

THE MOVING CAMERA: HALF THE WORK, DOUBLE THE OUTCOME

January 22, 2012

The diagram below demonstrates how, by fully exploiting the moving camera, you can cut a camera setup by half, while increasing your shot options in the edit room. The red and blue circles are the characters. The yellow triangles are the cameras.

This tip and many others come from my [**Directing The Camera Workshop**](#)

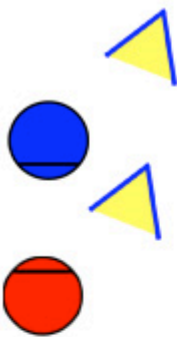
THIS WEEK'S ASSIGNMENT:

Follow the diagram below using two objects and a camcorder (the video camera on your phone will do.)

Place two dolls (or two actors, or two friends, or two water bottles, or any two items that will represent two characters facing each other for a conversation), then get a camcorder and cover their dialogue with tracking shots. (If you don't have a camcorder, you can walk in a straight line with a stills camera to get the sense of it.)

First cover each character with the type of tracking shot diagrammed below.

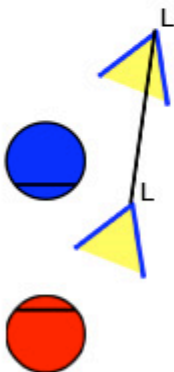
Did that? Great!! Now try continuing the track all the way through, so that the camera pans over to the blue character, ending in the reverse over-the-shoulder! In other words, the track will go from: over-the-shoulder facing Red, push in to Red's close-up, pan over to Blue's close-up, ending on the over-the-shoulder that faces Blue. How's that for four shots covered with one, single set-up! (Dazed and confused...? Take my workshop. No prior experience is assumed. Working and aspiring directors at all levels are welcome.)



Locked shots:

According to this shot diagram, we cover the red character with two shots:

- 1) close-up on Red
- 2) Medium over-the-shoulder on Red



Tracking shot:

This shot diagram involves only one camera set-up, but gives us three shots:

We track in from an over-the-shoulder shot into a close-up, giving us the option to cover the dialogue in a dynamic, moving shot, heightening the emotional feel of the scene

The "L" next to each camera indicates that we plan to shoot a locked version of the dialogue from that position. We can shoot a locked version of the dialogue from the over-the-shoulder position, and a locked version from the last position, in the close-up.

Now we have three shots to choose from in the edit, including a tracking shot, and we got all this from a single camera set-up.

These types of camera moves are very easy to execute but very few people think to do them. They economize the shoot (here we've cut the camera set-ups in half), while adding production value.