01322

The Film Foundation presents:

MAKING MOVIES

A Guide for Young Filmmakers

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DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA
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01322

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Introduction

The Mask of Zorro

Photo: Ron Batzdorff

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas
The Grinch (Jim Carrey) conspires with his dog Max to deprive the Who's of their favorite holiday.

This manual will help you make a movie. It is written like a basic recipe for chocolate; it gives you the basic ingredients and lays out the *process*. Whether you make fudge or M & M's is your challenge. As a filmmaker, you also have a challenge: to tell your story with your vision, using your creativity and intelligence. Whether you are ambitiously learning how to make a movie on your own, or working with others in a moviemaking group or class, enjoy. Enjoy the flexibility and discover the fantastic foibles of filmmaking.

This guide explains the basics of making a low-budget, student film. It's a big contrast to Hollywood, but the talents and skills needed to make a good film are the same.

In Hollywood, hundreds of people often work on a single film. You might work together with just eight friends but the process remains the same.

On a big Hollywood production, there are many specific jobs. If you watch the credits at the end of a major movie, you will see that there is a director (who is in charge of the entire movie), actors, at least one writer, a cinematographer, a producer, an executive producer, an associate producer, editors, art directors, and sound-effects people. One person operates the camera, one person is in charge of moving the camera, and still another might be in charge of making sure nothing gets in the way of the camera. There are also dialogue coaches, stunt coordinators, grips and gaffers, makeup artists, assistant makeup artists, costume specialists, and assistant costume specialists. These are just a few of those involved in a big Hollywood movie.

Fortunately, you do not need all these people to make a film. In making a short film, each person has a special role to play, and each will probably have multiple jobs in order to accomplish all the aspects of film production. This guide introduces these different components.

- Everyone has something special to offer in making a movie.
- This is about learning, having fun, and exploring your creativity.

Just like athletes must practice to build their strength, coordination and skill, this manual offers experiments, or explorations to work your moviemaking muscles. Some might be as boring as lifting weights. Others might be as fun as a pick-up game of basketball. Together, they will help give you the skills and experiences needed to direct and make a movie. You have to provide the creativity.

A Word from Your Sponsor

Do you like going to the movies?

Did you ever want to create a movie of your own?

Maybe you like working with cameras and lights. Perhaps designs, colors and costumes fascinate you. Maybe you like to compose and perform music. The film industry includes people with all kinds of talents and interests—from directors, actors, writers and cinematographers to art directors and sound engineers. In fact, film is the only creative process where people from many different backgrounds work together to produce a single work of art...called the director's vision.

Now imagine this: The film you created—or helped to create—is deteriorating. The moving images are fading to black. The soundtrack is distorted. With each passing year, the chemicals on the film tape decay a little bit more until one day the film is simply no longer there. Once a film self-destructs, no one can ever view it again.

How would you feel if all your hard work and creativity had disintegrated to dust?

What is film preservation and why does it matter?

Hundreds of movies made in the 20th century—the first century ever to use moving image technology—have already self-destructed. "So what?" you might ask. So what if 50 % of the movies made before 1950 are lost. What does it matter if a movie made in the year you were born has begun to fade? Movies are just entertainment, after all, aren't they?

Many people—both filmmakers and movie-goers alike—would not agree. Movies matter—and here's why.

Some movies record history, capturing current events and community and family traditions. With moving image technology, we can hear and see Reverend King deliver his "I have a dream . . ." speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in our nation's capitol. We can watch Neil Armstrong take humankind's first step on the moon.

Other movies reflect history. These movies comment on current events and traditions. For example, in TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (1962, dir. Robert Mulligan), Gregory Peck portrays an Alabama lawyer in the 1930s. He argues his case in a segregated courtroom where African Americans must—by law—sit in the balcony.

Some movies imagine the future. In THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951, dir. Robert Wise), movie-goers of 1950s watched in awe as a flying saucer landed on Earth. The alien had come with a warning: If Earthings did not end war and learn to solve their differences peacefully, they would face total destruction.

Movies matter because they are more than images and sounds. They are stories. The stories movies tell have a value beyond making us laugh or cry or hold our breath in suspense. They provide clues to understanding who we are . . . or were. Movies mirror our hopes and fears, our achievements and failures. Like a painting, a symphony or a novel, movies an important source of artistic and cultural information about our country.

Movies matter, also, because they can be great teachers. Think about it. How does a young artist learn to paint or sculpt? By studying the works of the great masters. Likewise, musicians might study Beethoven or the Beatles. To learn their craft and seek inspiration, young writers may read Shakespeare, Austin, or even Harry Potter's creator, J. K. Rowling.

But, if the great films of the past are lost (as many already are) who will the young filmmakers of tomorrow study?

Because movies matter, the United States Congress passed in 1998 the National Film Preservation Act. Preservation means to protect films from deterioration as well as to restore decaying film before images and sounds are lost forever.

Because movies matter, some of the most famous directors in the film industry created The Film Foundation. The foundation's goal is to increase awareness of this country's film heritage and to preserve as many films as we can. The first step in saving movies is understanding that movies are more than entertainment.

The Film Foundation created this manual for you. We created this manual because we believe:

- viewing and/or making movies can be an exciting and creative learning experience for all youth;
- understanding the decisions, hard work, and passion required to make a movie will help you better understand why films are worth saving.

Get ready. The pages inside this manual are filled with all kinds of creative activities. Some will challenge your critical thinking skills. Some will inspire you to communicate with others as you never have before—using images and sound as well as words. Whether a movie-goer or a future filmmaker, you can be sure that the movies that matter to you, matter to us all.

Preface: What Is a Movie?

The word “movie” comes from the term “motion picture” - pictures that move.

Photo: Phil Bray

Mrs. Doubtfire
Robin Williams is *Mrs. Doubtfire.*

Beetlejuice
Barbara and Adam Maitland (Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin) change their minds about using the skills of demonic “freelance bio-exorcist” Betelgeuse (Michael Keaton) when he shows them his scary stuff.

Like books, movies tell a story. But instead of words on paper, movies are a visual and a listening experience. The audience sees and hears the story. People all over the world love this powerful medium — they love the way movies tell stories.

The storyteller is the director. He/she is in charge of how a story is made into a film. Exactly where and how the images are filmed and edited, how the actors portray their characters, and what the audience experiences, is all part of the director’s vision. The story itself can be simple or complex, silly or intense. The director’s vision is responsible for how the movie makes the audience feel about the story: sad, amused, bored, exhilarated, scared, powerful, or humble.

Stories in books can describe any place in the universe, with any number of characters. But there are constraints in filmmaking. Film directors can be limited by the weather, number of actors, available space, and, especially, the money needed for props, costumes, special lighting, sound and camera equipment. So, a lot of creative problem-solving comes into play.

It is the director’s challenge to make his or her vision translate from story to movie, using the techniques of filmmaking — things like character development, camera angles, and editing. But you have to develop your own vision and probably the best way is to create (or help create) a film from beginning to end. By doing so, you will learn how to:

- develop a story and interesting characters
- write the story in the language of filmmakers: a screenplay
- create a visual storyboard to show camera angles, distance, and subjects
- plan a filming schedule
- utilize various camera, sound, and lighting techniques
- work with actors
- understand the power of art direction and continuity
- use costumes and makeup
- do post-production sound and editing

These components are presented in this manual for you to learn, practice, and adapt to fit your own vision. Throughout this manual, movies will be recommended as prime examples of different techniques and film accomplishments. Don’t worry if you can’t see every movie. You can observe and analyze the concepts in many films.

" The learning process is never over. Every new work creates new sets of problems that need immediate answers. And there are certain answers you can only find in the works of the great masters...To find your own voice doesn't mean you have to be deaf to other voices. Sometimes they work as an echo, other times like a series of traffic signs that, if right, will guide you to create a work that will touch other people."

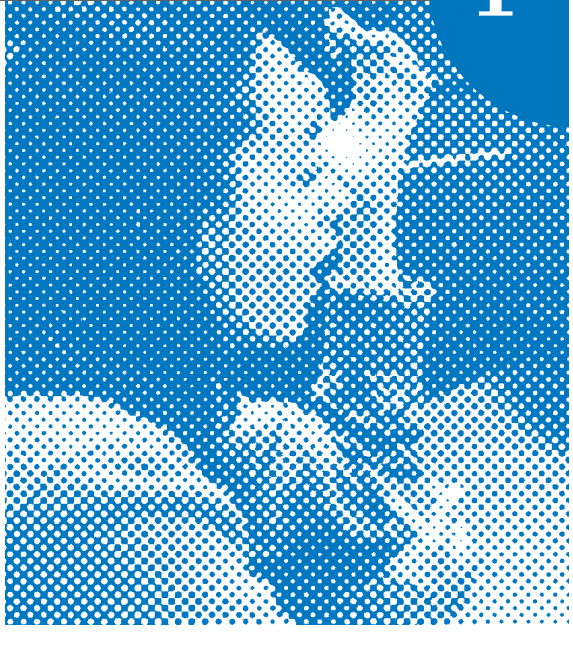
—Martin Scorsese

Director, The Age of Innocence

Chapter 1

Storytelling

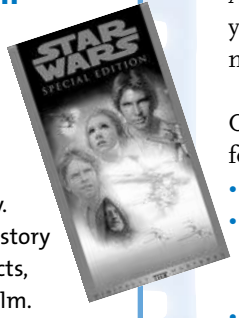
- Making Movies Is about Telling a Story...Visually
- Words or No Words
- Words, Words, Words
- Making it Better: with Problems
- Tips from the Experts



STORYTELLING

Making movies is about telling a story...visually

A Movie to Watch



Star Wars: A New Hope, directed by George Lucas.

This, the first of the *Star Wars* movies, really follows a hero's journey. By combining a simple story with special visual effects, Lucas created an epic film. Watch it to see how well it follows the story formula.

Almost every movie tells a story and the better you are at storytelling, the better you will be at moviemaking.

One of the classic ways to tell a story is to follow this simple story formula:

- There is a hero.
- Hero faces a scary or difficult adventure or problem. He/she is trying to accomplish something.
- Hero eventually overcomes his/her fear and goes on the adventure.
- Hero faces serious obstacles.
- Hero solves his/her problems, and overcomes the obstacles.
- Hero reaches his/her goal and learns a lot along the way.

This formula may sound basic, but huge numbers of excellent movies have used it. The power of a film comes more from how the story is told.

You can read more about this formula in *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler.

Telling a story *in a movie* differs from using words to *write* a story. This chapter will tell you about those differences and give you exercises to help you become a better storyteller... and moviemaker.

WORDS OR NO WORDS

Sometimes, movies don't use words to tell the story.

Watching a movie is a visual experience. Much of the story is shown to the viewer without using any words. Think about a movie that opens with a car chase, or a dog's view of the sidewalk as it is being walked. No words are used (in movies, the words are called **dialogue**), only visual images and sounds: cars crashing, the jingle of a dog leash, or sometimes, just music.

Imagine a scene in a horror film where a monster sneaks up on his victim, ready to pounce, and, at the last minute, the victim turns around and screams. Again, there is no dialogue; the director wants the audience to *see* the action, to feel more captivated and scared.

Now, imagine the opposite:
Monster "I am now approaching my victim, ready to pounce."
Victim "And here I am, completely unaware of what's about to happen."
Monster "Here I go, about to jump!"
Victim "I think I sense something coming towards me...uh-oh!"

This dialogue would be silly, and funny instead of scary.

In filmmaking, the storytellers decide if the *feeling* expressed to the audience would be communicated better *without* using words. In our daily lives, we experience non-verbal (no words) communication all the time. Think about when your mother, or father, or best friend gets mad at you. Sometimes the way they look at you, or the things they do like ignoring you or turning their back on you can be more hurtful than anything they might say.

How can you tell people how you are feeling <u>without</u> using words?
List three ways you can communicate your feelings non-verbally:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Have you ever been around someone who is speaking a foreign language? Could you tell something about what they were saying just from their tone of voice, gestures, and emotions? People can communicate without saying, or understanding words. Many times, you see the true character "underneath" the words. Actors work hard to show the audience the true nature of their characters, using more than just words.

Can you tell by someone's body language if they are surprised? How can you tell? Describe what someone might do with their face, or other body parts, to convince an audience they are really:
grossed out by a cockroach. _____

_____

disappointed by a bad grade on a test. _____

_____

shocked to hear an old lady swear. _____

_____

EXPLORE:
acting without words

You need at least one other person for this exploration. It's a little like charades. Write down as many emotions as you can think of, like sadness, pleasure, anger, fear, surprise, embarrassment, and shyness on individual slips of paper. Fold up the pieces of paper and put them in a hat or a bowl. One person picks a piece of paper and acts out the emotion without saying a word. The other person(s) guesses the emotion. However, some emotions are pretty hard to act out.

After you do this exercise, record some of your thoughts:

It was easy to act

because

It was hard to guess that my friend was trying to act

because

I had an easy time guessing that my friend had picked

because

EXPLORE:

How do directors convey the feelings of the characters without using dialogue?

Compare two movies. Look for techniques like the angle and distance of the camera, the actor's body language, the sound effects, and lighting techniques.

Pick one movie where the emotion of a character was communicated *very effectively without dialogue:*

Movie:

Name of character:

Give an example of how the director and actor revealed the character's emotion in a particularly powerful scene:

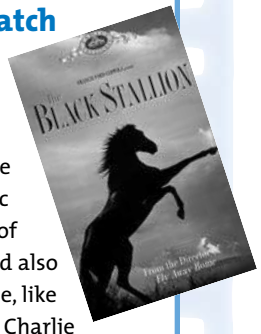
How did the music or other sound communicate the way the character was feeling?

Did you think about whether the director decided to use a particular angle of the camera, or if the lighting helped communicate emotions?

Ideas:

A Movie to Watch

Black Stallion, directed by Carroll Ballard.



This is a great movie that tells a dramatic story without a lot of dialogue. You should also watch a silent movie, like *The Kid*, directed by Charlie Chaplin. Made in 1921, it is a wonderful example of how moviemakers were able to tell stories even before they knew how to make sound in movies.

Now choose the opposite — a scene in a movie that did a poor job of expressing feeling.

Movie:

Name of character:

How was this character's emotion shown?

Obviously, it often makes sense for characters to talk. But it is important to realize that in film, dialogue is just one technique used to convey the movie's story. Filmmakers-in-training should experiment with all the techniques introduced in this guide.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Movies usually include dialogue to help tell the story.

In order to make a movie, you will probably tell your story using action without dialogue, as well as with dialogue. It is important to understand how to express parts of the story using only action and images, and to practice writing dialogue. There are no rules, but the films that many people respond to use dialogue that seems real — how a real person would talk.

EXPLORE:
how real people talk

How do people talk to each other?
How do people look as they are listening to someone?
How do people combine words, expressions, and other types of body language during conversation?

Take a field trip for this exploration.
Go to a public place, like a restaurant or a mall, and observe the different ways people communicate. Pay attention to the conversations around you. Notice the types of words, accents, phrases, and topics discussed, and how the people interact when communicating back and forth. Do they pause a lot? Do they talk really fast? Does the person they are talking to seem to understand them better than you?

Public place: _____

_____

"Characters": _____

_____

Amusing phrases or words: _____

_____

Strange phrases or words: _____

_____

Other observations: _____

_____

_____

You may want to keep notes about other interesting people you observe, to give you ideas later for developing the characters in your film.

EXPLORE:
Write a conversation

The characters are Demaune and Christina, and they are your age. Here is the scene: Demaune and Christina barely made it on the school bus, and had to sit together. Both are embarrassed. They like each other, but neither one wants the other to know. Christina is wondering if Demaune knows about Renee's party this weekend, but she does not know how to ask him. In the first line, Demaune says: "Good thing we caught the bus."

DEMAUNE: Good thing we caught the bus.

CHRISTINA:

Tips from the Experts

- When writing dialogue, think about how people really speak.
- You do not want the characters to sound like they are giving a speech.
- Have them talk the way you know people talk. If they speak in slang, use it.
- Be sure to read the dialogue out loud.
- Listen to how it sounds. If it sounds natural, keep it.
- If it sounds strange, or forced, rewrite it.

MAKING IT BETTER: WITH PROBLEMS

Some stories are great. As you are reading or watching them, you cannot wait to find out what happens next. Other stories are boring, and put you to sleep. How do you tell a story to make it exciting?

Storytellers often make their stories more interesting by adding *conflict*. The conflict can be a battle or a contest of some kind.

Sometimes, conflict is created when one person wants to do something, and someone else is trying to stop him or her from doing it. Conflict can also come from within the character. For example, a woman wants a raise in salary. She totally deserves the raise, but she is insecure and afraid to ask her boss. The conflict here comes from within the woman — from her own fear.

Question: How can you make a story more interesting, more dramatic?
Answer: Create an obstacle — create conflict, create a problem.

Obstacles are more dramatic if they are alive. Climbing a mountain can be an obstacle, but it might be more dramatic if someone tries to prevent you from climbing to the top.

EXPLORE:
the use of obstacles

Do obstacles really make stories more exciting? Think about and answer these questions:

What is one of your favorite movies?

Did the hero face an obstacle? What was it?

Who was the hero of that movie?

How did the hero overcome the obstacle?

EXPLORE:
creating obstacles

Below are four characters. You create the obstacles/conflict for each one. Try to give them human obstacles... someone who wants the opposite of what Barry, Shartelle, Quintin, and Juan want.

A Movie to Watch

Titanic, directed by James Cameron.

The main character, Rose, has several conflicts — her relationship with her ill-suited fiancée, the expectations of her mother and wealthy social group, not to mention, trying to survive the sinking of the *Titanic*. This movie is an excellent example of how conflicts and obstacles can intertwine.

Character **Barry, age 15**, has decided he has to quit hanging out with his friends, because they have started committing hate crimes against gays, African Americans, and Asians.

Obstacles:

Character **Shartelle, age 24**, wants to move from New York City to her aunt's farm in Northern Michigan. She is trying to break away from a life of using drugs and get her life back together.

Obstacles:

Character **Quintin, age 19**, wants to follow his passion to become a biologist and help save endangered species. But his mother, a single parent, thinks making money is the most important priority, and will not pay for his college unless he goes to Business School.

Obstacles:

Character **Juan, age 13**, has grown up in Kansas and he's never left the state. He wants more than anything to go mountain climbing. By helping his dad with his business, collecting old tires to be recycled, he has saved enough money for a plane ticket.

Obstacles:

A Movie to Watch

The Truman Show, directed by Peter Weir.

This is an *original* story of Truman Burbank, a man whose life is nationally televised, unbeknownst to him. Truman slowly uncovers that all the people in his life are "actors," and his reality, as he knows it, doesn't actually exist. It's a wonderful film with heartwarming scenes, clever dialogue, and a fresh and innovative plot.
A must see!

Tips from the Experts

- Stories are most interesting when the characters have big decisions to make, and when the audience knows that making the wrong decision would be a real disaster.
- Stories are most dramatic when the conflicts are intense and require the hero to make hard decisions.
- The audience should understand the goals of both the hero and the person (or monster or animal) trying to block the hero. The audience might even like both of them.
- Stories can be exciting when both sides have a good argument and it is hard for the audience to decide who is right.
- There should be plenty of surprises.

Notes:

"Write, write, write, and write again."

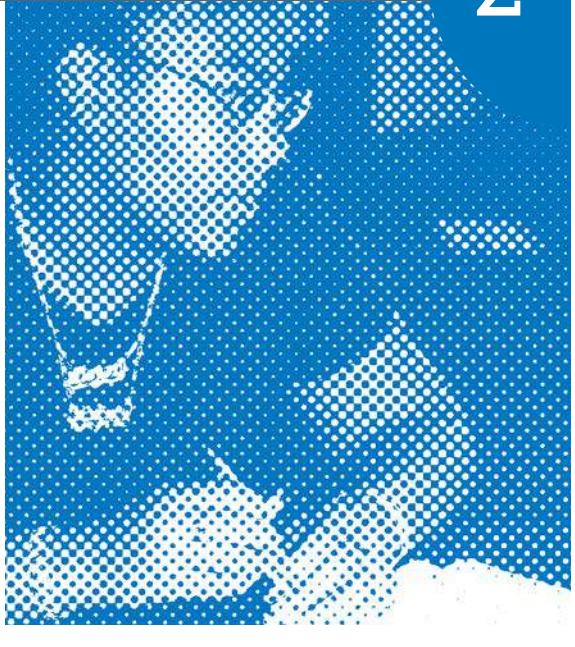
—Spike Lee

Director, Do The Right Thing

Chapter 2

From Story to Screenplay

- Scriptwriting
- What's Your Story?
- Writing Your Screenplay, Finally!
- Tips from the Experts
- Sample Screenplay
- Note to the Director
- Moviemaking Roles



SCRIPTWRITING

There is a critical step in taking a story idea and making it into a movie. It is a particular format that goes by two names — screenplay or script. All movies need a script. In a screenplay, the dialogue is written a particular way, and descriptions of settings and action are abbreviated.

SCRIPT EXAMPLE: Half Naked

Two guys are standing in an empty, school hallway, wearing nothing but underwear. They have been pushed out of the gym locker room. Delmont tries to get back in, but the door is locked; they are totally freaked out.

DELMONT: Oh my God!
ARTURO: What are we going to do?

Delmont looks down the hall, to the left, then to the right. The doors are all closed, and no one else is in the hallway.

DELMONT: I hate my life. I guess we should...

What happens next?
You decide. Practice writing a short movie script for Half Naked.
You have the starting plot of the story — you continue it, and include:
1 a short **description** of each scene.
2 **where** the action takes place.
3 **what** happens in the scene to make the story interesting.

A few challenges for this exercise:

- Keep the screenplay short — just two pages.
- Use dialogue *and* description of action *without dialogue*.
- There should be a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- All the scenes of the movie take place in one location — at the school.
- The story takes place over the course of one day.
- **By the way, are the guys wearing boxers or briefs?**

Write your screenplay on the following two pages:

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

The work you have done in the previous sections were stepping-stones on the path to writing your story, and ultimately, making your own film. To write a good screenplay for film, you need to:

1 decide the story you want to tell.
2 develop interesting characters for that story.
3 create obstacles and interesting solutions to the problems that your characters face.
4 write your idea in outline form.
5 expand your outline into a screenplay.

1. Coming Up with a Great Story Idea

Use your creative abilities to generate a list of possible story ideas. The next exercises should help you start thinking about some ideas.

Write down four interesting things that have happened to you:

Funniest:

Scariest or Weirdest:

Most thrilling:

Biggest conflict/problem that you have faced:

Can you think of two interesting things that have happened to someone in your family, to a friend, or someone in your neighborhood?

1.

2.

George Lucas, the man who directed and wrote *Star Wars*, has said in interviews that he came up with the idea for that movie because, as a kid, he loved *Flash Gordon, a* TV show about space. What is your favorite TV show?

Can you create a story idea for a movie, based on your favorite TV show?

TV show: _____

_____

Story Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Choose your best idea.

Re-read all your ideas. Choose the idea that fits in all these categories:

- You like the idea.
- It seems like one that you could make into a movie using locations near your house or school.
- You can make it work with the number of actors you can count on being in your movie.
- You can tell the story in a 5-10 minute movie.
- Remember, this is going to be the basis for your movie, so pick an idea you really like.

Story Idea:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

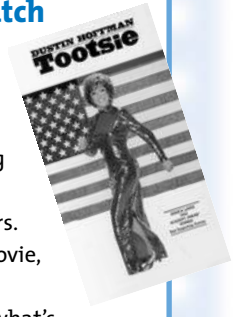
_____

Congratulations, you have a story. Now you need an outline. Why make an outline? Two reasons:

- It will help you think about the story in a format that is easier to make into a movie.
- An outline is easy to expand into a screenplay.

The next two sections give ideas and exercises for developing interesting characters and designing obstacles.

A Movie to Watch



Tootsie, directed by Sydney Pollack.

A successful, well written, entertaining comedy full of interesting characters.
As you watch this movie, ask yourself:
Are you wondering what's going to happen next?
How do you think the director is able to accomplish that?
Is it funny?
What makes it funny?
The film has wonderful performances by the entire cast.

Tootsie

2. Developing Your Characters

Character sketch

After you identify your characters and your **plot** (the major event in the story), create details to make your characters more interesting.

Write a **character sketch** describing your character. Include information about his/her:

- childhood
- favorite foods
- clothes
- relationships with friends and family
- major problems he/she faces in life
- things she/he loves
- music she/he listens to

Here is a short character sketch from a non-existent movie. The movie is about a girl who tries to win a spelling contest.

> **Natasha Lake** is a fifteen-year-old, African-American, high school sophomore. She grew up in South Central, Los Angeles. Her parents own and run a barbershop near their home. Natasha helps out in the barbershop, sweeping the floor and running the cash register. She is shy, and has spent most of her life listening to other people — especially men getting their hair cut.
>
> She loves movies and wants to be an actress. Once, she watched for three hours while a movie was being shot on her street. She saw Danny Glover, and was impressed with all the film equipment, and how much fun everyone seemed to be having on the hectic set.
>
> Jimmy and Patrice are Natasha's only friends. None of them are popular. Patrice, the wild one, likes to get them in trouble. Jimmy is quiet, like Natasha, and both of them secretly enjoy the attention they get from hanging out with the outrageous Patrice.
>
> Natasha is attractive, in a subtle way. There is something about her that seems special — a quiet intelligence. While she does not think of herself as very smart, she knows she has a talent for spelling. Unlike most people her age, she likes blues and jazz — the kinds of music played at the barbershop.

Write a character sketch of your main character. Remember, you are making it all up, but the more you develop your character, the easier it will be to write good dialogue, so the words that come out of his or her mouth can sound natural.

Your character sketch

Name: Age:

What are some of your hero's personality traits? (Funny, irritating, a troublemaker, athletic, easily embarrassed, gentle, angry, not very smart...)

Write down as much as you can:

Describe the home life of your main character.
Does he or she live with parents, a roommate, a dog, brothers or sisters, alone?

Who are his or her best friends? What are they like?

3. Creating Obstacles and Interesting Solutions to the Problems That Your Characters Face

This is the middle part or plot of your screenplay. Come up with at least one conflict —unexpected things that go wrong and get in your protagonist's way. Be clever. Keep your audience guessing.

What problems/obstacles stand in the way of your main character (also known as the protagonist) from achieving a goal?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Think of unique ways your protagonist will deal with the problems he or she encounters. You want the audience to root for your protagonist...or at least care about what happens.

How does your protagonist handle these obstacles? Write two possible solutions.

1. _____

2. _____

What kinds of problems occur because of the solutions your protagonist tries?

_____

_____

Does your protagonist succeed or fail? This is the end of your story. Make it memorable. Obviously, not every story has a happy ending, although many movies made in Hollywood do.

How does everything end? How does the main problem get solved?

_____

_____

Here is an example of a story outline from a real movie. It pulls the story ideas together and keeps it simple. Use it as a guide for your own outline.

4. Story Outline

Movie: Home Alone, directed by Chris Columbus

The story idea is:
A young boy must save his home from burglars when he's left alone during vacation.

Is it a comedy, adventure, drama, romance, or horror movie?
Comedy

Where does the movie take place?
The family's house, mainly. Also, at the airport and a grocery store.

Who is the hero?
Kevin, a resourceful, smart and mature-like 8-year old

What does the protagonist want?
Kevin wants to prevent the burglars from robbing his house.

Who are the other characters? Are they the hero's friends or his opponents?

Harry, a bungling burglar	Opponent
Marv, Harry's dumb partner	Opponent
Kate, Kevin's mother	Friend

What exciting thing (the "hook") happens at the beginning of the story? What gets the audience interested?
The family leaves for vacation and forgets Kevin.

Who or what gets in the hero's way?
Harry and Marv, the burglars

What problems stand in the way of your hero getting what he/she wants?
- Kevin needs to get food and money without his parents.
- Burglars break into Kevin's house.
- Kevin needs his family.

What solutions does your hero come up with?
- Kevin first scares away the burglars with a BB gun.
- Then Kevin rigs his house with contraptions, scaring away the burglars.

How does everything get resolved?
Kevin succeeds in foiling the burglars. His family comes home.

Does your hero learn anything?
Kevin learns to appreciate his family.

Now it's time to outline your story.

You should try and pick only one location. You want to spend your time shooting, not moving around from location to location. Keep it simple and realistic. Try to avoid things like major battle scenes.

Where does the movie take place?

Your hero can be good or evil, female, male, child, adult, animal, or alien.

Who is your hero or your main character?

This is the goal your main character will try to accomplish by the end of the movie.

What is the goal of your hero?

Who are the other characters important to the story? Are they the protagonist's (hero's) friends or enemies?

1.

2.

3.

This is the beginning of your story. It starts on the first page of your script. The exciting thing that happens is the **hook**. It sets the tone for the entire movie.

Do you have a plan to "hook" your audience?

Who or what gets in the hero's way?

What problems stand in the way of your hero getting what he/she wants?

What solutions does your hero come up with?

How does everything get resolved?

Does your hero learn anything that teaches something to the audience?

" Whether it be a lyric, a novel or a screenplay, what separates the professional from the amateur is not so much the ability to write, as the ability to rewrite."

—Alan and Marilyn Bergman
Lyricists, The Way We Were

WRITING YOUR SCREENPLAY, FINALLY!

You have your idea. You have a good sense of the characters in your story. You have an outline. So, you are just about ready to start writing your screenplay. But first, you'll need to know the format, some special language, and abbreviations.

A short film screenplay is about nine or ten pages long. It will be written and re-written, because as you proceed in the filmmaking process, you will be changing and adapting the screenplay based on the obstacles you encounter and the things you discover.

Try and break it into sections:

Page 1: The Set-up (where the audience learns what the hero wants). This is the beginning, with a good hook.

Pages 2-7: The Middle (who or what opposes the main character and why). The problems the hero has to overcome.

Pages 8-9: The Ending (where the problems are resolved). The protagonist either wins or loses.

Scenes

Screenplays are written scene by scene.

A scene is a part of the story that happens in <u>one</u> place over <u>one</u> period of time.

For example, if a movie starts out with a guy getting ready for work in the morning, there might be three separate scenes:

Scene 1. brushing his teeth in the bathroom
Scene 2. getting dressed in his bedroom
Scene 3. eating breakfast in the kitchen

Every time the *location or the time changes,* it is considered a new scene.

Each scene should lead naturally into the next one, and keep the audience guessing about what will happen next. In written form, a scene can be any length, from a couple of lines to a page, or even longer.

Parts of a Screenplay

- The **elements** that make up the screenplay are:
- **Slug Line –** when and where the scene is taking place
- **Action –** what is happening
- **Characters and Description –** who is in the scene
- **Dialogue –** what the characters are saying
- **How** the characters say their lines

Men in Black

Slug Line

The first part of a screenplay is called the **slug line**.

A slug line lets everyone know *where and when* the scene is supposed to take place. Every scene in your screenplay should start with a slug line.

Following is a slug line from the screenplay for: *Men in Black*, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld:

```
EXT. DESERT CLEARING - NIGHT
```

This slug line means:

- EXT. is an abbreviation for EXTERIOR, which means outside.
  If it were an inside shot, it would say INT., short for INTERIOR.

- The next part of the slug line gets more specific about the location of the scene; in this case, a DESERT CLEARING—a big, empty place in the desert.

- The final part of the slug line tells you when the scene will take place— in this case, at NIGHT.

With just four words, the screenwriter gave the director a lot of important information. They knew they needed to look for someplace outside to shoot this scene and the place had to be, or had to *look like,* a desert clearing.

Since it takes place at night, they knew they would need to shoot the scene after dark. (Shooting outside at night often requires special lighting and equipment, so if the director shooting *Men in Black* could not get that kind of equipment, they would have to talk to the writer about changing the scene to take place during the DAY.)

Explore:
deciphering slug lines

Here are a few more examples of slug lines from *Men in Black*.

After each line, write down, in plain English, the information that the slug line gives you. (A few hints: A *morgue* is a place where police sometimes store dead bodies before they are buried and MIB BUILDING means Men in Black Building.)

Example:

EXT. ROAD - TEXAS/MEXICO BORDER - NIGHT

Plain English: Outside, on a road, at the border of Texas and Mexico, at night.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER -

EXT. MORGUE (SIDE STREET) - DUSK

INT. MIB BUILDING - HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A Movie to Watch

Back to the Future, directed by Robert Zemeckis.

Pay close attention to the unique storyline and how the character changes his future by traveling into the past and back.

Back to the Future
Inventor Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd) and time traveller Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) exchange concerned looks when Marty's future mother (Lea Thompson) pays them a visit.

Action

Another element in a screenplay is the **action**.

The action comes after the slug line, and it describes the scene (including the setting, the characters, and what is happening) in greater detail.

The action should be no longer than a few sentences. Sometimes there are lines of action in a screenplay, without a slug line.

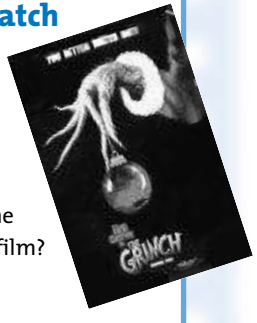
Here are a couple of action elements from *Men in Black,* with their slug lines:

> EXT. WORLD'S FAIR - LANDING TOWER - NIGHT
> Edgar climbs the outside of the landing tower of one of the spaceships, pushing Laurel up ahead of him, headed for the saucer at the top.

> INT. GARAGE - DAY
> The next morning. A door opens on a garage and an ORKIN MAN steps inside, carrying a tank of toxic gas. The morning light spills on an abundance of spiders, crawling everywhere — big ones, small ones, hundreds of them have moved in and taken over this dusty place.
>
> The Orkin Man sighs and sets down his tank.

In both cases, the action is described simply and quickly. The trick is to give just enough detail to get across what is happening, and no more.

A Movie to Watch



Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas, directed by Ron Howard.

Can you pick out the protagonist in the film? How about the antagonist?

Photo: Ron Batzdorff

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas
Little Cindy Lou-Who (Taylor Momsen).

Characters

The names of *new* characters are always capitalized in a screenplay. You should write a simple, brief description. This is how the characters of "Kay" and "Dee" are introduced in the third scene of the movie:

> TWO MEN get out of the car, dressed in plain black suits, crisp white shirts, simple black ties, shiny black shoes. KAY, fiftyish, is extremely world-weary; his partner, DEE, mid-sixties, is just weary.

Once they are identified as KAY and DEE, their names are never capitalized in the *action* again. But they are still capitalized in the DIALOGUE.

Using capital letters tells the person reading the screenplay, "Hey, pay attention, there's a new character here!"

Sometimes, characters do not have names, but are identified by a short description instead. Usually it is a minor character, someone who plays a small part, like the ORKIN MAN, who is in the movie only for a minute or two.

Tips from the Experts

- Every movie tends to have at least one main character — or protagonist — and his or her enemy, called an antagonist. The protagonist is not necessarily good or bad, but he or she is the person who carries the action of the movie forward. The movie is usually the protagonist's story.
- For example, the protagonist in *Star Wars* is Luke Skywalker. The antagonist is Darth Vadar.

Tips from the Experts

- The beginning part of a screenplay is called the **setup** — that's where the protagonist and the problem he or she wants to overcome is introduced. In a ten-page screenplay (the kind you would write for a ten-minute film), the setup will be on the very first page or so.
- Putting in lots of twists and turns (surprises) can make the film more fun to watch, and it keeps the audience interested.
- Let other people read your screenplay to get some feedback.
- Keep re-working scenes and characters as you get more familiar with your story. A script is a work in progress. You will probably even rewrite dialogue or include new thoughts while you are filming your story.

Dialogue

Dialogue is, of course, what your characters say. Here is more of the scene, showing how **dialogue** fits in with the **slug lines** and the **action**.

EXT. DESERT CLEARING - NIGHT
Kay and Dee lead their captive into a clearing in the desert brush. Dee pulls an enormous handgun from a shoulder holster and stays a pace or two off, covering him. Kay has an arm draped around the man's shoulders.

KAY
I think you jumped off the bus in the wrong part of town, amigo. In fact, I'll bet dollars to pesos that you're not...

He pulls out a small laser device, which he ZIPS neatly down the front of the man's clothes.

KAY (CONT'D)
...from anywhere near here.

The man's clothes fall to the ground, revealing what he really is underneath — A SCALY SPACE DUDE, about four-and-a-half feet tall, with a snout, snail-like tentacles, and independently moving eyes on stalks at the top of his head.

Dialogue is always indented, with the name of the character speaking written in capital letters in the center. There are no quotation marks around the dialogue.

SAMPLE SCREENPLAY

Game Time by Todd Newman

FADE IN:

EXT. high school soccer field - NIGHT

The field is empty. The lonely sounds of crickets can be heard.

CUT TO:

A man sits alone on the bleachers. His silhouette is dimly lit by the moon. He strikes a match. The flame invades the darkness and reveals the face of a rugged looking man. He is EMIL McGILVRAY, mid 30s. He is deep in thought as he lights a cigar and scans the field with his eyes.

SUDDENLY, JERRY JOSEPH, an elderly night watchman, approaches and shines a flashlight in Emil's face.

JERRY
Who the hell are you?
Emil lifts his hand to shield his eyes from the blinding light.

EMIL
I'm sorry. I played soccer here years ago.
I graduated in '86.

Jerry takes a step closer.

JERRY
(sarcastically)
Well, good for you. But I didn't ask for your resume.
I asked who you were.

EMIL
My name is Emil McGilvray.

JERRY
It's two o'clock in the morning. What are you doing here?
Emil puffs his cigar. He takes a deep breath and sighs.

EMIL
I'm not sure.
(beat)
I guess I came here to find my youth.

Jerry chuckles to himself. He turns his flashlight off and puts it in his coat pocket.

JERRY
Let me tell you something kid. You still have your youth.
I'll be seventy five years old this March. One thing I've
learned in my old age is not to dwell on the past.
Thinking about what used to be won't do you any good.

Embarrassed, Emil looks away from Jerry and begins to cry. Jerry sits down next to him.
He pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket and hands it to Emil.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(consoling)
Whatever problem you've got kid, I'm sure there's a solution.
(beat)
There's a coffee machine in the teachers lounge. I'll go grab
you a cup while you take a few minutes to pull yourself
together.

EMIL
(clearing his throat)
Thanks.

Jerry stands. He gives Emil an encouraging pat on the shoulder and walks off. Emil solemnly stares down at the handkerchief. He decides to use his sleeve to dry his tears instead. As he regains his composure, he gazes upon the soccer field. His mind begins to wander.

CUT TO:

SUPERIMPOSE: 1986
EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Anxious students and fans fill the bleachers waving banners displaying pride for their schools. Cheerleaders dance and tumble up and down the sidelines in perfect rhythm to the music being played by the marching band on the field.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys on the soccer team put on their uniforms and prepare for the game. A young Emil, now 16 years old, is already dressed. He stands by the locker room window and stares at the action that is going on outside. He notices a beautiful girl sitting on the bleachers.

CLOSE UP on JENNIFER NEWMAN, 16 years old. She sits and gossips with a group of her friends. She must feel Emil's gaze. She turns and sees him in the window. Excited, she waves and blows him a kiss. Emil smiles.

SUDDENLY, A harsh voice breaks Emil's concentration.

VOICE (O.S.)
McGilvray! Stop flirting with the girls and get your butt over here.

Emil snaps to attention. COACH MATTERA, mid 40s, a pit bull of a man, enters the locker room. The boys huddle up around the coach as he gives them a pep talk.

COACH MATTERA (CONT'D)
I won't bore you with a long speech. Today is the championship game. The one we've worked for all season. I want 110 percent from each and every one of you. Focus, play hard, and make me proud.
(beat)
Let's go get 'em.

The boys clap their hands and roar with enthusiasm.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

The opposing team is stretching and warming up on one half of the field. Emil and his teammates burst through the locker room door followed by coach Mattera. The fans applaud as the boys take their positions.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - DAY

MONTAGE:

From various camera angles, we see Emil playing an aggressive game. The action is heated. Goals are scored. Shots on goal are blocked by diving goalkeepers. Coaches scream instructions from the sidelines. Fans cheer from the stands. Players slide on the ground fighting for possession of the ball. Both teams are drained as the game nears an end. An exhausted Emil glances at the score board.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on the score board. It's a 3-2 game. Emil's team is down by one goal. There is only one minute left to play in the game.

BACK TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The ball is passed to Emil. He beats one man, then another. Desperately, he darts up the field toward the opposing goal. There are ten seconds left on the clock. SUDDENLY, He is tripped up by a defensive player. Pandemonium breaks loose on the field. Players shove one another. Coaches argue as the referee tries to calm the chaos. Emil is awarded a penalty kick.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD SIDE LINES - MOMENTS LATER

The boys huddle around as coach Mattera gives Emil last minute instructions.

COACH MATTERA
Emil, this is a chance of a lifetime. We need this goal to go into overtime. If you score, you'll be a hero. That girl you like to flirt with will love you forever. So will the rest of us.

Emil walks onto the field and prepares the ball for his shot. He glances at Jennifer who is standing on top of her seat with her fingers crossed. He turns and stares hard at the opposing goalkeeper. The referee blows his whistle and motions for Emil to take his shot. Emil's P.O.V. The goalkeeper tries to break Emil's concentration by pounding his hands together and jumping from side to side. In slow motion, Emil approaches and shoots. The ball cuts through the air, hits the goal post, and bounces off the field. Devastated, Emil falls to his knees. The game is lost.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - NIGHT - PRESENT
Emil stares up at the dark night sky. His face is engulfed by the smoke from the cigar that still burns between his fingers. SUDDENLY, he is snapped out of his trance by a tap on his shoulder. Jerry has returned with two cups of coffee.

NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

Telling a story on film involves real challenges.

The challenge of space

If you were writing a book instead of making a movie, your story could be a thousand pages long. Before you start shooting your movie, you will have to decide how long that movie should be — a short one is usually about 5 to 10 minutes long. You will have to work within a time framework to tell your story.

Finding actors

In a written story, you could write a scene in which your main character and thousands of barefoot people walk out of a desert. In your movie, a scene like that would be difficult to pull off. Try and adapt your story so you do not need a lot of actors.

Making scenes look realistic is hard

In a written story, you could have the action take place anywhere in the world — or even another planet. You could write about a computer whiz who lives at the South Pole, in a research station. *In your movie, you will be limited by where you can actually go to shoot the movie — or how easily you could make neighborhood places look as if they were somewhere else.* Think it through.

Wacky weather

Let's say you are ready to shoot your happy, sunny, outdoor scene then you discover that it is cold and about to rain. You may have to wait, and shoot on another day. The visuals have to be right and making them right is not always in your control.

Time can be your enemy

You probably have a very limited number of days — and number of hours in each day — when you can shoot your movie. You have to squeeze all your shooting into that period of time, or cut scenes out. Plan ahead as much as possible before you start shooting a movie. The more you plan, the more you will be able to get everything you need done when the time for production (shooting your movie) begins.

Money

Suppose you were making a werewolf movie. You find the *perfect* werewolf costume at a props shop, but the costume costs $500. But your entire budget is only $40. You might have to do some creative costume making at that point, or rethink the entire werewolf idea. Making a film is about telling a great story *and* figuring out a way to tell that story *on film*, in a way that your audience will believe.

MOVIEMAKING ROLES

What are the roles necessary in making your short film? The answer depends on how many people are available to help. If there were six people, the roles would be:
(These are not exactly how the roles are played out in a large Hollywood production, but these basic definitions should be very helpful.)

Director

Responsible for the entire production and finishing the film. Defines and communicates his/her vision for the film, sets the schedule, creates storyboards, (see page 42) and works with the actors. The director selects the location sites (or approves/ disapproves them if someone else is doing the scouting). He or she also sets up the shots with the cinematographer and works with the editor to put together the final cut.

The best directors are those who have a clear vision of what they want, and they work well with others. Getting the most from your crew while being responsible for the production is a tough job. Great films are created when the ideas of everyone on the crew are heard, respected, and considered seriously, and the director makes the right choices.

Producer

Works with the director to make sure everything happens according to schedule and budget.

Writer

Writes the screenplay. Works closely with the director on rewrites.

The key to writing is rewriting. You should do several drafts of the screenplay. Hopefully, each time it will get better. You will be getting a lot of feedback from your director. One of the toughest challenges about being a screenwriter is figuring out how to gather others' suggestions and incorporate them well. Take every suggestion seriously.

Cinematographer

Shoots the film, frames the shots, and comes up with camera and lighting ideas. Works most closely with the director on determining what will be shot and the mood that needs to be communicated by the shots. Responsible for caring for the camera and making sure that tapes and batteries are available.

Sit down with the screenplay. Think about all the different ways the scenes can be shot. Consider each one and write down some of your favorite ideas. Go over these ideas with the director. Think visually.

Actors

The people who act in the film. They work closely with the director to find out how their characters can best be played.

Go beyond just memorizing your lines. Think about how your character would say his/her lines and use body language. Pay attention to the character you are going to play, and think about what that character wants in the scene. If it is not clear to you, work with the director to clarify your character's goals, desires, or needs. Scenes work better when the desire of one character conflicts with the goal of another character.

Editor

Edits the film. Works closely with the director to determine the order of the shots, the mood to be conveyed by the editing, and the use of music and other sound.

Pay attention to the screenplay as it is being written. Think about how you would like to see the film look, and communicate your ideas to the director. Watch movies, television shows, and TV commercials. Pay attention to how the shots were put together.

" If you cast right, the most important imperative for a film director is: do not confuse your actors! Be careful with every word. Less you talk, less you spoil."

—Miloš Forman
Director, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Chapter 3

Directing

- Getting the Picture: Directing
- Creating a Storyboard
- Checking Your Shots...Beforehand
- Working with Actors
- Directing Tips from the Experts

Getting the Picture: Directing

A Movie to Watch

Jaws, directed by Steven Spielberg.

After you watch this movie, how do you think the director builds suspense and keeps the viewer feeling scared?

How do you take a story that only exists on paper, and turn it into an interesting and powerful movie? A good screenplay is a good foundation but even the best ones need to have a director that can translate it well to the movie screen.

This chapter is mainly about directing, however, much of it applies to other movie-making roles as well.

A good director understands the work of all the crew members. For example, to be a good director, you need to have a vision of how a scene should be shot. Can a director be effective if he or she does not know how things actually look on *camera*? Directors need to understand the importance of set design, and the difference lighting makes in setting a mood.

What is directing?

The director, in a sense, is like a teacher. He/she instructs the **cast** and **crew**. The **cast** are people *in* the movie, the actors. The crew helps make the movie and are involved in the *production* — all the activity associated with preparing and shooting the movie. Just like a teacher helps students learn about physics, or algebra, the director helps the cast and crew learn about the story that will be told on film.

To be effective, the director takes the time, using his or her imagination, to think about the story:

- How should the story be told?
- How should the film look?

The director sees the film in that imagination exercise. That "mental movie" is called the director's vision.

Students are not the only ones who have to do homework. The director of a movie has a lot of homework, too. To direct a film, part of your homework will be to create that "mental movie," and run it through your imagination.

If you are a director who can explain your vision, the actors will understand how you want the story to be told. They will also respect your decisions as the director. You have probably had a few really talented teachers that you respected because they knew more than just science or math — they knew how to help you learn.

> *" I spoke to a friend of mine recently who was about to make his debut as a film director. He was in a state of abject terror about the task ahead. His mind was reeling with information about lenses, and stock ratios, and CGI shots, and how to talk to the crew and the actors — you name it, he was panicking about it.*
>
> *So I asked him why he wanted to make this particular story. He thought for a moment about it and then he launched into an impassioned speech about the characters and the themes, and vivid descriptions of the atmosphere.*
>
> *In short, he had a vision for the film. When he'd finished I told him what I believed. Which is that his inspiring personal vision was the greatest possible tool he could have for dealing with all the other challenges. The entire crew will want to share that vision. To help execute it. To challenge it so that you can helpfully refine what you need to say. To answer all those questions. To collaborate. So for what it's worth, hold onto that vision. At all costs. The rest will to a large extent, take care of itself."*
>
> —*Kenneth Branagh*
> *Actor and Director,* Hamlet

What makes a good director?

Here are a few ideas:

- Having a clear, creative idea of how the movie should look
- Knowing how to tell a story visually
- Explaining this vision to your crew members
- Working well with people and getting the most out of their talents
- Being organized and prepared for everything that might go wrong on a shoot
- Making good, quick decisions
- Sticking to the schedule
- Inspiring the crew with positive phrases: "Great job!" "Well done!" "Beautiful work!"

These are some of the important traits of a good director. Be patient. Most of them come with practice, effort, and experience

What does a director actually do?

In Hollywood, the director is in charge of most of the moviemaking process. Everyone has a vital role, but the director has to oversee everything and everyone. The director usually has a boss or two, such as the executive producer, and/or the studio.

It is the director who:

- helps shape the script (often with the producer and writer)
- lays out the entire movie in a storyboard
- picks the rest of the crew (sometimes with the producer)
- chooses and works with the actors
- decides the shots for every scene and tries to stick to the schedule
- selects the locations and music
- oversees the editing
- basically, oversees *everything*.

The director's job

Understand and work with the script

The director is responsible for how the story looks on film. The director first reads and analyzes the script if he/she has not already been involved in the creation of the script. Next, using his/her vision as a guide, the director creates storyboards, to show how the story should be told visually. These storyboards look something like a comic book, but without words. Sometimes they are really basic sketches, but they show the sequence of the shots, and the basic distance and angle of the camera. Using the storyboards as a guide, the director will work with the writer to make the script ready to shoot on film.

The director does this by getting as familiar as possible with the story, asking:

- What is the story really about?
- What is its theme?
- What mood will help tell the story?
- Who is the target audience?
- What are some interesting things you can do to tell this story *visually*?
- What changes need to be made to the script in order to make it better?

Stick to the schedule

Directors set the schedule and need to stick to it! If you have a nine-page screenplay to shoot and only three days to shoot it, then you will probably need to shoot three pages a day to get it all done. If, on day two, you are still shooting the opening scene, then you are in trouble. Can you get an extra day of shooting? Can you change the script so that you do not need the last few scenes?

It sounds obvious, but a *lot* of Hollywood movies go over budget. Usually, it is because they did not stick to the schedule. Manage your time wisely. Think and plan ahead.

Head cheerleader

The director sets the mood for the entire production. If everyone has fun and feels good about their contribution, you end up with a much better movie. So, remember to keep people feeling that they are important. Make sure your criticism is the helpful kind. Above all, listen.

Check the day's shooting

At the end of a day of shooting, the director looks at the day's work to review what ended up on film. These shots are called the "dailies" or "rushes."

The director should ask:

- Am I happy with the work that was done today?
- Does other shooting need to be done?
- Do we have enough time to re-shoot a scene that just doesn't look right?
- Is there a way to learn from today, to help the shoot tomorrow?

Keep in mind that movies are not always shot in *sequence* (in first, middle, last order). The director has storyboards in sequence, but you can shoot each scene in any order. You will change around the order during *post production* (after the film is shot), during the editing phase. You do not have to begin shooting the opening scenes, and end with the last scene. You can mix it up. As the director, you have to continually communicate with your cast and crew and use your storyboards to give them a sense of where the story is going.

Work with the editor

When the film *shooting* part ends, film *editing* begins. This is the process when the director and editor take all the shots, and put them in the order that the director thinks will tell the best story. It is time consuming, technical, and can really impact and shape the director's vision of the film.

Talented directors have a vision of how to tell the story, and communicate this vision so that the cast and crew can help capture the vision on film.

Communicating a vision involves making a lot of decisions.

The director is constantly making major decisions, like:

- Who should play each character?
- What kind of setting would be best for the fight?
- What kind of costumes should the actors wear?
- What kind of music should be playing?
- Where should the camera point?

The director has to know what he/she wants the actors to do before the shooting begins in order to get the best performance.

CREATING A STORYBOARD

Imagine and sketch the images

A director takes the screenplay, visually maps it out in his or her mind, and then, on *paper*, in the form of a **storyboard**.

What is a storyboard?

It is a shot-by-shot layout, drawn on paper or on a computer, showing what the film will look like before you bring an actual camera into the production.

Some directors plan every single shot with a storyboard. They really picture *exactly* how they want each shot to look and to flow together. (Some storyboards are so extensive they could fill every wall in a room.) Then the actual shooting of the film becomes as simple (or as difficult) as following these examples: many of the artistic decisions have been made already — the movie just has to be shot and edited together.

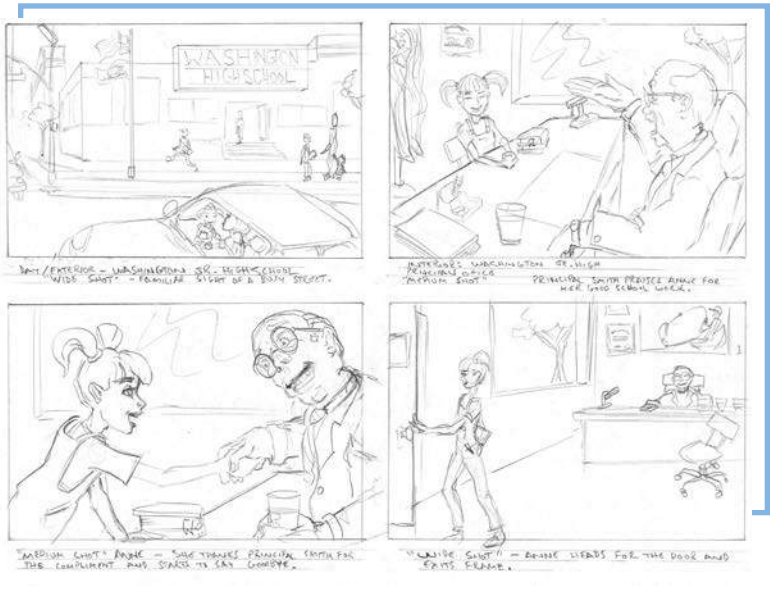
THE STORYBOARD: two examples

On the next two pages you will see two storyboards. **Each storyboard tells this story:**

A student, Anne, has a meeting with her principal at school. Anne does not want to tell her parents about the meeting. She goes home and, eventually, goes to sleep.

Nothing much happens here but still there are many, many different ways to get from point A (Anne at school) to point B (Anne asleep). These two storyboards give you two different choices. In the first storyboard, the story is told in a series of 15 short scenes. In the second storyboard, only 5 short scenes are used. Notice the different choices that are made.

Long Storyboard
Scenes 1 -4



Long Storyboard

Scenes 5-8

Long Storyboard

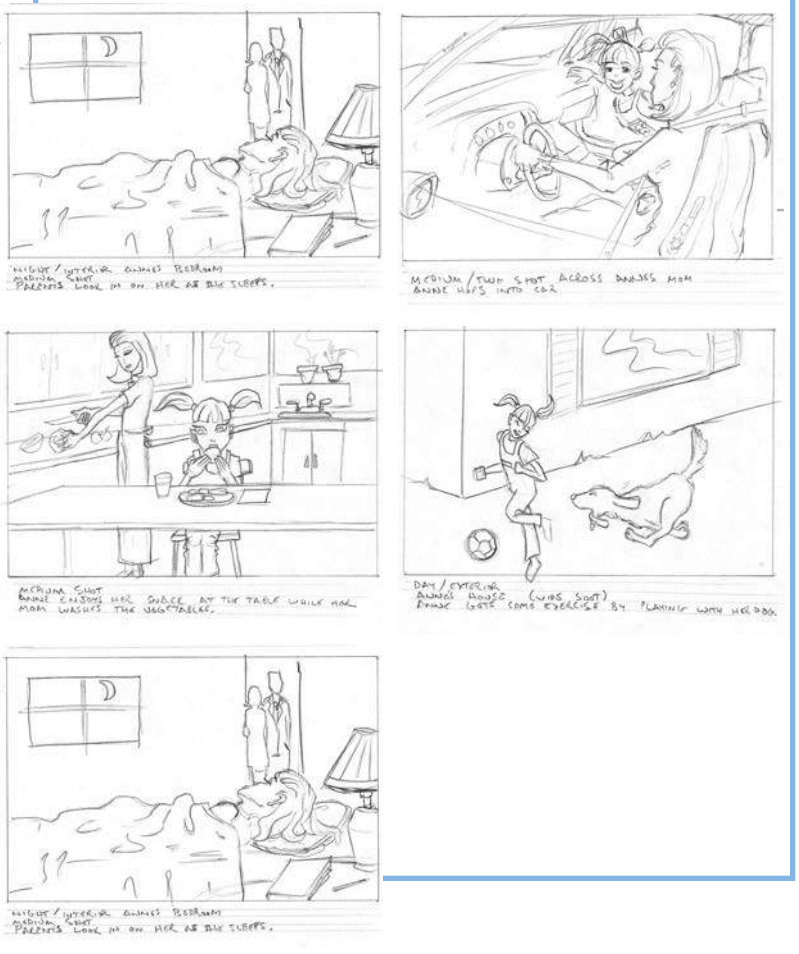
Scenes 9-12

Long Storyboard

Scenes 13-15

Short Storyboard

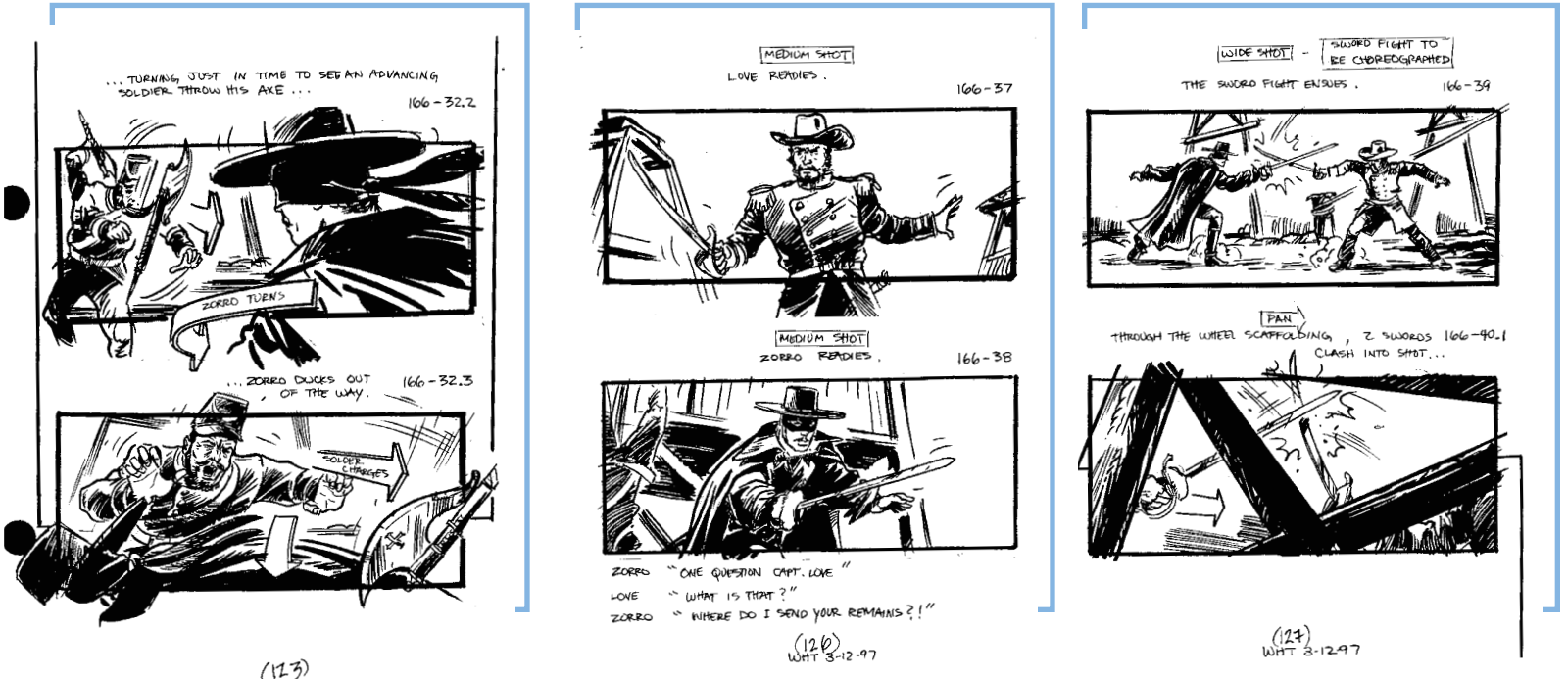
Scenes 1-5

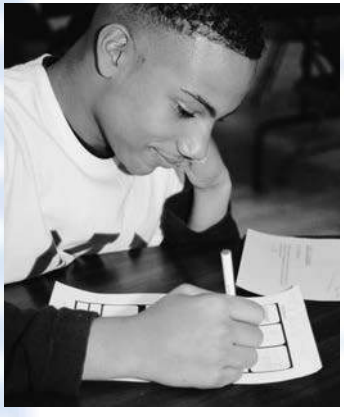


The Mask of Zorro

Directed by Martin Campbell

Sample storyboard from The Mask of Zorro





Explore:
creating a storyboard

Storyboards help the director think visually about storytelling. Storyboards are not about making the drawings realistic; in fact, you do not need to make the drawing realistic. You can use stick figures for the people, squares for desks, a circle for the sun, and lines for a fence. The important thing is to get an idea of how each shot will look.

Decide what you *think* you want the shots to look like before you arrive on the day of the shoot. Do your homework like a professional, and you will have a clear vision of the story you want to tell. Also, be open to making changes once you are on the set, and ask for other peoples' ideas — especially those of the cinematographer.

When thinking about the shots, make decisions about:

Composition
Composition is the positioning of people and things in the shot.
Should the main character be in the middle of the frame, or off to the side?

Lighting
Should it be bright or soft? Should it come from above, below, or from the side?

(POV) Point of view
POV refers to the position of the camera. Should it be up close and personal? Should it be angled downward or upward at the actor?

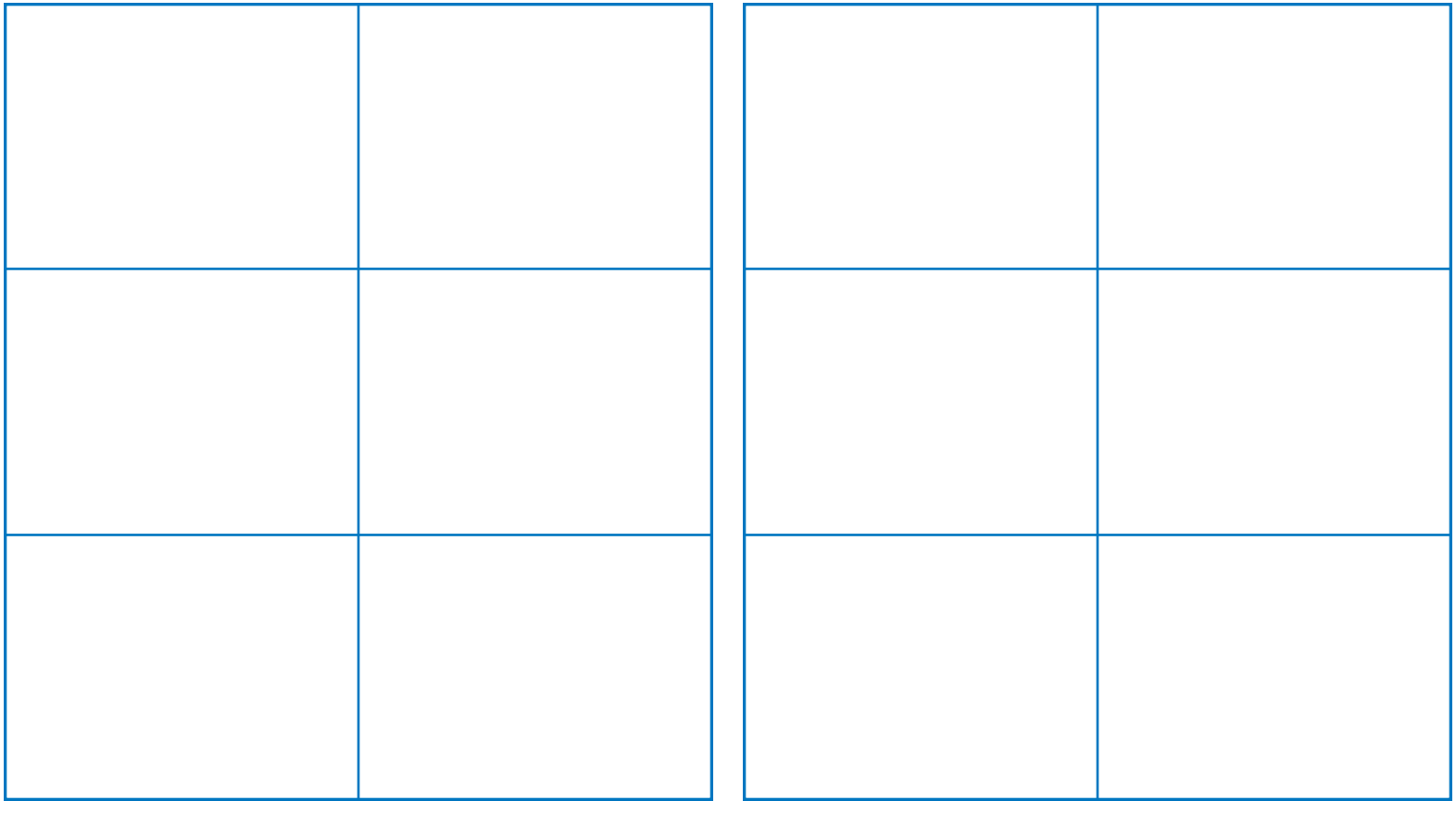
Here is a basic story

Two friends are sitting together in math class. J.D. is sitting behind Keisha as the teacher passes out a test. Both friends start to work on the test. J.D. tries to cheat by looking over Keisha's shoulder, and copying her test answers. Keisha notices and tries to cover up her paper. J.D. gives up and starts to work on his test.

Try to storyboard this short story. As you do, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you want the shots to be really close (so that a face fills the entire screen), medium, or far away?
- What should the angle of the shot look like? Straight on or tilted? From above the character, or down low?
- From whose point of view will the camera be looking, from the point of view of one of the characters, or from the point of view of an invisible storyteller? There is no RIGHT way or WRONG way to do this exercise. You are the director — you make it look the way you want.

Long Storyboard



See how these shots show three different points of view? One is shot from a "third person's" point of view. One is shot from the girl's point of view. And one is shot from the fish's point of view.

Can you identify each?

Short Storyboard

CHECKING YOUR SHOTS... BEFOREHAND

It is an excellent tool to have your shots on paper, but things look different through a camera. Directors and cinematographers usually want to see what their shots look like when framed by the camera, in order to really figure out which shots work. They look at a scene through a **viewfinder** — the viewing piece of a camera — or they look through the camera itself. Keep in mind, this is not shooting the film, it is just looking through the viewfinder to see how things appear.

EXPLORE:
a camera exercise

Have a friend pose in a chair, on a bed, or somewhere comfortable. Ask him/her to express an intense emotion, like anger or despair. Experiment with your camera, shooting your friend from different distances and angles. Notice which shots make your friend's emotion appear more extreme.

EXPLORE:
shooting your storyboard

Take the storyboard you created and check out your shots with a camera — a video camera, a film camera, or a still camera. As best you can, try to shoot your storyboard. Try to create each scene. Notice what you like, or don't like. Notice how the camera's position changes the way the shots look. Each shot will tell a different story.

WORKING WITH ACTORS

The director works with the actors to determine how their characters should be played, and how a certain scene should appear. The actors give their input, but the director is the person most responsible for what ends up on film, and makes the final acting decisions.

Explore:
actors and directors working together

You will need three people for this experiment: two actors and one director.
The scene is between a girl who is sad and a guy making jokes.

Choices to make:

- Is the guy trying to show off for the girl?
- Is the guy trying to cheer her up?
- Why is the girl sad?
- Does she like the guy's attention?
- Does she want him to go away?

The director's choices will determine what the scene is really about.

The director should discuss with the actors how to play the scene. Is the guy being mean, or is the guy being nice? Is there something he wants from her, and is that why he is being nice? The director also has to decide the girl's motivation. Why is she sad? What does she want the guy to do? Is she angry that the guy is making jokes, or does she like it? Does she cheer up, or does she get upset?

Talk over these decisions, and then the actors can act out a short scene.

Write your ideas afterwards:

It was an interesting exercise because

" Plan the work, work the plan."
—Tom Irvine
Assistant Director,
From the Earth to the Moon

The actors did a good job of

but they could have

better.

I learned that

The actors felt that

Directing Tips from the Experts

Be prepared for everything to go wrong. Filmmaking depends on many variables:

- The camera has to work.
- The lights have to work.
- The actors have to arrive on time and have their lines memorized.
- The costume person has to remember to bring all the clothes.
- For outdoor shooting, the weather has to be just right.

The list could go on and on.

Most directors say that *being prepared* is one of the most important keys to success. You should try to *anticipate*, figure out ahead of time, all of the things that could go wrong on any individual shoot, *and* you have to figure out a backup plan.

For example, if you were planning to shoot a scene with two actors, one camera, and one lamp, in an empty classroom after school, what are some of the things you might do to prepare?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Here are some answers to that question:

- Bring another camera, just in case something happens. And don't forget an extra battery pack.
- Check the lights in the room to make sure they work.
- Bring an extra light bulb just in case one of them goes out.
- Go over the lines and rehearse the scene with the actors. Are they ready? Did you remind them what time they need to arrive in order to get made up and dressed?
- Is someone going to be mowing the lawn right outside the window? Are you sure there is not a lot of traffic noise?
- Who is bringing the costumes for the shoot? Are there going to be costume changes?

No matter what happens, stay calm.

As the person in charge on the set, the director sets the mood, and if she or he is not calm, people helping with the shoot will not be as good at their jobs.





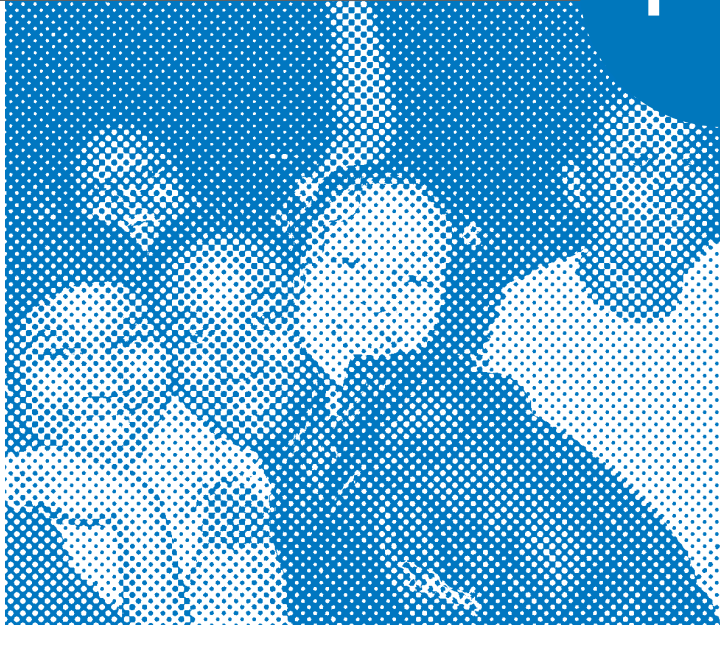
" My first job in the film industry included "sliming" monsters with methylcellulose and emptying chemical toilets in motor homes on the set of Humanoids from the Deep. *Of course, my responsibilities have changed considerably since then, but I'll never forget how important it was to learn every conceivable aspect of motion picture production."*

—*Gale Anne Hurd*
Producer, Terminator

Chapter 4

Production Cast & Crew

- Art Production
- Acting
- Costumes and Makeup
- Other Important Responsibilities/Jobs
- Explore: Continuity
- The Camera
- Lighting: a Bright Subject
- Sound



ART PRODUCTION

The art director is in charge of art production, working with the director to make sure the **set** conveys the story that the director is trying to tell in that scene (the set is the place where a scene is shot). It can be a pre-existing place, like McDonalds, or a place that is constructed and decorated to look like a McDonalds. The art director designs the set. He/she can make a backyard or a local park look like a jungle. As with many jobs, planning ahead is key: looking at every single scene that is going to be shot to figure out how to make each scene look right.

Props is a term that is short for "properties," and they include all the items on a set. Props give the audience information about what is happening in the film, and important details about the characters. For example, two friends are roller blading by themselves, and they see each other at the park. They have a conversation while drinking water, and then one looks at her watch and realizes she has to get going. In the least, two bottles of water, a watch, and two pairs of roller blades are needed.

You have probably seen the *X-Files* and *Friends* on TV. What types of props might you need for these shows?

X-Files Props

Friends Props

How do you decide which props to use?

Filmmakers use props and settings that reveal details about the characters.

Questions to consider:

- How can you best tell the audience about the character and his or her world?
- What would an apartment with almost no furniture say about your character?
- How will you use color?
- Does a neon-pink book bag tell the audience anything about your character?
- What props convey important information?
- Would your character seem more nervous if he wipes his face with a handkerchief every five minutes?

How can you get ideas for props?

Try looking through magazines and books; watch old movies.

What sort of props might you use to create:

The living room of a family of very tall people

A modern-day witch's attic might have

Where do you find props? Thrift shops, garages, storage areas in your home, and yard sales are excellent places to look.

A Movie to Watch

Edward Scissorhands, directed by Tim Burton.

This movie is especially good for its use of props, makeup, and lighting.

Photo: Zade Rosenthal

Edward Scissorhands
Kevin (Robert Oliver, right) dazzles his classmates by inviting Edward (Johnny Depp, left) to display his talents during "Show and Tell" in Twentieth Century Fox's *Edward Scissorhands*.

EXPLORE:
making a room into a set

You are the art director for a scene in which there are four characters, all high school students. They are meeting in their school to discuss this year's yearbook. Unfortunately, your school does not have a yearbook office, so you have to turn a regular classroom (where the scene is going to be shot) into something that looks like one. What kind of props could you use to make it look like a yearbook office? Remember: The audience will see only what the camera shows them, so the whole room does not need to be "dressed" as a set.

" I try to live by Lou Nizer's words... 'A person who works with his hands is a laborer. A person who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. A person who works with his hands, head, and his heart is an artist.'"

—Syd Litwack
Art Director, Head

Make a props list:

Acting

How often have you watched actors on a TV show or a movie, and thought to yourself, "I could do better than *that*!" It's very difficult for most people to be good at acting. Acting is a skill, and of course, it's very important in the filmmaking process. A director can do everything right, and a cinematographer can have every camera shot perfectly framed, but if the acting is really bad, the film will not be very good.

What makes a good actor?

Just like people, characters often say one thing, but mean something else. In real life, people experience this every day. A director, with the actor, decides what the character really means — what he/she really wants — regardless of what the character says in the dialogue.

Usually, the best actors are those people who can really *get into* his/her character's head and act *like* that character, leaving the audience wondering where the acting stops and the real person begins. The real person (the actor) seems to become that character. While acting is hard work, good actors make it look easy.

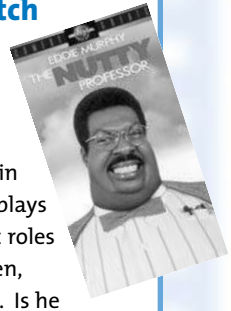
Most professional actors have spent many years studying acting. They take classes, watch and study films, plays, and television programs, and read a lot of books. They educate themselves so that they have the background information that helps them play a particular character. If an actor has never been in a war, and has to play a Vietnam veteran, his or her research would include talking with real veterans.

Actors should read the script several times, think about the character's history, and daily activities, and ask:

- Who is my character?
- What does my character want and why?
- What motivates my character?
- What does he or she wake up thinking about or wishing for?
- Did my character have a happy childhood?
- What does he/she do on weekends?
- What kind of music does he/she listen to?
- Has he/she ever been in love?

Filling in these details for yourself will help you make your character real and believable. **If you are the director, you need to know about all the characters in the film.**

A Movie to Watch



The Nutty Professor, directed by Tom Shadyac.

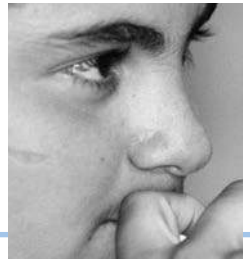
In this movie, the main actor, Eddie Murphy, plays many of the different roles himself, including men, women, and children. Is he able to convince you that he is actually these other people? While makeup really helps, being able to play lots of different characters is a real talent that only some actors possess.

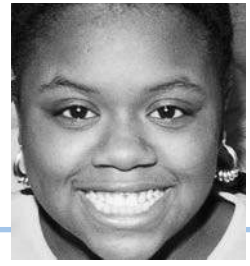
" Do your homework, show up prepared, and always rely on your instincts."

—Anjelica Huston
Actor, Prizzi's Honor

EXPLORE:
acting in character

Pick one of your favorite movie characters and practice being that character.
How would your character eat breakfast?
How does he/she brush their teeth?
What kind of driving style would your character have?
How does your character act when he/she is attracted to someone?



EXPLORE:
observation exercises for the actor

Try creating a character observation notebook for yourself. Watch how people behave. Write down small character sketches of people you observe. Write down what you think that person is probably like, and why you have come to that conclusion. Notice how they carry themselves, what kind of clothes they wear, what they eat, how they eat, etc.

Character:
Your conclusions about the character:

What were the clues that led you to those conclusions?

Character:
Your conclusions about the character:

What were the clues that led you to those conclusions?

Acting is doing

Acting is *doing*. It is *showing* how your character feels. Sometimes an actor expresses the feelings of a character in subtle ways. Being subtle is the opposite of being hyper or extreme. The director often guides the actors, letting them know if they need to be more understated, or more extreme.

For instance, a scene where two characters, Luis and Gail, are having a conversation. Luis does not want to talk to Gail, but he wants to end the conversation without hurting her feelings.

What can Luis do? Could he act like he is in a hurry to get somewhere on time?
Think of two things he could do to indicate that he wants the conversation to end:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Conflict - Opposing Goals

All good drama has conflict. The scene above might be even better if Gail tried to counter Luis' attempts to end the conversation. One character wants to leave, and the other wishes to continue the conversation — these opposing goals provide conflict.

How to create and solve conflict are some of the most important choices that directors and actors make. The scene with Luis and Gail could go many different ways. Conflict can involve war and weapons, but the non-physical kind of conflict, like the one with Luis and Gail, can be the most intriguing.

Next time you watch a movie, see if you can identify the goals of the characters, and which of those goals conflict with each other.

Acting involves reacting.

Actors play off of what other actors do, using body language as much as dialogue. When actors play off each other especially well, it is called having "chemistry." Without chemistry between characters, a movie is boring.

Example: You are an actor in a scene where another actor is going to scream. Even though you have rehearsed this scene ten times already, you have to react to the scream as if it were the first time. Your reaction to a scream should show in:

- your face. Would it be a shocked expression or a scared expression?
- your body. Would you stiffen up or turn suddenly?
- your actions. Would you cringe or scream as well?

Whatever you do should seem natural.

Another thing to remember is that acting is constantly changing, evolving. Every time you rehearse or shoot a scene with other actors, it will be different. They will say their lines a little differently, or make a new facial expression, which might call for a different type of response from you. That is why it is so important to pay attention to everyone. Most famous actors listen very well. They pay attention to the little things the other actors do and say.

" After sitting through a lifetime of failures and a few precious successes, what is the raw basic wisdom that I have learned? Without the help of Confucius, I'll try to actually tell you something useful. For one, you have to be willing to die trying. Being born into the business, one might say I had a leg up on most. But I'll tell you, the part of my life filled with rejection after rejection still outlasts the part of my life that I've actually worked as a director and actor.

The drive you must have needs to border on obsession. Where does one find this? I found this drive at a rather young age. It was out of my early social awkwardness that I discovered the incredible power of film. As a young teenager, I was picked on and bullied by more together and popular kids. I was consumed by the embarrassment and failure that I endured. So I began making revenge fantasy movies with Super Eight cameras around New York City. With titles like Murder in the Park, *I would make movies acting out terrible murders and ass whoopings of my adolescent assailants. More than therapy, I realized the power these images held. When my two-bit punk adversaries saw these films, they were visibly shaken, more so than their constant taunting had shaken me. At a young age, I got to witness first hand the visceral power the medium held as these kids watched, mortified at their defeat. I had murdered them on film, and they had completely lost face to a kid they had always terrorized with ease. Of course, they kicked my ass immediately afterwards, but that only proved the great effectiveness of my little films further. It was after seeing this that I fell in love with the medium, with the idea of being able to affect people in a way that they could not even control. I saw that movies themselves took people on rides that they had no choice but to give in to. I have never found or seen anything else like it.*

Recognize your influences and if you don't have any, find them. There is no greater teacher than following the career and body of work by someone you admire and respond to. Make your work personal. There is nothing worse than making a movie about being homeless when you've never gone hungry for longer than a couple of hours. Die a student, not a teacher, and never, never, take yourself too seriously."

—*Ben Stiller*
Actor and Director,
There's Something About Mary

Costumes and Makeup

A Movie to Watch

Mrs. Doubtfire, directed by Chris Columbus.

Robin Williams, who plays the lead character, has to be very careful how "she" talks and interacts because "she" is actually a man.

" Costume design at its best uses silhouette, color and texture to create a character, define a time and tell a story."

—Deena Appel
Costume Designer, Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me

Costumes, makeup, and hair styling can help tell your story. Imagine the agents in *Men in Black* without their black suits and sunglasses. Imagine a war movie without the uniforms, or *The Addams Family* without their makeup. Would the story of *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* be complete without the transformation of Mike Myers through costume, hair, and makeup? Costumes and makeup help tell the movie's story by giving the audience visual details about the characters.

The hair, makeup, and costume people are in charge of *visually* transforming the actors into the characters they are playing. An actor will act the part but these folks are the ones who make him/her *look* the part.

Clothes alone can tell an audience a lot about a character. Think about the people you see at the mall or on your street. You probably make a lot of quick judgments about people based on the clothes they wear. Clothes help you decide if someone is nerdy, trendy, conservative, rich, uptight, hip, funny, young, old-fashioned, or boring. Audiences do the same thing when they see characters in movies.

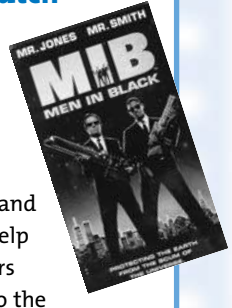
Different clothes and makeup make the actors themselves feel different. Do you feel more attractive in certain clothes? More relaxed in sweats? The way an actor looks can have a real impact on his/her performance.

The right costumes will **define your characters** before they ever say a word of dialogue.

Can you imagine Darth Vadar without his mask and cape? How would the feeling of the movie *Star Wars* been different if the main characters had worn "normal" clothes, like jeans and t-shirts?

A Movie to Watch

Men in Black, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld.



Notice how the costumes of "Kay" (Tommy Lee Jones) and "Jay" (Will Smith) help shape the characters and lend support to the overall story. Their costumes are even incorporated into the title of the film.

Men in Black

Creating Average-Looking Characters

If your characters are people living in present-day America, doing their hair, makeup, and costume will be pretty easy. You can probably pull their costumes from their own closets, or borrow them from friends.

If there is something you cannot find, check out the Salvation Army and other thrift shops. Sometimes, if you explain it's for a school project, the store manager will "rent" the clothes to you for a reduced price. Ask friends and relatives if you can borrow props and clothes for costumes. Keep in mind that clothes look very different depending on how they are put together, and what accessories (baseball caps, jewelry, purses, backpacks) you use.

For example, what if your character is a 40-year-old man, who wears a formal suit? But, he also wears tennis shoes. What will the tennis shoes tell the audience about the character? Experiment with different combinations of clothes and accessories.

If you are the costume designer on a movie that takes place in the past, try going to the library for ideas on clothing. Take a look at books on the history of costume as well as old magazines (a good one is *Life Magazine*).

Put on the Makeup

Everybody in the cast will probably need some form of makeup, at least powder (yes, even the guys); otherwise, their skin will look too shiny on film.

A face that has a lot of makeup on it may look a little overdone in real life, but will probably look normal on film. Keep this in mind when applying makeup and experiment with how your characters look on film.

The makeup artist should have a makeup session with every actor before the shoot begins and should be sure to take notes. When the makeup artist finds a look that he/she likes, he/she should write down the cosmetics used and, if possible, should take photos of the actor. That will help in re-creating the same look for the shoot.

Usually the director wants to see all the actors in costume and makeup before the shoot, to make sure the makeup choices support his/her vision for the film.

EXPLORE:
making someone look like... someone else

Let's say you were the makeup artist on a movie and had to make some of the kids from your school look like the characters they are supposed to play. Here is some information about the characters in a school scene. There are four characters — two girls and two boys — and all of them are in the 8th grade.

JILL studies a lot, but she's a C student who is trying to fit in with the "cool" kids.
LATOYA is very popular, doing well in school, and she's a good runner on the track team.
JOHN is a straight A student who wishes he were more athletic — he often gets harassed by other guys.
DERRICK is the top athlete in the school.

- What would each of these students look like?
- What kind of clothes would each one wear?
- Would they wear glasses?
- What kinds of books and school supplies would they carry?
- Would they wear jewelry and makeup?

Make a list of makeup and clothing you would need for each character:

JILL:

LATOYA:

JOHN:

DERRICK:

Before makeup

Makeup artist at work

After makeup

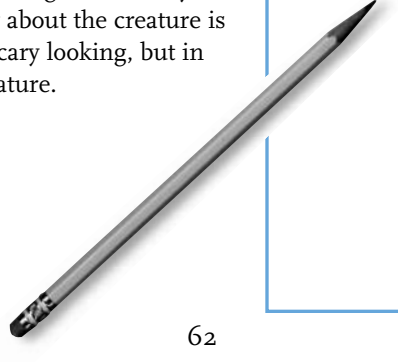
Creating critters and creatures

Transforming someone into a non-human character is a lot tougher than doing makeup and costumes for a human character. It is also a lot more time consuming.

If your movie has aliens or monsters, you have to decide what they are going to look like:

- What color is their skin?
- Do they even have skin, or is it fur?
- How many arms and legs do they have?
- What is fashionable on their planet?

If you can, *start with some drawings*. It is easier — and less expensive — to experiment on paper than it is on people. Let's say your assignment is to create a creature that emerged from a hole in a neighbor's backyard. The only thing you know about the creature is that it's supposed to be scary looking, but in reality, it is a friendly creature.



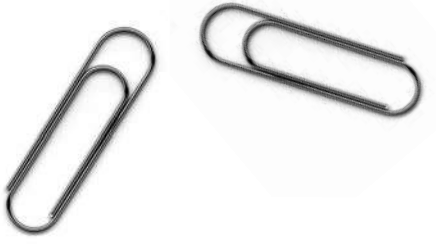
Sketch some of your ideas of what that creature could look like here:

and here:

To spark your imagination, do some research. Look at science fiction and comic books for ideas. A trip to the fabric or hardware store will give you some ideas for supplies that you can use.

Use your imagination. You can find a lot of the stuff you need for costumes at home. Look at everything as possible material: trash bags cut into strips, aluminum foil, toilet paper tubes, cellophane wrap. Search your attic or basement for old Halloween costumes. Check out your local thrift shops and craft stores.
Be creative.

If your creature requires special makeup, you should *experiment on the actor's face* until you are satisfied with how it looks. Take pictures or notes of the different things you try, so you have a record of what works and what does not. Once you have it right, and the director agrees, practice putting it on the actor until you can do it quickly. Figure out how long it takes to apply the makeup, so the actor knows how early to show up on the day of the shoot.



Before

After

Costumes and Makeup at the Shoot

Bring everything you can possibly think of to the shoot. You never know what you might need, so be prepared.

Here is a list of some costume and makeup basics. Don't leave home without them!

Costume Kit

- Needle and thread
- Scissors
- Toupee tape — clear, double-sided tape
- Duct tape — lots of costumes in movies are taped or pinned together
- "Wet Ones" moist tissues — the kind for babies. They're great for emergency cleanups like dirt or makeup on a collar
- Ironing board and iron (if you can)
- Safety pins — large and small

Makeup and Hair Kit

- Powder
- Blush
- Mascara
- Lipstick and lip gloss
- Makeup brushes
- Makeup remover
- Bobby pins and hair bands
- Comb and brush
- Box of tissues
- Baby powder

During shooting, keep an eye on the cast to make sure their makeup and costumes are holding up. Is somebody sweating? If so, powder their faces between takes. Has their mascara smeared? Stop and clean it up.

Actors should look exactly the same for each take, and their look needs to stay consistent — or as consistent as it is supposed to be — throughout the movie.

Often, a scene can take more than one day to shoot. If possible, take a photo or make notes of each actor at the end of every day of shooting. That way, when shooting starts the next day, you can make sure the actor's hair looks the same, and notice things like whether his shirt was tucked in or not.

This is called continuity, and it is really important! Things need to match up from shot to shot, or the movie will look inconsistent.

If scenes are shot out of order, it is critical to take notes and/or photos so you can be sure the actors look right for whichever scene is being shot. Was the bruise on his left or right cheek? Were her glasses on or off? Was she wearing that watch yesterday?

These details may seem small, but if just one of these things changes from scene to scene, it will distract your audience.

Other things to consider

- Can everyone in the cast move comfortably in what they are wearing?
- Does your story take place in one day, or over several days? Sometimes the only way the audience can tell it is a new day in a movie, is when the characters change clothes. You can sometimes make just a little change (put a sweater on, or take one off) to make it look like a different set of clothes.
- How does the cinematographer want the scene lighted? Lighting greatly affects makeup. *Avoid solid white clothes*. They reflect too much light for the camera. If you really want to use white clothes, use clothes that are off-white.

More things to consider

- Is a character going to fall into a pool, or get a bowl of spaghetti dumped on his or her head? If so, you may need to have a few duplicate outfits, shampoo, and a blow-dryer.
- Colors are important — they affect the mood of a scene. Also, do you want your actor wearing a green shirt if he is sitting on a green sofa? Think about it.
- *The color red will attract your eye, so will large patterns.* Think about how you can use or avoid these to help tell your story.
- Finally, how does everyone in the scene look when they are all together?

EXPLORE: continuity

It is the first day of shooting and the director has started by shooting the final scene of the movie. In this scene, the character, a 16-year-old girl, is going home after a long night at a party. Her dress is crumpled, her makeup is faded and smeared, and her hair is messy.

The next scene to be shot is the first scene of the movie, when that same girl is just entering that same party.

You are the costume designer. What would you have to do to get your actor ready for these scenes? After party scene:

The beginning of the party scene:

A Movie to Watch

High Noon,
directed by
Fred Zinnemann.

This is one of the best Westerns ever made. What techniques do you think the director used to elevate suspense and create tension?

Other Important Responsibilities and Jobs

Gaffer
Also known as the chief lighting electrician. The gaffer is in charge of all the electrical wiring and equipment.

Grip
The grip is responsible for the adjustment and maintenance of production equipment on the set. Typical duties include laying dolly tracks and erecting scaffolding.

Location Scout
The location scout is in charge of finding the best spot to shoot each scene.

Set Designer
The set designer works with the art director to ensure that the location looks right for the shoot.

Sound Engineer
The sound engineer figures out what kind of sound effects and/or music can be used to enhance the movie. He/she also creates those sound effects and makes sure they are recorded. This person is also in charge of making sure the overall sound of the movie is correct, including the dialogue.

" Shoot a lot and look at what you're getting. The less you structure the better. Find situations in which you interact with the world with a camera."

—*Woody Omens, ASC*
Cinematographer
Coming to America

The Camera

Obviously, the camera is a critical piece of equipment in moviemaking. You should be familiar with how to operate a camera and get to know the different ways that video and film cameras are used to tell a story.

On a professional movie set there are three key people on the camera staff:

1. The **cinematographer** or **director of photography** is in charge of the camera staff, lighting the set, and making all the important decisions about using the camera.
2. The camera operator films the scene.
3. The gaffer or chief electrician works with the cinematographer to light the set.

Usually, the director decides what the shot is going to be, then, with the advice of the cinematographer, decides what angle to shoot from. On a small film, the cinematographer usually operates the camera as well.

Using a Video Camera

Each video camera is unique. The following instructions are basic to most video cameras. But after reading the information in this manual, check out the *manufacturer's instructions* for the camera you are using. Then try the different camera moves and positions suggested in this chapter.

Some cameras and recorders are separate and must be connected with a control cable. Other models combine camera and recording functions in a single camcorder.

While cameras and recorders may have dozens of buttons, knobs, and other controls, you only need to master about seven of them to begin videotaping. They include: POWER, TAPE EJECT, VIEWFINDER, WHITE BALANCE, ZOOM, FOCUS, AND RECORD.

Additional functions vary from model to model: MACRO (close focusing), low light GAIN, BACKLIGHT compensation, and HIGH SPEED SHUTTER and DATE/CLOCK timers. Some are more useful than others depending on the type of work you do. They will be easier to master once you are familiar with the basics.

The following checklist outlines the setup procedure and explains essential video functions. It is followed by a list of other important camera functions.

For the field- camera exercise (shooting outdoors), complete all the steps on the checklist and operate all the functions of the following list:

1. Set up tripod.
Loosen the lock knob of the handgrip and adjust it to the correct position and lock it down. Loosen the lock knobs on all three legs of the tripod and spread the tripod legs apart. Grasp the head of the tripod and pull straight up to desired height. Lock all three legs down, then make any fine adjustments by centering both leveling bubbles by unlocking and adjusting the legs of the tripod, one leg at a time.

2. Attach the tripod adapter to the base of the camera.

3. Attach the camera to the tripod.
Make sure the camera is locked onto the tripod and the PAN and TILT locks are locked before letting go of the camera; otherwise, it could fall and break.

4. Set the viewfinder.
Rotate the viewfinder down and towards you. Do not force it.

5. Connect the battery or AC adapter.
Insert a charged battery into the battery compartment. Put it in until it slides into place. *Do not force it.* Or, connect the AC adapter by plugging it into an electrical socket, if available, and into the unit.

6. Turn the power on.
If you are using the AC adapter, turn it on first. Then push or slide the POWER switch on top of the camcorder.

7. Set the iris.
The iris controls how light or dark the picture appears by governing the amount of light that enters the lens. Set the iris on AUTO or open it manually until the picture looks right.

8. Set the white balance.
Auto: Set the while balance selector to the AUTO position. The white balance is automatically adjusted as the illumination changes.
Manual: Set the white balance selector to the MANUAL position. Aim the camera at a purely white wall or sheet of paper so that the white space fills the screen. Press the white set button. The indication **white** in the viewfinder will disappear. *You must always re-white balance when moving from outdoors to indoors and vice versa.*

9. Set the focus.
Zoom in to a close-up of a subject. Set the focus button to manual. Use your fingers to grasp the focus ring (which is the forward most segment of the lens barrel).

Rotate it for the sharpest image in the viewfinder. The lens will stay focused at that distance, even if you zoom in or out.

You may find auto-focus useful, however, in some situations, the camera's continual refocusing can be annoying. Auto-focus will give unusable results if the subject is not in the center of the frame or when there is movement between the camera and the subject. To auto-focus, set the focus mode selector to AUTO. Use the zone selector button to determine if you want to focus on a small, medium, or wide portion of the frame.

10. Zoom

The zoom lens can be adjusted to get various shots — wide, medium, or close-up. The handgrip has a two-part button for powered zoom between **wide** (W) and **tight** (T). The power zoom has two speeds. Press either the (W) or the (T) side of the button *lightly for a slow zoom*. Press them down *firmly for a faster zoom*. There is also a manual zoom lever on the zoom right, which may move less smoothly, but faster.

11. Record

There are two red record buttons. One is behind the handgrip where your thumb falls when shouldering the camera. The other is on top of the grip where it is easier to reach when shooting on a tripod.

Press either button once to begin recording, and once again to stop. You do not have to hold it down. Look for an indicator. *A red light in the viewfinder means that you are recording.* You should also notice the counter numbers changing. When you press RECORD to stop shooting, look again in the viewfinder to double check that you are not recording any further.

12. Audio

Connect the external microphone into AUDIO CHANNEL TWO (R). Ambient sound (the sound that's all around you, like traffic in the distance or an airplane flying overhead) will be recorded from the built-in camera MIC (short for microphone) on AUDIO CHANNEL ONE (L). Set the audio selector button (on the back of the camera) to HI-FI MIX. Adjust the audio level from -3 to OdB for speaking. Watch the audio indicator and monitor the audio with headsets.

More Camera Features

Standby

Cameras can be put on STANDBY to save battery power while keeping WHITE BALANCE. With camcorders, using STANDBY also avoids wearing out one spot on the paused tape. You can select STANDBY or the camcorder will do it automatically after five minutes of waiting without recording. Press the STANDBY button again to switch to the RECORD PAUSE MODE or start recording again by pressing either red record button.

Macro

This converts your zoom lever into a close-focusing lever. Move the zoom lever to the wide-angle position until it stops. Then press the green MACRO button on the lever so it can move further into the macro range. To focus in macro, slowly move the lever. Macro will allow you to fill the screen with very small objects and is handy for copying small photos, newspaper headlines, or other illustrations.

Record View

By pressing the left camera search button once while in RECORD PAUSE MODE you can replay the last three recorded seconds. If you hold down either (+ or -) camera search button, you can search forward or backward on the tape. To playback a scene, keep the camera search (+) button pressed.
Make sure to search forward when finished to avoid recording over footage.

This function can wear on tapes and the camera-only use when necessary.

Gain

In low-light situations, GAIN will brighten the picture electronically. However, there is some trade-off in picture quality, so leave it at zero setting unless you need it.

High-speed Shutter

This quickens the shutter speed by increments to catch fast-moving subjects with less blurring. The effect, however, may only be noticeable on freeze-frame or slow motion playback. Also, since the exposure time is cut, HIGH-SPEED SHUTTER requires a lot of light and is generally only useful outdoors.

Fade

With the FADE mode selector, the color of picture fade in/out can be set to black or white. Picture and sound can be faded in or out for a soft-looking intro or exit from a scene.

Date/Clock

If this function is activated, you cannot remove it from your video later! If you see the date or time indicator appear on the viewfinder, simply press the DATE/CLOCK button until it disappears.

VCR Controls

The camcorder has buttons for playback, fast-forward, rewind, etc., similar to any VCR or portable videocassette deck. These are useful for reviewing footage in the viewfinder or on a monitor. If you use these functions to review footage, make sure to cue the tape to forward to where you last stopped recording to avoid recording over footage.

Tally Clock

This indicates to the cast when the camera is recording.

A note about film by
Richard Crudo, ASC
Cinematographer, American Pie

" *Nearly all features, TV shows, commercials, and music videos are photographed on* thirty-five millimeter motion-picture film *similar to the kind you buy at the drugstore and use for family snapshots. The technique involved in shooting with "35" is somewhat more complex than what you are about to undertake; but there are many places you can go to learn if you so desire. However, a number of the same approaches used in film also apply to the* video camera *and* tape *you will be using. An added bonus is that video provides you with instant feedback on how you're doing, and film does not."*

Videotape Types*

This page is a guide to help you understand the different formats of video, and which one may be right for you.

There are several different formats for recording video: VHS, SVHS, Beta, 3/4-inch, 8mm, and Hi-8.

Beta is popular with professional photographers or videographers. 8mm, VHS, and SVHS are the most popular formats for non-professional use.

Beta is the highest quality tape so it will produce the best quality video recording.

A high quality videotape can record good sound and good visual detail. The larger the bandwidth (the range of frequencies that can carry video information), the more video detail it can hold. The larger the bandwidth, the more lines of resolution there are on the tape, creating a sharper picture.

Beta holds the largest bandwidth, with 500 lines of resolution.

Format Lines of Resolution

Format	Lines of Resolution
VHS	240
8mm	240
SVHS	400
Hi-8mm	400
Beta	500

Hi-8mm tape


VHS tape

In general, when you buy videotapes, you get what you pay for. If you buy a tape for 99 cents, it is probably going to give you 99 cents worth of quality and use.

Think about these questions when you buy videotapes:

- Consider how long the tape needs to be for your purposes. Tapes are available in a variety of lengths.
- When you buy film for a still camera, there are a variety of films to choose. Some are best for action, some for bright light. The same is true with videotapes. The tapes are labeled according to what the manufacturers think the tapes are best used for. You may or may not notice a difference depending on how you use the tape.

Stationary camera with tripod

Hand-held camera

Camera Positions

There are three basic camera positions: **stationary**, **hand-held**, and **moving**.

Stationary

A stationary camera is in the same place for an entire shot and it's usually mounted on a **tripod** to keep it steady. A tripod can be adjusted to different heights and angles. Sometimes the camera is set on a table or another stable surface. Either way, the camera is stationary, but it can still be swiveled around to shoot someone as they walk through a room, for example. The camera can shoot a lot of movement from a stationary place.

Hand-held

Hand-held means exactly that. If you are the camera operator, it means you would hold the camera in your hand as you shoot. You can stand still or move. The image will move with the motion of your body. Usually the picture ends up looking jiggly. Footage shot with a hand-held camera often makes it look like things are happening at that moment, like live news footage. These kinds of shots are often used to provide a particular **Point-Of-View** or **POV** shot because we are seeing things from a person's **Point-Of-View**.

Moving camera

Moving

A moving camera is one that moves during the shoot, like shooting a moving car from another moving car. Shooting as you walk would be a hand-held moving shot.

Anything with wheels and a place to sit can work for a moving shot. If you wanted to film someone walking along the sidewalk, you could get into a shopping cart and have someone push as you shoot. Of course, no one in the audience will ever know you were in a shopping cart. All they see is a great shot.

For low-angle moving shots, some directors have been known to get on a skateboard with the camera. Whatever you do, don't hurt yourself, drop your camera, or run into anyone.

EXPLORE:
camera techniques

Try shooting a simple shot — a dog sleeping, your friend walking, or the newspaper lying on the kitchen table. Choose one and use all three camera techniques — stationary, hand-held, and moving. How do the moods and feelings conveyed by the shot change depending on how you move the camera?

Shot of: with stationary camera

Write what you think of the shot:

Shot of: with hand-held camera

Write what you think of the shot:

Shot of: with moving camera

Write what you think of the shot:

Long shot

Medium shot

Close-up

Camera Moves

Now that you know the three basic camera positions, here are three basic *camera moves*:

Pan

Move the camera from side to side as if you are following someone walking across a room. Or, you can **pan** a room that is empty to show that it is empty. A **pan** follows the same kind of movement your eyes might make if you were going into a room and scanned it to see what is there.

Tilt

Move the camera up and down as if you are following someone jumping on a trampoline. A **tilt** can be used even when a camera is fixed on a tripod.

Zoom

Move in on an object from a wider shot to a closer shot. You can also **zoom out** to include more of the setting. Moving the camera closer and farther away will give you pretty much the same effect, but it will alter the perspective.

Shooting Technique

Following, are the steps of the camera setup checklist. Take the shots listed below.

Zooming allows you to take a lot of different kinds of shots. Here are four of the most common shots used:

- **Long shot** (LS) — a camera shot where the main subject appears small among its surroundings
- **Medium shot** (MS) — shooting a human figure (or other subject) so you see the person from the waist up
- **Close-up** (CU) — a shot taken very close to the subject or with the subject of the shot very large within the frame, revealing a detail only, like hands, face, etc.
- **Extreme Close-up** (ECU) — a shot taken very close to the subject, closer than would be necessary for a close-up, revealing extreme detail, like a tear dropping from an eye.

Camera moves can reveal something that you do not want the audience to see at first. For instance, imagine a scene where you see a small group of students talking outside, and then the camera **zooms in** behind them to reveal a monster in the bushes.

See how you can build suspense in different ways, depending on how you put your pictures together?

Close up of monster

Shot of three girls

Medium shot of the monster

Shot of the three girls

Medium shot of the monster

Close-up of the monster

Or imagine you see a close-up of a man's face while he is asking a woman to marry him, then the camera pulls back to reveal that he is just practicing in the mirror.

Tips from the Experts

- Whenever you move the camera, keep in mind that the camera is jerking even more than you are, and more than it even looks like through your viewfinder.
- If you want the shot to look even steadier, move really slowly and carefully.

EXPLORE: camera movement

Move around with the camera while shooting and see what it looks like. Then do the same shot standing still. Take a look at what you shot. How does the feeling change in both instances? Which one would you use in different situations?

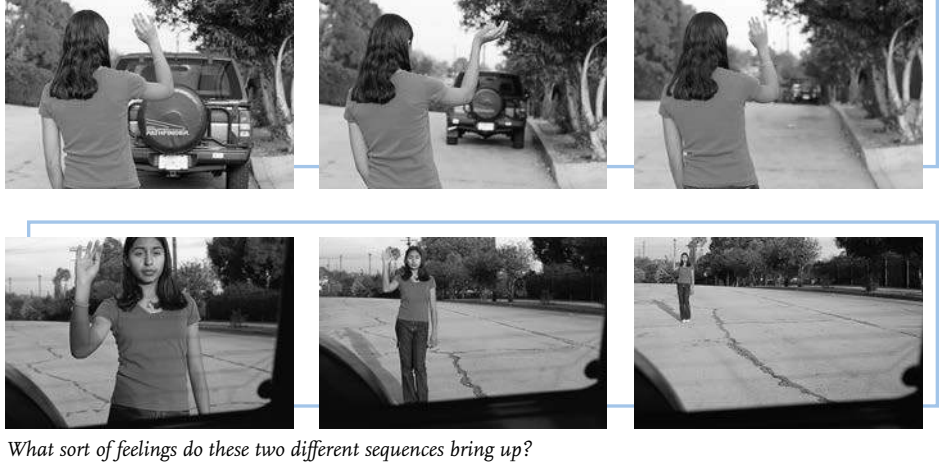
Framing the shot

The way you frame your shot (what is *in* the frame, versus, the rest that is outside), and where you place the camera, can show the audience very different things.

Maybe a scene calls for a couple to say goodbye, and then the guy gets into his car and drives away.

If you want to emphasize the loneliness of the girl left behind, you might use a stationary shot with her in the foreground and let the car get smaller and smaller in the frame as it pulls away.

Or you might do the opposite — stay with the car and pull away as the girl gets smaller and smaller in the distance. Again, experiment. Try different things and see what you like.



What sort of feelings do these two different sequences bring up? Which one do you like better? Why?

Tips from the Experts

- A wide shot can tell the audience a lot about the setting and help set the mood for a scene. This type of shot is also known as an establishing shot.
- The farther away from something you are, the less important it will seem in the shot.
- If something or someone is moving, you can decide to move with the action or stand still and pan with the action, or just let it move through and out of the frame. Each tells the story a different way.
- Close-ups of actors' faces are for big emotional moments. Most directors try not to use them too often.

Composition

How everything in the frame is positioned is called the **composition**. It is usually more interesting to have some things closer to the camera and some things farther away. *What* you choose to place closer and farther away depends on what information you want to get across in the shot. There is no right or wrong, there is only what looks best to you. (You might want to look at movies, paintings, advertisements, and photographs to see how other people compose their shots.)

Do you see how a shot's composition makes a difference in how you, the viewer, feel?)

Sometimes having a frame a little out of balance can be a message to the audience that all is not as it seems, that something awful or funny, or dramatic is about to happen.

For example, if you want a bad guy to appear in a scene, you may want to have him enter the frame from the side in a wider shot so that you almost do not notice him at first. Then, maybe you will cut to a scary close-up. This can have a lot of impact.

An unbalanced composition also works well in comedy. Scenes are often funnier when they are off-balance.

The composition, camera position, and camera moves are important to telling the story.

Experiment.

A Movie to Watch

The Perfect Storm, directed by Wolfgang Petersen.

How are close-ups and other camera angles used to tell the story?

Other Camera Hints

- Whenever possible, use a tripod. A tripod will give you a steady shot. If you do not have a tripod and the only option is to hold the camera on your shoulder, try leaning your back against a wall. That will steady your body. Or, put a cushion or pillow on your shoulder and balance the camera on it. Just keep in mind, what looks like a little bit of shaking when you are shooting looks like a whole lot of shaking when you are watching.
- Before you settle on your shot, why not experiment? Take a walk in the area and try to see the spot you will be shooting from different angles. Squat down. Stand on your tiptoes. Lean from side to side.
- Think about shooting **coverage**. Coverage is a shot that an editor uses to break up action, to make it more exciting or more interesting.

For example, if two people are talking, you might shoot a steady medium shot (a shot that shows both people from the top of their heads to their waist) of them standing and facing each other while they are talking.

Then shoot the conversation again. This time, shoot a close-up of one of the people. Then shoot it *again*, this time as a close-up of the *other person*. Can you imagine how helpful this will be for editing? Watch television shows and commercials to see how **coverage** is commonly used in editing.

- Take shots that will help visually connect sections or subjects. For example, a wide shot of people walking into a building orients the viewer for the scenes inside. A moving shot from a car, a camera pan, or a person walking can connect two shooting locations. (More about specific transition ideas later.)

See how using coverage shots and close-ups can increase your options when you start to edit?

Lighting: A Bright Subject*

If there is not enough light, we cannot record pictures, but adequate **illumination** is only the beginning of good **lighting**. If you have ever tried to read a book in dim light, you know that your eyes do not work as well as they do in brighter light. Likewise, video cameras can record in amazingly low light, but their pictures will be much better—clearer, sharper, and more colorful — at higher **base light** levels. Once you have adequate **base light**, you begin the art of **lighting**: controlling the direction and balance of various light sources.

Lighting, whether daylight or electric, is an integral part of film production. While bad lighting sticks out like a "sore thumb," good lighting often goes unnoticed by non-technical people.

In addition to your adequate amount of base lighting, you can add or subtract other light sources in order to create depth and texture with shadows.

You want lighting that is bright enough to let you see what you are videotaping with the amount of detail you want. If the light is too dim or dark, you will not be able to see much on your videotape.

If you use the overhead lights in a room or natural sunlight, make sure the camera is not tilted up into the light. You do not want to shoot directly into any light because you may damage the camera.

In general, you do not want the source of light to come from behind your subject. If a light source is behind an object, it will seem dark and you may not be able to see what is going on, or see the details of the object.

If there is not enough light available, try using the GAIN or BACKLIGHT button. This will let the camera work with less light; however, the video may not look as clear.

In daylight, the base light level is generally quite good. Control over lighting is mainly through choice of camera angle and time of day and where you put your own light. Also, when practical, harsh contrast sunlight can be softened by "filling" shadows with a supplementary (extra) light or reflector.

Indoors, the available light is usually not adequate for quality recording. Most indoor video recording requires the use of supplemental lights to increase the base light levels while striving to maintain a natural and pleasing effect.

Always plan to arrive early so you can experiment with your light. With video you can see the results instantly by watching the viewfinder or monitor.

Remember that video is a "high contrast" medium. That means shadows that look okay to your eye will appear darker on screen.

Other considerations are:

- costume
- skin tone
- hair
- background

All of these will affect your video picture. *White and fluorescent colored clothing or backgrounds are trouble* because they are too bright and make most subjects reproduce poorly.

Avoid taping people against a white background, and advise them not to wear white or solid fluorescent-colored clothes. The iris of the camera adjusts for the overall brightness of the image and will tend to close down, leaving your subject's face underlit. Also, small, "busy" patterns, like fine stripes, tiny polka dots, or herringbone, can interfere with the video dot pattern and "dance" on the screen.

Eyeglasses and reflective jewelry can be a nuisance. Try moving lights higher and further to the sides to lessen reflections. Or, bounce lights off white walls, ceilings, or cards.

EXPLORE:
how lighting can change a mood

Lighting can really set a mood. Pick a room and use your camera to shoot that room for a few minutes at a time at different times of the day. Think about how the different lighting makes you feel — how the shadows make the room seem different. At some times of the day, the room might feel like a cheerful place; at other times, it may seem disturbing. How does the feeling change if you turn some lights on? What happens if you open the curtains or shades? What happens when you shoot the room in the dark?

Experiment.

See how lighting can be used to make a perfectly ordinary shot look...kind of scary? Lighting is used to create a mood.

Sound

Music and Other Sound Effects

If you saw the movie *Jaws*, you probably remember the music that was used to build tension. That bum-bum, bum-bum, bum-bum sound made you sure the shark was about to appear.

In *Star Wars*, deep, low music was used whenever an evil character was getting into a scene — and light, classical music played when the scene featured one of the good guys.

Sound is an incredibly important part of a movie. It helps set a mood.

Good sound effects (**SFX** for short) not only make a movie a lot more interesting, they help tell the story as well. For example, if the audience sees a close-up of a woman's face while hearing the SFX of footsteps approaching, they know someone is coming, even if the audience cannot see the person coming. If the footsteps sound heavy and make an echo-type sound, they know — or, at least, are *led to believe* — that something bad is about to happen. If there is scary music playing at the same time, it increases the tension even more.

The audience doesn't need to see something to know it's there. Sometimes it's more effective if people don't see everything because their imaginations can take over.

Creating SFX is lots of fun. You can make sounds using anything.

When you are trying to create the sound of something that you cannot record live, like the sound of hot lava, you could record the sound of spaghetti sauce boiling. A substitute sound will work, as long as it sounds believable to the audience. You just have to *experiment* until you find the right ones.

If you have editing capabilities (discussed later in this manual), you will be able to record your SFX separately, and add them to your movie after it is shot. You might also be able to **score** the movie, which means to add music to it.

If you don't have the editing equipment to add sound after your shoot, you will have to do the SFX *while* you are shooting. You will need to do your experimenting well before the shoot. Then you will need to rehearse in order to perfect the timing, so that the SFX can match the action. Also, you will need to do a few tests before the day of the shoot, to determine the most effective distance to the camera microphone to get the best sound.

Ideas to get you started:

- To create the sound of thunder, wiggle a flimsy cookie sheet.
- In order to make a thud sound heavier when someone falls, drop some heavy books off-camera.
- To make the sound of fire, crinkle up some cellophane or some dead leaves. If you wanted to add the sound of popping sparks, have someone crack their bubble gum a few times into the microphone.
- Walking in very wet sneakers makes a nice squelching sound.

Garbage-In Means Garbage-Out

During the shoot, microphones are the tools we use to gather sound for recording. Microphones work very much like our ears except for one thing — they have no brain.

Our brains help us filter out distracting noises so we can concentrate on what we want to hear. *Microphones take in everything,* indiscriminately — the voice and natural sounds you want, along with the noise and garbage that can garble your audio track.

To help solve this problem, microphones are designed with different “listening” or pickup patters, and with different ways of mounting.

The job of the audio person is to choose the right microphone, and put it as close as possible to
the source of sound in order to get the most program audio and the least garbage (unwanted noise).

A Movie to Watch

2001: A Space Odyssey, directed by Stanley Kubrick.

How do you think music enhanced this movie? What about the cinematography?

Microphone Types

On-Camera Microphone

The camera-mounted microphone is very convenient, but it is also very far from the source of sound. For interviews, the voice gets mixed with too much other noise. At a shoot, you may hear a person fidgeting in the back louder than the person on camera.

Use the camera microphone for getting ambient or "natural" sounds of crowds, traffic, rustling leaves, etc.

There is a MICROPHONE SELECT SWITCH next to the camera's built-in microphone. The zoom setting will help direct the built-in microphone toward the actors (or subjects) according to the setting of the zoom lens. This directional function will work better on a close-up shot than a wide shot.

The TELE setting increases the built-in microphone's sensitivity when recording sound from a distant source.

The WIDE setting records the widest range of sound. Under normal shooting conditions, the WIDE setting is most commonly used. This will allow the best recording of ambient sound.

Hand-Held Microphone

Designed to be hand-held or put on a stand, this is a general-purpose microphone. Plug it into the camcorder's microphone input, and hold it as close as practical to the actors.

Clip-On Microphone

The clip-on microphone (also called LAPEL or LAVALIERE) is small enough to be clipped onto the actor's lapel, shirt, necktie, or dress. It is not very noticeable and tends to make the person less self-conscious than a hand-held microphone in the face.

Tips from the Experts

Because video is such a visual medium, the audio is often neglected in beginning video production. But audio can be just as important as the picture. What follows are some suggestions and considerations for capturing good sound.

Always, always, always:

- Test your equipment before you plan to use it. It is better to find out a microphone is not working before you start shooting, rather than after.
- When you are using the camera, always check your sound before you start. Do a brief test, and then play it back.
- Ideally, a microphone is held or placed 4-6 inches away from your subject's mouth in order to capture clear audio. If you use the on-camera microphone, the ideal distance is about 3 feet — just far enough away to focus on good head and shoulder shots. Be careful about any noise you make. Because you will be closer to the on-camera microphone than the subject will be, you will sound louder.

Solving Audio Noise Problems

Wind can play havoc with your program audio, causing loud pops and crackles which cannot be removed later. Windscreens over your microphone can help.

A common windscreen is the plastic foam "sock" that slides over the microphone's pickup element. The porous foam baffles much of the wind while causing minimal interference to voice and music.

Indoors or out, the audio operator quickly discovers the world is a noisy place. Many unwanted sounds intrude on your production track and obscure the audio you want.

Indoor nuisances include air conditioners, refrigerators, motors, other voices, phones, and pagers. Outdoors, you have traffic, sprinklers, airplanes, wind, voices, and all sorts of things you never notice until you start recording.

Make the best of a noisy situation. Choice of microphone, windscreen, position and timing will all help to minimize unwanted noise and make the sound for your film cleaner and better.

Your choice of microphone is important. A unidirectional (one direction) type will help reduce noise when filming in a crowd or on the street.

Outdoors, try to find a quiet spot for the shoot. Move around the building to escape traffic noise.

It is a good practice to record ambient, or natural sound for each location you are shooting. After you get the scenes you want in a location, ask people to stop talking and turn the camera on in order to record a couple minutes or more of the natural location sounds. In editing, natural sound mixed with program audio can help create smooth audio transitions.

ADDING MUSIC TO YOUR FILM:*

If you plan to use music, be aware of the impact of music and sound effects on your film. Choose them carefully to reflect the feeling and pace of your shoot.

One way to experiment with adding music and sound effects after you shoot is to use the AUDIO DUB feature on your camera, if it has one. This feature allows you to record audio (music, voice, or other sounds) over the video you have captured, just by pressing down the button while you play the video in the camera. Bear in mind, if you use this feature, you will erase all other audio on that part of the tape — like the actors' dialogue!

And a Few "Sound" Tips

- *Always check to make sure the audio is recording when you are shooting*. You can do this by playing back a short test recording to make sure that both audio and video are working.
- Try to shoot in locations that are not noisy. If you are shooting in a noisy building, or outside where there is traffic, the sound will likely come out poorly.
- If you are shooting an actor talking in an area that is noisy, think about showing the source of the noise, at least in one of the shots.

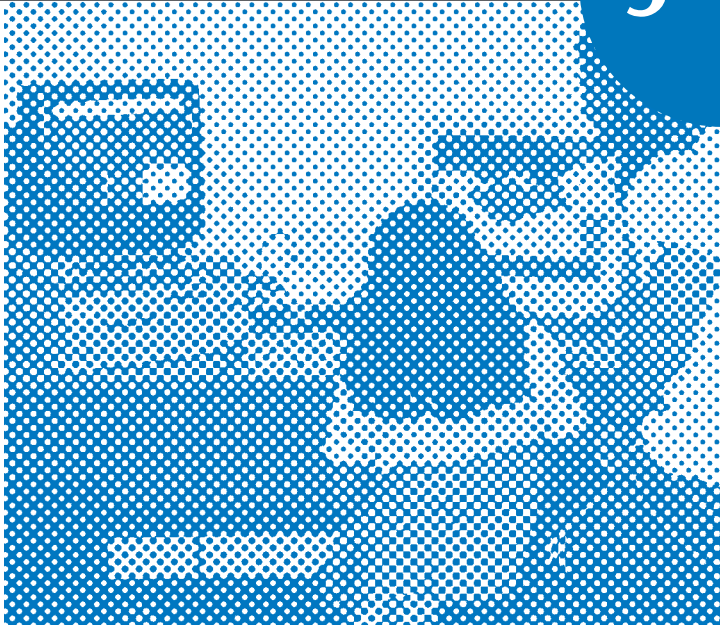
*" I wanted to be a still photographer but, at college, my editing teacher gave an assignment to tell a story using only pictures cut out of magazines using no words. I've been trying to do that in film ever since. The closest I've come was editing "*All That Jazz.*"*

—Alan Heim
Editor, Hair

Chapter 5

Editing

- **Putting the Puzzle Together**
- **Explore: Creating an Editing Storyboard**
- **Technical Aspects of Video Editing**



Putting the Puzzle Together

What does it mean to edit a movie?

A Movie to Watch

Babe, directed by Chris Noonan.

Notice how the combination of special effects, the use of real animals, animatronics (mechanical) doubles, and computer technology are seamless and convincing.

Photo: Jim Townley

Babe, the Gallant Pig
Even pigs can dream in the heartwarming comedy starring James Cromwell as Farmer Hoggett and Babe as himself.

There is a scene, about fifteen minutes into *Star Wars*, when R2D2 is alone. He is looking for Obi-Wan Kenobi on Luke Skywalker's planet. R2D2 is walking alone down a dark, scary road. The shot shows R2D2 rolling along, then quick glimpses of eyes peering out from behind rocks. The audience cannot really see who — or what — is looking out at R2D2, but the quick shots let the viewer know that something bad is probably going to happen.

It is the editing that helps build the suspense of that scene, and it is the editor, working under the guidance of the director, who decides:

- what shots to use.
- how to put the shots together.
- how long to hold each shot before cutting to the next one.

Good editing involves selecting shots and combining them to convey the director's vision. Poor editing makes the movie seem labored and boring.

In this way, the jobs of the editor and director are very collaborative, very close — each giving feedback and helping the other. Some directors work closely with editors while shooting a movie. The director sometimes consults with the editor on what shots she or he should shoot.

Advice from
Mark Goldblatt, ACE,
Editor, Armageddon

" The job of the film editor is to take all the raw film footage and sound that is shot for a motion picture and to shape it and mold it into a finished film. We usually do this using the shooting script as a guide, and we work very closely with the director who, after all, interpreted this script in the first place. Our job is to actualize the vision and intentions of the director, allow the film's story to unfold clearly, and hopefully to keep the audience interested! In other words, our job is to make the best motion picture possible with the available footage.

In editing, we might partially or even totally alter the structure of the film. The ending might become the beginning, the beginning could become the end, we might tell the entire story as a flashback, perhaps from the point of view of a particular character. We could add a voice-over narration, write entirely new lines of dialogue to explain unclear plot points (and perhaps play them over characters' backs), play scenes in slow motion or fast motion or backwards or whatever might seem appropriate. Ironically, in editing, I personally believe that the simplest, least complex form of storytelling is generally the way to go, but sometimes, an editor will have to use every trick in the book to make the best possible film."

The editing process can completely change the meaning of the story.

Perhaps you have these shots:

A Boy looking out a window onto the street; he looks happy

B Same boy looking out a window — this time looking sad

C Shot of kids arguing on the street

D Girl sitting on her porch reading, not far from the arguing kids

If the editor left these shots in order, it would seem that the boy is witnessing an upsetting event. Something bad is happening, or about to happen, and the girl reading might be involved.

But if the shots are edited into the following order, the meaning is completely different:

B Boy looking out a window onto the street, looking sad

D Girl sitting on her porch reading

A Boy looking out a window onto the street; he looks happy

With this editing arrangement, the boy is sad for some reason, but when he sees the girl, it makes him happy. The viewer would infer that he likes her — a completely different story

EXPLORE:

Take the four shots and edit them in another sequence:

1st

2nd

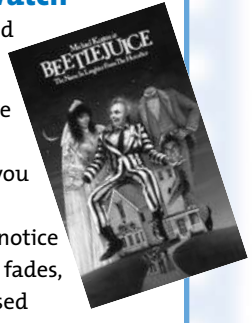
3rd

4th

What story does your scene tell?

A Movie to Watch

Beetlejuice, directed by Tim Burton.



Hopefully, you have seen this comedy before, but when you watch it this time, train your eyes to notice whether dissolves, fades, or cutaways are used between shots.

Beetlejuice
A still red-blooded spirit, Betelgeuse (Michael Keaton) is enamored by a magician's assistant whose trick has failed, as he sits in the "afterlife waiting room."

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

A movie in its raw form is like a jigsaw puzzle. You have individual scenes, music, sound effects, and maybe some visual effects. All these elements need to be put together to make a complete picture, a complete movie. That is the editor's job.

Editing is one of the most critical parts of making a movie. You often do *not* notice good editing, all you know is you have been drawn into the movie. The story moves along quickly, with plenty of surprises. When the editing is not done well, the movie tends to be boring or confusing.

The editor of a full-length movie makes thousands of decisions, each one building on the one that came before it. The editor, with the help of the director, not only decides *which scenes* to use, she or he decides *how many* of them to use, the *length* of each, and their *order*.

1. **Editors have to figure out which scenes to include, and which ones to leave out of the final cut.**
   The **final cut** is the finished movie. Parts of scenes, or even entire scenes, may be edited out (cut) if the director and/or the editor do not think they are necessary to tell the story — or, if the movie is longer than the director intended.

   The director and the editor may decide there is a scene missing; in which case, the director, cast, and crew will try to go back and shoot an extra shot, called a **pick-up shot**, or **pick-up scene**, to fill in the gap.

2. **Editors have to convey the passage of time.**
   Movies almost never happen in **real time**. You rarely see a two-hour movie about a story that takes place in exactly two hours. Most movies take place in longer stretches of time, which require **compressing time**. *Jurassic Park* takes place over a few days. *Forrest Gump* includes forty years in a man's life. *Planet of the Apes* takes place over hundreds of years. But all of these films were shot and edited to be 2-3 hours in length.

   Compressing time is one of the most important aspects of editing.

3. **Editors clean up mistakes.**
   Editors clean up mistakes that occur during the shoot, such as **sound glitches** — sounds that were recorded, but not wanted. You might have a great **take** (a **take** is a shot) visually, but the sound is unacceptable. Perhaps a jet flew by during the middle of the dialogue, and you can't hear what the hero is saying. The editor might fix the problem in a number of ways.

   Depending on the type and the ability of his specific editing equipment, the editor might take the dialogue from another take, and lay it over the scene. Or, he/she might use the take without sound, and put music over it instead. Another option would be to use a completely different take. One of the wonderful aspects about editing: there is rarely just one way to solve a problem or to create a desired effect.

   When editors create a scene, they often talk about it as "building" a scene. Because they are building it, by adding layers of picture, natural sound, music, and special effects.

The best way to start learning about editing is to rent movies you really admire and study them. Try watching them with the sound off. Notice the length of the shots, the order, and the starting and ending points of each shot.

Different Types of Edits

A *change*, from one shot to another, is called an **edit**.

There are many different types of edits and each one works in different ways to effect the pacing of the story. The trick is to figure out which type of edit, in each given scene, will best tell the story.

A **cut** is when you go from one shot to another with nothing in between.

Cuts can be sudden or smooth, depending on what picture you are cutting *from*, and what picture you are cutting *to*. Cutting from a shot of a saw sawing away at a tree to the tree hitting the ground is smooth, because the viewer would expect that to happen. Cutting from a shot of a saw cutting a tree to a man biting into a burger is more sudden or abrupt, because it is unexpected. *Unexpected* may be exactly what you want.

The *length* of an edit can make a big difference in the telling of a story.

To create excitement, editors often use **quick cuts**, which are a series of short shots strung together. Think of *Star Wars* again. In the space battle where Luke Skywalker destroyed the Death Star, there were literally hundreds of shots, each no more than a second long. On the other hand, if you were editing a love scene, you may want to use fewer and longer shots to enhance the romantic feeling. Experiment to see what feelings the different kinds of edits create.

Other commonly used edits are:

- **fades** — when a scene slowly goes black for a moment, before another scene comes up
- **dissolves** — where one scene fades *in* while another is fading *out*

Most video cameras have a dissolve feature built in, and these edits can be easily done in-camera while filming. Dissolves can also be used to change the mood of a movie or to provide a transition between two very different scenes.

- A **cutaway** is when an editor cuts away from the main scene to something that somehow relates to the scene.

Cutaways can emphasize particular points of the story. For instance, if a character is nervous about taking a test, you might cut away to a close-up of her foot tapping, or teeth marks on her pencil, and then go back to the face of the character.

Cutaways are also used to compress time. If you want to keep the beginning and end of your scene, but get rid of six boring seconds in the middle, use a quick cutaway.

For example, imagine a scene where a spy, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, walks into an airport men's room, and comes out dressed as a priest. The editor could use a shot of the spy going into the bathroom, cut away to a clock on the wall, and then cut back to the spy walking out of the men's room disguised as a priest. By using the cutaway, the editor has spared the audience from having to see him go into the stall, take off his clothes, put on his cassock, and throw the old clothes in the trash. Cutaways give you more options.

Think of another cutaway shot that could have been used in the example we just gave you?

See how cutaways can be used to compress time?

EXPLORE:
editing cuts

You can watch any movie for the next exercise, but pick one you have seen before to help you focus more on the editing cuts, and less on the story line.

Movie:

Find two examples for each type of edit cut. Describe the initial scene, and the scene that followed. You will need to use your pause button a lot.

Fade

1. Scene:

   Fades to:

2. Scene:

   Fades to:

Dissolve

1. Scene:

   Dissolves to:

2. Scene:

   Dissolves to:

Cutaway

1. Scene:

   Cutaway to:

2. Scene

   Cutaway to:

EXPLORE:
creating an editing storyboard

You are the editor of a scene.
The scene has been shot to show:

- A student, your age, is walking down the street, going home after school.
- A clown leaps out from a nearby bush and tries to grab the student.
- The student screams and the clown runs away.

Your shots to edit with the director:

- Close-up shots, medium shots, and establishing shots of the student
- Close-up shots, medium shots, and establishing shots of the clown
- One extreme long shot of the entire scene from start to finish, from the perspective of a nearby second-story window
- A close-up shot of a nearby tree, swaying in the wind (a cutaway shot)

Before you start using editing equipment, it is helpful practice to edit on paper, in storyboard form.

On the following few pages you will find two storyboard grids.

Create two different sequences of 6-12 shots each.

Using a pencil, draw (you can use stick figures here) how you would edit this scene using the shots above.

Before you get started, think about these questions:

- Do you want the scene to be scary, funny, really tense, exciting, or all of these?
- Do you want to show the entire scene from far away, using the extreme long shots? What sort of feeling would those shots give your audience?
- Do you want to *only* show the student and his/her terror, and not show the clown at all, leaving the audience wondering why the student is so scared?
- Do you want to show the clown hiding in the bushes before he jumps out?

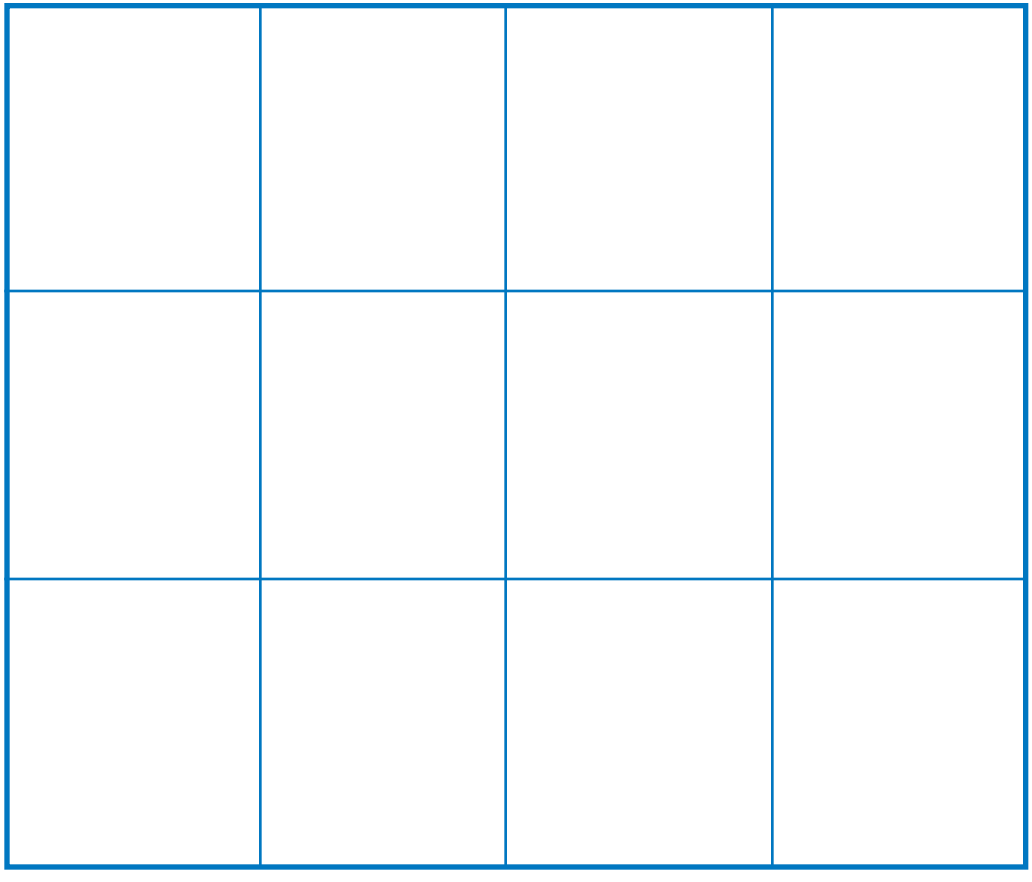
The thing to remember is:

anything is possible.

There is no real right or wrong way to edit.

Editing Storyboard

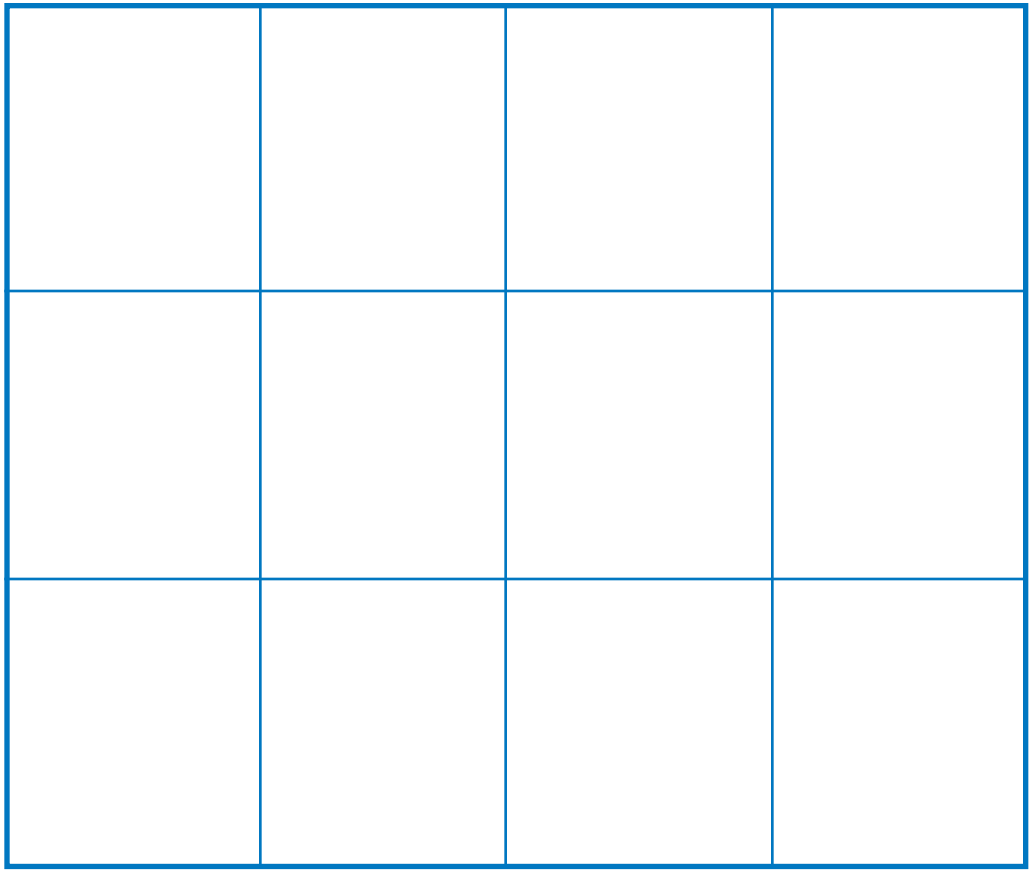
Name of your first scene:



Explore:

Another editing storyboard

Do it again, using the same shots in a completely different way. If last time you used mostly medium shots, this time use mostly close-ups. Did you use the tree shot last time? If not, try it here. The goal is to see how different cuttings — how putting different shots together in different ways — make the whole mood and sense of the scene feel different.



Technical Aspects of Video Editing*

What follows is an explanation and demonstration of the basic concept of analog editing. Once you understand the basic concepts, you can take this information with you to any analog or digital editing system. The buttons on the machine may differ from system to system, however, the concepts will remain the same.

The Basic Concept of Editing onto a Blank Tape

Step One You need two tapes (one with raw footage, one blank)

#1 Raw Footage tape(s) (aka "source tapes")

#2 Finished Product tape (currently blank, but not for long!)

One tape contains your raw footage (video you have collected, but have not edited yet). The second tape is blank. You may have more than one tape with raw footage on it, but for this example, we'll just use one raw footage tape.

Step Two After you have logged your tape (see Video Log), select your video clips and decide what order you want them to appear on the Finished Product tape.

Suppose we gathered video of the Golden Gate Bridge, and now we want to edit it. We only gathered four shots (it got too foggy for more). We look at the tape and log what we have.

Video Log

Video Logged: Golden Gate Bridge

Logged By: Susan Allen Date: September 15, 1997

Counter (WHEN and how long)	**Description of Video** (WHAT)	**Description of Audio** (HOW it sounds)	**#** (WHERE: put clips in order)
0:30 (10 seconds)	Medium shot of Chris and Sarah talking	Can hear their conversation. Talking about how cold it is	2
0:40 (15 seconds)	Wide shot of a group of people walking across the Golden Gate Bridge.	General sounds of cars, people talking, birds	1
0:55 (18 seconds)	Close-up shot of Sarah shivering	Can hear Sarah saying "brrrr"	3
1:13 (10 seconds)	Super-close up of Chris joking around. (but this image is out of focus — don't use)	Can hear laughter and talking clearly, cars and waves in the background	X

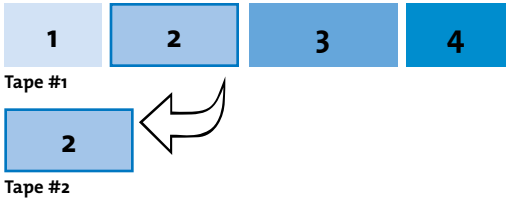
On the tape they look like this:

In analog editing, we must put the shots down in the order we want them to appear (in digital editing, you can put the shots down in any order, and then move them around if you decide you want to put them in another spot.) Immediately, we know we can't use Shot #4, because it's really out of focus. The other three shots are fine. We decide we want to put Shot #2 first when we edit onto the blank tape, because it establishes the setting. People will see that and immediately know where they are and have an idea of what's going on. We'll put Shot #1 next, because we want to get a closer look at the people on the bridge. Then we'll put Shot #3, because it gives us an even better idea of what it is like to be on the bridge and what the people are doing.

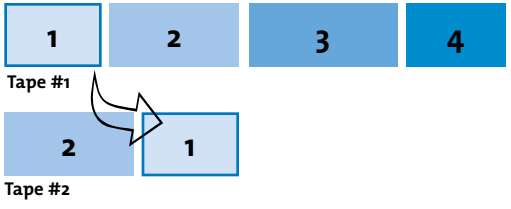
So our final product will look like this:

Step Three Copy the clips you selected, in the order you want them to appear, onto the blank Finished Product Tape. (Tape #2)

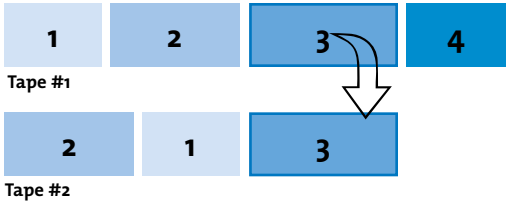
We've decided to start with Shot #2 because it's our best starting shot — it's framed well, in focus, and it shows the whole scene. We'll put Shot #2 near the beginning of Tape #2, copying it from Tape #1 to Tape #2.



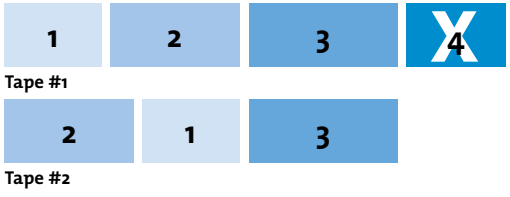
Then we want to copy Shot #1 from Source Tape/Tape #1, and place it after Shot #2, which is already on the Finished Product Tape/Tape #2.



Then we want to copy Shot #3 from Tape #1, and place it after Shot #1 which is already on Tape #2



Since Shot #4 is out of focus, we won't use that shot at all.

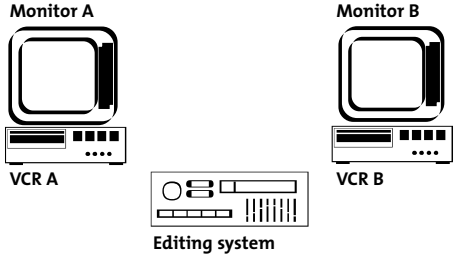


Tape #2 — this is what our brief finished product looks like!

What you've just read over is the basic concept of editing. The concept remains the same, no matter what type of machines you use. Now that we have a basic understanding of how to edit, here is a bit more detail.

Using an Editing System

The Equipment



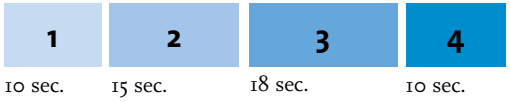
The Editing System is connected to both VCRs by cables. You can control both VCRs using the buttons on this system. It's like a remote control for your TV, only with some extra features.

Using an Editing System

Setting Your In and Out Points

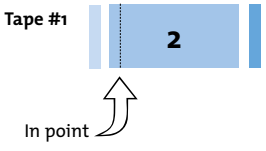
On the raw footage tape/Tape #1, determine the length of the shot

In the example up above, we started with Shot #2. When we copied it from Tape #1 to Tape #2, we had to decide exactly what amount of that shot we wanted based on our purposes. We may have 10 seconds of that shot, but do we want to use all of it? How long will we want to see that clip before we go to the next one?



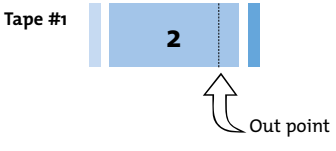
Set your In Point on your raw footage tape

Let's say we decide to use 5 seconds of Shot #2 to open the video. And we want to start a few seconds into that shot. Now we know exactly where we want the shot to start, so we select our In Point (or it may be called Inset or Insert Point). We select this spot by pausing at the exact spot where we want it to start, and pressing "Inset" or "In Point."



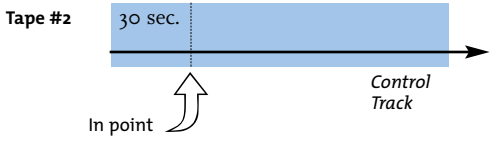
Set your Out Point on your raw footage tape

Now fast forward or play the tape until you arrive at the place you want the shot to end. Press "pause." Press "Outset" or "Out Point." Now the editing system knows the length (5 seconds), and where to start and stop copying.



On the blank tape/Tape #2, Set your In Point.

Now you need to tell the editing system where to begin copying onto the second tape. Since the tape is blank, your In Point doesn't have to be exact. (It actually isn't entirely blank, it has Control Track on it. See the next page for a definition of what Control Track is and how to put it on your tape. It's easy!) As a general rule, set your In Point about 30 seconds into the tape (to make sure the tape has the proper tension, and you have enough space for pre-roll). You do not need to set an Out Point on this tape since the editing system will stop when it reaches the end of the section of Tape #1 you've instructed it to copy.



Tips from the Experts

- Put "Control Track" on the second tape. This enables you to Insert edit onto a new tape. Control track is a series of magnetic impulses that allow new signals to be added on top of it. The magnetic impulses are like glue that hold down the new images. You "black" a tape, or lay down control track, by putting your blank tape/Tape #2 in a VCR or camera and pressing "Record." This will record "black" or "control track" onto this tape. You may want to do this ahead of time. Make sure you put control track over the entire tape.
- Label your tapes as soon as possible, either just as you take off the cellophane wrapper, or just as you take it out of the camera.
- Before you begin to edit, rewind your tape to the beginning, then reset the counter to zero. Now, as you edit, you know exactly how far you are into the tape. Also, when you log your tape, you can refer to the counter to find your shots.

Use Insert Editing

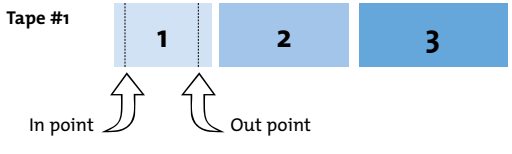
There are two ways to edit analog video: assemble edit and insert edit (see the Glossary for definitions). We want to use insert editing when we edit pieces of video onto another tape. Assemble editing is often used for copying an entire tape onto another one, with no editing. You select your editing method by pushing the appropriately labeled button "Insert" or "Assemble" on your editing system after you have selected your In and Out Points.

Edit

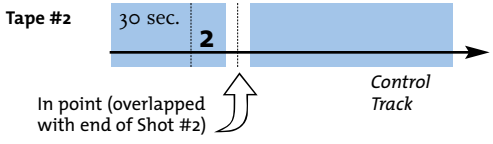
Press "Edit" and the editing system will copy Shot #2 from your raw footage tape to your blank tape/ Tape #2.

Repeat this process for each edit.

So, for the next edit...to edit Shot #1 onto the second tape, we will select our In Point and Out Point on Shot #1.



Then select the In Point on Tape #2. Start this point a few frames (or half a second) before Shot #2 ends. There needs to be some overlap of video, otherwise you'll see a gap or static between video shots.



Now that you have all the In and Out Points selected, select the Insert method of editing by pressing "Insert" (you may not need to press this again — it depends on the editing system's memory), and then press "Edit."

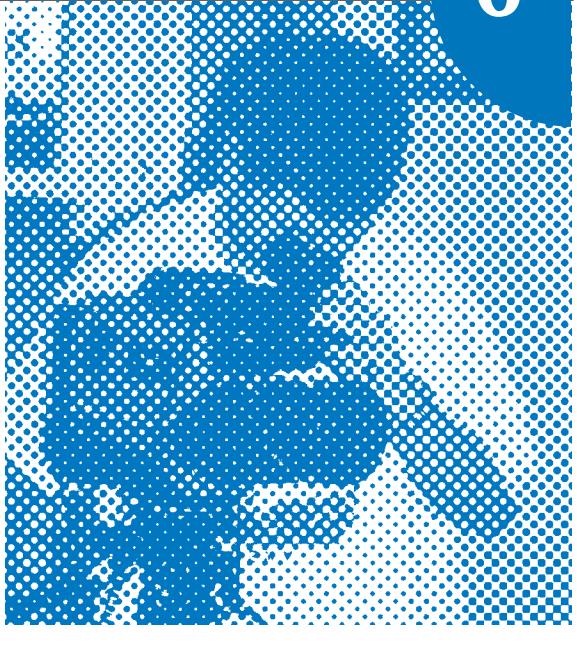
" Making a movie is like putting the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together: The producer's job is to have an overview and keep the whole picture in mind while making sure all the small components fit together perfectly."

—Denise Di Novi
Producer, Edward Scissorhands

Chapter 6

Making Your Movie

- Your Production Schedule
- Note to the Director: a Word about Continuity
- Production! Shooting Your Movie
- The Editing Process
- Forms and Contracts



Your Production Schedule

This is the nitty-gritty for a pre-production, production, and post-production schedule. This section will outline the procedure to make a short film from start to finish.

The next pages include a timeline and the steps of making a movie, based on an eight-week schedule. Your film might take more time, or less, but you can use it as a guide.

We've also included a few forms that your cast and crew will need to fill out (see pages 115 through 117.) These forms protect both the actors and filmmakers.

Pre-Production: Week One

• Begin writing screenplay

Writer(s)

- Once you have decided what you want to write about, discuss the idea with the director, producer and the rest of your crew. Brainstorm about ways to make the story more exciting. As the writer, it is your job to keep track of these ideas, so write them all down.
- Create character sketches for each character.
- Refresh your memory on screenplay format.
- Write an outline of your screenplay (this would include the main things that will happen and how each character works in the scene).

Director

- Go over the screenplay with the writer. Always think about how you want to tell the story visually.
- Start talking to different crew members about the positions they want to take.

Notes:

Pre-Production: Week Two

• Re-write script
• Choose actors

Director

- Work with the writer on the screenplay.
- Choose the crew.
- Hold auditions for roles.
- Pick actors for roles.
- Conduct a table reading (see "Actors" below).

Writer

- With your first draft of the screenplay finished, make copies and distribute them to everyone involved with the film.
- Gather feedback, and figure out which of the suggestions to use.
- Rewrite the screenplay.

Cinematographer

- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Start to think about location possibilities.

Actors

- Participate in a **table reading** of screenplay: all the actors sit around a table — and each takes one character. Read the screenplay out loud, even if it is a rough draft. This helps the director, writer, and the actors to figure out what works and what does not.
- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Prepare for auditions. Get familiar with all the characters.
- Once roles are assigned, start to memorize lines.

Editor

- Start conversations with director and cinematographer on shooting ideas.

Notes:

Pre-Production: Week Three

- **Next draft of screenplay**
- **Create storyboard**
- **Rehearse with actors**

Director

- Give feedback on the screenplay, paying attention to what works (and what does not) at the table reading.
- Start to work on storyboard.
- Conduct table reading of screenplay.
- Working closely with the cinematographer and editor, finish storyboard and distribute to rest of crew.
- Hold first rehearsal for actors.

Writer

- Write second draft of screenplay and give to the director.
- Listen to table reading of screenplay.
- Gather feedback and incorporate any changes.

Cinematographer

- Give feedback on screenplay to director and writer.
- Since the screenplay is near its final form, start finalizing location decisions.
- As an exercise, using your camera, practice shooting the table reading to get used to shooting people talking.
- Work with director on storyboard.
- Go over location choices with director.
- Think about whether locations need extra help in making them work for each scene. (Are props needed?)
- Go to the chosen locations and begin experimenting with shots.

Editor

- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Start to think about editing possibilities. Watch movies, television programs, and commercials for ideas.

Actors

- Perform table reading.
- Continue to study character and memorize lines.
- Participate in rehearsals.

Costume/Makeup/Hair

- What kind of clothing would best convey each character in each scene? Make a list.
- What kind of makeup and hairstyles would best convey each character in each scene? Make a list.
- Go over these lists with the director.
- Start to look for necessary clothing, props, and makeup.

Notes:

Pre-Production: Week Four

- **Final draft written**
- **Rehearsals continue**
- **Prepare for production**

Director

- Give feedback to writer on screenplay.
- Work with actors on characterizations. Discuss the "story" of each scene. Discuss the motivation of the characters.
- Hold rehearsal for actors, during which you should block the scene with the actors and the cinematographer. **Blocking** the scene means not only going over the dialogue, but also how and where you want the actors — and the camera — to move during the shoot.
- Create a production schedule.
- Create a final checklist for production and go over it, making sure all is ready.
- Before production, hold a final meeting with the entire cast and crew to go over all the details. Is everyone ready?

Writer

- Third draft of screenplay is written and distributed.
- Listen to table reading conducted with actors playing their correct roles.
- Final draft is written, incorporating ideas from table reading.
- Final draft is distributed.

Cinematographer

- Go over the director's storyboard and experiment with setting up different shots.
- Work with director on blocking.
- Continue experimenting with shots on chosen locations. *Double check supplies needed for production:*
  Do you have enough blank tapes? Do you have back-up tapes?
  Do you have adequate batteries? Do you have back-up batteries?
  Do you know how to turn off the date and time display so that it will not appear on your shots?
  Do you have the props you need for each set?

Costume/Makeup/Hair

- Have you found the necessary costumes and makeup? Make sure you have everything you need for production.

Note to the Director: a Word about Continuity

After each scene is shot, take careful notes (or assign this responsibility to someone else) of possible continuity issues. For example, in one shot your actor is eating a piece of chocolate cake. Is the cake completely gone in the next shot?

If you are shooting over several days, but the action (according to the screenplay) is supposed to take place all in one day, are your actors wearing the same clothes they were wearing in the first shoot or have they mysteriously changed clothes? Alternatively, if your action takes place over several different days, you will want your characters to have a change of clothes for each new fictional day. All this has to be determined before shooting begins so that the actors (or the costume person) can be sure to bring the appropriate clothes.

Either you or the costume person should, at the beginning of each new scene, write down the names of the actors in the scene. Next to their names, write down the different clothes they will need. Then, mark down the place in the script where the change of clothes should occur.

The same is true with makeup. The makeup person should keep track of makeup, as it is needed scene-to-scene, paying special notice to continuity.

Create a shot list. This is a list of every shot you want and need to make. You should go over this with the cinematographer and make sure you do not have too many for each day. After your first day, you will have a better idea of how long each shot takes. You may need to re-create your list if you think it will take too long.

Production! Shooting Your Movie

To the Director, Part II:

When the actors are in their places and the camera is ready, you shout: "**Camera**!" That lets the cameraperson know it is time to start shooting.

Then, you loudly say: "**Action**!" That is a signal for the actors to begin.

When you shoot a scene, watch very carefully. Is the scene working? Do you like it? Or do you think the actors could do better? If you're not sure about a scene, and if your camera has playback capability, you can rewind and look at it.

When the scene is over, wait at least five seconds, letting the camera roll, and then shout: "Cut!" Only then should people feel they can talk freely on and near the set. The delay will give you time to record over your voice (so it will not end up in the movie) when you start shooting the next scene.

Once you have reviewed the scene, you and the camera and sound people will need to make a decision quickly. If you are all happy with what you have shot, move on to the next scene. If not, try it again.

There are many reasons why you would re-shoot a scene. You might not like the way the leading actor is saying her or his lines. Someone might have sneezed during filming. Or, you might have to brainstorm how to set up the scene better.

Shoot as many takes as needed, but remember your time constraints and the patience of your cast and crew.

Before you do a new take, you need to tell the actors what you want them to do differently, tell the cinematographer how you want it shot differently, or talk to the art director about how you want the scene to look different. Make sure your direction is specific, then shoot the scene again.

After each day's shooting, review your shot list. Did you get every shot you needed? If you missed one or two, is there a way for you to make it up in the next day's shoot? Try not to get too far behind.

Notes:

Production: Weeks Five & Six

- **Directing**
- **Shooting**
- **Acting**
- **Getting ready to edit**

Director

- Get to the shoot early to make sure that everything is ready.
- Work closely with the cinematographer, checking shots on the viewfinder or a playback monitor.
- Stick to your schedule.
- Always remember your storyboard.

Writer

- Although this may not be necessary, be prepared to make screenplay changes throughout production.
- Help with continuity.

Cinematograher

- Place props as needed.
- Set up and start shooting.
- Be flexible.

Editor

- Thinking about how you want to edit the film, watch the shooting and make helpful suggestions to the cameraperson and/or director at the end of each shoot.
- Start to review the **dailies** — the daily tapes of each day's shooting. Make a list of the shots you like and, using the numerical code on the camera, mark down the time code and the tape number so you can find the shot you want when you need it.

Notes:

Post Production-Pulling It All Together: Weeks Seven & Eight

- **Finish editing movie**
- **Choose and lay down music and sound effects**
- **Hold a screening of the film**
- **Have a wrap party**

Prepare for an interesting and intense couple of weeks. Editing your film, even though it is shot, will take a lot of time and effort. It is in the editing room that the film in your head becomes a reality on the screen — a challenging transition to make.

Note to the Editor and Director

First task: make a log (a list) of all the raw footage. This is a list of all the shots with the corresponding number of where they appear. This is *really important*! You will find yourself referring to this list over and over again. Be sure to mark the list with all the vital information you need. For example:

Tape counter number on your VCR or edit machine	Sample scene description
1:01	Close-up: boy and girl (happy) walking down sidewalk **(Good sound. Bright light.)**
1:45	Medium shot: girl screaming when she sees a monster **(Really good.)**
3:12	Close-up: monster tentacle grabbing boy's foot **(A little dark, see if there is another.)**
3:50	Amazing long shot of monster slithering away **(Gave me chills.)**

If the editor has already made a log based on her/his viewing of each day's dailies, then the editor should review the shots with the director.

As you log the footage, watch each take of each shot and make a separate list of which takes you like the best and where they are on the tape. This is known as your **select** list, and your favorite takes are called your **selects**. Having a select list makes it easier to find everything when you start editing.

Once you have logged all the footage and chosen your selects, you can start editing the rough cut. How you do it depends on your equipment.

Editing can be the most technical aspect of making a movie. If you are lucky, you will have access to some professional digital (computerized) editing equipment. If this is the case, rely on the operator or owner of the equipment to show you how to use it. The advantage to digital editing is that you can edit your movie in any order you want. If you change your mind about an edit, it's easy to go back and lengthen it, shorten it, or try something different.

Notes:

THE EDITING PROCESS

Director

- Work with the editor on the rough cut — the first attempt at editing the film.
- Your editor may bring new thoughts to what shoots will work best. Listen to what he/she says. Work together. Be a creative, collaborative team.
- Lay down the sound effects.
- Choose the music for the film.
- Before you finalize everything, show the film to your whole crew to get their reactions. Discuss the film with the editor. Make whatever changes you think you should after these talks.

Editor

- You will either create a rough cut on your own, or, more likely, will work with the director and perhaps a couple of other members of the crew on editing a rough cut.
- Once you have the rough cut, show it to the director (and other involved parties) and see if he/she has any comments.
- When everyone is happy with the rough cut, you should begin putting the finishing touches on the movie. Again, what you can do will depend on your equipment. If possible, add music and sound effects that will help give the movie more impact.
- Clean up any glitches.
- Make sure the sound levels are consistent throughout.

Rest of the Crew

- Participate in the editing process. Make suggestions, but even more important, *observe*. See how a film is put together.
- Hold a party (in Hollywood, it's called a "wrap" party, because it celebrates "wrapping" up the film). Make sure everyone who had anything to do with the film is invited.

Be proud of what you created.

Hold a screening of your film!

Forms and Contracts

LOCATION CONTRACT

Permission is hereby granted to _____ (hereinafter referred to as "Producer"), to use the property and adjacent, located at

_____

_____ for the purpose of photographing and recording scenes (interior and/or exterior) for motion pictures with the right to exhibit and license others to exhibit all or any part of said scenes in motion pictures throughout the world; said permission shall include the right to bring personnel and equipment (including props and temporary sets) onto said property, and to remove the same therefrom after completion of work.

The above permission is granted for a period of _____day(s), from _____ to _____ at the agreed-upon rental price of _____.

Producer hereby agrees to hold the undersigned harmless of and from any and all liability and loss which the undersigned may suffer, or incur by reason of any accidents or other damages to the said premises, caused by any of the employees or equipment, on the above-mentioned premises, ordinary wear and tear of the premises in accordance with this agreement excepted.

The undersigned does hereby warrant and represent that the undersigned has full right and authority to enter into this agreement concerning the above-described premises, and that the consent or permission of no other person, firm, or corporation is necessary in order to enable Producer to enjoy full rights to use of said premises, herein above mentioned, and the undersigned does hereby indemnify and agree to hold Producer free and harmless from and against any and all loss, costs, liability, damages, or claims of any nature, including but not limited to attorney's fees, arising from, growing out of, or concerning a breach of above warranty.

_____ _____

Signed Lessee

_____ _____

Title Signed

_____

Address

TALENT RELEASE

I _____ give permission to _____ to use my name, likeness, pictures, and/or voice in connection with the motion picture or video tentatively titled _____ for broadcast, direct exhibition, and any subsidiary purposes whatsoever. The foregoing consent is granted with the understanding that _____ is the copyright holder of _____ and has sole discretion to cut and edit the film and/or voice recording of my appearance as seen fit. I specifically waive any rights of privacy or publicity, or any other rights I may have with respect to such use of my name, likeness, pictures, and/or voice.

I hereby certify and represent that I have read the above and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Signed _____ Dated _____

Printed Name _____

Guardian Signature _____ Dated _____
(If under 18 years of age)

Film Title

Director	Date
Producer(s)	Day of Days
Sunrise (time)	Weather:
Sunset(time)	

Schedule (scenes you will be shooting that day)

Set Description	Scenes	Location

Talent

Cast	Role	Make-up Time	Call Time (on set)

Production Crew

	Time In	Time out
Director		
Writer		
Cinematographer		
Art Director		
Make-Up Artist		
Hair Stylist		
Costume Designer		
Sound Technician		
Location Manager		
Caterer		
Misc. Crew		

Epilogue: Looking Back

Did you like making a film? Is it fun to work collaboratively with others to create something that never existed before?

What surprised you about what you learned?

Did you like working collabortaively in a group? Why or why not?

Would you like to make another movie? Why? Why not?

What are some of the things you would do differently if you had to do it all over again?
Did you make any mistakes?
What did you learn from them?

What would you think if, after you finished your film, someone else changed it?

Hopefully, you ended up loving the process of filmmaking, and this is just the beginning of your creative exploration.

Be bold.
Be creative.
As they say in Hollywood, "break a leg."

Glossary

General Terms

ACE (American Cinema Editors): an honorary society of motion picture editors, who come together on the basis of their professional achievements, their dedication to the education of others, and their commitment to the craft of editing

ASC (American Society of Cinematographers): an organization where cinematographers meet with fellow professionals and discuss their craft.

Antagonist: a character who tries to prevent the protagonist from reaching a particular goal.

Cast: the actors in a film

Continuity: the art of maintaining consistency from shot-to-shot and scene-to-scene, even when the scenes are shot out of sequence

Crew: the techinical people working on a movie

Dailies/Rushes: film shot during one day of shooting

Deciphering: unscrambling or de-coding to understand the meaning

Hook: an enticing beginning of a movie that sets the tone

Lighting: an important means of expression in film, lighting refers to the method of illuminating a shot

Lyricists: people who write the words (the lyrics) to songs

Plot: the major event of the story

Props: abbreviation for "properties"— objects in a scene that decorate the set, or objects that an actor uses (e.g. a pen, a painting on the wall, a bouquet of flowers, a couch)

Protagonist: the main character of the story or film

Scene: 1. One or more shots taken at the same time and place. 2. Part of the story that happens in one place, during one period of time. Sometimes, a single shot can make up an entire scene.

Sequence: number of scenes taken together

Set: the place, created or pre-existing, where a scene is shot

Set up: each time the camera position is changed

Shot: the smallest unit of film— taken in one uninterrupted process of the camera.

Storyboard: a shot-by-shot layout drawn before shooting or editing the scene

Viewfinder: it's the part of the film camera that you will look through. It shows what the camera will record on film.

Camera Composition

Close-up (CU): a very close shot of something — usually a person's face or some other object. This shot really captures emotion.

Composition: the positioning of people and objects in the frame

Establishing shot: a wide shot that shows the audience a lot about the setting

Extreme close-up (XCU): Like it sounds, it's a really close shot. It may be someone's lips, or a person's eye with a reflection in it.

Extreme long shot: taken from a great distance (or it looks as though it is taken from a great distance). It is often used to give the audience perspective — a sense of how later scenes will fit into the whole environment.

Medium close-up: an example would be a shot of a person from the waist up

Long shot: taken from a longer distance, it gives slightly more details than the extreme long shot, and is sometimes referred to as the establishing shot. It shows the audience a lot about the setting.

Object: things in a shot that are not people (e.g. a tree, a car, a building)

Subject: a person in a shot

Camera Angles

Cutaway: an abrupt cut away from the scene to something else or to a new scene. In old movies, there might be a hero who falls over a cliff and was hanging onto a rock. Then there would be a cutaway to an owl in a tree. Then a shot back to he hero — who was by then standing on the ground.

Eye-level angle shot: Shot at eye level. These shots give a real sense of someone's point of view.

High-angle shot: You need to be higher than your subject to shoot this way, either looking down at something on the floor, or, you could get up on a table or chair and shoot down. It is used to give the viewer a sense of superiority to the subject, and to give a sense of the subject being vulnerable, small.

Low-angle shot: a shot in which the subject is above the camera. It usually conveys a sense of the subject's importance, looming above us.

Oblique-angle shot: effective in showing scenes of violence and confusion or being drunk or drugged— usually from the point of view of the person.

Camera Movement

Pan: moving the camera from side to side, as if you are following someone who is walking from left to right

Tilt: moving the camera up and down, as if you are following someone jumping on a trampoline

Zoom: moving in on an object from a wider shot to a closer one

Lighting Terms

Base light: the existing amount of light in a room

High contrast: when the tones of color, or black and white, are more extreme

Illumination: the amount and quality of light on a subject (example: a candle would provide a very small amount of light to illuminate a subject)

Lamp: a special light used for photography or cinematography

Editing Terms

Assemble edit: Used to copy an entire video, or pieces of a video, onto a new master video tape (one which does not already have a recorded signal or control track (black)). This process records the video and audio together (which cannot be divided) and combines them on to another tape. This is often used to make complete copies of programs.

Coverage: a shot used by the editor to break up the action

Dissolve: when the end of one shot fades into the next one— not turning to black, but blurring slightly and then clearing up for the next shot

Edit: to assemble a film by cutting and repositioning the shots

Fade: when the end of a shot darkens into a black screen— and then fades up, or lightens, into the next scene.

Final cut: the final, edited film

Insert edit: This process allows you to edit audio and video, separately or together, onto a master tape with control track (black). This process requires a master tape with control track.

Montage: A French word meaning "to assemble," a montage is achieved by editing many images rapidly together. A sequence of shots, usually without much dialogue.

Pick-up shot/scene: a shot that is added after the editing phase

Reaction shot: a shot used by editors to draw more interest in a scene. For example, a close-up of a person listening during a conversation

Real time: a shot or scene filmed in actual time, not compressed

Simple cut: when the end of one shot is directly butted onto the beginning of the next without any noticeable special effect

Sound glitch: unwanted sound on the film footage that was unintentionally recorded

Superimposition: when two images are shown, one on top of the other. Usually, one image faded away, leaving just one image. Usually this is done quickly, but long enough for the viewer to link the two objects in her or his mind.

Sound Terms

Ambient sound: background sounds like a clock ticking, a flurorescent light humming, traffic, wind, etc.

Audio: any kind of sound in a film or video

Dialogue: a conversation spoken between actors or one actor speaking to himself/herself— it's the actor's spoken words

Music: It conveys a mood and sometimes it helps the audience understand what is happening, or what is about to happen.

Narration: the off-screen voice of the observer-commentator. It can be a character in the film or it can be someone we never see.

Score: adding music to the movie to help promote the director's vision

SFX/Sound effects: sounds created to mimic objects or subjects in a film, like the sound of a girl walking in snow, a dog barking, an alien spaceship engine, etc.

Unidirectional microphone: collects sound from mainly one direction. Can be pointed at an actor to better hear dialogue and reduce ambient noise.

Voice over, or monologue: 1. Often used when the actor's thoughts are said aloud (but the image is not of the actor's lips moving) and/or when the invisible narrator speaks. 2. a long speech

Windscreens: devices like a special foam sock that are placed on a microphone to reduce ambient wind noise

Directors Guild of America

The Directors Guild of America (DGA) was founded in 1936 to protect the rights of directors. To the filmakers who gave birth to the Guild, the issues are clear: the establishment and protection of economic and creative rights for directors and recognition of the director's contribution to the art of moving pictures.

Today, the DGA represents more than 12,700 members (Directors, Assistant Directors, Unit Production Managers, Associate Directors, Stage Managers, Technical Coordinators) working in theatrical, industrial, educational and documentary films, as well as in television (live, filmed and taped), videos, commercials, interactive media and internet projects in the US and throughout the world.

For more information, please visit www.dga.com

The Film Foundation

The Film Foundation was established in 1990 by Martin Scorsese and seven other eminent directors—Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas, Sydney Pollack, Robert Redford and Steven Spielberg—who were joined shortly thereafter by directors Robert Altman and Clint Eastwood. The Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to helping protect and preserve motion picture history.

Through direct funding to the nation's leading archives, the Foundation works to preserve a broad range of films including classic Hollywood productions, avant-garde works, documentaries, newsreels, and silent films from the early days of cinema. The Foundation also creates educational programs, national campaigns and public events to foster greater awareness for film protection and preservation.

In 2002, the Foundation consolidated with the Artists Rights Foundation of the Directors Guild of America. With this consolidation, the President and Secretary-Treasurer of the DGA became members of the Board of Directors.

For more information, please visit www.film-foundation.org

THE FILM FOUNDATION

FILMMAKERS FOR FILM PRESERVATION

Roll Credits

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Guilds, Organizations, Foundations

American Cinema Editors
American Society of Cinematographers
Art Directors Guild
Costume Designers Guild
Institute for Civil Society
Maui Community Television
The Ralphs/Food for Less Foundation

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