

Composition for Film and Video

Every frame in every film tells a story: the choice of how we frame the subject tells us about the character's relationship to the environment; the choice of angle tells us about the character's status (weak, powerful, etc.) within the scene; and camera movement creates emotion through the simultaneous manipulation of framing and angle. You can learn the basic in about ten minutes and spend the rest of your life mastering their application!



This [video from Lights Film School](#) demonstrates the variety of framing choices a director can make when deciding how to direct the attention of the audience to the drama of the scene.



Look past the advertising and contest promotions and [this short video from The Slanted Lens](#) will reveal how camera movements combine different framings and angles to create emotion in your scenes.



And if you have the time, please look into [Tony Zhou's ever-expanding video essay series "Every Frame A Painting"](#). Tony is a wonderful and entertaining guide to the art, craft, craft and style of contemporary Hollywood and global cinema.

For the exercise, I divide the students into groups. I like to show the trailer for *Run, Lola, Run* as inspiration, because the goal is for a character to go from one place to another in the impossibly short time of 12 seconds. (At JCU, students go from the Guarini building to Piazza Santa Maria!) They must use camera movement to establish WHY they have to go, but must then use continuity editing to actually move the character from one location to the next.

Lighting Exercise

Lighting your scenes properly can add an incredible amount of production value to your film and it does not have to cost a fortune. Have a look at the following short videos. The first explains how to create a typical interview lighting set-up (with a few extra flourishes) while the second looks at the many ways you can use a reflector and the third explores how to create a versatile lighting kit on a budget.



In this short video Eve Hazleton walks the viewer through how she sets up a typical interview lighting scheme. The principles here are valid for nearly every shoot!



Here's a short video from Norwegian filmmaker "Andrax" that demonstrates how to use cheap 5-in-1 reflectors to achieve cinematic lighting effects. It also discusses how Neutral Density filters affect your ability to select an aperture. (The reflector section begins at around 3:10.)



Here's a quick video from Ryan Connelly of Film Riot that shows how you can build a versatile and VERY useful light kit from bits and pieces you can find at a hardware shop.

The exercise

Each student submits their favourite word in English. You then divide the class into work groups and each one chooses a word. The word becomes a perfume and the students' job is to create an advertisement for this perfume using the most dramatic lighting they can create with the tools at their disposal.