

# SHOT COMPOSITION CHEATSHEET

**LONG SHOT:** The degrees to how “long” or “wide” a long shot can be innumerable. They can be establishing shots of locations or distant shots of a subject. If there is a subject, their entire body is in the framing. This places the emphasis on the location and not on the subject. When describing long shots, focus on words like the “background” and emphasize setting and world over characters.

**MEDIUM SHOT:** Closer than the long shot and therefore more personal, the medium shot usually frames characters from the knees up, though one can combine it with the long shot to create a medium long shot that shows the full body. Often this shot works best with larger casts of characters, so if you have several people talking you’d want to emphasize the group dynamic and their position near each other. For early shots in a film, most movies resort to this framing, so you do not need to worry as much about implying this composition.

**CLOSE-UP:** The screen is filled with part of a subject, but not completely. It is usually from the shoulders up and is used during emotional scenes to give the audience a more personal connection to the scene. When describing close-ups, hint at the composition by focusing on emotions and reactions in the face, avoiding any reactions that have to do with someone’s overall demeanor or position they are standing in.

**EXTREME CLOSE-UP:** The extreme close-up emphasizes the eyes or mouth of a character and demonstrates a deep emotion they are feeling. It can feel crowded since the character fills the entire frame. When implying this type of shot, try to tap into that “crowded” feeling and make a point to emphasize more details than just the eyes. However, as with most ways to describe composition, you can do this more naturally by imagining that the camera is always portraying someone’s perspective, allowing you to write from their point of view.

**LOW ANGLE:** A low angle shot shoots from the ground and looks up at the subject. It usually gives the subject a feeling of power or dominance. This type of shot is fairly easy to imply in your script. Simply describe a character as looking up, then describe how large a person or object appears to that person to hint at a low angle shot.

**HIGH ANGLE:** The high angle looks down at the subject instead of up at it. When used to focus on people, it makes them feel small or far away or makes them appear weak. When describing this in your script, it is just as easy as describing the low angle, because you focus on the perspective of a certain character.

**Want more practice? Check out my [sixteen storytelling prompts](#), four of which are for screenwriting only!**