

Form and Style

Documentary Techniques

- Archival Footage:** Also called 'Stock Footage', this is film or video that can be used in other film productions. Stock footage is often images of cities and landmarks, historical events of importance or images of the natural landscape and wildlife. Archive footage can also refer to news footage.
- Voice Over Narration:** The use of a non-diegetic (not part of the narrative) voice that assists in explaining information, primarily in a documentary or news feature.
- Voice Over Exposition:** The use of a non-diegetic voice to introduce information to the audience. Typically this is factual in nature, and occurs at the beginning of a documentary feature.
- Archetypal Characters:** A typical character who is used to represent a wider range of people, their views and opinions. Also known as a 'stock character'.
- Contrasting Characters:** Characters who are fundamentally different to one another. Used by producers to create tension and differing points of view for an audience.
- Interviews:** Interviews can be both direct and indirect. A direct interview involves asking questions in a way that the responder understands the purpose of the question, and the intended response. Indirect interviews involve asking questions when the responder is unaware of the purpose, or the intended response.
- Montage:** Selecting and carefully editing of selected pieces of film to form a continuous whole.
- Cross-Cuts:** Used to establish action occurring at the same time, cross-cutting involves the camera cutting away from one action to another to give the impression of the action occurring simultaneously.
- Jump-Cuts:** An cut in film editing that gives the impression of the subject "jumping" forwards in time. This is done by showing almost the exact same shot in successive frames, with only a slight variation in the subject.

Inter-Cuts:	To interrupt the narrative with shots from other scenes, or flashbacks.
Cinema Verite:	A style of filmmaking that is typical in documentary form, where the camera records actual persons without directorial input. Often referred to as 'observational filmmaking'.
Establishing Shot:	Used in filmmaking to set up the context for a scene by allowing the audience to see where it is taking place, and the relationship that the characters have within it.
Point-Of-View Shot:	By using the camera in a specific way, usually after a shot of a character or person, the camera is able to film a short scene that is exactly what that character or person would be looking at – it shows their point of view.
Reaction Shots:	Usually a cut-away shot to indicate the reaction of a particular character. This is usually in response to a specific action or emotion, and is used primarily to show the audience the full traits of a particular character.
Frankenbiting:	An editing tool that allows for scenes, usually with spoken dialogue, to be edited into smaller sound bytes, and in effect changes the meaning of the scene. There is a great amount of debate over the ethics of this, particularly in reality television.
Confessional Monologue:	A direct to camera 'confession' of a character in the film. In a documentary this occurs in response to a particular event or action.
Dialogue / Duologue:	Dialogue is the conversation that occurs between many people in a film. Duologue refers to conversation between only two people.
Monomyth (or Hero's Journey):	In a monomyth, the hero begins in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unknown world of strange powers and events. The hero who accepts the call to enter this strange world must face tasks and trials, either alone or with assistance. If the hero survives, he may achieve a great gift or "boon." The hero must then decide whether to return to the ordinary world with this boon. If the hero does decide to return, he or she often faces challenges on the return journey. If the hero returns successfully, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world.