

Look Room, Lead Room and Headroom

Look room is the space that you leave in front of someone's face on the screen. This space gives the person room to breathe, as well as gives the impression that the person is looking at or talking to someone just off screen. If you don't leave enough look room, your subject will appear to be boxed-in and confined.

Be aware that the amount of look room necessary is dependent upon the angle of the subject to the camera. A person looking directly toward the camera will require less look room than someone shot in full profile.

Moving objects such as cars require a similar buffer called "lead room." Allow extra space in front of a moving car so that the viewer can see that it has someplace to go. Without this visual padding, the car's forward progress will seem impeded.

Headroom is another element you should consider when framing your subject. Headroom is the amount of space between the top of someone's head and the top of the frame. If you leave too much space, the person will appear as if sinking in quicksand. If you don't leave enough room, the person will seem in danger of bumping his head. By positioning the subject's eyes on the top third imaginary line, you will be building in the proper amount of headroom.

When considering head- room, be sure the shot is loose enough so that you see part of the subject's neck or the top of the shoulders. If not, you'll end up with what looks like a severed head on a platter. However, don't be as concerned with cutting off the top of someone's head. Viewers do not perceive this as abnormal as long as you frame the actor's eyes where they should be.



Good example of Look room / lead room



What not to do and how to fix it.



A car shot without lead room.



Example of proper headroom



Example of what you should not do.



Example of what you should not do.