

Editing for Narrative

[MUSIC PLAYING] All right, well, welcome to the next tutorial video. This tutorial video is going to kind of step away from the model project that I'm working on for this module, and instead, we're going to look at an overview of some editing techniques that you might be able to put into your story at this late stage as you sort of finish it up. These techniques are very, very common, and you'll see them in movies, TV shows, commercials, but they're kind of hard to notice unless you know what to look for.

So let's dive right in. The first one I want to talk about is building suspense or tension. And editors figured out they could do this over a hundred years ago, and authors have been doing this for centuries. Basically what you do is you give people a little situation. You give them a premise, and then you cut away. You jump away before it's resolved. And that just forces people to keep watching. They need to know what happens.

So editors do this by setting up a situation. Then they jump away. And the viewer is thinking, oh my gosh. What's going to happen in that situation? And then they jump back and resolve it.

Now, I didn't edit this video, but this is a real quick example of what I'm talking about. Here we're going to have some slow-motion slaps. I'm just going to go ahead and play this for you. Now, you see the hand approaching the faces, and then right at the last second, it cuts away. Whoa! Then there's this weird shot of this guy's head here, and now we get the resolution, right? And we see the people getting slapped in slow motion.

So this is a very, very simple example, but what the author did here was instead of just showing the slap in one scene, they built a little tiny bit of tension by cutting up the footage into tiny, tiny pieces and giving us that expectation, that anticipation of what's going to happen. And it makes us want to watch until the end to see the result or the culmination of what was introduced at the beginning.

So feel free to use that in your editing. It doesn't have to be totally linear. Your storytelling can be a little bit nonlinear. It can jump around, and it will really help keep the interest of your audience.

Now, the rest of these techniques I'm going to talk about all involve audio and using audio in concert with your clips and your editing. So there's two that I'm going to talk about first, but they're very closely related. They're called the J cut and the L cut. And those are easy to remember because the actual shape that the clips make on your timeline will form those letters, the J and L.

So let's see how this works. I'm going to grab a fireworks clip, and I'm going to grab maybe people dancing. We're going to do a J cut first. And I want to unlink both of these audio clips and video clips so we can move them around.

And what we're going to try to do here-- I'm just going to trim off that end here. What we're going to try to do here is we're going to have the video, instead of having the fireworks stop and then the dancing come in, we're going to cut the audio and the video at different times so they sort of blend into one another.

So first of all, we've got to make sure we have plenty of overlap so that we can manipulate our clips the way we need to. And this is going to be a J cut, so we're going to try to make the shape of a J. I'm going to move our dancing clip to the right. Give us a little bit more fireworks. And now you can see we've got our J, right? These two clips kind of make a J. See?

So as we watch, the sound of the dancing is going to come in first while the video is playing. So that sort of gives the audience a little bit more of a transition. It gives the audience kind of a clue of what's coming up.

We can do the same thing the other way. The sister of the J cut is the L cut. So let's do the same thing. We're going to grab the clip of our fireworks and unlink them. And we're going to-- let's do a new clip this time. How about this hot-air-balloon one? And let's unlink those as well. We're going to make sure we have plenty of overlap here.

And now we want the shape of an L. And what this means is that the sound of the fireworks is going to bleed over a little bit into the clip of the hot-air balloon. Let me just show you this clip real quick so you can kind of see what it is. It's just a hot-air balloon engine firing up. It's kind of cool.

So if we pull this audio to the right-- and obviously if you were to do this yourself, you would spend some time tweaking it and making sure that the sounds blended together well and the timing was nice, all that good stuff, but this is just for an example.

So you might be able to predict what's going to happen with our L here, right? This is our L, as opposed to our J. This L cut, the video is going to stop. The firework audio is going to continue to play while we see video of the hot-air balloon, and then the hot-air-balloon sound is going to jump in.

So we still hear the fireworks. Let's just hear that one more time without me talking.

[FIREWORKS]

Again, if you keep your eye out for some of these techniques in the next movie you watch, you will definitely start to see them. You might see a character maybe giving a speech, talking to somebody, telling a story. And as their story kind of maybe goes to a different setting, you could still hear their voice as the video transitions to what they're talking about, but you'll hear that initial audio kind of carry over into the next clip in sort of an L cut. Or you can introduce a sound early and get people curious. What is that sound? And then using a J cut, the video will jump in and let the audience know, oh, that's where that sound's coming from. So those are some fun ways to kind of be creative and introduce some interest.

The last one we're going to look at is something you've seen a million times, and it is basically syncing to music. We're going to try to cut our clips along the beat of a song.

So let's make a new timeline. This should be pretty fast, a new timeline. We can call it Music Syncup. And I got this song from incompetech, Kevin MacLeod, who has a lot of great songs and music that you

can use if you attribute him. So let's just-- I think I'm going to use this song in my video as well, my model video.

Let's try first without syncing to music. If we just have the music in the background and we play--

[MUSIC PLAYING]

OK, the music does add a little something, but it's not really interacting. We don't really see a connection between the music and the video.

Now let's see what happens if we start to sync it up. So if we listen closely, we can hear a double hit of the beats at the very beginning of the song.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Comes in again right here, right there. So let's go ahead and put our next clip right on that beat, right on where that beat happens. Make sure it's right. You can always zoom in.

OK, let's do the next one. Should be right here. You can always look too at the monitor here. There's a little tiny monitor. And as you do playback, you'll hear. It'll peak right at the loudest point. OK, so it sounds like it's right there.

Pull the next clip up. And your clips should actually be about the same length, right? They should all look about-- and you can see these all look about the same. They should be all about the same length, and that makes sense because songs are often in the same tempo, the same speed the entire time, very mathematical. So we shouldn't expect to see this change a lot.

OK, let's see how this looks.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Now we're cutting on the beat.

All right, and so now all those clips, they have nothing to do with each other, really, but they all kind of seem to work together a little bit more nicely because they're synced up to the beat of the music. That's another thing you can do is you can edit on the beat, and that way the music and the video is all working in concert.
