

# VIDEO EDITING GUIDELINES

## Log and Label your Shots

You can pay me now or you can pay me later. It will take a little time to log and label all your shots in the beginning, but it will pay off in the long run.

Use a topic and descriptor for each shot, i.e. **Capitol Front, Med, Pan R**

Common Descriptors:

- Wide
- MW (Medium Wide)
- Med (Medium)
- C/U (Close)
- XC (Extreme Close up)
- Pan R
- Pan L
- Tilt Up
- Tilt Down
- Zoom In
- Zoom Out
- Low (Low Angle)
- High (High Angle)
- C/A (Cut Away)
- 2 Shot
- Rev (Reverse Angle)

## Tell a Story With Your Video

The same way you would construct a story with words, construct your video with building blocks to develop the visual story.

- Each Frame is a Word
- Each Shot is a Sentence
- Each Sequence is a Paragraph
- Multiple Sequences make a Chapter

## **Choose the Best Footage**

It may sound a little silly, but be selective.

It is common to shoot more footage than you actually need and choose only the best material for the final edit. Often you will shoot several versions (takes) of a shot and then choose the best one when editing.

If a shot is too shaky, don't use it.

If it's out of focus, don't use it.

## **Develop Your Sequences**

A basic sequence might be:

- Wide Shot
- Medium Shot
- Close Up
- Extreme Close Up
- Cut Away/Transition Shot
- Repeat

But you could just as easily do:

- Medium Shot
- Medium Shot
- Close Up
- Medium Wide Shot
- Extreme Close Up
- Close Up
- Medium Shot
- Wide Shot
- Cut Away/ Transition Shot

Think about continuity when building your story.

## Choose Your Editing Points Wisely

Use cuts from one static image to another. Avoid editing in mid-pan or zoom. Allow the shot to stabilize before cutting to the next shot. Also, if action is taking place within the frame, allow it to finish.

If you must edit mid-motion, use a transition such as a dissolve or wipe.

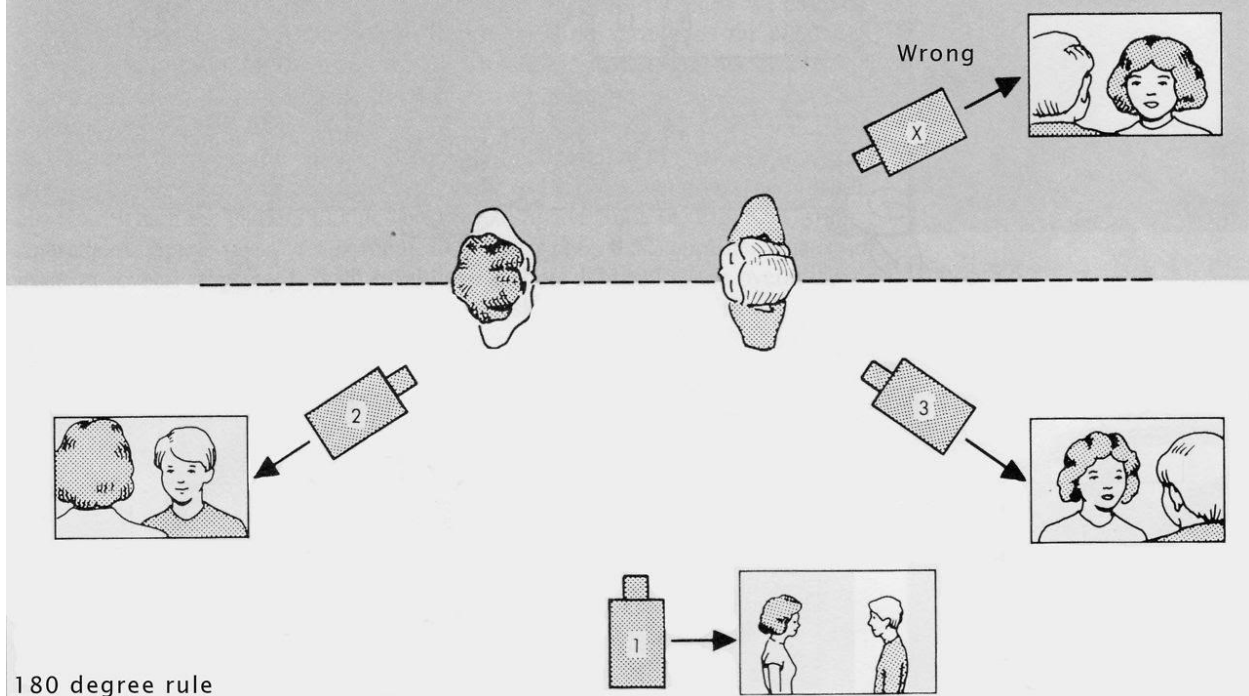
Use natural visual transitions within the frame as edit points... a person leaving or entering the frame, someone crossing in front of the camera, an interesting extreme close up.

## Stay in Your Plane

Maintain the “180 Rule”.

Establish a plane between 2 subjects, on one side of the room, or on one side of your action and maintain that perspective until you transition to another sequence. That way the subjects appear to look at each other... you understand where objects in the room are... and the action continues to flow in the same direction, not ramming into itself.

A conversation scene and the axis of action



## **Avoid Jump Cuts**

A jump cut occurs when you have two consecutive shots with an exact or similar camera set up, but a difference in the subject... or the same subject in 2 different positions. It happens most often when editing interviews when going from one piece of A-Roll to another, or going from Voice Over with the subject to the same subject in an interview.

If you leave the remaining shots side-by-side, the audience will be jarred by the slight repositioning of the subject. Instead, cover the cut with some b-roll, or use a fade.

Avoid cutting from a person in the B-Roll to the same person in an interview (A-Roll). Either use a Cut Away or a Transition (Dissolve or Wipe).

## **Use Nat Sound as a Defining Element**

Make sure your Nat Sound levels under your Voice-Over/Narration is at a good level. Ideally it should be about 20% of your main audio. Less than that and it can't be heard... more than that and it can overwhelm the main audio.

Use Nat Sound Breaks as story telling elements or transitional shots.

## **Music**

Music can add a depth to your video project, but it can also detract from it.

Choose your music wisely for the tone of your video. You may need more than one piece of music within your project.

Avoid music with vocals unless it is there is no Voice-Over/Narration. Keep the levels around 10%-15% under your Voice-Over/Narration.

You can use the music as a transitional tool, bringing it up full volume between V/O segments.

There are several music services/sites that provide Royalty Free tracks designed to be used as background.

## **Back it up**

Back up your video footage. Don't risk losing it. Make backup copies with either DVD's or copy your footage onto an external hard drive. Should anything disastrous happen to your computer you have peace of mind knowing that footage is safely tucked away on your backups.

## **SAVE Frequently**

There's nothing worse than spending hours editing something and then poof, it's gone. Get in the habit of saving your progress a couple of times every hour, especially after you've made significant edits to the project.

When you first start your editing project, you'll need to name your project and give the project file a location to save it on your computer. Name your project something that's relevant to you and again, save frequently!