

Camera Focus
The viewer's point of attention

Cinema and television give the director an uncanny ability to control the audience's vision. You can shift and change points of view as people learn new information, move locations, or switch perspectives. This kind of power is achieved through the ability to adjust focus.

Rack Focus / Focus Pull

Manipulating focus is a way of communicating with the camera shots. A rack focus shot is when the camera changes focal length mid-shot to create emphasis. The first assistant cameraman (or “First AC”) usually does it.



Shallow Focus

In shallow focus shots, your subject is in crisp focus while the other scenery out of focus. This limits your depth of field to create emphasis on your subject.



Deep Focus

In a deep focus shot, everything in the frame is in focus. This is great when you need your audience to feel the scenery or particular scene elements.



Tilt Shift

A tilt-shift lens rotates perspective within the lens and emulates selective focus. It can make parts of your image appear in sharp focus while others are out of focus.



Camera Angles

Adjusting camera height for impact

Eye Level Shot

First, consider the most common height: the eye level shot. When your subject is at eye-level they're in a neutral perspective (not superior or inferior). This mimics how we see people in real life -- our eye line connecting with theirs.

What is an eye level shot?

An eye level shot refers to when the level of the camera is placed at the same height as the eyes of the characters in the frame. An eye level camera angle does not require the viewer to see the eyes of the actor, nor does the actor need to look directly into the camera for a shot to be considered eye level. Eye level shots simulate standard human vision and thus present visual information through a familiar viewpoint.



The difference between an eye level and shoulder level shot is determined by the middle portion of the frame because the position of the lens iris determines the level of the shot more accurately than the base of the camera body. You may have the base of your camera in line with an actor's shoulder, but the iris of your camera will be level with the eyes of the actor.

Usually the directors use eye level shots to-

- Dissolve the barrier between viewer and story.
- Humanize their characters with a neutral camera angle.
- Simulate standard human vision and familiar composition.

Low Angle Shot

In cinematography, a low-angle shot is a shot from a camera angle positioned anywhere below the eye line, pointing upward. This shot frames your subject from a low camera height. A low angle shot is any shot in which the camera is tilted upward to view the subject. It can even be below the character's feet, which is called an extreme low angle shot. These dramatic camera shots most often emphasize power dynamics between characters. A superior character with the upper hand is often framed from down low. This makes an inferior feel like they are looking up to them.

Common uses of Low Angle Shot-

i) *Low angles can convey power.*

Low angle shots are often used to convey power, and depending on the subject, that power can be a good thing or a bad thing.



ii) *Low angle can convey vulnerability.*

Low angles have this weird ability to signal vulnerability, which seems a bit contradictory since we know that low angles can convey power. Part of this is simply that we see the character from an unusual angle, and within the context of the scene we as a viewer become annoyed by the framing. And another reason is, because we are more confined, especially when indoors.

iii) *Low angles increased perceived height.*

Low angle can increase the perceived height of an object. Filming from a low angle can create the illusion of taller or more height of an object.

Did you ever take a photo of your friends or sibling jumping, hoping to catch a moment up in the air? Did you get down low to make that jump look higher? It is a basic perception trick, but it is one that used in filmmaking a lot.

High Angle Shot

In a high angle shot, the camera points down at your subject. A high angle shot is any shot in which the camera is tilted downward to view the subject. It usually creates a feeling of inferiority, or “looking



is

down” on your subject.

High angle shots can be used for (at the very least) three ways:

i) *Narrative Information*

This is when a director uses a high angle shot to show things that would be hard to see from any other angle. It is often used in battle sequences or when showing a large space that has a lot of visual information. It can establish the scale of a crowd; can give context to a scene.

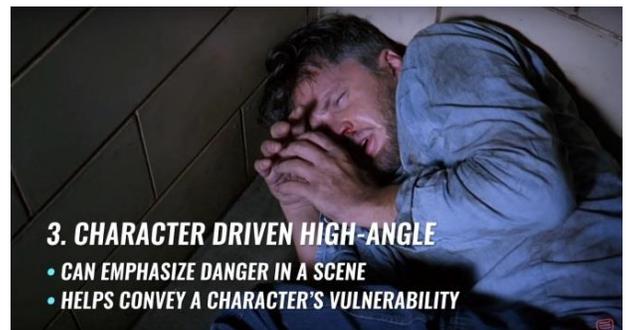


ii) *Emotional Response*

This is where a director uses a high angle shot to generate a feeling within the mind of the viewer. That feeling is most often tied to human beings' natural fear of falling from heights - and thus a high angle shot can simulate that terror. Can create emotional reaction, can add tension to a scene.

iii) *Character Information*

High angle shots can signal a character's vulnerability. It is like a psychological vantage point for anyone other than the character in the frame.



Hip Level Shot

This is when your camera is roughly waist-high.



Knee Level Shot



This is when your camera height is about as low as your subject's knees. They can emphasize a character's superiority if paired with a low angle.

Ground Level Shot



This is when your camera's height is on ground level with your subject. Needless to say, this shot captures what's going on the ground your subject stands on.

Shoulder Level Shot

This is when the camera is roughly as high as the subject's shoulders. A shoulder level shot can maximize the feeling of superiority when paired with a low angle.



Dutch Angle

A Dutch angle (known as a Dutch tilt) is a shot that has a noticeable tilt on the camera's "x-axis." In other words, in the Dutch angle, the camera is slanted to one side. With the horizon lines tilted in this way, you can create a sense of disorientation. It's a camera technique that was used by the German Expressionists in the early 1900s. Directors often use a Dutch angle to signal to the viewer that something is wrong, disorienting, or unsettling.



Bird's Eye View Shot / Overhead shot

This shot is from way up high, looking down on your subject and a good amount of the scenery surrounding him or her. This can create a great sense of scale and movement.



Aerial Shot – (Helicopter Shot)

What is aerial shot?

An aerial shot is a shot that's taken from an elevated vantage point than what is framed in the shot. Aerial shots give viewers a deeper understanding of what is happening below, both literally and metaphorically.

Whether taken from a helicopter or drone, this is a shot from way up high. It establishes a large expanse of scenery.



Camera Movement *Meaning through motion*

The way a camera moves can give meaning to what's happening on screen. You can burst into a room, drone over from on high, pan with a head turn, and dolly-zoom for any revelation.

Static / Fixed Shot

When there's no movement (i.e. locked camera aim) it's called a static shot. These camera shots emphasize the appearance and movement of the subject against its environment.

Static shots work well in comedy because the actor's performance trumps the camera moves.

Zoom Shot

These camera shots are when the camera zooms in or out mid-shot. When it zooms in, it can make sudden -- and sometimes comical -- emphasis on a character or object. When it zooms out it usually reveals objects or characters.

Pan Shot

Pans move the camera side to side on a horizontal axis. This can reveal something, horizontally, to your viewer or allow them to follow an action.

Tilt Shot

Tilting is when you move your camera up and down on a vertical axis. So it's exactly like a pan, only vertical.

Swish Pan or Whip Pan

This is when you pan the camera from one shot to another, creating a motion blur.

Swish Tilt

The swish tilt is the same idea as a swish pan, only vertical.

Tracking Shot

A tracking shot moves with your subject. Sometimes it follows behind or beside them on a dolly, Steadicam or a gimbal.

Crab Shot

The crab shot is basically a dolly shot that moves horizontally like a crab.

Arc Shot

These camera shots find the camera circling a subject to reveal it from different angles.