

The 5 Basic Angles

You have learned about the basic shots: close up, mid shot, wide shot, and the extremes. But there are also a set of basic angles. When combined with different shots, your camera choices open up exponentially.

Birds Eye View

The most disorienting of the 5 angles, this involves filming a scene from directly overhead. This angle is seldom used as it often renders the subject matter unrecognizable and abstract. When used correctly however, it can be considered very expressive. It's great for making those filmed seem small and insignificant while giving the audience an 'all powerful' feel implying a sense of destiny or fate.

High Angle

Not nearly as extreme or disorienting as the bird's eye, the high angle is usually shot from a crane or high in a building. They provide a great overview of a scene while avoiding the overwhelming effect often gotten from the bird's eye. Objects being filmed appear reduced in height and movement can seem slowed down and tedious. While the importance of environment is increased, we lose the sense of speed and importance of the subject as it can appear to be swallowed by the landscape.

Eye-Level Shot

Eye level shots are simple and as neutral as possible, allowing the audience to choose their views and opinions of the characters. Realist in nature, some filmmakers will only use eye level shots as they feel the other angles are too manipulative.

Low Angle

Sporting the opposite effect of the high level shot, low angles can make your actors appear taller. This is particularly useful for short actors, or trying to make someone appear more intimidating. Motion appears to be sped up and the sky or ceiling fills the background which can come in handy. The over all scenes may come across as more confused with a low angle – great for building suspense which is why you will often find them in propaganda films (*Battleship Potemkin*) or in scenes where the hero enters to save the day.

Oblique Angle

A tilted angle, this gives the effect that the actors are leaning, almost falling to the side. The most common use for this angle is point-of-view shots as it helps suggest imbalance as though one was drunk. The oblique angles can suggest tension and movement but can be disorienting to the viewer so they are used with rarity. Except of course for violent scenes in which they are key!