

What is Editing?

Whether you are a critical television viewer or involved in your own production, an awareness of the final phase of work, post-production, offers an important understanding of how video/film is constructed. Once the idea and script have been developed, pre-production planned, and production accomplished, all of the footage will be edited together to create the final product in post-production. Many people consider editing the most creative and enjoyable component of the entire production process. Although the editor can be very creative, she/he is limited by the quality of the pre-production and production work. Not even a talented editor can rescue videotape in which the purpose is poorly thought out, or where the sound and lighting is inadequate.

Of course, editing is not essential to the construction of an effective video message. Sometimes the video makers choose not to edit their footage, allowing footage from a single camera to play in real time. Real time is when a sequence of the final tape is not manipulated or condensed through editing; the taped event is reflected in its original time frame.

The word edit is derived from the French word, *montage*, which means to cut. In editorial terminology, a cut is the point when one image stops and another begins. A montage is a rapid succession of edits compiled to make a sequence. When you edit, you select images and sounds and compile and manipulate them in a chosen order on tape or film. By compiling the order, length, and juxtaposition of a series of images and sounds, the editor creates a system that is ordered by its own logic and rhythms.

The essential activity of editing is the assembling of shots together in a certain order. It is the sequence of shots cut together that moves a film along from beginning to middle to end.

As with all other aspects of film production, there are rules and conventions in the language of editing. The common thread among many of these is the creation of a sense of continuity — linking shots together to portray an event without literally showing the entire event.

Types of Editing

Two of the most common types of editing are *Continuity Editing* and *Montage Editing*.

Continuity Editing orders shots so that actions move seamlessly from one point to the next, keeping a logical and continuous sequence of events in scenes and between scenes. The primary idea behind this kind of editing strategy is to maintain a continuous flow of psychologically motivated connections between each shot and scene. By maintaining these connections it appears as though the film is a contained world all on its own. Even in movies that clearly take place beyond our own lives, the effect of this style of editing is to create a world we might wish to inhabit, even if they may be practically impossible. Continuity editing works by maintaining a clear cause-and-effect relationship between each of the shots of a scene. It is the most familiar style of editing, found in most movies and television programs.

Montage Editing shots are put together so that audiences have to make their own connections between the images. The filmmaker does not lead the viewer down a clear cause-and-effect path. He or she assembles the shots to create an idea for the audience. But the audience has to determine what the idea is.

Let's say a filmmaker want to suggest the feeling of thirst. Because thirst is a feeling rather than an object, the filmmaker may decide to do the following:

- He or she shows a picture of a basketball player bent over in exhaustion, with sweat pouring off his brow.
- The next shot shows an iceberg floating in Baffin Bay on a bright sunny morning.
- In the final shot, the filmmaker shows a bottle of pop dripping with small bits of ice, as though it has just been pulled out of a cooler.

Individually, none of these shots clearly suggest a feeling of thirst, but together they tell a story, a story that we see all the time today in televisions advertisements.

Most fiction films today use a combination of both continuity and montage edits. Usually continuity editing dominates mainstream Hollywood films, while montage editing is used to portray the passage of time or action sequences.

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