

Common Script Terms

AERIAL SHOT - Used to give the effect of a shot taken from an airplane. The shot would show more area than one taken from a crane shot.

b.g. - Background. Any activity or sound in a scene that is secondary or subordinate to the main action and which serves as a backdrop for that action. Always abbreviated in lower case with period after each letter.

CLOSE UP (C.U.) - A camera shot that closely examines and/or emphasizes some detail either on a person or an inanimate object. Always spelled out and capitalized.

DISSOLVE - A scene transition used to indicate that the scene should gradually fade away.

DOLLY - A camera cue used in direction instructing the camera to move along with the subjects of the scene. This is achieved by either a hand-held camera or a camera on a moving platform. Always capitalized.

ELLIPSIS - Series of three periods used to signify a pause or a change in thought sequence (...). Use of ellipsis often indicates that a word or words have been left out because they are "understood".

EXT. (EXTERIOR) - Indicates a particular scene will be shot outside. Used in scene headings and always abbreviated in capital letters with a period.

FADE OUT - Transition used at the end of an act and at the end of a film. Occasionally but rarely appears in the middle of a script. The scene gradually darkens to black. Always spelled out, capitalized with a period.

f.g. (Foreground) - Activities taking place nearest the viewer, in perspective. Always abbreviated in lower case with periods after each letter.

FREEZE FRAME - Works as a camera direction rather than an actual scene ending or transition. It means that a picture stops moving and becomes a still photograph.

INSERT - A scene involving an inanimate object which gives us a certain piece of information or calls our attention to a specific fact. The insert may be a watch telling the time, a calendar, a newspaper headline, etc.

INT. (Interior) - Indicates that a particular scene will be shot inside. Used in scene headings, always abbreviated in capital letters with a period.

LONG SHOT (L.S.) - Camera shot off in the distance usually includes considerable background detail. Must be spelled out in capital letters.

MED. SHOT (Medium Shot) - The only camera angle that is abbreviated, this is a shot of usually one or two characters from the waist up. Always capitalized.

MONTAGE - The concept of using two or more related subjects on the screen at the same time blended in a montage effect.

MOVING or MOVING SHOT- Camera cue used in scene action to indicate that the camera should move with what is being filmed.

O.S. (Off Screen) - Usually off screen situation where the character is talking from another room in a house. Stated as (O.S.) next to the character name and o.s. in scene action.

PAN - Camera turns or spins slowly from left to right or vice versa. Always used spelled out and in capital letters.

P.O.V. (Point of View) - Viewpoint of a character or characters. We, the audience, see something through a character's eyes, as he or she sees it. Always capitalized and abbreviated with periods after each letter.

SERIES OF SHOTS - Series of short action sequences which serve to move the audience quickly through time, experience, stream of consciousness, etc.

SUPER (Superimpose) - Effect is one of showing one thing over another in the same shot. More often than not, the titles are "supered" over the beginning sequences of a film.

VOICE OVER (V.O.) - Indicates a mechanical transmission of a character's voice heard over an instrument such as a telephone or tape recorder. Always capitalized and spelled out in direction. Always capitalized and abbreviated in parenthesis next to the character name.

ZOOM - The camera lens moves forward or back on a person or object. Always spelled out in capital letters.