

EDITING REVIEW part 1

If we're telling a story, we have a dramatic structure and certain emotive or thematic points of identification within the story which make it meaningful or interesting. We translate this into a series of images, or "picture statements" which combine *mise en scene* (things in the scene, including the actions of characters) and composition to express something. **We edit then, primarily when a new picture statement is required for dramatic/thematic purposes.**

The Basic sequence:

1. **The general principle:** Movement from general to the specific, follow curve of dramatic tension
2. **How it goes:** LS (establishing shot) shows context of action, establishes spatial relationships → MS begins to isolate key subjects from general background, presents key narrative relationships → CU key details, esp. emotion, decisionmaking, motivation... → back to MS for recontextualizations (re-establishing shot) or relaxations in dramatic tension.
 - A. Not necessarily one shot each, depending on pace of dramatic build in scene.
 - B. Not necessarily all the way in to tight CU, depends on intensity of scene.
 - C. Usually tightest CUs in range for a scene reserved only for most important moments
3. **An example:** Our story is about Elvis first recording. First, the context. In what sort of place is this action occurring? LS E arrives at Sun studios, we see that it's a recording studio, not too fancy, real time period, see that it's urban, integrated, cross-cultural... Next how does E fit in to this context: MS he looks around, confused, never been there before, certain awkwardness, we see his clothes are different from the other people around, he's moving differently, looking at things they ignore. What does he make of all this? CU expression of wonder, then a look of hesitation. Why hesitation? MS OTS sign "record yourself" people go in and out of door Elvis stands. Here, we needed to recontextualize a bit, so we pulled back to show a new relationship, not Elvis/general environment, but Elvis/the studio. He comes to a decision. We go back in to CU for his look of resolve, he moves to enter the studio. Cut as he moves back to looser MS, signaling the end of the sequence.

Planning for Editing

1. Shoot to edit! Approach scene as sequence of picture statements. Plan shot breakdown. **Edit on paper or in your head before you shoot.**
PRACTICAL POINT: Despite you're meticulous planning, run each shot long at both ends to give yourself a selection of edit points, so you can change your mind a bit and make adjustments during editing.
2. You must always be able to answer, for yourself:
Why is **THIS** (composition) being shown **NOW** (editing) in terms of what you are trying to express.
Why cut there. Why not tighter or looser framing or shot from another angle? Why show this instead of that?
3. Each edit must be **motivated**, in terms of your communicative goals. I.e. we need always need a conceptual answer to the question, "why change shots." The only good answer is "we need a new shot to make an important new point." No new point, no new shot. (This does not hold for all styles, e.g. rock video, advertising...)
4. Compositions gain meaning based on where they occur in a sequence. In devising each picture statement, you must take into account how what has come before affects the meaning of the shot (e.g. eyelines, inferred comparisons or cause-effect connections) and how it will in turn set up a contextualization for what comes after.

Editing creates space!

- A. Eyeline match. Movement across edit.
 - B. Pictorial continuity
 1. jump cut=consecutive shots of same subject that are too similar, or show a lapse of temporal continuity.
 2. The general rule: For 2 consecutive shots of the same subject: change size and/or angle (30° rule)
 3. Avoid problems by placing another shot between 2 shots of same subject
 - a. shot-reverse shot sequence, b. cut-aways, c. cut-ins.
- PRACTICAL POINT: Cutaways can save your butt. Shoot some even if you don't think you'll need them.
3. Maintain screen direction via the 180° rule; get across the line by tracking, or intermediate shot on the line.
 4. Maintain relative screen position. (subject should stay on same side of frame in succeeding shots)
 5. Match on action: carries the viewer across the cut, enhances flow of action

Editing condenses or expands time.

- A. A screen sequence may be shorter or longer than the action in real life. Shorter to show the essentials, cut out the rest. Longer if a quick event has many details, or needs a build of suspense or emphasis.
- B. Entrances and exits solve continuity problems; just need an "empty" frame on one side of the edit pt.

EDITING REVIEW part 2

Editing shows relationships and creates comparisons, contrasts, juxtapositions.

- A. Graphic match.
 - 1. areas of light and dark, line and shape, volume and depth, movement.
 - 2. Usually comparison/contrast or continuity function, tying otherwise disparate scenes together.
 - 3. Often more stylish than functional (lots on *Miami Vice*)
- B. Movement Contrast
 - 1. Different directions; 2. Moving vs. still
- C. **Parallel action**. Implies narrative, Creates suspense (how will these fit together?)
- D. **Montage**. (or “beyond narrative”)
Defined as editing together a series of shots tied together conceptually rather than purely in terms of pictorial continuity. E.g. montage often involves elements from different settings.
 - 1. sequential montage: cause effect relationships, time lapse
(hand with flowers, hands exchange rings, testing formula on wrist)
 - 2. sectional montage: “explores the complexity of a moment” build details
 - 3. **Associative montage**: evocative connections — ads, rock videos
 - 4. **Intellectual montage**
 - a. Direct Metaphor: Kerensky = Peacock; b. Dialectical Montage: Hungry man+fat man=injustice

Editing establishes tempo and rhythm.

- A. Supports dramatic structure: more edits for hectic moments, longer shots for more leisurely, relaxed moments. (up to a point, editing is secondary here to pace and rhythm of the action. Longer takes of Grant and Hepburn doing *Bringing Up Baby* would still move faster than a version of *The Passenger* with double the cutting pace.)
- B. The content curve
 - 1. in theory, any composition has a range of optimum screen time, bounded by the minimum of time for the viewer to register the information, and the maximum of time one can stay with this without redundancy or boredom (this is obviously affected by camera movement or changes within the mise en scene, which basically create new compositions and reset the content curve.)
 - 2. thus screen time should relate to level of detail, and tends to be different for LS, MS, CU.
 - 3. various effects available by violating content curve
 - a. prolong suspense (occasionally too long)
 - b. create surprise (occasionally too short)
 - c. establish sense of unease, delirium (all too short)
 - d. establish aesthetic distance, and artsy auteurist credentials (all too long) ala Warhol, Jarmusch, Godard etc.
- C. Metric Montage

Alternatives to Continuity Editing

- 1. Graphic or rhythmic elements favored over narrative.
- 2. purposeful violations
 - a. jump cuts (Brechtian critical distance, or just MTV)
 - b. non-diegetic inserts (intellectual montage)
 - c. multi-perspective space
 - d. temporal disorder
 - 1. flashbacks, flashforwards
 - 2. repetition
 - Eisenstein - subjective but still narrative loops
 - 3. asynchronous time
 - e.g. a story told sectionally, all the pieces add up even in jumbled order.
Renaiss, *Catch22*, *Pulp Fiction*...