

The Extended Family of Basic Shots

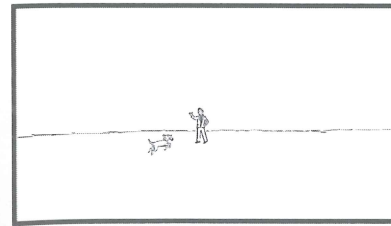
Basic shots represent the most straight forward depiction of a human subject. The illustrative examples presented here are an introduction to the various magnitudes of shots that you will be able to create in each category. In order to keep things as simple as possible, the illustrations will assume a single subject in a plain environment with the recording camera placed roughly at the same height as the subject's eyes (this camera placement is a relatively standard way of shooting a person from a neutral position). For now we will maintain a character stance central in the frame, and looking straight to lens. This basic presentation is just for training purposes, you will later understand more numerous and much better ways to compose the images.

The following is a list of the basic shots (Figure 1.6):

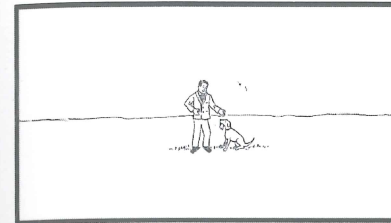
- Extreme long shot
- Very long shot
- Long shot/wide shot
- Medium long shot
- Medium shot
- Medium close-up
- Close-up
- Big close-up
- Extreme close-up

Extreme Long Shot

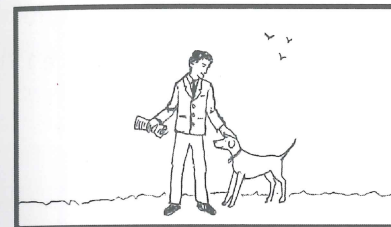
1. May be abbreviated as either XLS or ELS
2. Also referred to as a very wide shot or a very wide angle shot
3. Traditionally used in **exterior** shooting
4. Encompasses a large field of view, therefore forms an image that shows a large amount of the environment within the **film space**
5. Often used as an **establishing shot** at the beginning of a motion picture or at the start of a new sequence within a motion picture
6. Shows where—urban, suburban, rural, mountains, desert, ocean, etc.
7. May show when—day, night, summer, winter, spring, fall, distant past, past, present, future, etc.



Extreme Long Shot : XLS / ELS



Very Long Shot : VLS



Long Shot : LS



Medium Long Shot : MLS



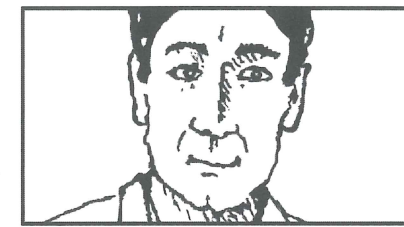
Medium Shot : MS



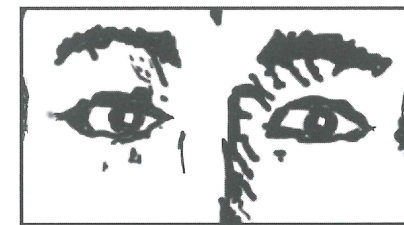
Medium Close-Up : MCU



Close-Up : CU



Big Close-Up : BCU



Extreme Close-Up : XCU / ECU

FIGURE 1.6 Examples of the nine shot types.

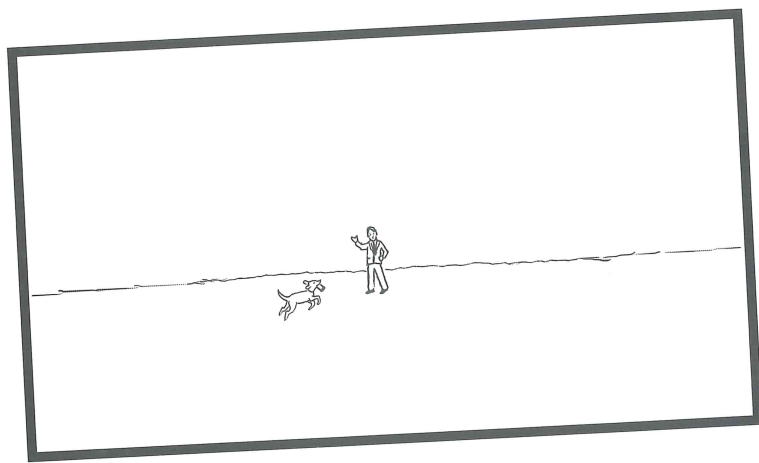


FIGURE 1.7 Example of an XLS.

8. May show who—lone stranger walking into town, massive invading army—most often the human figures in the XLS are so small that details are not distinguishable—general, not specific, information will be conveyed (Figure 1.7)

Very Long Shot

1. May be abbreviated VLS
2. Also in the wide shot family
3. May be used in exterior or **interior** shooting when enough width and height exist within the studio set or location building, such as an open warehouse
4. Environment within the film space is still very important as it fills much of the screen, but the human figure is more visible and clothing detail may be observed
5. May be used as an establishing shot where movement of character brings the figure closer to the camera
6. Shows where, when, and a bit more of who (Figure 1.8)

Long Shot/Wide Shot

1. Abbreviated LS and/or WS
2. This is usually considered a “full body” shot, wide but in close to a figure with head and feet visible in the frame
3. Interior or exterior shooting
4. Larger human figure takes attention away from the environment; however, a fair amount of the character’s surroundings is still visible

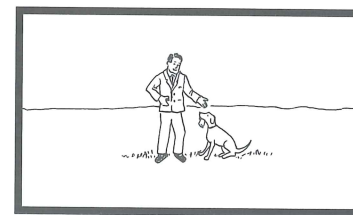


FIGURE 1.8 Example of a VLS.

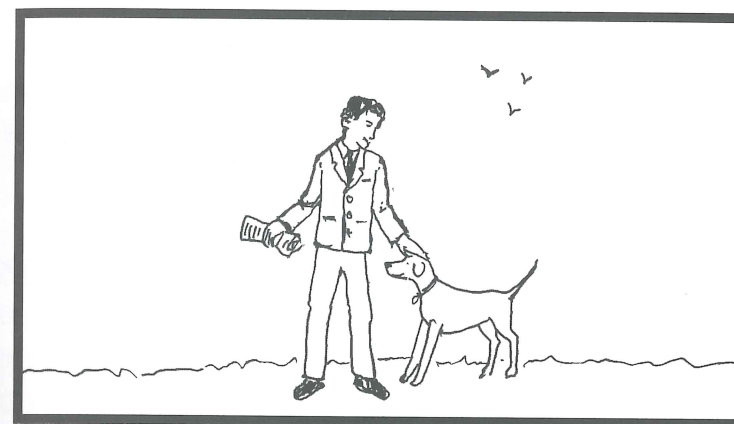


FIGURE 1.9 Example of a long shot.

5. May not work well for an establishing shot
6. Shows where, when and who—the gender, clothing, movements, and general facial expressions may be observed more easily (Figure 1.9)

Medium Long Shot

1. Abbreviated MLS
2. First shot in increasing magnitude that cuts off a body part of the subject—traditionally framed such that bottom of frame cuts off the leg either just below or, more commonly, just above the knee. The choice for where to cut may depend on costuming or body movement of the individual in the shot. If you cut off above

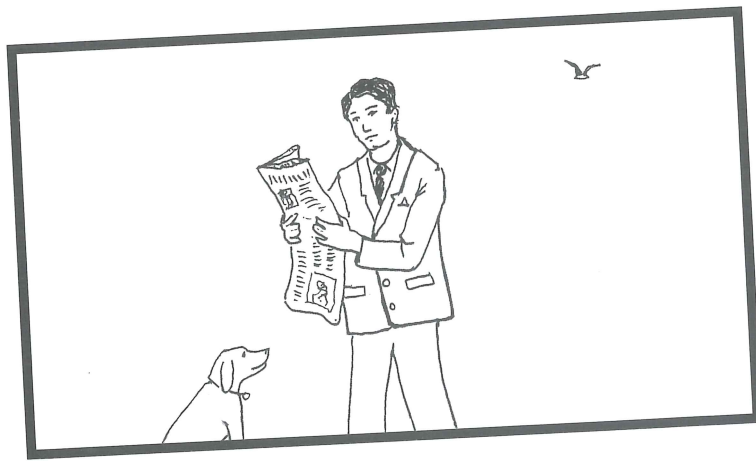


FIGURE 1.10 Example of a medium long shot.

the knee, it is sometimes referred to as the “Cowboy” because in American Western movies there was interest in being able to show the firearm in the holster strapped to the thigh of a cowboy.

3. May be interior or exterior shot
4. Human figure is prominent; details in clothing, gender, and facial expressions are visible
5. Shows more of who than where and may still show when (Figure 1.10)

Medium Shot

1. Abbreviated MS
2. May also be called the “Waist” shot, as the frame cuts off the human figure just below the waist and just above the wrist if arms are down at the side.
3. Interior or exterior
4. Human figure is most prominent in the frame—eyes and the direction they look, clothing, hair color, and style are all plainly visible
5. Subject movement may become a concern, as the tighter framing restricts the freedom of gesture—be careful not to **break frame** (have an actor’s body part touch or move beyond the established edge of the picture frame)
6. Certainly shows who and may provide generic detail about where (inside or outside, apartment, store, forest, etc.) and when (day or night, season) (Figure 1.11)



FIGURE 1.11 Example of a medium shot.

Medium Close-Up

1. Abbreviated MCU
2. Sometimes called a “two-button” for the tight bottom frame cutting off at the chest, roughly where you would see the top two buttons on a shirt. Definitely cuts off above the elbow joint. Adjust bottom frame slightly for men or women depending on costuming
3. Interior or exterior
4. Character’s facial features are rather clear—where the eyes look is obvious, as is emotion, hair style and color, make-up, etc. This is one of the most commonly used shots in filmmaking because it provides so much information about the character while speaking, listening, or performing an action that does not involve much body or head movement
5. An audience is supposed to be watching the human face at this point in the framing so actions or objects in the surrounding environment hold little to no importance
6. Depending on general lighting and costuming, you may discern general information about where and when (Figure 1.12)

Close-Up

1. Abbreviated CU
2. Sometimes called a “head shot,” as the framing may cut off the top of the subject’s hair and the bottom of the frame can begin anywhere just below the chin or with a little upper shoulder visible (costuming and hairstyle dependent)



FIGURE 1.12 Example of a medium close-up.



FIGURE 1.13 Example of a close-up.

3. Interior or exterior
4. A very intimate full face shot of a human subject showing all detail in the eyes and conveys the subtle emotions that play across the eyes, mouth, and facial muscles of an actor—health conditions and facial hair in men and make-up use in women are clearly visible
5. An audience member should be totally focused on the human face with this framing, especially the eyes and/or mouth
6. Who but not so much where or when (Figure 1.13)

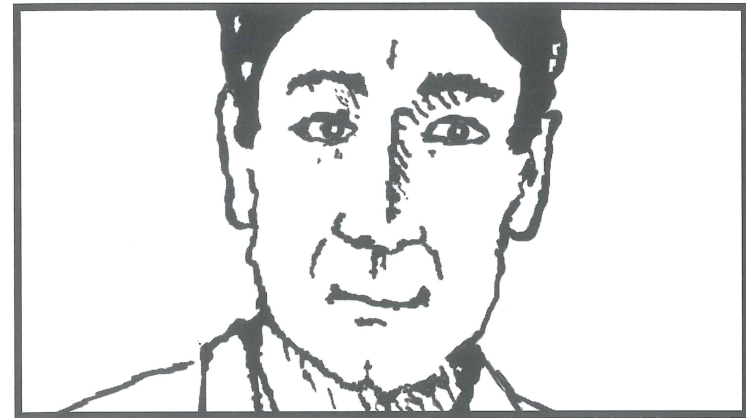


FIGURE 1.14 Example of big close-up.

Big Close-Up

1. Abbreviated BCU
2. Human face occupies as much of the frame as possible and still shows the key features of eyes, nose, and mouth at once
3. Interior or exterior
4. Such an intimate shot puts the audience directly in the face of the subject—because every detail of the face is highly visible, facial movements or expressions need to be subtle—very little head movement can be tolerated before the subject moves out of frame
5. This shot is about who and how that “who” feels—angry, scared, romantic, etc. (Figure 1.14)

Extreme Close-Up

1. Abbreviated ECU or XCU
2. Purely a detail shot—framing favors one aspect of a subject such as his/her eyes, mouth, ear, or hand
3. Lacking any points of reference to the surrounding environment, the audience has no context in which to place this body part detail, so understanding will stem from how or when this shot is edited into the motion picture—it may be helpful if the subject whose body detail is displayed in the XCU is first shown in a wider shot so context may be established for the viewer



FIGURE 1.15 Example of an extreme close-up.

4. This type of extremely magnified imagery can be used in documentary work, such as medical films or scientific studies, and may be used in fictional narrative, although sparingly, and experimental art films (Figure 1.15)

End of Chapter One Review

1. Visual "grammar" or film language is understood around the world.
2. The format of your camera initially determines the shape of your frame.
3. The aspect ratio describes the dimensions of your active recording area.
4. The three basic shot types are the medium shot, close-up, and long shot.
5. The extended family of nine shot types ranges from extreme long shot to extreme close-up.

The Rule of Thirds

We moved the actor's head off toward frame left in our MCU example in order to generate a more balanced frame of weighted objects. Notice that we did not choose framing like the examples shown in Figures 2.7 and 2.8.

We could create frames like this for particular reasons, but for the most part we are going to be following the accepted grammar, and the **rule of thirds** is definitely one



FIGURE 2.7 Back of talent's head is too close to frame left, breaking the frame edge.



FIGURE 2.8 Cutting the face in half may be considered "artsy" or "experimental" so beware.

of those points to follow. The rule of thirds is very easy to remember and very simple to execute. Take your frame and divide it up into thirds, both vertically and horizontally (Figure 2.9).

Of course, these lines are never going to physically live on your frame. You have to know their approximate placement on your particular viewfinder in your camera. So, when searching for a rule of thirds composition, you may choose to frame your talent as shown in Figure 2.10.

One can also place visual elements at the crossing points where two of the lines intersect. In this case, the eyes within the head of our MCU figure are placed roughly at this crossing point (see Figure 2.10).

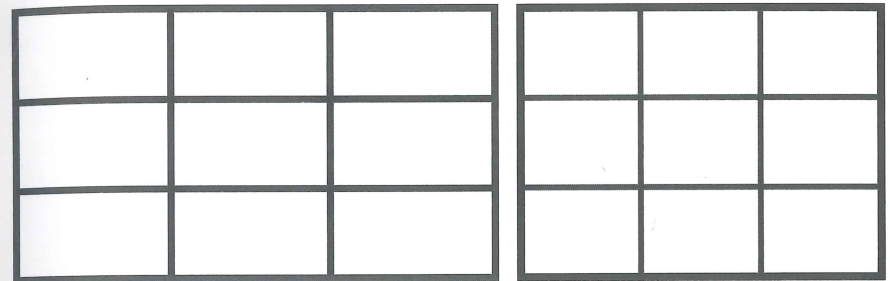


FIGURE 2.9 Frame markings along the 1/3 lines inside a 16:9 frame and a 4:3 frame.



FIGURE 2.10 Talent placed along the vertical 1/3 line.