UNIT 16 STAGES OF PRODUCTION – 3

UNIT STRUCTURE

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16.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the different shot sizes
- summarize the principles of good shot composition
- describe the different camera movements and angles
- outline the rules of screen grammar

16.2 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we have discussed about production activities, production equipment and lighting.

In this unit you will learn a few more aspects of production, i.e., camera angles and movements, shot sizes etc. We will also discuss about the rules of screen grammar in this unit. Along with proper knowledge of equipment and lighting, these concepts of shot composition and screen

grammar are very important for the production of an aesthetically sound programme which is meaningful and pleasing to the eye of the viewer.

So, let us begin with a discussion about the basics of shot composition.

16.3 SHOT COMPOSITION

16.3.1 Shot Sizes

Television uses different kinds of shots. The director or cameraperson needs to have the ability to visualize a shot in a given location from any position without actually going to that particular spot. Shots are classified based on content, as well as camera height, camera movement and usage. Shot sizes depend on the camera angle, field of view and the camera distance. By physically altering the camera position or the lens, we can achieve seven different shot sizes. The seven basic shot sizes are:

Shot	Name of shot	Focus	Purpose
	ECU	Extreme Close Up (face shot). Captures from mid-fore-head to just above the chin, or even closer.	Used to show details up close, as details are magnified to a very large extent, and to emphasise facial expressions or to make the subject appear threatening.
	CU	Close-up. Just above the head to the upper chest. Cuts just below the necktie knot.	Used as reaction shots, to show emotions, enabling us to easily see facial expressions and what the subject is thinking and feeling. Details are magnified.
	MCU	Medium close-up. The typical passport-size photograph. Cuts the body at the lower chest.	Used to show reactions and indicate what the subject is feeling.

Shot	Name of shot	Focus	Purpose
	MS	Medium shot (mid shot). From the waist to the head. Cuts the body just above/below the waist	Used to help viewers recognize the subjects and to see what they are doing with their hands.
	MLS	Medium long shot. From head to below the knees or just above the ankle. Cuts below the knees.	Used to clearly show body gestures, especially the arms.
	LS	Long shot (head-to-toe shot). Shows the entire body and a very short distance above and below.	Used to establish the location and enable viewers to follow action within the frame, this is a shot in which the subject can be seen in full. Details are still missing, but the shot is a little closer than the ELS.
	ELS	Extreme long shot. Has the background dominating the individual.	Often used at the beginning of a film or sequence as an establishing shot to show where the action is taking place; also used to make a figure appear small or isolated in the landscape. Enables viewers to follow wider movements. Also used to establish relative positions of subjects.

16.3.2 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMPOSITION

Surely, all of us have clicked photographs sometime or the other. We liked some of these, but others, we simply did not. Similarly we like the photographs in *National Geographic, Nature* and *Outlook Traveller.* Why do we like them? Because they were all well-composed.

Composition is about arranging all the visual elements in a frame in a manner that makes the image visually pleasing, satisfactory, and complete. Positioning of the various elements such as mass, colour, light, line etc. in an aesthetic manner is good composition.

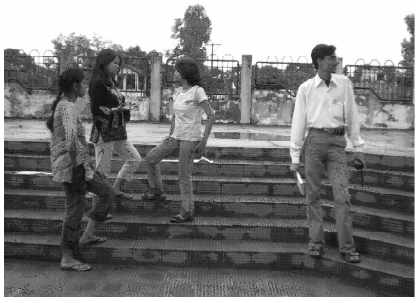
Grouping, patterns, shapes and forms have a great impact on us - they help us appreciate an image. When viewers experience 'friction' while reading an image, they are sub-consciously experiencing an unsatisfactory feeling. An image is said to be well-composed when viewers are able to read it smoothly without disturbance to the mind and eye. Pleasing arrangement of elements in an image always leads to its appreciation. Good composition always tries to achieve this effect.

The principles governing good composition include:

1) Grouping and organisation : It is also known as the principle of unity. It means the arrangement of objects within a frame so that they look grouped rather than unrelated and scattered. The human mind has a tendency to group or organize items together to form a cluster of shapes. Even stars are grouped together to form constellations. Elements within a frame may be grouped together either because they belong together or because they are of the same size, shape or colour. This results in a certain harmony while reading the image and the viewer attains a comfortable degree of perceptual satisfaction.



A



B

Figures A, B: The human brain has a tendency to group elements in shapes and clusters

1) **Balance:** Distributing elements within a frame so as to achieve a state of equilibrium is called balance. Balance helps the meaning of the picture to be made clearer and visible. The size of the elements within the frame also lends balance and helps the viewer understand the meaning clearly.

Equilibrium does not mean that all things need to be at rest. Balance can allow movement and therefore visual interest.

The state of mind induced in the viewer by the image may, however, outweigh any perceptual consideration of balance. A huge insect crawling anywhere in the frame is bound to attract the interest of the viewer irrespective of the composition.

2) **Ratio and Proportion:** The ratio and proportion of a composition play an important part in indicating the key areas in the frame. Remember Leonardo Da Vinci's *Divine Proportion*? It uses the principle called the golden section, which ancient Greeks based their works of art on, whereby the objects painted had remarkable geometric properties. According to this principle, the human body is a perfect example of ratio and proportion.

3) **Rule of thirds**: Compositional balance using the rule of thirds ratio revolves around positioning the main visual elements in the frame according to a prescribed formula. The frame is divided into three parts, both horizontally and vertically, and the points where the lines intersect provide the golden section. A useful starting point for any compositional grouping is to place the main subject of interest on any one of the four intersections. Studies reveal that a viewer's eyes normally focus either on the left half or the right half of the screen. This is why, perhaps, even newsreaders are placed either to the left or right of the screen. The ratio of dividing the frame into areas of one-third and two-thirds has almost become a visual convention now.



The rule of thirds chart (Figure 3.1) is a helpful guide in placing central and secondary points of interest within the frame. For example, centering a small dog near the lower left circle and a boy's face looking down at the dog near the upper right circle renders a pleasing composition.

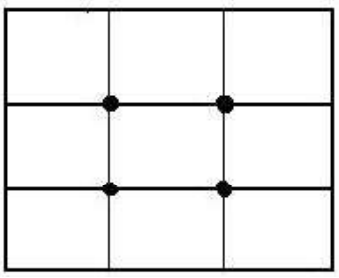


Figure 3.1. Here we have drawn circles where the lines intersect. These circled areas in the frame are areas of aesthetic strength, and according to the rule of thirds, these are excellent points at which to place one's central point of interest.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. How many basic shot sizes are there? Name them.

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Q.2. Explain the significance of ELS?

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Q.3. When is an ECU used?

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Q.4. Name the principles governing good composition.

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Q.5. What do you mean by balance?

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16.4 CAMERA MOVEMENTS AND ANGLES

16.4.1 Movements

Why would we need camera movement if the camera position has been decided before recording a shot? A camera move is usually prompted to either add visual interest, to express excitement, to increase tension or curiosity, to provide a new subject of interest, or to provide a change of viewpoint. Camera movement should be motivated by the action and controlled in speed and timing. Movement of the camera without motivation will attract attention to the movement itself and not the content.

There are two basic camera movements: the pan and the tilt.

Pan: The simplest camera movement is the pan. The horizontal movement of the camera - left and right - even as the pedestal (also called the tripod) stays stationary is called a pan. This movement does not involve the movement of the camera mount (camera stand). The pan is often used to give visual variety among a number of static shots but usually the main use of a pan, apart from keeping a moving object/subject in frame, is to show relationships. Shots beginning with a pan should be well-balanced and continue to do so till the pan ends.



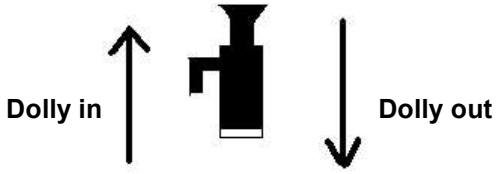
Tilt: Another simple camera movement is the tilt. The vertical movement of the camera - up and down - even as the pedestal stays stationary is called a tilt. The tilt, resembling the movement of the head up and down, provides a view of the elements lying above and below the field of view, so to say. Like the pan, there needs to be motivation for using a tilt.



Apart from the pan and the tilt, the other camera movements are track in/ out, truck left/right, zoom in/out, arc right/left. Let us examine these movements in brief:

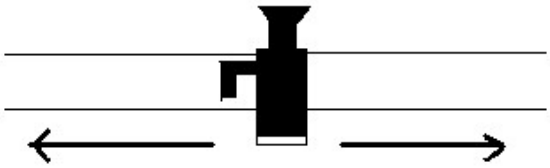
Track in/track out: Also called 'dolly in' and 'dolly out', track in/track out is the combined physical movement of the camera along the pedestal. The camera and the pedestal are mounted on a track and trolley that moves the camera either towards or away from the principal object. Moving the camera away or towards an object alters the relationship between foreground and background objects. The perceptual change is similar to what we observe when we physically move towards or away from an object.





Truck left/truck right : Also called 'crab left' and 'crab right', truck left/truck right involves the lateral movement of the camera and the tripod mounted on a track and trolley. In this case the camera moves sideways on its mount along with the subject. It is mainly used to follow the subject moving across the screen. Trucking or crabbing is also used to reveal the extent of a scene, section by section, and also a series of objects. It is important to keep the frame steady and maintain the same shot size all along the shot.





Truck left **Truck right**

Arc right/ arc left: As the name itself suggests, the angular movement of both the camera and the tripod mounted on a track and trolley is called arc. Also meant to provide fresh viewpoints, arching serves to change visual emphasis on a subject while the camera is in movement.

Then of course there is the **zoom-in/ zoom-out**. It involves no actual movement of the camera, but here the focal length of the length is altered give the illusion of moving closer to or further away from the object. In zoom-in we move closer to the object, whereas in zoom-out we move further away from the object.

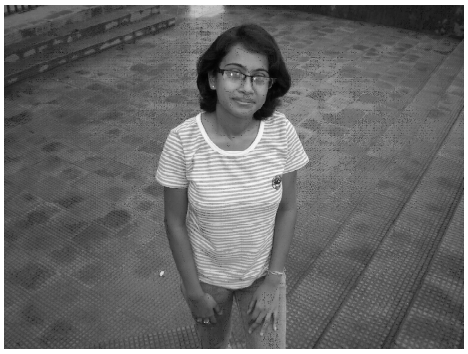
16.4.2 ANGLES

Camera angle refers to the positioning of the camera in relation to the subject. The placement of the camera right in front of an object makes the object look different from when you place the camera a little to the left or right of the object.

The most common angle is the **Eye-Level angle.** It shows subjects as we would expect to see them in real life. It is a fairly neutral shot.



A



B

Lowering the camera and shooting from below the subject, conveys that the subject is dominant or powerful (see A). If the aim is to make the person look like a menacing monster, the camera should be lowered even further. Objects such as buildings, also look larger and more imposing when shot from a vertical angle lower than normal. This type of shot **is called the 'worm's eye view' or low angle shot.**

Conversely, elevating the camera and shooting a person from above suggests that the person has a submissive, diminished character or is in a precarious situation (see B). This type of shot is called **high angle shot**.

When the high angle shot is taken from directly above the subject, it is called **the 'bird's eye view'** shot. It can be used to show the positions and motions of different characters and objects, enabling the viewer to see things the characters can't.

There is another angle called the **Dutch angle**. Here the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle. This creates an interesting and dramatic effect.

And then there is the **over-the-shoulder** shot. Here the shot of one actor is taken from over the shoulder of another actor. An over-the-shoulder shot is used when two characters are interacting face-to-face. Filming over an actor's shoulder focuses the audience's attention on one actor at a time in a conversation, rather than on both.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS B

Q.6. Explain the significance of low and high angle shots.

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Q.7. Define the following:

a. Dolly in/dolly out

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b. Pan

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c. Dutch angle

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Q.8. What is an over-the-shoulder shot?

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Q.9. An eye level shot is also called .....

Q.10. When the high angle shot is taken from directly above the subject, it is called ..... shot.

16.5 RULES OF SCREEN GRAMMAR

There are a few factors we need to keep in mind while shooting. The edges of the frame are important and play a vital role in composing a visual.

Headroom: Since we move around and like moving with some space around us, particularly above us, a little space above an object in the frame is in order. The space above an object within a frame is called headroom. In other words, head room refers to the space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame. Since part of the picture gets lost during recording and transmission, we must make provision for this picture loss while framing the shot itself.

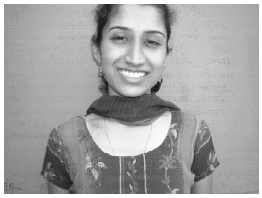
While too little or no headroom gives a constricted feeling, too much headroom can also result in an odd image.



Excess headroom



Correct headroom



No headroom

Noseroom/ Leadroom: We do not walk with our nose sticking into a wall, do we? Or when we point a finger at something, do we like it if our hand hits a wall? Since the answer is no to both, it makes sense to leave some space in front of the principal subject in the direction of his or her movement. Somebody looking or pointing in a particular direction other than straight into the camera creates an area of interest outside the screen area. The subjects are often looking, gesturing, or moving in a particular direction, generating viewers' need for more space in which that action may take place. Providing this space within the frame helps the viewer to connect to the outside-the-frame interest area. The director and camera operator must take that look, gesture, or movement into account and leave enough room for it. This space within the frame that connects to an outside space of interest is called the noseroom or leadroom.



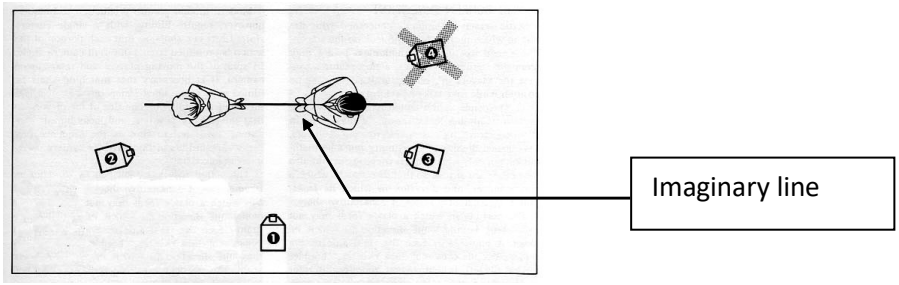
Inadequate noseroom



Adequate noseroom

The 180-Degree Rule:

It is a cinematographic technique which states that the camera must remain on the same side of an imaginary line, perpendicular to the camera's viewpoint, from which the establishing shot, is taken. The 180 degree rule is an important element of the continuity style.

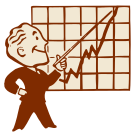


Say you are shooting two individuals facing each other. The imaginary line runs through the two individuals. The 180 degree rule mandates that the camera should be on the same side of both the individuals if one has to maintain continuity of direction. Jumping the imaginary line will result in change in direction! If you look at the above diagram, you will see that you can shoot from the camera positions 1, 2 and 3 but not position 4 because it crosses the imaginary line.

If a subject leaves the frame from left to right, he/she should enter the frame from left. However, if the subject enters from the right, it is likely to disorient the viewer.

One can, however, cross the imaginary line properly by moving the camera across the line.

Shot-Reverse-Shot Sequence: A shot-reverse-shot sequence is the normal way of representing a conversation between two people. For e.g. while shooting two characters engaged in dialogues, the camera will frame one person facing right and the other facing left. i.e., the shots are taken from one participant's point of view at a time. Sometimes it is an over the shoulder shot for better effect. Edited together, this gives the illusion of two people facing each other and enables cutting back and forth between the characters that appear to be interacting. The audience 'read' the alternation as a link between the characters - whether or not they were actually together when the shots were taken - if the eyelines of the two characters match. For eg. An interviewer's questions are often filmed when the interviewee is no longer in the room. In such cases, it should be ensured that their eyes engage with each other, else the effect will be strange and disorienting.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.11. Explain the following terms:

a. Noseroom

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b. Headroom

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Q.12. What is a reverse-shot-reverse-sequence?

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Q.13. Explain the 180^0 rule.

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16.6 LET US SUM UP

1. Television uses different kinds of shots. Shot sizes depend on the camera angle, field of view and the camera distance.
2. There are 7 basic shot sizes. They are: Extreme Close Up (ECU), Close Up (CU), Mid close up (MCU), Mid Shot (MS), Mid Long Shot (MLS), Long Shot (LS), Extreme Long Shot (ELS).
3. Composition is about arranging all the visual elements in a frame in a manner that makes the image visually pleasing, satisfactory, and complete.
4. An image is said to be well-composed when viewers are able to read it smoothly without disturbance to the mind and eye. Pleasing arrangement of elements in an image always leads to its appreciation.
5. There are two basic camera movements: the pan and the tilt. Apart from the pan and the tilt, the other camera movements are track in/ out, truck left/right; zoom in/out, arc right/left.
6. The horizontal movement of the camera - left and right - even as the pedestal (also called the tripod) stays stationary is called a pan.
7. The vertical movement of the camera - up and down - even as the pedestal stays stationary is called a tilt.
8. Track in/track out is the combined physical movement of the camera along the pedestal.
9. Truck left/truck right involves the lateral movement of the camera and the tripod mounted on a track and trolley.
10. The angular movement of both the camera and the tripod mounted on a track and trolley is called arc.
11. Zoom-in/ zoom-out involves no actual movement of the camera, but here the focal length of the length is altered give the illusion of moving closer to or further away from the object.
12. Camera angle refers to the positioning of the camera in relation to the subject.
13. The most common angle is the Eye-Level angle. It shows subjects as we would expect to see them in real life.

14. Lowering the camera and shooting from below the subject is called low angle shot.

15. Elevating the camera and shooting a person from above is called high angle shot. When the high angle shot is taken from directly above the subject, it is called the 'bird's eye view' shot.

16. In Dutch angle the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle.

17. In over-the-shoulder shot, the shot of one actor is taken from over the shoulder of another actor.

16.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1 :

There are 7 basic shot sizes. They are : Extreme Close Up (ECU), Close Up (CU), Mid close up (MCU), Mid Shot (MS), Mid Long Shot (MLS), Long Shot (LS), Extreme Long Shot (ELS).

Ans to Q. No. 2 : ELS or Extreme Long Shot can be used for a variety of purposes. It is often used at the beginning of a film or sequence as an establishing shot to show where the action is taking place; also used to make a figure appear small or isolated in the landscape. It is also used to establish relative positions of subjects.

Ans to Q. No. 3 : Extreme close up or ECU is used to show details up close, as in this shot details are magnified to a very large extent. It is also used to emphasise facial expressions or to make the subject appear threatening.

Ans to Q. No. 4 : The principles governing good composition are:

a. Grouping and organization
b. Balance
c. Ratio and Proportion
d. Rule of thirds

Ans to Q. No. 5 : Balance means distributing elements within a frame so as to achieve a state of equilibrium. Balance helps the meaning of the picture to be made clearer and visible. The size of the elements

within the frame also lends balance and helps the viewer understand the meaning clearly.

Ans to Q. No. 6 :

The low angle shot conveys makes the subject look dominant or powerful. Very low angle shot can even make a person look dangerous or menacing. Conversely, a high angle shot of suggests that the person has a submissive, diminished character or is in a precarious situation.

Ans to Q. No. 7 : a. Dolly in/ dolly out: It is the combined physical movement of the camera along the pedestal. The camera and the pedestal are mounted on a track and trolley that moves the camera either towards or away from the principal object. Moving the camera away or towards an object alters the relationship between foreground and background objects. The perceptual change is similar to what we observe when we physically move towards or away from an object.

b. Pan: The horizontal movement of the camera-left and right-even as the pedestal (also called the tripod) stays stationary is called a pan. This movement does not involve the movement of the camera mount (camera stand). The pan is often used to give visual variety among a number of static shots but usually the main use of a pan, apart from keeping a moving object/subject in frame, is to show relationships.

c. Dutch angle. Here the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle. This creates an interesting and dramatic effect. This angle is known as the Dutch angle.

Ans to Q. No. 8 : Over-the-shoulder shot is a shot in which the shot of one actor is taken from over the shoulder of another actor. An over-the-shoulder shot is used when two characters are interacting face-to-face. Filming over an actor's shoulder focuses the audience's attention on one actor at a time in a conversation, rather than on both.

Ans to Q. No. 9 : Neutral Shot

Ans to Q. No. 10 : Bird's eye view

Ans to Q. No. 11 :

a) Noseroom: Somebody looking or pointing in a particular direction other than straight into the camera creates an area of interest outside

the screen area. Providing this space within the frame helps the viewer to connect to the outside-the-frame interest area. The director and camera operator must take that look, gesture, or movement into account and leave enough room for it. This space within the frame that connects to an outside space of interest is called the noseroom or leadroom.

b) Headroom: The space above an object within a frame is called headroom. In other words, head room refers to the space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame.

Ans to Q. No. 12 : A shot-reverse-shot sequence is the normal way of representing a conversation between two people. For e.g. while shooting two characters engaged in dialogues, the camera will frame one person facing right and the other facing left. i.e., the shots are taken from one participant's point of view at a time. Edited together, this gives the illusion of two people facing each other and enables cutting back and forth between the characters that appear to be interacting.

Ans to Q. No. 13: The 180 degree rule is a cinematographic technique which states that the camera must remain on the same side of an imaginary line, perpendicular to the camera's viewpoint, from which the establishing shot, is taken. The 180 degree rule is an important element of the continuity style.



16.8 FURTHER READING

1. Belavadi, Vasuki (2007) Video Production. Oxford University Press.
2. Zettl, Herbert (2015) Television Production Handbook. USA : Cengage Learning.
3. Donald, Ralph, Maynard, Riley, Spann, Thomas (2008) Fundamentals of Television Production. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
4. Rabiger, Michael (2009) Directing the Documentary. Focal Press.

16.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. The size of a shot and the angle chosen by the camera has a bearing on the depiction of a character. Elaborate.

Q.2. What is composition? Explain the rule of thirds as one of the principles of good composition.

Q.3. Explain the significance of the 180 degree rule in maintaining the unity of direction of an action.

Q.4. What are the rules of visual grammar? Explain each factor in detail.