

Camera Operator SOP

1. Purpose of Our Camera Shots

The goal of every camera shot is to **serve the message**. A well-executed shot keeps the congregation's eyes on the communicator and their ears on the Word. Poorly framed or erratic shots pull attention away from the message and onto the technical production itself — which should never happen.

Camera shots displayed on the projector screens exist to **enlarge and clarify** the communicator for the audience. Every shot decision should ask: *Does this frame make it easier or harder for people to focus on what's being said?*

2. Standard Shot Framing — The "Cowboy" Shot

COF's standard shot for communicators is the **Cowboy shot** — framed from approximately mid-thigh to just above the head.

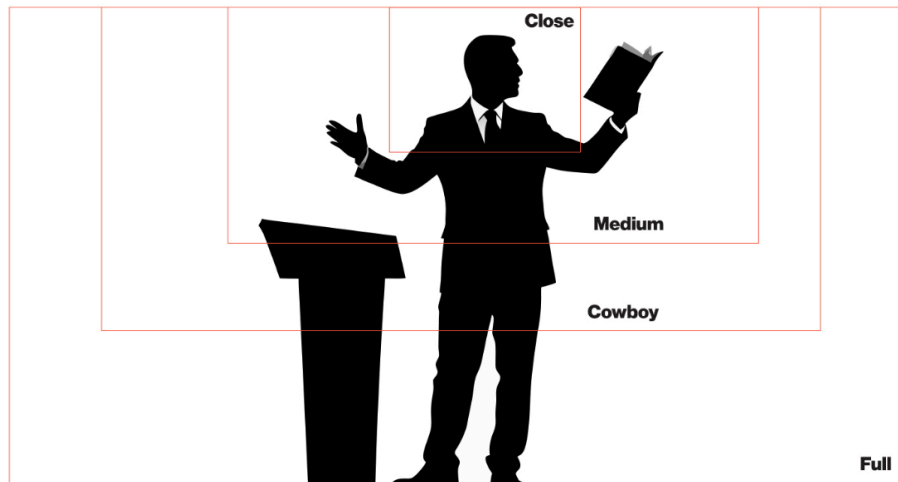
Framing rules:

- Keep the communicator:
 - When not moving: **Centered in the middle third** of the frame horizontally
 - When moving: **Following in the trailing third** of the frame horizontally
- The communicator's head should sit **on or above the upper third line** — never cropped awkwardly at the top
- Leave a small amount of **headroom** above the communicator — not too much, not too little
- Avoid cutting the frame at natural joints (knees, waist, neck) — mid-thigh is the preferred lower crop point
- The communicator should **never touch the edges** of the frame

When to adjust the shot:

- If the communicator raises their hands or moves expressively, **loosen the frame slightly** to accommodate the gesture before it happens — anticipate, don't react
- If the communicator steps to one side of the stage, reframe **proactively** so they remain centered before they arrive, not after

Examples:



3. Following Communicators

When a communicator moves across the stage, smooth and intentional camera movement is critical.

Movement principles:

- **Be proactive, not reactive** — watch the communicator's body language and anticipate where they're going before they get there
- **Move gently and steadily** — quick, jerky cuts or pans pull the audience's attention away from the message entirely
- **Don't lag** — moving too slowly means the communicator drifts toward or out of the frame edge, which looks unprofessional and is disorienting for the audience
- **Keep them in the middle thirds** at all times during movement
 - Centered when not moving
 - Trailing thirds when moving

Common mistakes to avoid:

- **Over-correcting** — making large, sudden adjustments after the communicator has already moved
- **Under-anticipating gestures** — getting caught with a tight frame when the communicator uses their hands broadly
- **Losing the communicator at the frame edge** — if this happens, smoothly and quickly reframe; do not cut abruptly

4. General Best Practices

- **Always be ready** — know the communicator's style before the service if possible. Some communicators are stationary; others walk the full stage
- **Communicate with your team** — if you are one of multiple camera operators, coordinate with the director or switcher so shots are complementary, not redundant
- **Stay focused** — avoid making unnecessary adjustments when the communicator is stationary and the shot is clean. A still, well-framed shot is always better than constant minor repositioning
- **Check your exposure and focus** before the service begins — a technically sharp, well-exposed shot with good framing is the standard every time. ***WE HAVE SUNDAY PRESETS***