Composition for video

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Rule of thirds

This is one of the most basic composition rules. When you look at your subject using Live View on the LCD screen, imagine a noughts and crosses grid over it. The lines and the points at which these lines intersect are the ideal places – the “thirds” – to position your subject, and doing so will generally result in a pleasant and balanced composition. Try moving your camera so your subject appears where two of the lines meet; it doesn’t have to be directly on the intersection but somewhere close to it. Try a couple of different compositions to find the one you like best.



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Establishing shots, medium shots and close-up shots

When shooting video, you want to vary the types of shots for a more interesting feel. There are three types of shots that you'll always see in videos and movies, from big Hollywood productions to commercials and even wedding or occasion videos.

• The establishing shots are the wide shots, allowing the viewer to take in the entire scene and get a feel for what's happening, and they're often the first shots in a scene.
• Medium shots can be of a subject (full length or cropped), or a tighter shot of a scene that doesn't include all of the surroundings that a wide or establishing shot does.
• Close-up shots are tightly cropped, showing fine detail. They can be of a person's face, an action occurring that is important to the storyline of your movie, or simply a tightly cropped shot that shows details of an object.

Where to crop or frame a person

As with still photography, when deciding where to crop for people shots you want to do it in a way that makes the final footage pleasing to the eye. Avoid cropping at major joints – like the waist or knees. For example, if you're showing a person full-length, you don't want to accidentally crop them at the ankles. Likewise, for a medium shot, don't crop a person at the knees. Frame your shot just above your subject's knees. With a tighter shot, don't crop your subject at the wrist, as the viewer will be left wondering where their hands are.

Quick tips

• Leave just a small amount of air space above your subject's head; too much space doesn't good.

• When framing a tight close-up, you can get away with cropping off part of their head, so long as their eyes fall on the top "rule-of-thirds" line.

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