

Video Cuts & Transitions Reference

Essential cuts, transitions, and when to use each one

THE 7 ESSENTIAL CUTS

Cut	How It Works	When to Use
Jump Cut	Cut within same shot, time skip	Speed up pacing, skip boring parts
Cutaway	Cut to related shot, then back	Cover edits, show reactions, hide cuts
J-Cut	Audio precedes video of next shot	Smooth dialogue transitions, lead-ins
L-Cut	Video cuts, audio continues from previous shot	Conversation flow, scene transitions
Match Cut	Cut between visually similar frames	Creative transitions, time/space shifts
Smash Cut	Hard cut to dramatically different shot	Comedy, surprise, shock value
Invisible Cut	Cut hidden by movement or darkness	Seamless transitions, one-take illusion

TRANSITIONS

Transition	Effect	Best For
Hard Cut	Instant switch between shots	Default. Use 90%+ of the time.
Cross Dissolve	One shot fades into the next	Time passage, gentle scene changes
Fade to/from Black	Fade out or fade in from black	Scene beginnings and endings
Wipe	One shot replaces another with motion	Stylized, retro, comedic moments
Push	New shot pushes old shot off screen	Dynamic scene changes, energy
Dip to White	Flash of white between shots	Dream sequences, memory, flashbacks
Zoom Transition	Quick zoom between two shots	Vlogs, social media, high energy
Glitch/Distortion	Digital noise between shots	Cyberpunk, tech, gaming content

PLATFORM PACING GUIDE

Platform	Avg Cut Frequency	Transition Style
YouTube (Vlog)	3-6 seconds	Hard cuts, jump cuts, J/L cuts
YouTube (Tutorial)	5-10 seconds	Hard cuts, cutaways, dissolves
TikTok / Reels	1-3 seconds	Hard cuts, smash cuts, jump cuts
Short Film	4-8 seconds	Match cuts, dissolves, invisible cuts
Documentary	5-15 seconds	Hard cuts, dissolves, J/L cuts
Commercial	1-3 seconds	Hard cuts, wipes, dynamic transitions

What is it?

How to do it

Pro Tip

Works Best

Rule

Why

When to use transitions

BEAT-SYNC EDITING

Timing your cuts to the beat of the music for rhythmic, engaging edits.
Add markers on beat points (M key). Cut or place key moments on markers.
Cut slightly before the beat for a more dynamic, anticipatory feel.
Montages, music videos, social media reels, travel videos.

THE 90% RULE

Use hard cuts for at least 90% of your edits.
Hard cuts are invisible. Transitions draw attention — use them sparingly.
Scene changes, time passage, or when you want the viewer to notice.

