Look at this shot. Imagine that the man is talking to the boy. Let's say he talks for thirty seconds. Try looking at the picture while you count one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, and so on, up to thirty seconds.

If you're normal, you won't get much past one-thousand-ten before your eyes start wandering. Now look at this sequence of shots. Count to one-thousand-five at each one before moving to the next.
That was a lot easier, wasn't it? So what have we proved? We've proved that it's easier to look at six different images in 30 seconds than to look at one single image for the same time. That's the idea behind the basic sequence--to break up one long scene into several shorter scenes. This makes the story more interesting for the viewer. It also gives us the opportunity, in editing, to vary the length and emphasis of the story as we desire. Let's review the basic sequence we've just seen, shot by shot, and see how it works.

A WIDE SHOT or ESTABLISHING SHOT is simply that--a shot that's wide enough to establish your subject in the mind of the viewer. In this particular case, we see the man, the boy, and enough of their surroundings to establish that they're in the great outdoors.

Remember, a WIDE SHOT doesn't have to show everything--just everything that's important. A WIDE SHOT of a mountain would be a landscape. A WIDE SHOT of a man typing might show only the man and his computer, eliminating from the shot the rest of his desk and the surrounding office. A WIDE SHOT of an ant would be a fraction of an inch across.
The MEDIUM SHOT and the CLOSE-UP are, like the WIDE SHOT, endlessly variable, depending on your subject and your own point of view.

Essentially, the CLOSE-UP is the tightest, the closest you choose to be to your subject. In a person, it's usually a full head shot, as shown here. The MEDIUM SHOT falls somewhere in between the WIDE SHOT and the CLOSE-UP.

The CUTAWAY is the one shot that lets you easily change the length and/or order of your sequence. It's the shot most often forgotten by camerapersons and most often needed by editors.

In our sequence of the man and the boy, let's say that instead of talking for 30 seconds, the man talked for two minutes, the middle
minute-and-a-half of which was boring. So, in editing, you let the man talk for the first 15 seconds, cut away to the boy listening, throw out the boring middle of the talk, then cut back to the man for the final 15 seconds. So instead of this:

1 2 3

4 5 6

The splice in the sound track between Scenes 1 and 6 is covered by the cutaway of the boy listening.

The most common cutaway is the shot of the reporter listening in TV interviews. However, anything can serve as a cutaway, as long
as it's related to the main action, but not visually connected to it. That's the great value of a cutaway: when you cut to it, you don't have to match anything in the main shot you're cutting away from.

For example, a sequence of a man making toys can be shortened or rearranged by cutting away to shots of already completed toys on the shelves. Or the toymaker's face can serve as a cutaway from close-up actions of his hands working on the toy.

If you look hard enough, you can find a cutaway for just about any sequence you shoot. In an interview with an athlete, his photos and trophies are cutaways. If a woman is just sitting and talking to the camera, a close-up of her hands in her lap is a cutaway. An extreme wide shot, or a shot from behind, can also be a cutaway.

Cutaways can serve to enhance the story. If a man is talking about how he won an auto race, you can cut away to footage of the race, while continuing his voice on the sound track. If an interviewee mentions a person who helped her in her career, you can cut away to a shot of that person.

SHOOTING A BASIC SEQUENCE

The most important thing to remember in shooting a basic sequence is that EACH NEW SHOT SHOULD, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, INVOLVE A CHANGE IN BOTH IMAGE SIZE AND CAMERA ANGLE. This not only makes the sequence more interesting but, as we'll see, it makes it much easier to cut back and forth between shots. On the following page is a diagram, from above, showing where I placed the camera for the sequence of the man talking to the boy.
Notice that between WIDE SHOT, MEDIUM SHOT, and CLOSE-UP, I changed my camera angle by at least 45 degrees. You should always try to move your camera at least that much.

It's pretty obvious that a change in image size and angle between shots makes for a more interesting sequence. What's not quite so obvious is that it makes the transition from shot to shot smoother and easier to accomplish. With rare exceptions, most non-studio work is shot with a single camera. This means your subject has to repeat himself for the medium shots and close-ups. He's not always going to be able to remember and duplicate his actions exactly
for every take. So you might end up having to cut from a wide shot where he's looking straight ahead

to a medium shot where his head is inclined slightly downward:

If you change image size and not camera angle, you'll see the man's head jerk down on the cut. This is called a jump cut.

But, if you change not only the image size but also the camera angle, you'll be home free. The combination of image change and angle change will alter the viewer's perspective just enough for
often, you'll find that a change in image size and camera angle will cover even greater mismatches.

One special situation: When your subject is talking directly to the camera and you change camera angles, be sure to show the subject physically pivoting his body from one camera position to the other. Otherwise, the abrupt change in background will confuse the viewer. If you prefer, in the editing, you can cut on the action of the turn. They do this every night on your local news show when the anchor turns to a new camera and says "On the local scene...".

Cutting on the Action

A good way to get smooth transitions between shots is to cut on the action. The viewer's eye naturally follows movement on the screen. If a movement begins in one shot and ends in the next, the viewer's eye will follow the action right across the cut, without paying much attention to anything else.
Let's say that the man in our original basic sequence takes off his hat. We shoot the wide shot down to the point where he completes the action of removing his hat. Then we set the camera up for the medium shot, and have him begin the medium shot by repeating the action of removing his hat.

\[\text{WIDE SHOT} \quad \text{MEDIUM SHOT}\]

Then, in the editing, we CUT ON THE ACTION, so that he starts removing his hat in the wide shot and completes the removal in the medium shot. Without even realizing it, the viewer is carried smoothly from one shot to the next.

\[= \text{CUTTING ON THE ACTION}\]

There are lots of obvious situations where it's convenient to cut on the action. For example: opening doors, getting out of cars, sitting down, standing up, reaching for objects, walking, running, jumping--almost any kind of movement. The important thing to remember is that the last action of the first shot has to be repeated at the beginning of the second shot. So you have to shoot the same movement twice. This is called overlapping action.
CLEAN ENTRANCE - CLEAN EXIT

Having a clean entrance and a clean exit is almost as good as having a million different cutaways. Clean entrances and exits give you terrific flexibility in your editing. Let's say for example that you are shooting an explanation of the controls on a complicated piece of equipment. Your master shot—the one where you keep the camera running for the whole explanation—looks like this:

As the man explains the different buttons, he touches them and turns them. When you've finished the master shot, move in for close-ups of the different knobs. Start each shot showing only the knob on the machine. Then have the man's hand come in (CLEAN ENTRANCE), fiddle with the knob, and go out again (CLEAN EXIT), leaving once more just the knob in the frame.

So what does this do for us? Well, first off, if you cut to the knob, wait a beat, then have the hand enter, you don't have to
worry about matching the position of the man's hand from the wide shot to the close-up, because when you cut to the close-up the hand isn't yet in the frame.

Secondly, let's say you decide after the shoot that you only have time to explain the most important controls and you're going to have to eliminate some of the middle explanations. Easy as pie. Just go to a close-up of the last knob before the section you want to eliminate, let the hand exit cleanly, wait a beat, then cut to the wide shot, picking it up after the dropped section. Since you're cutting from a close-up of the knob without the hand, nothing has to match when you go back to the wide shot at a much later point in the explanation.
If you think about it, you can see there are many ways this sequence could be rearranged by taking advantage of the clean entrances and exits of the hand.

Let's look at another example. Say you've got a wide shot of a car driving by and you have to cut to a different shot of the same car, but the background is different. If you just cut from one shot to the other, the change in backgrounds will be very noticeable. But, if you let the car exit the frame in the first shot, hold a beat, then cut to the new shot with a different background, it'll work. By not seeing the car for a second or two, the audience will accept that it had time to get to a different place for the following shot.

Or you could accomplish the same thing by cutting to the new shot without the car there, waiting a beat, and then letting the car make a clean entrance.
Clean entrances and clean exits are very helpful in getting people quickly from one place to another. Say you have a sequence of a boy walking into his house and upstairs to his room. Rather than follow him all the way up with the camera, just show him walking in the front door (CLEAN EXIT), then cut to his room as he enters it (CLEAN ENTRANCE).

Clean entrances and exits are good for almost any kind of shot where somebody or something is moving from one place to another, picking something up, putting something down, hitting, pulling, selecting, etc. Whenever you have anything moving through your frame, particularly in a close-up, you'll be doing yourself a big favor by giving it either a clean entrance or a clean exit, or both. This will always allow you greater freedom in your editing.

SOME FINAL WORDS ON BASIC SEQUENCES

Only amateurs and some geniuses plan on making every cut a match cut. The more you cover yourself with changes in image size, changes in camera angle, cutaways, overlapping actions, and clean entrances and clean exits, the better your final product will be.

Remember, any still photographer can shoot a bunch of pretty shots, but only a real cameraperson can shoot a sequence.