

90 Second Challenge Resource: **Edit**

We humans see the world as a constant image stream. So, every film is unreal, but with a heightened sense of reality that comes from the brain's ability to work with disjointed images. It is: "Life with the boring bits cut out."

Editing will have a crucial impact on how well your story holds the audience.

- Stories are made of sequences,
- Sequences are made of shots,
- Shots are made up of takes.

There are a number of standard terms for shots:

Master-shots capture the action, sometimes from one angle, or with a developing shot.

Close-ups are added to increase the detail, and allow the pace of the action to be increased. They must have the same "continuity" as the master shot

Cutaways are shots that can add pace, but feature action or characters outside the master take. Again, they increase the pace of the action, and can have the reactions of other participants, but risk reducing the impact of the action - because they cut away from it.

Establishers introduce new locations.

Classic Sequence Construction

The classic sequence has a flow to the story, with perfect continuity between actions and dialogue. It's often said that : "The best edit is the one you don't see"

This is standard in drama, and it's vital to plan for it by using the script and noting the positions for the edit points defined in it.

The action must always be overlapped, and every shot must have a purpose.

Documentaries have the same aim, but the discipline is different because they are shot in a wide range of different ways.

Re-creating reality

All films should have a heightened sense of truth that is beyond reality.

They may use actors, presenters, or simply observe their subjects.

Presenters help when human knowledge or enthusiasm helps to deliver key factual information.

The presenter may be a key protagonist, or involved simply to give a sense of scale.

The shoot uses the "set-up" model, with constructed shots that reveal new scenes, and involve craning movements, focus pulls, pans etc. They may take several rehearsals to get right.

The shoot may also involve the use of "props" – objects for the presenter to show or demonstrate. These will be shot with a master-take for the words, and close-ups of the prop.

If the prop is changed by the demonstration, be sure to take a number of them!

The presenter may be introduced with a dramatic cut from another scene, or in an "establisher", such as an aerial shot, that uses a different technique, and may even be shot at a different time.

Observational

This style uses the "actuality" model to cover action that is out of the control of the director.

The key role of the director is to help the crew cover the action, by watching other aspects, and noting shots that can be picked up after the event. The crew will aim to change the shots to help the editing – moving the camera, and zooming for different shot-sizes.

Nearly every event takes longer than it will last in the final, edited version, so a good crew will pick up shots along the way.

The editing creates a thread of the action, then adds “cutaway” shots of other people or action not seen in the main action. The editing is “montage” – not using shots with overlapping action, but using cutaways to increase the pace of the action. If the main character in the event is the presenter, then it’s often easy to pick up close-up shots after the event, and thus maintain the pace of the sequence by using close-ups which increase the intensity, not “cut-aways”, which dilute it.

Editing Styles

The editing style should be planned into the shooting. There may be perfect continuity of action, with “action cuts” between shots, or it may be “montaged” with no continuity at all.

A few pointers:

- Cutting between shots is a common device to increase the pace and tension. Adding white flashes on the cut draws attention to the cut, rather than hiding it.
- Speeding up or slowing shots will also change their impact. This does not provide the same technical quality as shooting in high-speed or timelapse, but it does create the same effect. ‘Point-of-view’ shots may create a dramatic sense.
- Composite shots, with a foreground subject shot against a blue-screen or green-screen that is added to a background, can create entirely new images, as can blending multiple video layers.
- Dividing the screen into multiple images can strengthen the story by directly contracting action or dialogue, or comparing action. Ideally, the shots are framed with empty space in which to insert the contrasting image without changing the format of the shot.
- The edit and the shoot are bound together – edit effects must be planned in the shooting stage, and a careful combination of styles and action will create exactly the message you want in your film.