

Media Production Glossary

This glossary contains definitions for some of the concepts, techniques and tools used in producing narrative media.

GENERAL

B-Roll

Video or still images used as “filler” in a media project. They help convey the feeling, concept or location of the story.

Narrative

Plot or storyline. In a media piece, the narrative is the coherent sequencing of events across time and space. Dramatic action in a narrative usually involves key turning points. Moments of tension are resolved at the end. The story has a beginning, middle and end.

Point of View

The opinion or perspective expressed. This can be the perspective of the producer—the person who researched and produced the story—as expressed through the narrator or through the viewpoints of the characters.

Shot

A single sequence of a film, video or television program taken without interruption by one camera. A shot can be anything from a scientist working in a lab to a flock of birds flying overhead. A story is made up of many shots edited to connect one after another.

AUDIO

Ambient Sound

The natural sound of the place where you’re recording, for example, birds chirping in the forest, children laughing in a park or the hum of a piece of machinery

Cross Fade

When changing from one audio source to another, the volume of the first audio piece is lowered while the volume of the new audio is raised.

External Microphone

A microphone attached to the recording device but not built into the device

Room Tone

The sound of the room or other location in which you’re recording an interview—usually about 30 seconds to one minute of “quiet” recorded before or after the interview

CAMERA ANGLES

Dutch Angle

The camera is tilted so the frame isn’t parallel to the horizon

High Angle/Angle Down

The camera is positioned above the subject

Low Angle/Angle Up

The camera is positioned below the subject

Straight On/Eye Level

The camera is located at the subject's eye level

CAMERA LENS

By adjusting the camera's lens, you can alter the perceived magnification, depth of field, perspective and scale of subjects and objects in a shot.

Deep

A shot in which all objects and subjects are seen in the foreground in sharp focus

Normal

Produces an image with normal perspective, like looking at something with the naked eye

Soft Focus

A shot in which the foreground is in sharp focus and the background appears out of focus or unclear. This effect can also be created by taking the shot out of focus or by putting gauze or other material in front of the camera.

Telephoto

Enlarges or magnifies distant planes, making them appear closer to those in the foreground. In a telephoto shot, objects or subjects moving toward the camera appear to take more time than normal.

Wide Angle

Produces a field of view that is wider than the human eye can see, exaggerating the distance between foreground and background. In a wide-angle shot, something moving toward the camera appears to do so very rapidly.

Zoom

A lens whose focus can be adjusted during a shot, including normal, telephoto and wide angle.

CAMERA MOVEMENT

There are different ways to move the camera to achieve different shots or effects.

Crane

A long boom or pole to which the camera is mounted

Panorama (Pan) Shot

The camera rotates from one position on a horizontal plane, i.e., "pan right" or "pan left."

Swish Pan

A very fast panorama that blurs the action

Tilt

The camera rotates vertically from a single position

Traveling Shot

The camera is mounted to an apparatus like a car or track that moves it while filming

IMAGES

Cropping

Digitally editing a picture to remove anything you don't want in the final image

Establishing Image

Picture or video that sets the scene for the story—the first image used to tell the story

Framing

The placement of objects within your camera's field of vision

Marquee Picture

"Ideal" picture taken to represent your story. This is the picture you use with the title to promote your story.

Tripod, Monopod

Accessories that help steady the camera—the tripod has three legs, the monopod has one

LIGHTING

Directional

Use of various light sources, such as overhead, under-lighting or backlighting

High Key

Bright, even light with low contrast and few visible shadows.

Low Key

Low-level light with high contrast, such as in noir and horror films

Three-Point

Lighting projected from three different sources: a key light (a bright, primary light source that casts shadows); a fill light (light that eliminates or softens the shadows made by the key light); and a backlight (lights positioned behind the subjects or objects that outline or highlight their contours).

OPTICAL DEVICES

Fade-In

A shot that begins in darkness and gradually brightens

Fade-Out

A shot that begins in brightness and gradually fades to black

SHOT TYPES

Big Close-up

A shot in which a person's face fills up most of the frame

Close-up

A shot taken very close to the subject (for example, the head, neck and shoulders of a person) so that it fills most of the frame

Establishing Shot

A long shot used at the beginning of a sequence to establish a setting or scene

Extreme Long Shot

A shot in which a person's size is very small compared to the screen

Full Shot

A shot that includes a person's whole body, usually equal to the height of the frame

Medium Close-up

A shot framing a person from mid-chest level

Long Shot

A shot in which a person's whole body is included, but at a distance from the camera

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This resource is a component of the Media-Making Toolkit for Science Education, developed by KQED Education. The Toolkit includes instructions, worksheets and rubrics to assist educators in implementing media-making projects with students.

For a complete listing of the resources in KQED's Media-Making Toolkit, please visit www.kqed.org/education.