ten times worse when viewed on the TV screen.

Therefore, every movement that the camera makes must be in slow motion. You must develop a sense about yourself to move your hands about the camera in slow motion. The camera must move in slow motion as well. When placing your hand on the camera lens to focus, to change the iris, or to engage the fade sequence, do it in slow motion. The slightest bump will look like an earthquake on the screen.

Walking with the camera is a must in certain situations. However, it should be avoided most of the time. If you must walk with the camera, you should develop a Groucho Marx style of walk. That is a bent knee and waist type of walk that does not allow your head to bob up and down. Practice this, it works. You should also know where you are about to walk. Before you start walking, look for any obstacles like small stones, curbs, furniture, people that might cause you to stumble. Know your path. Another technique when walking is to use your free hand to guide yourself along a wall, railing, or any other structure. If you have to walk backwards, you can extend your arm and hand behind your back as a feeler to prevent any collisions with walls, objects, or individuals. If you use an assistant, this person can act as a guide as you walk. Have them place their hand on your shoulder or grasp and pull your clothing to guide your movements.



In moving the camera, a good rule to follow is, "*If you think you are moving the camera too slow, go even slower.*" Of course, you must move the camera to keep up with moving objects but, for normal pans and tilts, etc. slow movements are the keys to good looking productions.

Camera movements should begin and end with a static shot. This means that the camerea is not moving at the start and end of a shot. Zooms are also included in this technique. This gives the viewer's eye time to rest before the movement starts and after it stops. One or two seconds is long enough for this technique.

Often, videographers will find that they must hand hold a camera while panning across a scene. They start the pan in a normal body position and end up with a twisted waist. This causes a strain on the waist muscles which can result in body twitching and a shaky picture. Also, they may shuffle their feet to turn their body and make the pan. This will also shake the camera. To avoid this muscle strain and foot

shuffle, begin the pan in a twisted waist position with your feet pointing to where you want the shot to end. Then unwind as you pan the scene. You will end up in a normal body position, with no strained muscles and a steady pan.

Another factor in making camera movements is that similar slight movements of the camera and the subject often make an acceptable picture. For example, a subject is walking along a sidewalk. The videographer is walking backwards in front of the subject. When viewing the scene you will notice that the picture looks somewhat stable. Why? The reason is that the movement of both the camera and subject appear to cancel each other out and produce a steady picture.

Finally, the best tool in making camera movements is a tripod. Learn how to adjust the drags on a tripod and use it. You will produce rock-solid pictures by doing so. Hand holds may be necessary in certain situations, but in most cases you cannot beat the steadiness of a tripod.

CREATING SHOT SEQUENCES

SHOT SEQUENCES DEFINED

A **shot sequence** is the order and types of shots used to tell a video story. The order in which the shots are placed creates the flow of a video production. This flow should be smooth, logical, and not confusing to the viewer. This is called **continuity**. Continuity must be maintained throughout an entire production. The types of shots used and the sequence they are in maintains continuity, brings variety to the production, and keeps the viewer's attention.

CREATING A SHOT SEQUENCE

In creating a shot sequence, the videographer must use the camera as the human mind uses the body's eye. The mind will not let the eyes stay fixed on any one subject for more than 4 or 5 seconds. Our eyes are constantly moving and focusing on different subjects. For example, you are walking in a park and come across two of your friends having a small picnic at one of the park tables. Your mind will probably direct your eyes into the following views of the couple. First, a wide-angle or long shot of the entire scene. As you walk towards the couple, you will look at one of them and then the other. As you come closer, you could possibly look at what is on the table or in what activities they are engaged. Your next look will probably be at the first person who will speak to you. As the conversation continues, your eyes will shift from person to person, from person to table, from an action of one person to that person's face etc., etc., etc. The combinations would be endless.

This type of viewing must be created with your camera. The camera must record a variety of single images and not one long single image. Television producers follow a basic rule that no shot should last more than 30 seconds and no scene should last longer than 3 minutes. This is the **30-3 RULE**. This is the basic idea of how shot sequences are made. You take one long scene and break it down into a variety of short shots.

Another way of explaining this technique, is to think of it as viewing a pack of photos. For example, you picked up snapshots from a recent vacation and begin to look at them. You do not lay all the photos in rows on a table and then scan each row. This would be silly. Instead, you hold the pack in your hand and look at the top photo. Then you move the top photo to the bottom of the pack and look at the new top photo. Each photo is viewed for a few seconds before moving to the next one. This sequence is continued until all of the snapshots have been looked at.

This is how a video sequence should be treated. It is a series of shots that are linked together to tell a story:. A variety of shots, not one long shot creates interest.

TYPES OF SHOTS IN A BASIC SEQUENCE

A basic sequence generally begins with a **wide-angle or establish shot**. This shot establishes in the viewer's mind where the action is taking place, whether it is a large area, a building, a room, a corner of a room, or small space. The establish shot should only show what is important and relative to the scene. An establish shot of a student doing his homework might possibly show just the student and his books on a table and not necessarily the entire room. An establish shot of a picnic at the beach might show the entire beach area. An establish shot of a screw being driven into a board might be the tip of the screw driver and the screw going into the board.

The shots that follow the establish shot are the **medium** and **close-ups**. Medium and close-up shots provide the details of the action. Medium shots and close-ups are also relative to the scene and have an endless variety of possibilities. Generally, close-ups place you at the closest possible distance you want to be to the subject and provide details. Medium shots are somewhere in between the wide shots and close-ups and supply broader or general bits of information.

Two other types of shots that are useful in a shot sequence are the **cut-away** and **cut-in**. The cut-away is a shot of some action not taking place in the scene. A close-up of a bird chirping in a tree by the picnic table in the past example would be a cut-away. A cut-in would be a shot of some action taking place in the scene. A close-up of one of the friend's hands at the picnic table would be a cut-in. Cut-aways and cut-ins are very useful and often overlooked. The more cut-aways and cut-ins that you have to use during editing the better it is. They are lifesavers for editors. They have a number of uses. They can add variety to a shot sequence, make the sequence more interesting, provide additional information, and cover up mistakes. They can also be used to shorten a long continuous shot.

APPLYING SHOTS IN A BASIC SEQUENCE

Remember the couple having a picnic in the park? If you were to create a basic shot sequence from this scene it could possibly be created like this:

Shot Number

1. An establish wide-angle full length shot of the couple seated at the table. Length, 2-3 seconds.

2 and 3. A close-up of each individual's face. Length, 2 seconds.

4. A medium shot of one person at the table. Length, 2 seconds.

5. A close-up of the first person to speak. Length, long enough to include all of the greeting.

6. A medium close-up of the other individual's face. Length, 2-3 seconds.

7. A medium shot of the person speaking. Length, according to the conversation.

This list could go on and on. The shots would depend on what actions take place.

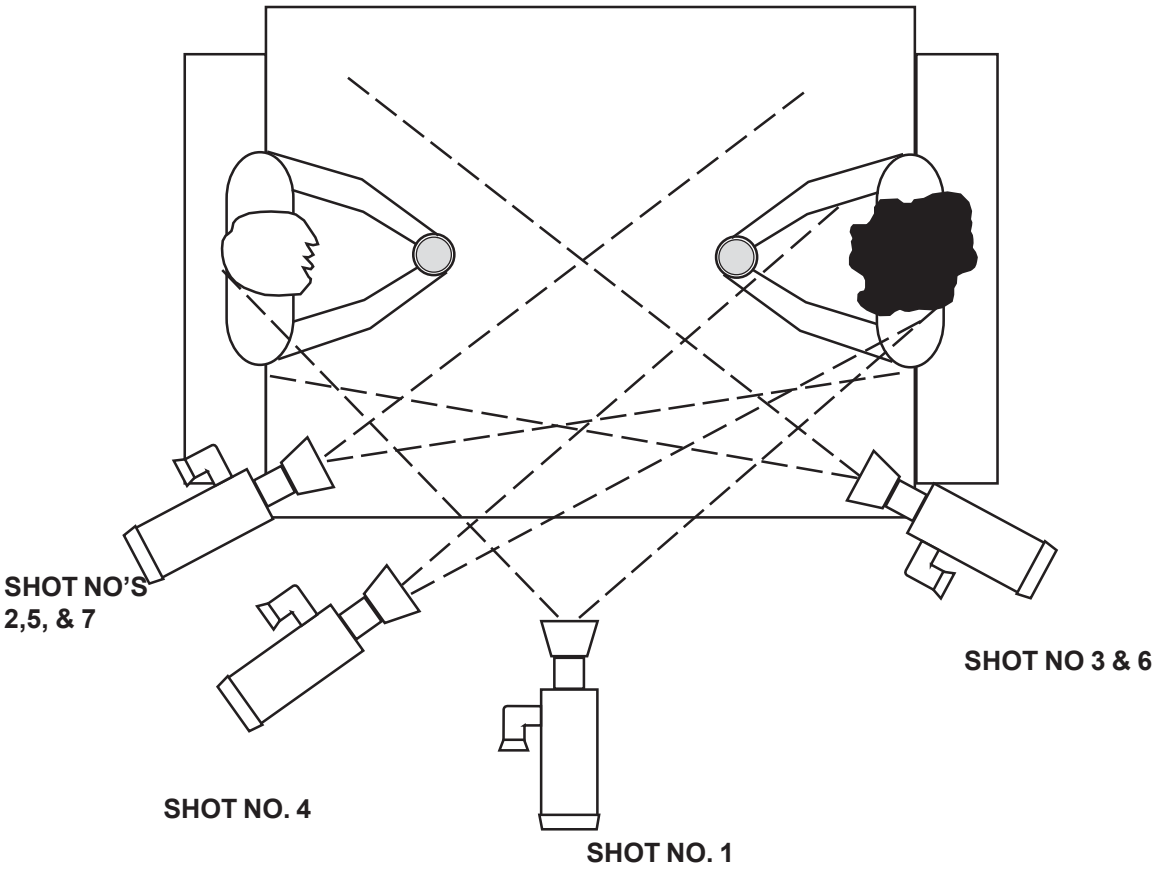


IMAGE SIZES AND CAMERA ANGLES IN SHOT SEQUENCES

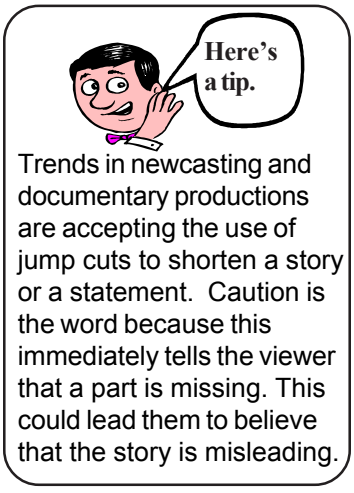
There are other factors that must be carefully treated in creating a shot sequence. One of these is that each new shot, when possible, should show a change in the size of the image and the camera angle. In changing camera angles, the camera moves in an arc about the subject. The move should always be at least 45°. Above is an aerial view of how a camera could have been placed for the shots of the couple in the park.

By examining the shots, you can see that by changing the image size and camera angle, you bring variety and interest to the scene.

One big stumbling block in performing these moves is creating what is known as a **jump cut**. This phenomena occurs when you do not move the camera at least 45° or change the image size enough. The jump cut produces a picture that seems to be a double exposure for a fraction of a second or makes the subject seem to bounce up or down slightly. (Hence the name jump cut).

More commonly, jump cuts are created when the camera position or the image size is not moved at all. For example, you are waiting for someone to come out of the door. You think the subject is about to come out and you start to record. However, the subject does not come out at the expected moment and now you must stop recording. A jump cut would occur if you started recording the door from the same spot with no change in image size when the subject did come out.

What can you do to avoid the jump cut? First thought, change image size and camera angle. That would work. However, what if you could not change the camera position? The trick here is to look for a cut shot. Perhaps there is a person looking at the door. Shoot several seconds of their face. Then go back to the door and start recording when the door opens.The insertion of a cut-away has avoided a jump cut.



This condition will occur quite often when shooting with a single camera. If you are shooting an impromptu situation like a party, a wedding, or any social gathering, a little forethought is needed to avoid jump cuts. If you are planning a production, you should have ample time to carefully plan and arrange your shot list to eliminate them.

CUTTING ON THE ACTION

Still another way of keeping continuity and a smooth flow in your production is to change shots by **cutting on the action**. This technique uses the natural ability of the viewer's eyes to follow action. If a movement starts in one shot and finishes in the next, the eye will follow the movement and tie the two shots together.

Let's say that a man is walking towards a door in a room. He approaches the door, reaches for the doorknob, turns it, opens the door and leaves the room. A sequence of shots could be recorded here that would call for cuts on the action.

The first shot could be a wide shot of the man walking towards the door. Still at a wide shot, his arm reaches for the doorknob -CUT- to a close up of just the doorknob. The man's hand enters the shot and grabs the doorknob, turns it and begins to push the door open -CUT- to a medium shot of the man pushing the door open and leaving.

Almost any kind of movement can be used for cutting on the action: kicking a ball, sitting down in a chair, opening a car door, walking around a corner, taking a hat off, etc.

ENTERING AND EXITING A SCENE CLEANLY

Having **clean entrances and exits** to a scene is still yet another way to provide smooth transitions from one shot to another. Clean entrances and exits mean that the subject will not "pop" in and out of a shot suddenly. A person walking towards the camera along a sidewalk should not suddenly appear on the sidewalk. Nor should they disappear out of the shot just as suddenly. In this situation, the subject should gradually walk into the scene from one edge of the frame and leave the scene (in this case) at the opposite side.

Clean entrances and exits can be performed in several ways. As an example suppose you wanted to take the person in a scene to a different location. The person would leave the scene and the empty scene would be recorded for a second or two. The next shot begins with the person in the new scene at the new location.. This method allows the viewer to accept the fact that the person had time to leave the first scene and arrive at the new location. This is one example of a clean exit and entry.

A second method provides the same results. Here, the person or pweaoba would cleanly enter a scene and move partially through it -CUT- with them still in the scene. Start recording the new scene but it must be empty. Record it for 1 or 2 seconds then the person or persons would make an entrance. Once again, the viewer would assume that the person would have had the time to leave the first scene and enter the second.

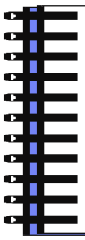
Another clean entrance was illustrated in the earlier example of the man leaving a room. When the man reached for the doorknob, the next shot was of the doorknob. The man's hand was not in the shot. It made a clean entrance in the shot, grabbed the knob, and turned it.

Quite often, close-up shots like this with both clean entrances and exits are used as cut shots. Editors love these shots. They can solve continuity problems. Another example is illustrated here:

HAND ENTERS SHOT

TAKES BOOK AND EXITS SHOT.

Finally, clean entrances and exits can shorten time and create a faster pace which is visually more interesting. To illustrate this, let's say that the scene calls for a person to enter a building and go to a room that is a fair distance from the entrance. You would not follow the person into the building through the halls and into the room. You would show the person walking to the front door, opening it, and going in with a clean exit -CUT- to the inside of the room they are going to and show the door they will be entering for one count. Then, the door opens and the person enters. This is a clean exit and entrance.



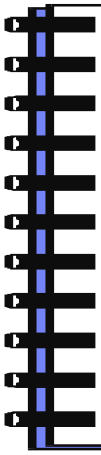
DO IT

Create a shot sequence of someone eating a meal. Use a variety of shots, cuts on action, camera angles, and clean entrances and exits.

IN-CAMERA EDITING

You might think that these techniques require two or more cameras. They do not. Some of the great Hollywood film classics were shot with one camera. You can do the same with planning and forethought.

These techniques can be performed while you are shooting spontaneous situations. This is known as **in-camera editing**. When recording a social event such as a wedding, family reunion, or a birthday party or a documentary with one camera, the challenge of in-camera editing is always present. Your mind should always be thinking of where you want to be next while still concentrating on the present shot. Think about creating the perfect shot sequence. You can develop this ability through practice, practice, practice.



DO IT

View any tape that you may have recorded before reading this book or if you have none, borrow a tape and critique it using the skills you have learned to this point. Write your critique on a piece of paper. Note how you would change the camera angles, positions, shot selection, or shot sequences to make the tape better.

Repeat this procedure several times. Every time you do it you will observe more and learn more.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF CAMERA USE

Finally, good video is not difficult to do if you follow the ten commandments of camera use. Following these commandments will help you to create quality video. Some of the commandments were written from topics in this chapter, others are from previous chapters and a few are from chapters to follow. It does not matter where they came from. The only thing that does matter is that you follow them.

Thou shall not fire hose
Thou shall have proper headroom
Thou shall stay close to the subject
Thou shall not snap shoot
Thou shall not headhunt
Thou shall not backlight
Thou shall not over zoom
Thou shall take the camera off thy shoulder
Thou shall not walk while shooting
Thou shall have good audio

Fire hosing is using the camera like a fireman uses a fire hose on a fire. While the camera is running, it is panned from side to side or tilted up and down to record everything and anything. The result is footage that is definitely sickening to watch. It simply annoys the viewer.

To avoid fire hosing, frame each shot; record long enough so that the viewer knows what is going on; stop the recording; then look for the next shot and record it. These short scenes are much easier to watch and avoid making the viewer dizzy.

Proper headroom was explained earlier in this chapter. Improper headroom is one of the most common faults of videographers and photographers. Look at a few photos that you or a friend took. Chances are that 99% of them will have too much space above the subject. Remember that placing a person's eyes one-third of the way down in the frame will provide proper headroom.

Stay close to the subject and your images will not be shaky and small. Being too far away is the second most common fault. The subject becomes small when the camera is far away and this places more of the scene in the frame than is needed. The surrounding scene is not important. The subject should dominate the frame. Also, with being too far away, the lens must be zoomed in and this creates shaky video. Therefore, stay close to fill the frame with the subject and record some rock solid video.

Snap shooting is making shots too short for the viewer to recognize what is happening. Unless you are producing a wild and crazy music video where short fast paced shots are normal, stay away from short shots. The viewer must be able to recognize what the shot is about. Additionally, if you are going to edit your production, you will need 3 to 4 seconds of lead-time at the start of the shot and 3-4 seconds at the end of the shot. This extra time is necessary for accurate precise editing.

Head hunting is always placing the subject in the exact center of the frame. Equal sides, top, and bottom surround them. It is at if they were in a gun sight. This is why it's called head hunting. The human eye cannot erase the often-large border that surrounds the subject. Head hunting creates poor composition.

Backlighting is bright light that comes from behind the subject or it is a background that is brighter than the subject. When a subject is in either situation, the electronics of the camera close the *f*-stops of the lens and this silhouettes the subject. Who wants to look at a dark shadowy subject? Perhaps police documentaries do when undercover officer does not want to be recognized. One of the most common

backlight situations is placing a subject in front of a window. This will produce a silhouette every time. Solution – don't do it. Another typical backlight situation is a bright scene on a stage. This will silhouette the performers. If you are recording on a ski slope or on a bright sandy beach and do not consider these bright backgrounds, say hello to Mr. Silhouette. Avoid bright backlight situation at all cost.

Over zooming occurs because human beings are lazy. It is easier to zoom than to walk closer or away from a subject. Do not be a zoom monster. Zooming in and out is poor technique. Plan your shots especially if you are going to edit. Shot sequences are better than zooms. However, news coverage and sports require zooming. It is a must in these situations. Zooming is also required to develop a mood or feeling in a scene. Zooming in to a slowly opening creaking door in a dark room surely sets a mood as zooming out from a single person sitting on a chair in the middle of a large hall establishes a feeling. Other than these situations, create a shot sequence.

Take the camera off your shoulder and produce shot variety. Shot variety is what makes exciting video. Cameras were not meant to stay on your shoulder. They can and should be used at different levels. If the action is low to the floor then the camera should be down there. If you are in a crowd where you cannot see the subject, then hold the camera over your head to get the shot. To see how camera positions and angles are used in broadcast TV, watch one minute of your favorite TV program and count the number of shots and different positions that were used. You will be amazed at how many there are. Remember, these shots were planned and so should yours.

Walking with the camera while recording is not good. Try to avoid it. If you must walk and hand hold a camera, try these techniques.

1. Set the camera to wide angle. This eliminates some shake.
2. Think that the camera is a hot cup of coffee and you do not want to spill it.
3. Keep your arms and legs bent as you walk. They will act as shock absorbers.
4. Move slower than normal.
5. Do not hold the camera against any part of your body. This will eliminate jarring the camera.

Good audio is a must. Audio carries the message. Video supports it. No audio, no message. When recording with the microphone that is built into the camera be aware of what it is recording by using earphones to monitor the audio. Often this microphone picks-up too much and most of it is unwanted noise that overpowers the important audio. When recording an interview with the built in microphone, stay as close to the subject as possible. This could eliminate unwanted noise. Ambient or natural sound, background music, and sound effects all have different rolls to play. However, be careful when using them. They could change the entire meaning of the message. Their roles will be presented in Chapter 9.

The next chapter introduces another aspect of camera use. It is so important that it has a chapter of its own. Before moving on, know, understand, and practice with the techniques and skills present so far.