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special effects

Special effects (fx) are events that happen in movies that require out of the ordinary techniques to create. Driving a car is not a special effect. Blowing one up is. There are also sound effects (sfx) in films, but that is a separate category. Special effects are generally divided into these categories:

Visual effects

Obviously anything that is not a sound effect is a visual effect — something you see as opposed to something you hear. However, this term usually refers to effects that you can see as they are being made on the set. Originally most all special effects were visual effects. They include things like models, explosions, fires, gunshots, trees falling, boulders crashing, etc.



Optical effects

As opposed to visual effects, optical effects are only seen in their entirety when the film is processed. Optical effects are created using special lenses, filters, layers of images (like animation and live action together) or any of these combined. The light sabre scenes in the original Star Wars movie were optical effects, sometimes using 7 layers of images!

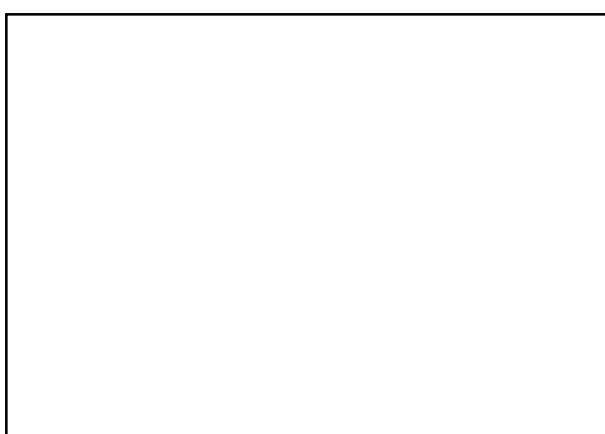


Digital effects

More and more special effects are done digitally these days. That is, the images are created using a computer. Digital effects are great for replacing optical effects because they can be smoother and more 'invisible'. Sometimes digital effects replace visual effects because they are easier and cheaper to do, but not necessarily because they look better. Any more the distinction between a visual effect, an optical effect, and a digital effect is becoming less and less clear. The term visual effect may be used to include all special effects except sound effects. (i.e. at the Academy Awards)









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editing

Off-line editing is an editing process where one is not producing the final copy of the film but is placing the scenes in proper sequence. This involves using a copy of the raw footage, often on a tape, with time-code added. This then leads to on-line editing.

On-line editing is usually preceded by off-line editing. Once the sequence has been determined, the actual production is ready to be edited with effects added, dissolves, wipes, etc. On-line editing yields the final copy of the production.

Non-linear editing is a process whereby video and audio information is digitized onto diskette arrays. This digitized media can then be accessed in a non-linear fashion, being able to jump instantaneously from one place to another. Compared to **linear** editing, where you cannot jump from one place to another and you must wait for tapes to spool up or down, non-linear editing affords a more flexible way of editing, allowing easier experimentation.

Cut to When one shot starts and is immediately followed by another shot, one is cutting to the next shot.

Jump Cut A jump cut is when there is a cut to another shot that either changes scene (intentionally) or when the action in two consecutive shots does not match (usually an accident).

Dissolve A dissolve is a transition from one shot or scene to another when one image fades out as another fades in over top of it.

Wipe A wipe is a transition from one shot or scene to another when one image slides in from the side or top or bottom of the screen, replacing the previous shot.