

The Five Elements of Documentaries



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- ◎ Interviews
- ◎ Cutaways
- ◎ “Cinema Verite” – Live Action
- ◎ Process Footage
- ◎ Archive

Interviews

- **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.



Interviews

- 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

- **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 .



Cutaways

- "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

- ① **Story Telling Cutaways**
- ① **Emotional Cutaways**
- ① **General Coverage Cutaways**

Story Telling - 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.



Story Telling - Cutaways



- **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 candleincense burning...people hugging...



Emotional Cutaways



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.**



CLOSE UPS

- The theory of film editing includes the definition of what makes a good visual
 - **Theory is that you can not 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**



Cinema Verite or Live Action

- **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

- 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 .



Archive

- **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

