

The **camera** is the device by which light is directed onto the film stock—the celluloid—or converted to electrical impulses which can be recorded on videotape. The DOP uses the camera to control exposure and composition of the image. Sound is recorded separately.

A **shot** is all that is recorded on film from the point at which the camera begins rolling (when the director calls 'action') until it stops rolling (when the director calls out 'cut'). The types of film this book deals with are made up of thousands of shots placed together through a process of 'editing'.

The choice of lens fitted to the camera determines the **shot size**, or the amount of the scene which is included in the frame. The three main categories of shot sizes are:

- close up: only a small part of an object or person is seen—for example the face
- medium shot: on a human figure, a medium shot includes about half the body, say from the waist up
- long shot (wide shot): this includes the whole human figure and part of the surrounding environment.



Long, medium and close up shots.

The development of the camera has reinforced a form of perspective known as monocular perspective. From this perspective, the image is organised as if the only things which are visible are those which can be seen from one place by one viewer. The idea is that if you were to stand where the painter or photographer stood you would see what they saw. This is now regarded as the 'natural' way to represent the world—although of course such painters as the Cubists challenged this. (Monocular perspective is in contrast to other points of view in forms of visual representation which have existed in other cultures, or in other periods of time. For example, in the traditional Chinese painting the view is organised from the top of the frame to the bottom, as an aid to contemplation.)

Lighting is another element which can be used by the DOP to control the image recorded on the film. Light sources can be varied to create depth (so that the image appears to have three dimensions and seems more realistic), mood (cheerful, scary), and emphasis (the lit object or character will stand out more than objects or people in shadow). In colour film, light sources can alter the colour. In *Hannah and Her Sisters*, for example, the lighting is soft and gives the image a 'warm' appearance suited to a film about family life.

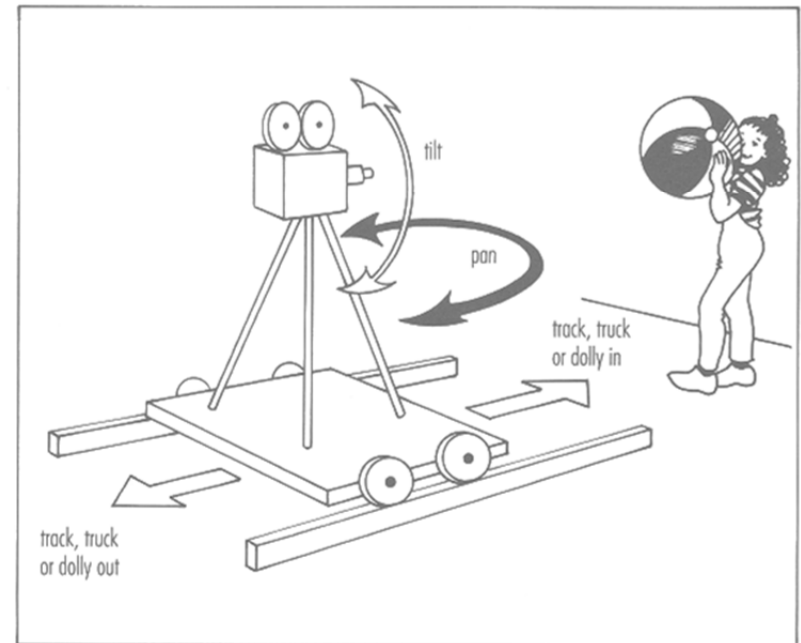
Tracking, panning and tilting.

The **composition** of the shots is the control of all the elements in a single frame of film. The camera seems to place a rectangle around the part of the world which faces it. This frame and the way elements are placed within it is the composition of the shot. Thus, composition is a function of the isolation of a section of the world in front of the camera, the choice of lens, and the placement of items within the frame.

The composition of shots involves **camera movement**. When the camera moves either on its tripod, or when the whole tripod is moved through space, the frame takes in different parts of the set or location. (You can see this if you make a rectangular shaped frame of cardboard, hold it up and view the world through it as you move the frame.) As the camera moves, the way things appear changes, so different meanings are created; in this way, camera movement is important in the creation of meaning in film.

The main camera movements are:

- **zooming**: a means of making objects appear closer or further away by use of a lens which seems to enlarge objects. A zoom can sometimes be used for similar effect to a tracking shot
- **tracking**: the camera moves forward or backward through space, or parallel to the action. This is often done by placing the camera on tracks (sometimes called a 'dolly')
- **panning**: the camera moves from side to side on its tripod—the three-legged stand which keeps the camera steady
- **tilting**: the camera moves upwards or downwards on its tripod to follow moving objects to reveal a scene or object which is too big to fit in one frame.



from *Flicks: Studying Film As Text* by D. Partridge & P. Hughes