

Video Style

A camcorder can be very easy to use but one of the biggest problems in video is knowing how to use the camera properly and effectively. The goal of most videos is to preserve a moment in time. The problem occurs when that moment in time is played back on your television set for your friends and the camera work is so bad that everyone gets seasick from watching it. This sounds very funny but the fact is that it happens all of the time. People can run a camera but not in an effective manner. So how is that problem resolved? Learning video style.

Good video style is something that is learned through practice. If you find something that looks good, remember it, and apply it in the future. Eventually you will have a collection of good shots that, when put together, will display good video style.

There are a few hints though that will help cut down on your experimentation and discovery time. Varying the types of shots and angles that are used in a video can turn an ordinary video into an extraordinary production. So take the time to learn the next few sections.

Types of Angles

There are three types of angles used in video: High, Normal, and Low. The High Angle is shot from above the subject with the camera looking down. The effect of this angle is that people or objects appear small. There is a feeling of dominance and a sense of power from the point of view of the camera.

The Normal Angle is the angle of everyday viewing. The camera is positioned at eye level and shoots exactly what a person would see. This angle is very comfortable since it is the one that all of us are accustomed to. Most shots in a video are from this angle.

The Low Angle is a very dramatic effect when used properly. It makes objects look larger than life. The object or person in the view of the camera is being dominated.

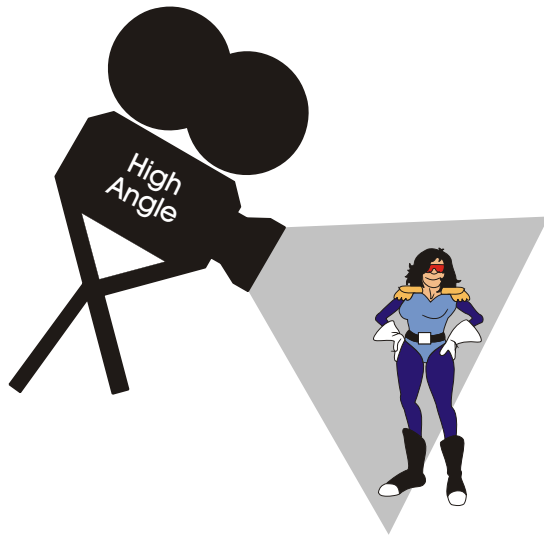
Experiment with the different types of angles to see what types of emotions they convey. Do not be afraid to change the angle of everyday viewing. Sometimes it is just too boring. A good hint to remember is this: look through the viewfinder like a photographer would. Set up your shots keeping in mind not only your subject but what is contained in the background.

Production NOTES

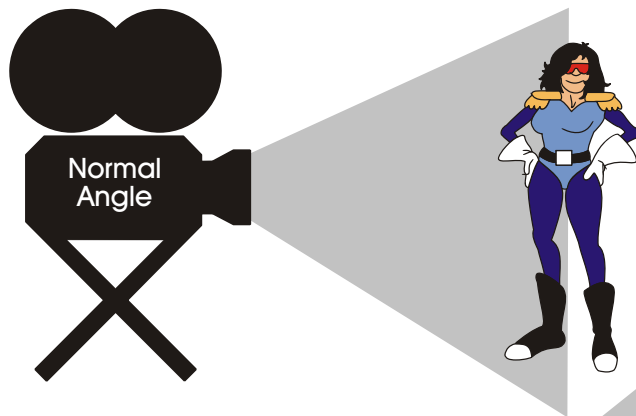
- ▶ Video Style
- ▶ Types of Angles

Did You Know?

One of the most interesting movies to watch the angles in is Citizen Kane. It is considered to be one of the greatest movies ever made. The movie had so many different types of angles that, at times, it was confusing, but the overall effect was tremendous. If you get a chance, watch the movie because there is definitely a distinct style in it.



Notice how the subject's size changes as the angle of the camera is tilted. From this diagram, what types of emotions does each angle convey?



Types of Shots

There are seven different types of shots that are used as reference points for video. Each shot is given a name and a short form for quick reference during storyboarding and in the production stage.

1. Extreme Long Shot (XLS)

The Extreme Long Shot is used to show a large area or landscape. Sometimes shots of people in a large crowd can also be considered as an XLS. It is the most impersonal shot possible in video. This is because it would be hard to see any reactions or emotion from people in the shot since they are too far away. An example of an XLS would be a shot of a school.

2. Long Shot (LS)

The Long Shot is a closer shot than an XLS and would contain a person's entire body from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet.

3. Medium Long Shot (MLS)

A Medium Long Shot would contain a person from their knees to the top of the head.

4. Medium Shot (MS)

A Medium Shot is considered to be what a person would see if they were standing and talking to another person. It is the most comfortable view and is used the most in productions. The shot contains a person from the waist to the top of the head.

5. Medium Close-Up (MCU)

The Medium Close-Up is often referred to as a head and shoulders shot. The reason for this is because it contains a person's head and shoulders completely.

6. Close-Up (CU)

A Close-Up is used to show emotion on the subject's face. It is slightly closer than the MCU with just the top of the shoulders visible.

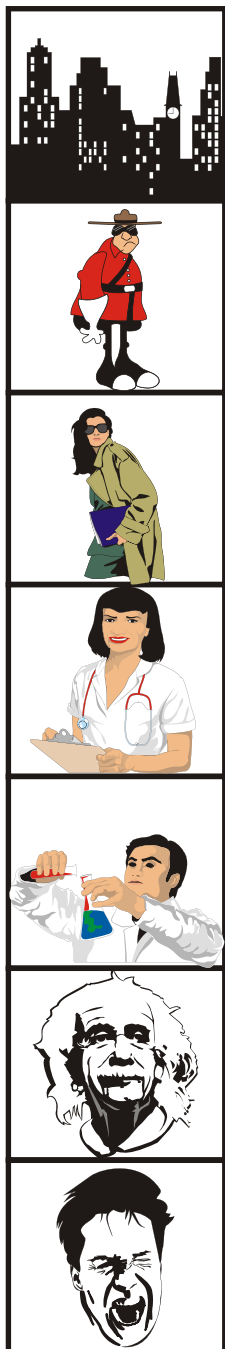
7. Extreme Close-Up (XCU)

The Extreme Close-Up is the most personal of all video shots. It can show emotion very clearly. It contains the entire face of the subject. This shot does have the tendency to make the viewer feel uncomfortable because it is too close.

Production NOTES

- ▶ *Types of Shots*
- ▶ *Extreme Long Shot (XLS)*
- ▶ *Long Shot (LS)*
- ▶ *Medium Long Shot (MLS)*
- ▶ *Medium Shot (MS)*
- ▶ *Medium Close-Up (MCU)*
- ▶ *Close-Up (CU)*
- ▶ *Extreme Close-Up (XCU)*

Types of Shots in Picture Form



Extreme Long Shot (XLS)

Long Shot (LS)

Medium Long Shot (MLS)

Medium Shot (MS)

Medium Close-Up (MCU)

Close-Up (CU)

Extreme Close-Up (XCU)

Chapter 4 Video Cameras & Style

Camcorder Parts Accessories Features Angles & Shots **Camera Movements** Lighting

Camera Movements

Very rarely in a video do you see the camera stay still for every single shot. There is usually some type of movement in every scene. If there was no movement at all, the scene would be boring to watch. Good camera movements add interest, can evoke emotion, and also give the viewer a better sense of what is in the scene.

There are eight types of camera movements that can be done with a standard video camera, tripod, and dolly.

1. Pan

A pan is a camera movement where the tripod or operator stays stationary in one place and the camcorder is turned from left to right or right to left. Pans are used to give the viewer a sense of what is contained within a scene. Since a camcorder does not have as wide a view as the human eye does, pans are sometimes necessary to get everything into the picture.

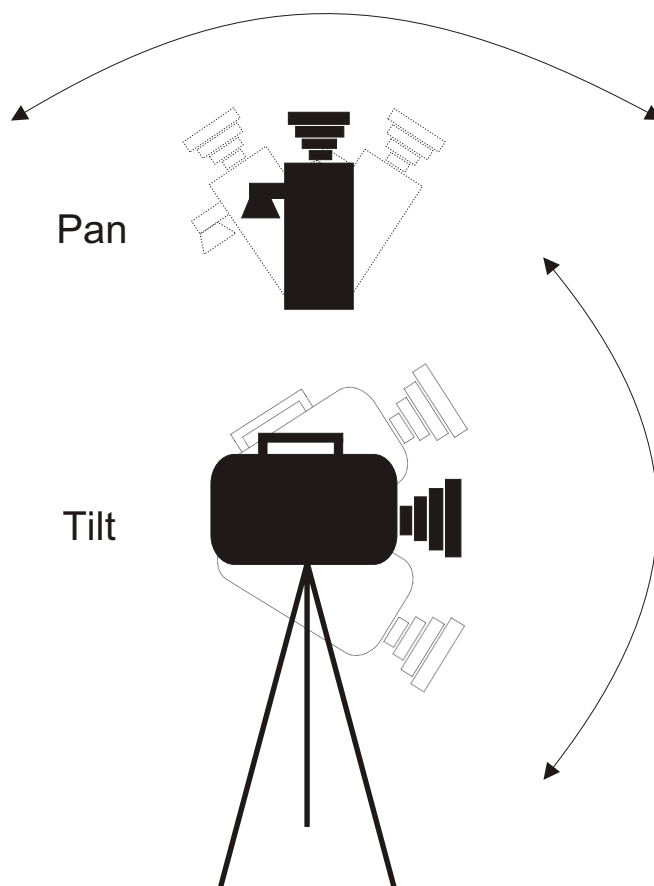
2. Tilt

A tilt also has a stationary base but the camera is gradually moved from top to bottom or bottom to top.

Again, a tilt has the same effect as a pan does. It allows the viewer to see more objects that are in a scene. However, a tilt can also convey a sense a mystery. By starting a tilt at a person's feet, the viewer will wonder who the person is the entire time the camera is moving upwards. The curiosity is fulfilled when the camera reaches the face. The same applies for a tilt in the opposite direction.

Production **NOTES**

- ▶ *Camera Movements*
- ▶ *Pan and Diagram*
- ▶ *Tilt and Diagram*

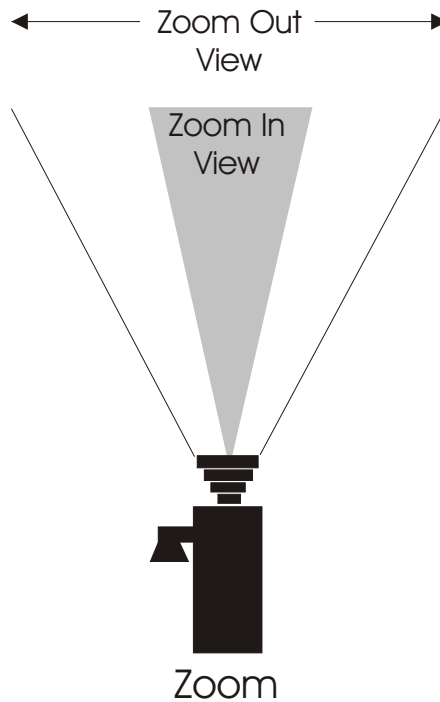


3. Zoom

A zoom is the gradual narrowing of the camera's view from a stationary location. The zoom function on a video camera is one of the most popular functions. People tend to use it so much because it is an easy way to get close to a subject without moving. The problem arises when the camcorder is zoomed into its maximum and the operator has a hard time keeping it steady.

There should always be a purpose to your zoom. Operators tend to use it just because it is there. When you perform a zoom, do not stop it part way only to start it again in a few seconds. If at all possible, stop the camera first, change your angle, zoom in, and then start recording again. This effect will look much better. If you have to zoom, use a tripod to keep it steady.

If your camcorder has a manual zoom lever, try it out with different special effects. Manual zooms at high speeds will give some great special effects when combined with strobe and digital gain-up functions. This type of experimenting may give you a valid reason for using a zoom.



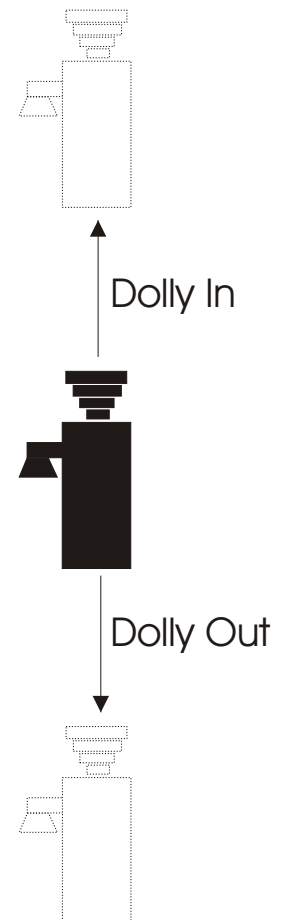
Production **NOTES**

- ▶ *Zoom and Diagram*
- ▶ *Dolly and Diagram*

4. Dolly

A dolly is the physical movement of the camera towards or away from a subject. A dolly does not use the zoom function. The camera is actually moved by either walking with it or pushing it along the ground or floor (the name "dolly" also refers to the wheel attachment for tripods).

To "dolly in" means that the camera is getting closer to the subject. A dolly out is moving the camera further away. This effect combined with arcing is frequently used in shows aimed



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at a younger audience. Both Much Music and MTV use dollying and arcing in their programs quite frequently.

5. Truck

A truck is the physical movement of the camera from left to right or right to left. Like the dolly, a truck actually involves the camera moving. This type of movement is used most often when following a person or object. For example, two people are talking while walking along a sidewalk. When the camera moves with the people, this is a truck.

In high budget professional projects, trucks are done along tracks or from moving vehicles to make sure that the picture has no jumps or jitters in it. For the average videographer, a truck will utilize a tripod and the hardware known as a dolly to obtain a steady picture. Be sure to perform this only on smooth surfaces with no unexpected bumps.

A truck left moves the camera from its current position to a new position to its left side. A truck right moves the camera to the right.

6. Arc

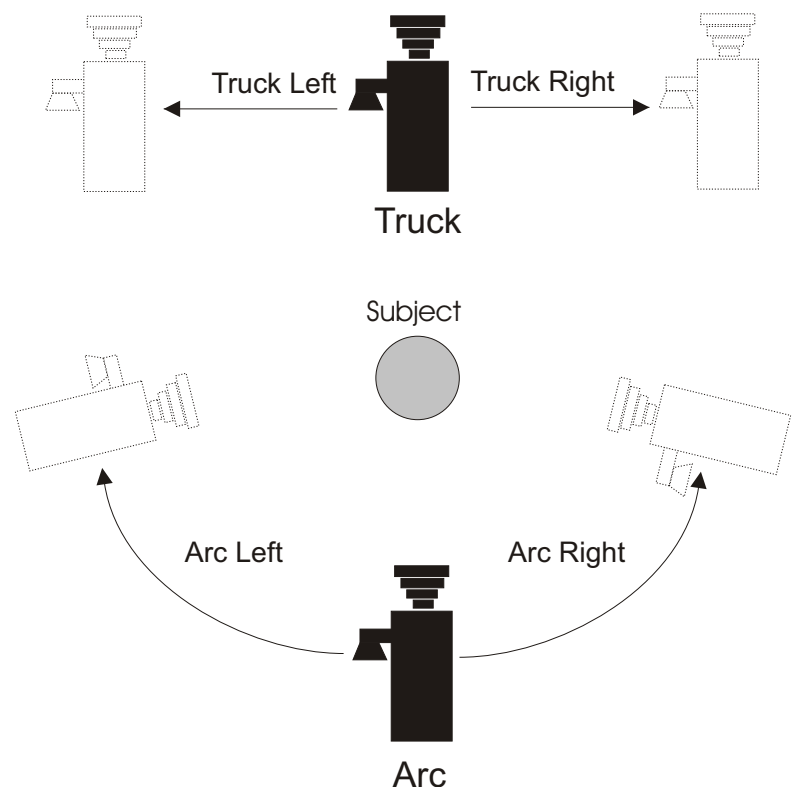
An arc is the physical movement of the camera left or

right while always keeping the subject in the middle of the picture. A continuous arc would eventually end up back at the starting point. The camera will have made a complete 360 degree circle around the subject.

As mentioned before, this type of camera movement is used in programs aimed at the younger generation, namely teenagers. It is a modern technique that appeals to the younger viewer. Be careful when using the arc with a dolly. If your target audience is comprised of adults, they may find this movement bothersome.

Production NOTES

- ▶ *Truck and Diagram*
- ▶ *Arc and Diagram*



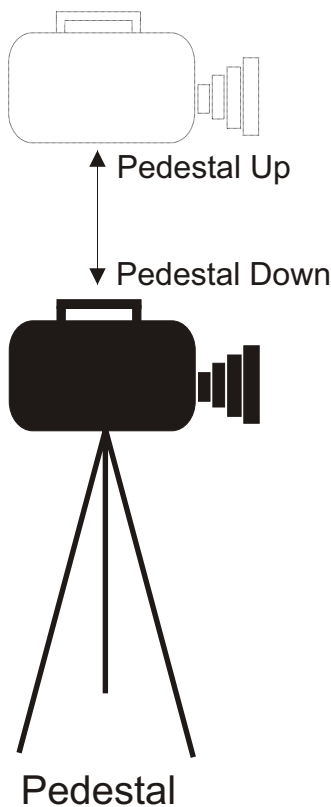
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7. Pedestal

A pedestal is the movement of the camera up or down from a fixed position usually while using a tripod. This type of movement is very easy to do with a tripod since they have a crank on them to perform this exact function.

A modified form of a pedestal is often used in movies when the scene starts out over top of a house or neighbourhood and lowers itself to street level. Feature films use a device called a jib to ensure a smooth movement.



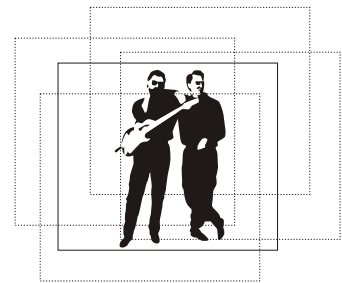
8. Realistic Television

Realistic Television is a relatively new type of filming or videotaping that involves moving the camera very slightly to achieve a more realistic feel to the picture. The look that is achieved may look amateurish to some people because it breaks the "always use a tripod" rule. The slight movements make the picture look like it has been taped by a person using their home camcorder. Television experts claim that this new type of camera movement makes the viewer feel like the events that are occurring on the screen are actually happening. People feel like they are part of the scene and are observing everything not on their television screen but as a third person looking in.

Television shows are employing this technique more often. *NYPD Blue* was the first show to use this movement extensively. Its success has encouraged others to explore this at a more in-depth level. Watch some television shows and see if you can pick this out. Evaluate how effective it may be or how poorly it has been done. Then make up your own mind if it is worth using or not.

Production NOTES

- ▶ *Pedestal and Diagram*
- ▶ *Realistic Television and Diagram*



Realistic Television

With Realistic Television, the camera never stays in one spot. The subjects in the scene may be centred for an instant and off to one side the next.



Lighting

We've seen on television amazing cameras that have the ability to see in the dark. The picture may be a strange colour but at least there is a picture to view.

We then rush to our camcorder manuals to find out if our camera can do the same thing. The manual says that your camera can give you a clear picture at the 1 lux light level. You think to yourself "Wow, I only need the light from 1 candle to get a clear picture!" You rush around the room shutting off all of the lights, get out a candle, and get your camera set up.

Now that you are armed with your new found knowledge your videos are going to look great! You start taping everything around the room. You can't see anything in the viewfinder but your manual says you will get a clear picture so the camera must be picking up something, right?

Wrong! When the tape is put into the VCR there is either a faint grainy picture or complete darkness. But your manual said it would work! What happened?

The answer to this question is simple. Camcorders need light. If there is not enough light, forget it. A grainy original picture looks bad, and will look

even worse if you do any editing at all. So how do you avoid this problem?

You have to know how your camcorder performs under certain lighting conditions. The manual may give a lux rating that looks great on paper but has no validity in practice. Since every company has a different method of measuring the lux level of their camcorders you will have to do some experimenting on your own.

To test how well your camcorder will perform, go into a dark room and gradually lower the light levels. At each level record a small section of video and describe the light level so you will know what you did when you watch the tape back. While watching the tape, look at the picture and see at what level your camcorder starts to get a grainy picture. You'll know it when you see it. Once you know how much light you need to get a clear picture, you will be a better judge of how much light you will need to add to a particular scene.

Adding light is not difficult. We've already talked about camera accessories and lights you can mount on your camera. Now let's talk about lighting a scene.

Production NOTES

- ▶ *Lighting*
- ▶ *Knowing Your Camcorders Capabilities in Different Lighting Situations*

Did You Know?

The most extensive commercial use of video cameras that could see in the dark was during the Persian Gulf War of 1991. CNN broadcast pictures of the bombing of Iraq from a hotel room. This technology was originally used by the army for surveillance purposes.



Production **NOTES**

Lighting A Scene

Every movie and television show always looks great. The picture is perfect, the colours are vibrant, there are no shadows, and the edges are well defined and crisp. How do they do it? Many lights positioned in just the right spot.

The basics of lighting a scene is very simple. With just three lights, you can get your pictures to turn out as good as the pros... well almost. Three point lighting involves the placement on three lights around your scene. The lights are called Key Light, Fill Light, and Back Light.

The key light is the first light you set up and is the major light source. It is usually pointed directly at the scene and it is located to one side of the subject. In a talk show or news setting, the light should be positioned just above the top of the subject's head.

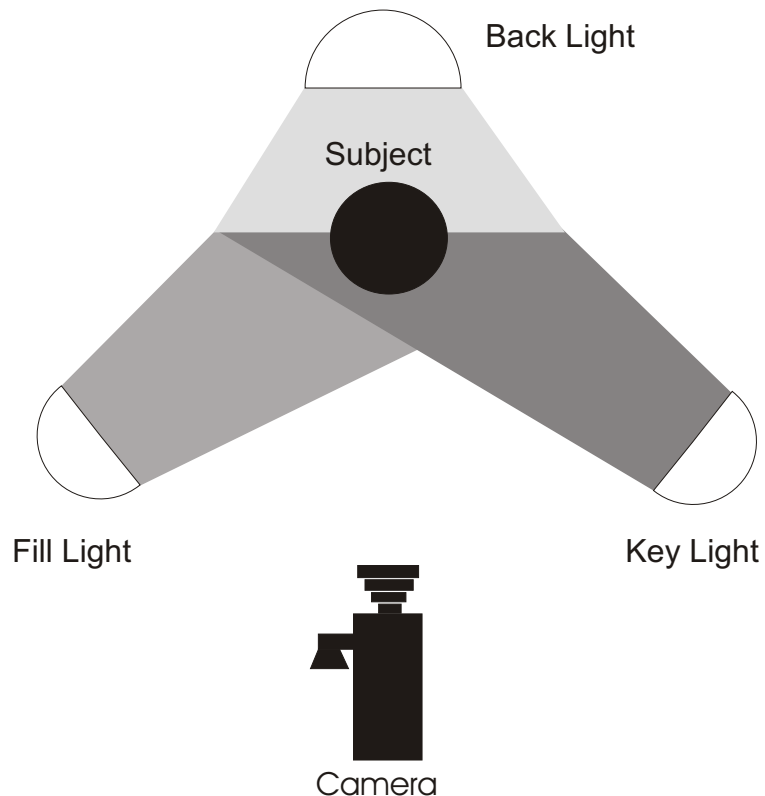
The fill light is not as powerful as the key light and is placed on the opposite side of the key light. It's purpose is to fill in the shadows with light to give a more natural look to the overall scene.

The back light is placed behind the subject at about the same height as the key light. Be careful that the back light does not light up the subject's

entire head. Ideally it should not cast any light onto the front of the subject. This light adds depth to the picture and separates the foreground from the background. In a sense, you are turning the picture into a three dimensional view from a two dimensional one.

Knowing and applying these basic lighting skills will dramatically improve your video productions. Camcorders and studio cameras love light, so give it to them.

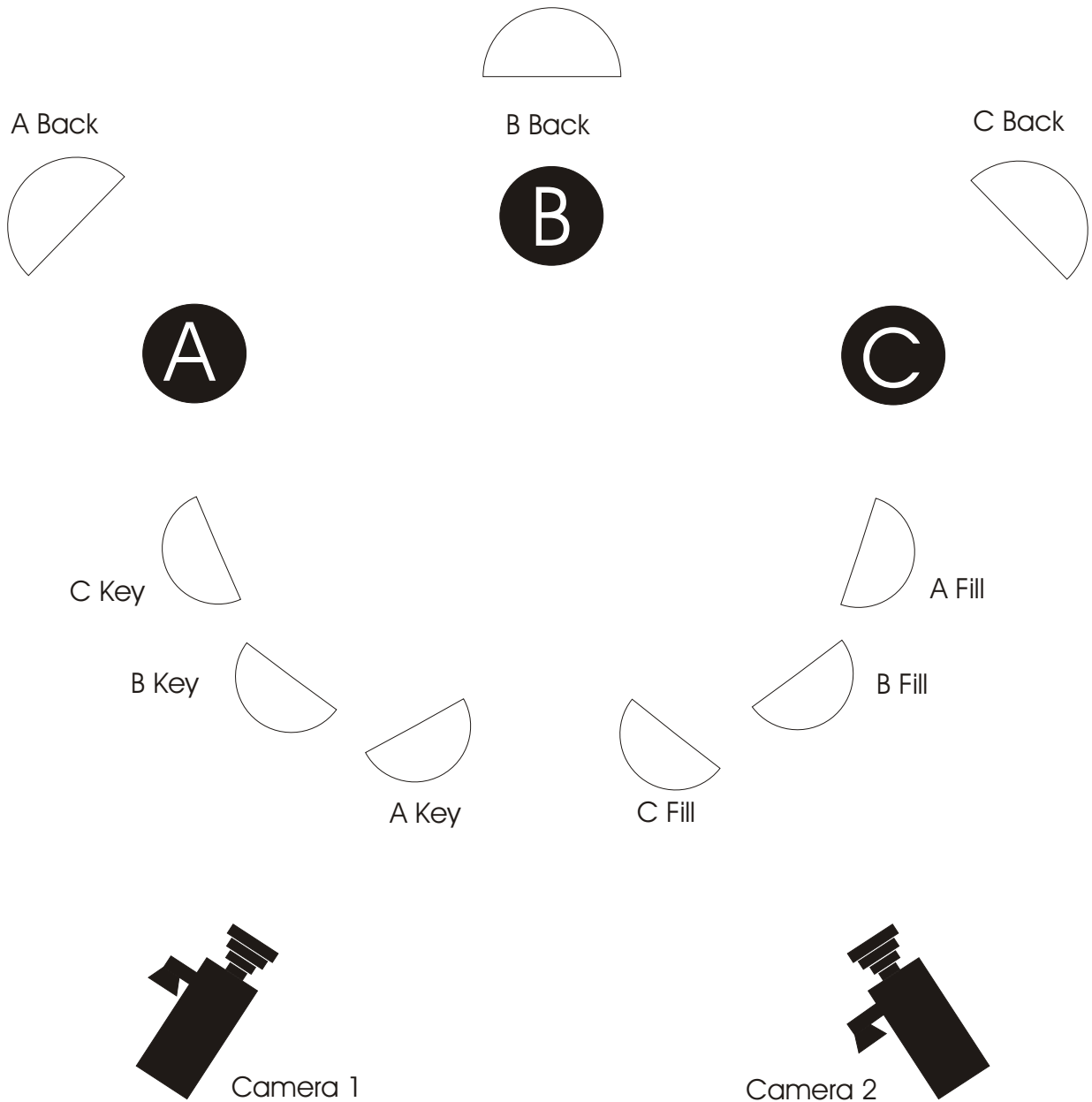
- ▶ *Lighting a Scene for Video*
- ▶ *Three Point Lighting*
- ▶ *Key, Fill, and Back Light*



Three Point Lighting



BACKGROUND



Three Point Lighting in a Television Studio

Note that the lights would be situated on a lighting grid located on the ceiling, therefore not being in the view of the cameras.