

## BASIC EDITING TIPS

This is a group of simple 'rules of thumb' for editing. These rules are guides - not iron-clad laws. Sometimes you will need to break them.

**KNOW WHEN A SHOT STARTS OR STOPS** - Every shot has a beginning and an end. Once you have selected a clip to work with, look at it with a careful eye to determine exactly where the in and out points go. For instance, if there is a nice shot with a camera wobble, cut out before the wobble. If the shot is a zoom in, cut after the zoom is finished. You will have another chance to adjust the shot later.

**ESTABLISH A RHYTHM** - There is a way in which editing is like music. The shots don't need to be the same length, but if you have a series of shots, look at the durations. Typically you might have two that are similar and then change up. A sequence that goes between quite long and quite short shots will feel awkward. A very short shot could be a second, or thirty frames.

**THINK ABOUT THE SPACE** that you are creating in a series of shots. Do you give your viewers a sense of 'being somewhere.' When you go from sequence to sequence, place extra value on the 'transition shot' that takes you out of a scene, or into the next one.

**MATCH CUTTING** - Match cuts are the bread and butter of editing. This is the illusion of continuous action. The classic match cut is the shot of someone opening a door. The follow up is a shot from the other side of the door carefully timed so that the door's movement looks continuous. To get a match cut right means adjustments of a single frame one way or the other.

**AVOID EXTREMES OF FOCAL LENGTH ON CUTS** - Part of the key to editing is to establish a sense of space; this means not getting the viewer seasick. (unless that's the point of the scene!) Avoid going from a very long shot (LS) to a very close one (XCU). In general, long to medium, medium to close, etc.

Typically, avoid a **JUMP CUT**, going from one shot to another almost identical one. Experiment and you will find that this means don't cut from a CU on someone to another CU of the same person. Instead, cut to a medium shot (MS) or a different angle (over 30 degrees).

**DON'T CUT FROM MOTION TO STATIC or STATIC TO MOTION** - If you try to cut a PAN before the camera has stopped, you will see the problem.

**L CUT** - An L-cut is one where the sound of the incoming shot starts before the picture, or occasionally, vice versa. L cuts are the beginning of a sophisticated approach to editing. They are very good for things like introducing a new speaker in a scene, or transitioning from one scene to another, giving a smooth and natural flavor to the cut.

**WHEN IN DOUBT, TAKE IT OUT** - Ideally, a finished film has only necessary images in it. If you think something is superfluous, your audience will probably agree.