

# CINEMATOGRAPHY

Cinematography consists of what information is presented and how it is presented. How it is presented has to do with: composition (scale, angle), lighting, color. We will look at some aspects that will help you make footage that is focused on the emotion and information you want to convey.



## GENERAL TIPS:

Define the central element you want to show (a person, a place, an object.) What is the information you need to give in the image?

Ask yourself: What emotion do I want to convey? Eg: if you are shooting a community, what do you want to highlight? If you want to highlight the progress the community has made then you will avoid elements in the image that highlight the problems. And vice versa, if you want to draw attention to a specific conflict you will avoid filming elements that give the opposite image to your message. Remember that you always "frame" reality when filming, that always happens, there are always elements that stand out and others that are left out. It is better that this happens in a conscious and deliberate way than that it is accidental and then the information that is transmitted does not express what you are looking for.

It is important that you learn the basic principles of cinematography, so that you can create images that express what you want, and what best identifies your community. You may think that

Remember that every video is a vision of the world, a conscious message, an action that seeks a reaction (a response in the viewer). You must design your images thinking about the reaction you want and use everything in that sense.

It is important that before filming anything, you take the time to get to know the people you are going to interview and film in their life, this way you will first learn about this person and then you will know what you are going to show of their life. Envisage them as collaborators in your project, you will gain more creativity in this respect. Ask them to show you their day, tasks, problems, hopes etc. From these moments of discussion many creative opportunities can reveal themselves.

Use composition techniques to draw attention to the element you want to highlight (whether it's a person, a location or an object). Simplify and eliminate from the image everything that distracts from the information you want to give. Filming is subtracting, it is framing a part of reality to draw attention to it.

Move around your subject or main object to capture different angles, try to find those angles that best reflect the emotion you want. Get close to the elements you want to highlight, and make them occupy 80-95% of the frame.

#### **What catches our attention in an image?**

- The figure in motion.
- The figure with the largest size.
- The figure closest to the camera.
- The figure most in focus in the shot.
- The brightest or most saturated colors in the shot.

Keep this in mind when framing, focusing and lighting your image. And when defining movement. Use lighting to highlight or draw attention.

## Framing

When shooting, look to create different frames with different scales and angles. This will add visual richness to your story once you edit it. Here are some types of framing. Each scale conveys a different emotion and serves to accentuate a specific type of information.

Scale is the proportion of the person in the frame (how close or far away the person is from the frame).

## Types of frames (by scale)

### Wide general shot



Focuses primarily on the context. The wide shot is the most descriptive, as it is the most open shot. The important thing is the location, the landscape.

### General shot



This shot allows you to see the characters in full body but also a wide information of the context; it allows you to recognize the subject and the environment at the same time.



### **American shot**



The subject is framed approximately from the knees up. This type of shot is known as an 'American or western' shot because it was popularized by this film genre. It works very well when you want to highlight some action of the subject that involves objects at the waist.

### **Medium shot**



The main subject or subjects are framed from the waist up. As we get closer to the character's face the intimacy increases. Used extensively in dialogue, and interviews.

### **Close-up**



Includes part of the shoulders and the face of the main character. It enhances the features of the face, the look, the expression, the gestures. The context almost does not appear.

### **Extreme close-up**



The face completely fills the frame. The face is the message itself, through which you can express a thought or an emotion. Here the degree of intimacy and closeness is extreme.



## Detail shot



Shows the detail of an object or person. It highlights the texture of a skin, or a specific element of the character (his hands, eyes, mouth, an object or part of his costume). It serves to emphasize the information of a specific element. Close ups and detail shots can evoke a deeper connection, emotion. Be that beads of sweat, fidgety hands, breath, wind in the hair etc. These may be positive to highlight or better avoided, depending on how they relate to your story.

## Types of framing (by angle)

### High Angle



The camera is placed above the character at a perpendicular angle. It usually emphasizes the smallness of a character in front of something larger than himself. It is also used to show a power relationship between two characters or between the character and his context.

### Horizontal shot



The camera is placed parallel to the ground and generally at the height of the character's face. This is the most common way of placing the camera. It is the most objective view, compared to any other form of angulation. It evokes closeness, confidence, stability.



## Low Angle



The camera is placed below the character. This point of view enhances the character, gives him strength and grandeur. It also gives a sense of instability in certain cases.

## Rules of composition

### **RULE OF THIRDS**

According to this rule of photographic composition, if we divide the frame vertically and horizontally into 3 equal sections, we should place the important elements of the image on the lines or at the intersections of the lines.

Using the rule of thirds is a very simple and effective way to frame your composition, and nowadays most digital cameras include composition grids with the division of thirds to compose images.







### **RULE OF SPACE**

You should position your subject pointing towards empty space to create a greater sense of space. A typical compositional example in wildlife photography is to leave space in front of the animal, in the direction the animal is moving. This is also a good photographic composition tip for portraits, where you can achieve a better image by capturing the subject looking out into open space.





## COMPOSITIONAL LINES

The use of guidelines, whether horizontal, vertical, or diagonal compositional lines, is one of the most effective compositional principles for guiding the viewer's eye to the important elements of the image. Use the natural lines of the environment to guide the viewer's attention.

If you want to create a visual journey, introduce curves into your composition. Curves add depth and are easy to implement. There are many different types, but the "S" shape is one of the compositional curves with the greatest impact on the frame. Ex: Rivers, roads, trees.



## FIGURE-BACKGROUND RELATIONSHIP

To emphasize a person in the image, choose a simple background, with few elements, or leave the background out of focus. This is essential in interviews. At the same time, choose a background that speaks about the character (their home, or an important location in the story you are telling).





## **SYMMETRY**

In relation to composing balanced images, using symmetry in your photographic compositions is one of the best ways to distribute visual weight within the frame. The most obvious example is photographing elements that can produce reflections such as lakes.



## **REPETITION**

Repetition is a very useful element of original photographic composition to make your images stand out. By repeating visual patterns or elements within the image, we can use colors in the composition, shapes, lines, textures, etc., creating an attractive visual flow for the viewer.





## GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Also look around for triangles, circles, squares, rectangles and even more complex shapes such as diamonds or diamonds. The easiest way to find shapes is in human constructions, but we can find compositional elements in nature as well.



## DEPTH

Look for the image to show people and objects at different depths (at different distances from the camera). A good tip is to separate the foreground, mid-ground and background to create this sensation, or use objects in the foreground that slightly interrupt the image. All this will help to convey a greater three-dimensionality in the filmed image.





## **RULE OF ODD NUMBERS**

This compositional rule consists of capturing an odd number of subjects to create more visually appealing images, including 3 or 5 elements instead of 2 or 4. The basis of the odd number rule is related to our subconscious, as studies show that visually it is more appealing to our mind to group subjects following odd numbers.



## **JUXTAPOSITION**

Juxtaposition consists of placing two or more contrasting elements side by side. In photography, you can use it by placing contrasting colors, tones, shapes and even objects or identities to make the viewer stop to analyze the visual meaning of the image.



## **ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE**

This is a form of composition where all the lines in the image direct attention to a point in the center of the image. It produces a great sense of depth and order. It can be used in location shots, when there are elements such as roads, bridges or natural elements that allow this type of visual structure to be created.





## Focal Length (Lenses)

**Short focal length lenses** (wide angle)- Below 35mm. Used when you want to show a large part of the location. Always distorts the image a little laterally, especially close objects. In the case of smartphone filming the standard lens is wide-angle, which is good for general shots, and does require a physical approach to the people and objects you want to highlight. (Don't use the camera's zoom lens because it pixelates the image).



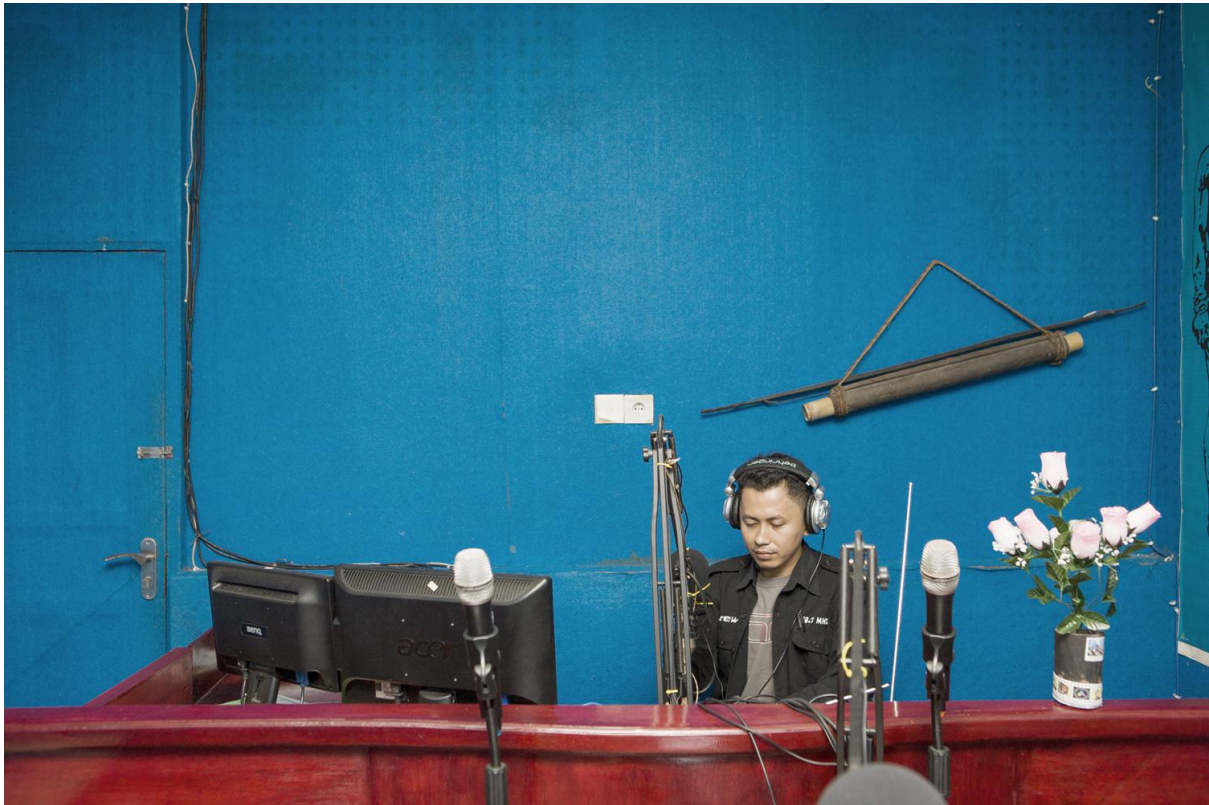
**Medium focal length lenses** (normal wide angle) - Between 35 and 50mm. They are the most commonly used. They do not have any type of distortion in the perspective, nor in the vertical and horizontal lines. It shows reality as close as possible to how the human eye sees it.



**Long focal length lenses** (telephoto)- 75mm- 250mm, or more. Brings the different planes closer together, compresses them with respect to their actual depth. Similar to viewing through a telescope or binoculars. Eliminates depth in the image, and makes it appear more two-dimensional. The most typical function is to be able to capture distant events, such as sporting events or any distant element that you want to magnify. But also, it can bring more intimacy, and a gentleness with its quick fall off in focus.







## SHOOTING WITH A SMARTPHONE

If you are using a smartphone, *always shoot horizontally*, it is a format more compatible with different platforms (internet, tv, cinema). Vertical filming is only used in some social networks like instagram reels. Only shoot that way if you are sure that this will be your only output format.

- Use the tripod during the interview.
- Check that you have enough memory in the cell phone to record the videos.
- Check that the cell phone battery is at 100%.
- Clean the camera lens.
- Put the phone in airplane mode.
- Do not use cell phone zoom-move physically.
- Shoot at least 10-second shots.
- Make very smooth movements.

\*\*\*

**INUTW - 2021**

**Photos: Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who.**