**Editing principles**

Use Motivated Cuts: Any edit breaks the illusion of continuity. When there is a reason for a different shot, a motivated cut is the least disruptive. Therefore, when a person looks to the one side in a scene, we can cut easily to whatever the actor is supposed to be seeing. When someone is talking about something, viewers expect to see it. This is a B roll.

Cut on Subject Movement: When you editor on motion, a bit of the action is include in both shots. If a woman is getting out of a chair, cut when she is halfway standing in the first shot to the same point in the second shot. The action diverts attention from the edit, making the transition smoother. Because the action distracts viewers, they don’t notice the subtle difference in detail between the two shots. To create a strong illusion of continuity, the shots must be as identical as possible. The relative position of hands, feet, objects, etc. In both shots must be the same. The rate of movement must also match. This is why when shooting you need to capture tight, medium and wide shots from the same camera position, to make this “sequence editing” more logical and matched.

Editors often want to end a shot as an object leaves the frame and cut to the next shot as the object enters, such as when a person walks out of one room and into another or a car roars out of a garage and down the street. In this case, cut the first shot as the object passes beyond the edge of the frame to the second shot about six frames before the object enters the frame. It takes about a fifth of a second for viewers’ eyes to switch from one side of the frame to the other. During this time the viewers’ eye are unfocused, and whatever is taking place on the screen becomes scrambled and the transition is less visible.

Control Shot length: Cut away from a shot the moment the visual statement is complete. Viewers lost interest in a shot very quickly once they understand the basic visual information. In non-linear editing where nothing is lost in editing (shot can be restored) it is interesting to cut shots shorter than you think is reasonable to see what the impact is on the whole of the sequence. This is an excellent way to get more different shots into the sequence.

You have to consider several things in deciding shot length. First, is the information you want to convey. How important is it for viewer to see all the details of a shot? The simpler or more familiar the object, the shorter the shot. A two second WS of the Statue of Liberty is enough for most viewers to recognize what they see. However a 20 second WS of the Forbidden City in China might not be enough.

**Use INSERTS/ B ROLL**

Sometimes these are called “cut-aways” because they show what is happening away from the principal camera action, this adds visual information. B Roll is often used over “talking-head” video to make the moment more interesting or to show what the speaker is discussing. There are other reasons for using B roll:

* Hide edits in the speaker’s audio track
* Show response to what is being said
* Stimulate the pace of the show
* Introduce visual variety
* Illustrates speaker’s comments
* Graphically present information
* Cover sound jump cuts or other visual problems

**Keep it simple**

If you are doubt about a shot, leave it out. TV viewers are used to rapidly moving plots and fast editing. They get bored quickly when a production seems to drag. Slow down the pace for even an instant and today’s viewers will hit the remote control or fast-forward through a video tape.

If a shot lasts longer than 3-4 second consider using more than one shot to convey the information. Shorter, more dramatic shots are more interesting than a long, dreary shot. But remember, if the action is compelling, editing might not be needed to keep viewers watching. For example, footage of a plane crashing into the ground, a building exploding, a winning football goal, or a volcano erupting is so dramatic that editing can detract rather than enhance the visual power.