The Five Elements of Documentaries
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- Interviews
- Cutaways
- “Cinema Verite” – Live Action
- Process Footage
- Archive
Frame the person using negative space, have them fill roughly 1/3 of the screen, on the left or right side. Make sure their "Gaze" is into the Negative space.

The Background influences the way the person is perceived.

- look for a background that will reveal something about the subject.
Leave room behind the subject, **never interview someone right in front of a wall.**

Leave 4-15 feet between the subject and the wall, you will notice the person's shadow disappear from the wall.

Watch out for reflections in people's glasses, turn them away from facing the window to solve the problem.
Cutaways: These are "Stand-alone" shots, similar to still photography.

- *Cutaways* can be store signs, close ups of ashtrays, a clock on the wall, people's faces, a candle, a shot of a highway.

- *Treat cutaways like still photographs.*

- squeeze the visual poetry of the shot.
"shots" that evoke something about the truth of the situation you are filming. Hold your shots still...

Record 8-12 seconds for each shot.
Three basic types of Cutaways

- Story Telling Cutaways
- Emotional Cutaways
- General Coverage Cutaways
Images of "Welcome to" signs, exterior shots of houses where interviews were filmed,

Images of main character entering and leaving a building, Wide shots of Cities or towns from on top of a hill or large building.
These cutaways allow the telling of the story without always having to use a narrator..
Emotional Cutaways

- Film shots that have emotional content built into them.
  - For example a solitary man sitting on a park bench...two people walking hand in hand...
  - A close up of a hand while they are praying...
  - Shot of a candle ....incense burning...people hugging...
General Coverage Cutaways

- Fillers

  - very important...

    - For example - if you are **filming a race car contest**...

      - shots of people watching the race...cheering...the hot dog stand...people lined up to get in...Ushers tearing ticket stubs at the entrance (close-ups)...people cooking out in the middle of the raceway...a close up of flags, loudspeakers and race track signage.
The theory of film editing includes the definition of what makes a good visual.

- Theory is that you cannot edit together two wide shots filmed from the same angle, same for medium shots...you need to insert a couple of Close ups between these shots.
filming what ever is going on with the subjects.

- No talking or interaction with subjects ... 

- The moment will come when the character reveals him or herself on film, and the camera is rolling when it occurs.
Cinema Verite or Live Action
Process Footage –

Filming the making of the documentary.

- *Behind The Scenes* footage film of the Documentary itself.

- ...perhaps we just hear your off-screen voice, with a glimpse of the director thru-out the film.

- If shots of the film maker are needed on location, give the camera to a "civilian" for a few minutes.
photographs and/or old videos of subject

- Scanning is the best way to import them into a digital editing system, but you can get a shot with your DV and HDV camera that can later be made into a still frame, and panned and zoomed through (aka Ken Burns style).

- ... footage from local news stations or photographs from newspapers