

The Techniques of Editing

When individual shots are edited together, filmmakers have a number of editing techniques at their disposal. The importance of these techniques is that they often happen so quickly that we don't notice them at all. Becoming aware of where these techniques are used in movies is important in order to understand the constructed nature of all moving images.

Some of the most common editing techniques include:

- *Simple cuts* — which are breaks from one shot to the next. Cuts carry the continuity of action forward in a straightforward manner, from action to action or place to place.
- *Jump cuts* — which are confusing cuts from one shot to the next that do not follow the obvious rules of cause and effect. These cuts are usually used to disrupt the audience's attention in order to create shock. In Steven Soderbergh's film *The Limey* (1999), jump cuts are used intentionally to suggest the main character's unbalanced state of mind.
- *Fade-downs* — which show the screen fade from an image to a black screen.
- *Fade-ups* — which show the screen fade from black to an image. Both fade-ups and fade-downs are used to suggest the passage of time and generally work to give the audience a chance to take a breath in preparation for the next scene.
- *Dissolves* — which show one image slowly disappear as a new image is introduced. Dissolves are used to indicate the end of one event and the beginning of a new event or scene.
- *Wipes* — which show one part of the screen literally wipe over the rest of the screen. One image disappears as it is replaced by a new image. This kind of edit is not often seen in movies, largely because it looks comic-bookish. For this very reason, wipes were used throughout *Star Wars* to suggest the comic-book origins of the movie.

In the division of responsibilities on a film set, directors supervise and steer the artistic and technical direction of a production and are responsible for a film's final tone and distinctive visual style. Editors make sure that a film's pace, story, and ideas work in the final production.