

Camera Angles

Not longer after people began representing images, they realized they could manipulate the content in the image by changing the perspective. For example, by taking a picture of a basketball player from the floor, the photographer accentuates the imposing height of a tall person. The effect makes the audience feel a certain way. This is what we mean when we say the camera can create meaning.

High Angle Shot

A shot in which the camera is higher than *the subject* of the picture .



Flat Angle Shot

A shot in which **the camera** is on the same level as *the subject* of the picture.
Also called Eye-level shot.



Low Angle Shot

A shot in which **the camera** is *lower than the subject* of the picture .



Camera-Subject Distance

Camera-subject distance refers to the distance between where the camera is taking the picture and the subject of the picture. Before deciding on the distance it is necessary that students know what the subject of the picture is. You could have long-shot picture of cows grazing on the side of a mountain with a farm scene in the foreground. What is the subject: the cows, the mountains or the farm? Many times it won't make a difference, but sometimes it does. Be aware of it.

Long Shot

The subject of the picture is **surrounded by other material** which give it *context*. If the long shot is of **a person**, you will be able to see his whole body with background or foreground material around him.



Medium Shot

The subject of the picture has some other material around it which gives it further meaning. If the medium shot is of a **person**, you will see *the upper body of the person with background or foreground material around him.*



Close-up Shot

The subject of the picture is the only material in the picture. There is no other material to define the subject. If the close-up is of a **person**, you will see only the face or some other body part.



With all camera-subject shots, there will be "in-between" shots which use a combination of these terms. A "medium-long" is somewhere between a medium or a long shot. A "medium-close" is somewhere between these two types of shots in which, perhaps, some background material is added to a close-up of someone's face.

Foreground and Background Material in Photographs

Knowledge of the correct subject within a picture is important when deciding what is foreground and background material. The subject of a picture is given meaning by other material in the picture. For example, a child in a picture is given meaning by the run-down shack behind him or the three hundred dollar mountain bike in front of him. Through the foreground and background material, the subject of a picture is given context or meaning. The person analysing the picture, of course, must decide whether or not the foreground and background material truly defines the subject.

Foreground Material

Foreground material is anything in the picture that is between the subject of the picture and the viewer of the picture. Or simply, anything in front of the picture's subject.

Background Material

Background material is anything in the picture behind the subject.

Consider the framing of the picture.

How is the subject arranged in relationship with the foreground and background material? How does the foreground and background material define the subject? Our understanding of photographs is essential in media literacy. Facial expressions often give clues as to the subject's awareness of the camera. Photographs in advertisements are *always* either *posed* or *aware* of the camera. All pictures come under one of three categories:

1. Posed

The subject is arranged, set-up; there is no attempt at hiding the fact the subject is totally aware of the presence of the camera. This one gets a little more slippery when the subject seems to indicate the picture is natural but is in fact posing. Most family pictures are posed.

2. Aware

The subject is *aware* of the camera, but tries to create an illusion that the image captured is natural. Political figures and celebrities in the public eye are always aware of the presence of the cameras which affects their actions and words. Advertising attempts to create "reality snapshots" which many people buy into continuously. The media literacy rule here makes it easy: no matter how natural and real a picture looks in a TV or magazine ad, if the image is selling something, it is *posed*.

3. Natural

The subject is genuinely "caught" within a real context. Some news photos and sports shots may fall under this category. Some would argue that athletes are aware of cameras which dictates their behaviour on and off the field during a game; others argue that the presence of a camera would not affect "the game" or a news story such as a protest. But recent history has shown that the presence of the camera adversely affects human behaviour whether it is measurable or not. Just take a video camera out at a family function and see how the behaviour of those present changes when the camera is nearby.