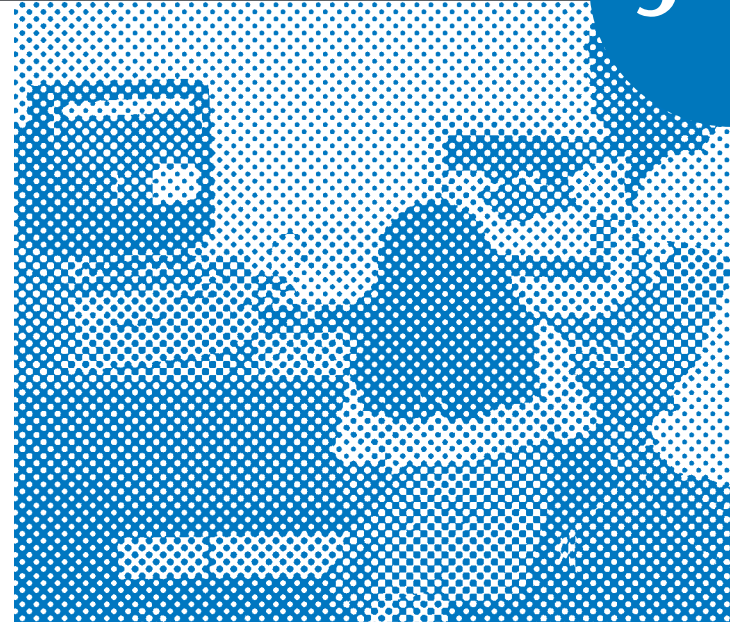


“ I wanted to be a still photographer but, at college, my editing teacher gave an assignment to tell a story using only pictures cut out of magazines using no words. I’ve been trying to do that in film ever since. The closest I’ve come was editing “All That Jazz.”

—Alan Heim
Editor, Hair

Editing

- Putting the Puzzle Together
- Explore: Creating an Editing Storyboard
- Technical Aspects of Video Editing



Putting the Puzzle Together

What does it mean to edit a movie?

A Movie to Watch

Babe, directed by Chris Noonan.

Notice how the combination of special effects, the use of real animals, animatronics (mechanical) doubles, and computer technology are seamless and convincing.



Photo: Jim Townley

Babe, the Gallant Pig

Even pigs can dream in the heartwarming comedy starring James Cromwell as Farmer Hoggett and Babe as himself.

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There is a scene, about fifteen minutes into *Star Wars*, when R2D2 is alone. He is looking for Obi-Wan Kenobi on Luke Skywalker's planet. R2D2 is walking alone down a dark, scary road. The shot shows R2D2 rolling along, then quick glimpses of eyes peering out from behind rocks. The audience cannot really see who — or what — is looking out at R2D2, but the quick shots let the viewer know that something bad is probably going to happen.

It is the editing that helps build the suspense of that scene, and it is the editor, working under the guidance of the director, who decides:

- what shots to use.
- how to put the shots together.
- how long to hold each shot before cutting to the next one.

Good editing involves selecting shots and combining them to convey the director's vision. Poor editing makes the movie seem labored and boring.

In this way, the jobs of the editor and director are very collaborative, very close — each giving feedback and helping the other. Some directors work closely with editors while shooting a movie. The director sometimes consults with the editor on what shots she or he should shoot.

Advice from
Mark Goldblatt, ACE,
Editor, Armageddon

“ The job of the film editor is to take all the raw film footage and sound that is shot for a motion picture and to shape it and mold it into a finished film. We usually do this using the shooting script as a guide, and we work very closely with the director who, after all, interpreted this script in the first place. Our job is to actualize the vision and intentions of the director, allow the film’s story to unfold clearly, and hopefully to keep the audience interested! In other words, our job is to make the best motion picture possible with the available footage.

In editing, we might partially or even totally alter the structure of the film. The ending might become the beginning, the beginning could become the end, we might tell the entire story as a flashback, perhaps from the point of view of a particular character. We could add a voice-over narration, write entirely new lines of dialogue to explain unclear plot points (and perhaps play them over characters’ backs), play scenes in slow motion or fast motion or backwards or whatever might seem appropriate. Ironically, in editing, I personally believe that the simplest, least complex form of storytelling is generally the way to go, but sometimes, an editor will have to use every trick in the book to make the best possible film.”

The editing process can completely change the meaning of the story.

Perhaps you have these shots:

- A** Boy looking out a window onto the street; he looks happy
- B** Same boy looking out a window — this time looking sad
- C** Shot of kids arguing on the street
- D** Girl sitting on her porch reading, not far from the arguing kids

If the editor left these shots in order, it would seem that the boy is witnessing an upsetting event. Something bad is happening, or about to happen, and the girl reading might be involved.

But if the shots are edited into the following order, the meaning is completely different:

- B** Boy looking out a window onto the street, looking sad
- D** Girl sitting on her porch reading
- A** Boy looking out a window onto the street; he looks happy

With this editing arrangement, the boy is sad for some reason, but when he sees the girl, it makes him happy. The viewer would infer that he likes her — a completely different story



EXPLORE:

Take the four shots and edit them
in another sequence:

1st

2nd

3rd

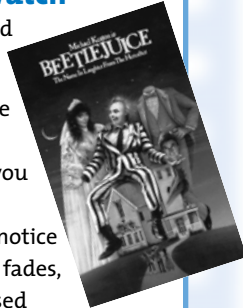
4th

What story does your scene tell?

A Movie to Watch

Beetlejuice, directed by Tim Burton.

Hopefully, you have seen this comedy before, but when you watch it this time, train your eyes to notice whether dissolves, fades, or cutaways are used between shots.



Beetlejuice

A still red-blooded spirit, Betelgeuse (Michael Keaton) is enamored by a magician's assistant whose trick has failed, as he sits in the "afterlife waiting room."

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Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

A movie in its raw form is like a jigsaw puzzle. You have individual scenes, music, sound effects, and maybe some visual effects. All these elements need to be put together to make a complete picture, a complete movie. That is the editor's job.

Editing is one of the most critical parts of making a movie. You often do *not* notice good editing, all you know is you have been drawn into the movie. The story moves along quickly, with plenty of surprises. When the editing is not done well, the movie tends to be boring or confusing.

The editor of a full-length movie makes thousands of decisions, each one building on the one that came before it. The editor, with the help of the director, not only decides *which scenes* to use, she or he decides *how many* of them to use, the *length* of each, and their *order*.

1. **Editors have to figure out which scenes to include, and which ones to leave out of the final cut.**

The **final cut** is the finished movie. Parts of scenes, or even entire scenes, may be edited out (cut) if the director and/or the editor do

not think they are necessary to tell the story — or, if the movie is longer than the director intended.

The director and the editor may decide there is a scene missing; in which case, the director, cast, and crew will try to go back and shoot an extra shot, called a **pick-up shot**, or **pick-up scene**, to fill in the gap.

2. **Editors have to convey the passage of time.**

Movies almost never happen in **real time**. You rarely see a two-hour movie about a story that takes place in exactly two hours. Most movies take place in longer stretches of time, which require **compressing time**. *Jurassic Park* takes place over a few days. *Forrest Gump* includes forty years in a man's life. *Planet of the Apes* takes place over hundreds of years. But all of these films were shot and edited to be 2-3 hours in length.

Compressing time is one of the most important aspects of editing.

3. Editors clean up mistakes.

Editors clean up mistakes that occur during the shoot, such as **sound glitches** — sounds that were recorded, but not wanted. You might have a great **take** (a **take** is a shot) visually, but the sound is unacceptable. Perhaps a jet flew by during the middle of the dialogue, and you can't hear what the hero is saying. The editor might fix the problem in a number of ways.

Depending on the type and the ability of his specific editing equipment, the editor might take the dialogue from another take, and lay it over the scene. Or, he/she might use the take without sound, and put music over it instead. Another option would be to use a completely different take. One of the wonderful aspects about editing: there is rarely just one way to solve a problem or to create a desired effect.

When editors create a scene, they often talk about it as “building” a scene. Because they are building it, by adding layers of picture, natural sound, music, and special effects.

The best way to start learning about editing is to rent movies you really admire and study them. Try watching them with the sound off. Notice the length of the shots, the order, and the starting and ending points of each shot.

Different Types of Edits

A *change*, from one shot to another, is called an **edit**.

There are many different types of edits and each one works in different ways to effect the pacing of the story. The trick is to figure out which type of edit, in each given scene, will best tell the story.

A **cut** is when you go from one shot to another with nothing in between.

Cuts can be sudden or smooth, depending on what picture you are cutting *from*, and what picture you are cutting *to*. Cutting from a shot of a saw sawing away at a tree to the tree hitting the ground is smooth, because the viewer would expect that to happen. Cutting from a shot of a saw cutting a tree to a man

biting into a burger is more sudden or abrupt, because it is unexpected. *Unexpected* may be exactly what you want.

The *length* of an edit can make a big difference in the telling of a story.

To create excitement, editors often use **quick cuts**, which are a series of short shots strung together. Think of *Star Wars* again. In the space battle where Luke Skywalker destroyed the Death Star, there were literally hundreds of shots, each no more than a second long. On the other hand, if you were editing a love scene, you may want to use fewer and longer shots to enhance the romantic feeling. Experiment to see what feelings the different kinds of edits create.

Other commonly used edits are:

- **fades** — when a scene slowly goes black for a moment, before another scene comes up
- **dissolves** — where one scene fades *in* while another is fading *out*

Most video cameras have a dissolve feature built in, and these edits can be easily done in-camera while filming. Dissolves can also be used to change the mood of a movie or to provide a transition between two very different scenes.

- A **cutaway** is when an editor cuts away from the main scene to something that somehow relates to the scene.

Cutaways can emphasize particular points of the story. For instance, if a character is nervous about taking a test, you might cut away to a close-up of her foot tapping, or teeth marks on her pencil, and then go back to the face of the character.

Cutaways are also used to compress time. If you want to keep the beginning and end of your scene, but get rid of six boring seconds in the middle, use a quick cutaway.

For example, imagine a scene where a spy, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, walks into an airport men's room, and comes out dressed as a priest. The editor could use a shot of the spy going into the bathroom, cut away to a clock on the wall, and then cut back to the spy walking out of the men's room disguised as a priest. By using the cutaway, the editor has spared the audience from having to see him go into the stall, take off his clothes, put on his cassock, and throw the old clothes in the trash. Cutaways give you more options.

Think of another cutaway shot that could have been used in the example we just gave you?

See how cutaways can be used to compress time?





EXPLORE:

editing cuts

You can watch any movie for the next exercise, but pick one you have seen before to help you focus more on the editing cuts, and less on the story line.

Movie:

Find two examples for each type of edit cut. Describe the initial scene, and the scene that followed. You will need to use your pause button a lot.

Fade

1. Scene:

Fades to:

2. Scene:

Fades to:

Dissolve

1. Scene:

Dissolves to:

2. Scene:

Dissolves to:

Cutaway

1. Scene:

Cutaway to:

2. Scene

Cutaway to:



EXPLORE: creating an editing storyboard

You are the editor of a scene.

The scene has been shot to show:

- A student, your age, is walking down the street, going home after school.
- A clown leaps out from a nearby bush and tries to grab the student.
- The student screams and the clown runs away.

Your shots to edit with the director:

- Close-up shots, medium shots, and establishing shots of the student
- Close-up shots, medium shots, and establishing shots of the clown
- One extreme long shot of the entire scene from start to finish, from the perspective of a nearby second-story window
- A close-up shot of a nearby tree, swaying in the wind (a cutaway shot)

Before you start using editing equipment, it is helpful practice to edit on paper, in storyboard form.

On the following few pages you will find two storyboard grids.

Create two different sequences of 6-12 shots each.

Using a pencil, draw (you can use stick figures here) how you would edit this scene using the shots above.

Before you get started, think about these questions:

- Do you want the scene to be scary, funny, really tense, exciting, or all of these?
- Do you want to show the entire scene from far away, using the extreme long shots? What sort of feeling would those shots give your audience?
- Do you want to *only* show the student and his/her terror, and not show the clown at all, leaving the audience wondering why the student is so scared?
- Do you want to show the clown hiding in the bushes before he jumps out?

The thing to remember is:

anything is possible.

There is no real right or wrong way to edit.

Editing Storyboard

Name of your first scene:

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |



Explore:

Another editing storyboard

Do it again, using the same shots in a completely different way. If last time you used mostly medium shots, this time use mostly close-ups. Did you use the tree shot last time? If not, try it here. The goal is to see how different cuttings — how putting different shots together in different ways — make the whole mood and sense of the scene feel different.

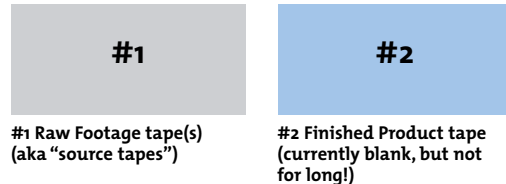
| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
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| | | | |

Technical Aspects of Video Editing *

What follows is an explanation and demonstration of the basic concept of analog editing. Once you understand the basic concepts, you can take this information with you to any analog or digital editing system. The buttons on the machine may differ from system to system, however, the concepts will remain the same.

The Basic Concept of Editing onto a Blank Tape

Step One You need two tapes (one with raw footage, one blank)



One tape contains your raw footage (video you have collected, but have not edited yet). The second tape is blank. You may have more than one tape with raw footage on it, but for this example, we'll just use one raw footage tape.

Step Two After you have logged your tape (see Video Log), select your video clips and decide what order you want them to appear on the Finished Product tape.

Suppose we gathered video of the Golden Gate Bridge, and now we want to edit it. We only gathered four shots (it got too foggy for more). We look at the tape and log what we have.

| Video Log | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Video Logged: Golden Gate Bridge | | | |
| Logged By: Susan Allen Date: September 15, 1997 | | | |
| Counter (WHEN and how long) | Description of Video (WHAT) | Description of Audio (HOW it sounds) | # (WHERE: put clips in order) |
| 0:30 (10 seconds) | Medium shot of Chris and Sarah talking | Can hear their conversation. Talking about how cold it is | 2 |
| 0:40 (15 seconds) | Wide shot of a group of people walking across the Golden Gate Bridge. | General sounds of cars, people talking, birds | 1 |
| 0:55 (18 seconds) | Close-up shot of Sarah shivering | Can hear Sarah saying "brrrr" | 3 |
| 1:13 (10 seconds) | Super-close up of Chris joking around. (but this image is out of focus — don't use) | Can hear laughter and talking clearly, cars and waves in the background | X |

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On the tape they look like this:



In analog editing, we must put the shots down in the order we want them to appear (in digital editing, you can put the shots down in any order, and then move them around if you decide you want to put them in another spot.) Immediately, we know we can't use Shot #4, because it's really out of focus. The other three shots are fine. We decide we want to put Shot #2 first when we edit onto the blank tape, because it establishes the setting. People will see that and immediately know where they are and have an idea of what's going on. We'll put Shot #1 next, because we want to get a closer look at the people on the bridge. Then we'll put Shot #3, because it gives us an even better idea of what it is like to be on the bridge and what the people are doing.

So our final product will look like this:

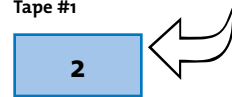


Step Three Copy the clips you selected, in the order you want them to appear, onto the blank Finished Product Tape. (Tape #2)

We've decided to start with Shot #2 because it's our best starting shot — it's framed well, in focus, and it shows the whole scene. We'll put Shot #2 near the beginning of Tape #2, copying it from Tape #1 to Tape #2.



Tape #1

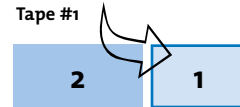


Tape #2

Then we want to copy Shot #1 from Source Tape/Tape #1, and place it after Shot #2, which is already on the Finished Product Tape/Tape #2.



Tape #1



Tape #2

Then we want to copy Shot #3 from Tape #1, and place it after Shot #1 which is already on Tape #2



Tape #1



Tape #2

Since Shot #4 is out of focus, we won't use that shot at all.



Tape #1

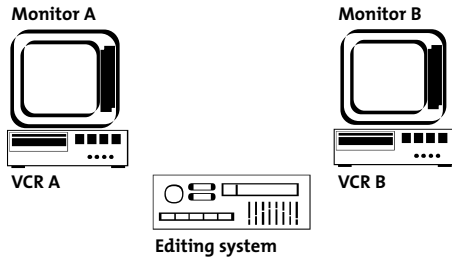


Tape #2

Tape #2 — this is what our brief finished product looks like!

What you've just read over is the basic concept of editing. The concept remains the same, no matter what type of machines you use. Now that we have a basic understanding of how to edit, here is a bit more detail.

Using an Editing System The Equipment

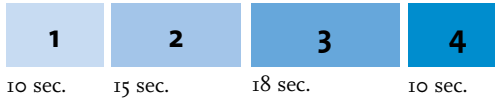


The Editing System is connected to both VCRs by cables. You can control both VCRs using the buttons on this system. It's like a remote control for your TV, only with some extra features.

Using an Editing System Setting Your In and Out Points

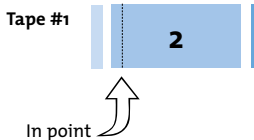
On the raw footage tape/Tape #1, determine the length of the shot

In the example up above, we started with Shot #2. When we copied it from Tape #1 to Tape #2, we had to decide exactly what amount of that shot we wanted based on our purposes. We may have 10 seconds of that shot, but do we want to use all of it? How long will we want to see that clip before we go to the next one?



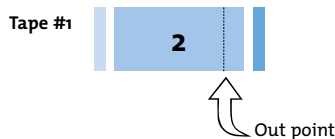
Set your In Point on your raw footage tape

Let's say we decide to use 5 seconds of Shot #2 to open the video. And we want to start a few seconds into that shot. Now we know exactly where we want the shot to start, so we select our In Point (or it may be called Inset or Insert Point). We select this spot by pausing at the exact spot where we want it to start, and pressing "Inset" or "In Point."



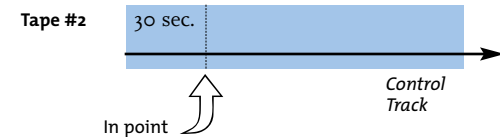
Set your Out Point on your raw footage tape

Now fast forward or play the tape until you arrive at the place you want the shot to end. Press "pause." Press "Outset" or "Out Point." Now the editing system knows the length (5 seconds), and where to start and stop copying.



On the blank tape/Tape #2, Set your In Point.

Now you need to tell the editing system where to begin copying onto the second tape. Since the tape is blank, your In Point doesn't have to be exact. (It actually isn't entirely blank, it has Control Track on it. See the next page for a definition of what Control Track is and how to put it on your tape. It's easy!) As a general rule, set your In Point about 30 seconds into the tape (to make sure the tape has the proper tension, and you have enough space for pre-roll). You do not need to set an Out Point on this tape since the editing system will stop when it reaches the end of the section of Tape #1 you've instructed it to copy.





Tips from the Experts

- Put “Control Track” on the second tape. This enables you to Insert edit onto a new tape. Control track is a series of magnetic impulses that allow new signals to be added on top of it. The magnetic impulses are like glue that hold down the new images. You “black” a tape, or lay down control track, by putting your blank tape/Tape #2 in a VCR or camera and pressing “Record.” This will record “black” or “control track” onto this tape. You may want to do this ahead of time. Make sure you put control track over the entire tape.
- Label your tapes as soon as possible, either just as you take off the cellophane wrapper, or just as you take it out of the camera.
- Before you begin to edit, rewind your tape to the beginning, then reset the counter to zero. Now, as you edit, you know exactly how far you are into the tape. Also, when you log your tape, you can refer to the counter to find your shots.

Use Insert Editing

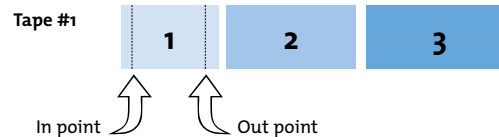
There are two ways to edit analog video: assemble edit and insert edit (see the Glossary for definitions). We want to use insert editing when we edit pieces of video onto another tape. Assemble editing is often used for copying an entire tape onto another one, with no editing. You select your editing method by pushing the appropriately labeled button “Insert” or “Assemble” on your editing system after you have selected your In and Out Points.

Edit

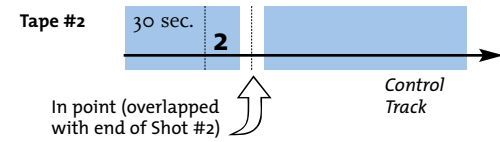
Press “Edit” and the editing system will copy Shot #2 from your raw footage tape to your blank tape/ Tape #2.

Repeat this process for each edit.

So, for the next edit...to edit Shot #1 onto the second tape, we will select our In Point and Out Point on Shot #1.



Then select the In Point on Tape #2. Start this point a few frames (or half a second) before Shot #2 ends. There needs to be some overlap of video, otherwise you’ll see a gap or static between video shots.



Now that you have all the In and Out Points selected, select the Insert method of editing by pressing “Insert” (you may not need to press this again — it depends on the editing system’s memory), and then press “Edit.”