

# SCREENPLAY TERMINOLOGY



## ANGLE ON

Used to emphasize a specific object in a shot to indicate that a different camera angle is to be made of a previous shot.

## BACK TO / BACK TO SCENE

The camera reverts to its original shot position from another.

## BACKGROUND (BG)

Any action or object(s) which is secondary to the main action and which appears far away to the main action, and which serves as a backdrop for that action. Usually abbreviated in lowercase letters with periods after each letter.

## BEAT

In a screenplay, this term is used to indicate a pause in a character's speech or action. Also refers to actions or incidents within scenes.

## CLOSE SHOT

Camera shot that includes only the head and shoulders of a character. Always typed in capital letters.

## CLOSEUP (C.U.)

Camera shot that closely emphasizes (isolates) a detail in a person, animal or object. Always typed in capital letters and is usually abbreviated.

## CUT / CUT TO

Instantaneous transition (change) from a scene (or a shot, or another person) to another. Always typed in capital letters.

## DOLLY IN / DOLLY OUT

Camera movement towards or away from a subject, involving physical movement of the camera. Always typed in capital letters.

## EXT.

Denotes a shot taken out of doors.

## EXTREME CLOSEUP (E.C.U.)

Camera shot that is extremely close to a subject, used to emphasize some particular detail. Usually typed out in full in capital letters.

## EXTREME LONG SHOT

Camera shot usually taken from a long distance away from the subject. Always typed out in full in capital letters.

## FADE IN / FADE OUT

Smooth, gradual transition from complete blackness to a scene (fade in); gradual transition from a scene to complete blackness (fade out). Always typed out in full in capital letters.

## FOREGROUND (f.g.)

The area of the scene (objects or action) which is closest to the camera. Usually abbreviated in Lowercase letters with periods after each letter.

## FREEZE FRAME

Camera direction (which is really an optical printing, or other, effect) where a single frame is repeated over time to give the illusion that all action has stopped.

## I/E (INT./EXT.)

Refers to shots taken in both an interior and an exterior location. For example, a police chase where we start inside a car and the camera moves outside the window when the character leans out to shoot a gun.

## INSERT

A shot within a scene which calls attention to a specific piece of information, usually an inanimate object.

## INT.

Denotes a shot taken indoors.

## ISOLATE

Tight focus on an object or person.

## JUMP CUT

An exaggerated acceleration of natural action achieved by removing from a scene footage that provides continuity of action, camera position or time. For example, a shot of man starting frame left and walking right who, in the blink of an eye, is next seen almost at frame right would be a jumpcut. He appears to have "jumped" to the right edge.

## LONG SHOT

Camera shot that is taken at a considerable distance from the subject, usually containing a large number of background objects. Always spelled out in capital letters.

## MATCH CUT

An edit in which physical elements or actions in the first shot greatly resemble actions or physical elements in the next shot.

## MEDIUM SHOT (MED. SHOT)

Camera shot often used to describe a shot of character approximately from the waist up.

## MONTAGE

Scene heading which indicates a rapid succession of shots.

## MOVING / MOVING SHOT

Camera shot which follows whatever is being filmed.

## NARRATION

Off-screen commentary, which is heard over the action. Also referred to as a voice over.

## OFFSCREEN (O.S.)

Indicates that the character speaking is not visible in the frame. Always abbreviated in all capital letters and enclosed in parentheses.

## PAN

Camera shot where the camera moves gradually from right to left or left to right, without stopping; to slowly move to another subject or setting without cutting the action.

## POINT OF VIEW (P.O.V.)

Camera position that views a scene from the viewpoint of a particular character. Always abbreviated in capital letters with periods after each letter.

## SUPER (SUPERIMPOSE)

The effect of showing one image over another. Always typed in capital letters.

## TWO-SHOT

Camera shot of two people, usually from the waist up.

## VOICE OVER (V.O.)

A Character Extension in which a character's voice is heard over a scene, as in narration, a tape-recorded voice, or a voice heard over the phone. Always abbreviated in capital letters with periods after each letter and enclosed in parentheses next to the Character Name, capitalized and spelled out in the script.

## WIPE

A wide variety of patterned transitions in which images seem to move (or push) other images off the screen.

## ZOOM IN / ZOOM OUT

A shot where camera optically moves towards the subject to bring it closer to audience. The reverse of it is ZOOM OUT.