A guide to key filmic terms

Location, set design, costume and props
All help to establish and reinforce character and plot. Often referred to as mise en scène.

Location Where the scene is taking place.	This may be an interior or exterior location, or a studio set designed to replicate a location.
Set design How the scene is designed in accordance with the story and themes.	Whether on location or in a studio, decisions will be made about what props, costume, colours and lighting are appropriate for how the scene should look. Also, the set will be designed to establish time and place.
Props Visual aids to enhance storytelling or clues to help develop the plot.	Props include a variety of things so they can be categorised as follows: **Hand props**: items that are handled by the actor. Examples might be a cup of tea or a gun. **Costume props**: items that are handled by the actor associated with their costume. Examples of costume props are hats, bags and umbrellas. **Set props**: items used to dress the set. Examples of set props are furniture, pictures and curtains.

Lighting and Colour
Lighting and colour can be used as visual tools to create meaning, and to create a sense of depth and three-dimensionality. Both help to establish mood and atmosphere and can highlight and define certain objects and characters to code a story.

Types of lighting Different light sources and positioning create different effects.	**Key light**: this is the main source of light that will ensure the subject of the shot is lit, usually from the front. **Back light**: a light source positioned behind the subject. Used without a key light, this creates a silhouette, shrouding the subject in darkness for dramatic effect. **Fill light**: to fill in other parts of the shot with light as appropriate, usually from a side angle. **Source light**: lighting that is visible in the shot, like a window or lamp.

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Contrast range The range of lighting in a shot can be altered for effect.	**High key**: full use of key, back and fill light to create a flat, even range of light with little use of shadows or depth. For example, a Hollywood musical utilises this type of lighting. **Low key**: noticeable contrast between light and dark, shadows and light. Creates depth in a shot. Commonly this will be achieved by using key light and little use of back and fill light. Film Noir is a classic example of this lighting.
Colour temperature Combined with the quality of light in the scene, colour temperature can establish a tone of either warmth or coldness. This is done by using light filters, diffusers and different coloured gels fixed over the camera lens.	Warm colours such as red and amber often provide an image or shot with a sense of warmth, with blues and greys used to create a sense of coldness. The colour temperature will not always be consciously noticed by viewers making it an effective tool for creating mood, atmosphere and to code a story so that it has greater dramatic clarity.
Colour palette The predominant colour scheme. Used for dramatic and emotional effect as well as story and character definition.	Colours are often used for their associations. Darker colours like red and black suggest passion, danger and evil; lighter colours like white suggest purity and innocence, while historical films might use a brown, yellow or sepia colour palette. The colour palette will be emphasised through costume, set design, location, lighting and temperature.

Sound Everything that can be heard in a scene.	

Music
Music is used to create a number of effects, usually emotion, drama and story coding.
	Music can:
	    • determine the mood or genre of a film
	    • build up or release tension
	    • change the emotional or physical status of a character
	    • smooth out transitions in the edit to allow a film to flow/link the scenes together
	    • highlight or code a theme or message

Dialogue The words spoken by the characters within the scene.	Dialogue can be scripted or improvised and is spoken by the characters. Dialogue can be used to establish character definition and relationships, and to provide plot information and back-story.
Voiceover When the story is narrated over the image.	This is when an omniscient narrator or a character is heard talking over the images you are seeing on the screen. Voiceovers are often used to provide back-story and either a subjective or objective perspective of the story as it unfolds.
Diegetic/non-diegetic sound Where the sound comes from.	**Diegetic sound** comes from within the film (the diegesis). It is implied by the action in the scene or storyline. Diegetic sound is most commonly the voices of the characters speaking or the sound made by movements and objects either seen or implied in the film. Another term used for diegetic sound is actual sound. Example of diegetic sound: music heard coming from a radio that can be seen on the screen. **Non-diegetic sound** comes from a source that is not visible to the audience. This is most commonly sound effects, music and voiceover. Another term used for non-diegetic sound is commentary sound. Example of non-diegetic sound: music played over a scene for effect that does not have a source within the film.

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Editing
The changing shots within a scene. The speed at which this happens will help to establish tone and mood. For instance, a screen car chase might feature fast-paced editing, with short takes and frequent cutting to convey drama and excitement. A countryside picnic scene, on the other hand, might be slow-paced, featuring long takes and infrequent cutting, to establish a relaxed mood.

Continuity editing	**Shot/reverse shot:** a shot is immediately reversed to give the effect of continuous, linear
The matching of shots to create the illusion of linear time and space. This allows the action to flow smoothly and seamlessly so that the viewer will not notice the transition between shots.	action. Example: if there is a shot of character one talking to someone off-screen, the shot is then reversed to show character two talking to someone off-screen. Because the shots are reversed they are standing in opposite positions creating the illusion that the two characters are having a conversation. **180-degree rule (or, crossing the line):** the camera must always film on the same 180 degree 'axis of action' to allow for continuity. Example: If a footballer is running towards his goal to the right and then the shot changes and 'crosses the line' to film from the opposite angle, he is now seen running to the left. This makes the viewer confused as to which way he is actually running.

Non-continuity editing When shots are mismatched to disrupt linear time and space. This will often confuse or disturb the illusion of 'reality' on the screen by drawing attention to the process of cutting.	**Jump cut:** two different camera angles, or shots, of the same subject edited together. The subject is not in the same position as in the previous shot, so they appear to have jumped. This can disrupt linear time, as it will appear like there is a period of time missing between the two shots. **Cross-cutting:** cutting between various shots of action in different settings/locations, creating the effect that they are happening at the same time. This is often used to create suspense. **Montage:** shots from a variety of different locations, settings, or time periods in the film, edited into one short sequence. A common use of montage is to convey a passage of time, for example, to show a character growing older, or to summarise a sequence of events during a flashback. **Flashback/forward:** a shot or scene inserted into the narrative that takes the viewer out of the current point in film time, and into another. Often used to recount events, fill in back-story, or represent events that are yet to come in the narrative.
Other cut types These are various cutting techniques, often signalling the end of one scene and the beginning of the next.	**Dissolve:** a gradual scene transition where the end of one shot overlaps with the beginning of the next shot. **Wipe:** a line or bar visible on screen that pushes away the current shot and pulls in the next shot. **Fade shots:** Often referred to as fade-ins or fade-outs. A fade-in starts from a black screen, as the shot gradually gets lighter. A fade-out ends with the screen gradually fading to black.

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Camera Technique
How the camera is positioned and how each shot is composed and set up.

Position and Framing How the camera is positioned in relation to the subject or action. Framing is the process of deciding what will be seen within the frame.	**Long shots:** used to show background and establish space and setting. **Mid shots:** used to show the torso and some background. Often used in scenes of conversation. **Close-ups:** show the head and shoulders, and allows the audience to engage emotionally with a character. Used to convey expression or draw attention to an object. **Point-of-view:** the camera allows us to adopt a character's viewpoint (see what they are seeing) and thus sympathise with their perspective of events. **Establishing shots:** often the first shot you see in a film or a new scene. These are often long shots or wide-angled to establish to the audience the location and setting. **Aerial shots:** are extreme high angle shots often filmed from a helicopter or a crane. These not only establish the location and surroundings but can also give the effect of the character being small and vulnerable.
Movement The camera's movement can be used to follow the action or convey a mood or viewpoint.	**Panning:** the camera moves slowly across from side to side on a fixed axis. **Tracking shots:** when the camera follows the action, moving along tracks laid for that purpose, often pulling backwards from a scene. **Tilt shots:** the camera moves up and down from a fixed axis. **Crane shots:** the camera, mounted on a crane, moves around at a distance above ground level. **Hand-held:** the camera is not positioned on a tripod or a fixed axis. The 'shaky' nature of this is often used to suggest greater authenticity, or to convey realism.

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Angle	**Low angle:** when the camera is anywhere below the eye line and is positioned pointing upwards. This is commonly used to convey a sense of inferiority from the camera's perspective, making the subject appear more powerful.
	High angle: when the camera is positioned above the eye line and is pointing downwards at the subject. In contrast, this gives a superior perspective with the subject seeming smaller or less powerful.
	Canted angle: where the camera is positioned so it is not level with the horizon. Canted shots are used to create an effect of uneasiness with the viewers and to also allow the tension to build.

Animation and Visual Effects	
Moving images created from sequences made up of 2D or 3D artwork, computer graphics or models. Many films now feature a combination of both animation and live action.	
Hand-drawn animation	Traditional animation created from thousands of still drawings put together in sequence to form moving images.
Stop motion	Photographing real-life objects, with incremental changes made from one frame to the next to create the illusion of movement.
Computer generated imaging (CGI)	The art of creating moving images with the use of computer technology. CGI can be used to create isolated effects, characters or backgrounds within a film; it can also be used to create a film in its entirety.
	CGI includes **motion capture**, a technique where actors wear specially designed suits that capture their movements and facial expression. This 'animation data' is then used as the basis for creating and animating a computer-generated model.
Rotoscope	Animators trace over live-action movement, frame by frame, resulting in a hand-drawn effect, sometimes with the original film footage visible behind.