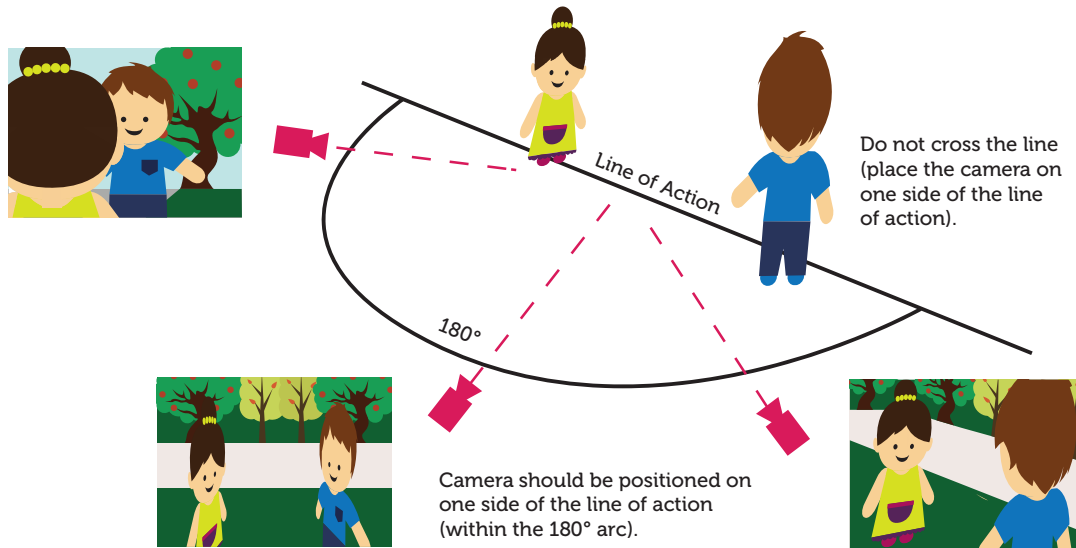


You've Crossed the Line!

The best camerawork is the kind that tells the story clearly and lets you feel like you're right in the middle of the action. That's why filmmakers usually stick to the 180-degree rule, which states that the cameras should not cross the line of action.

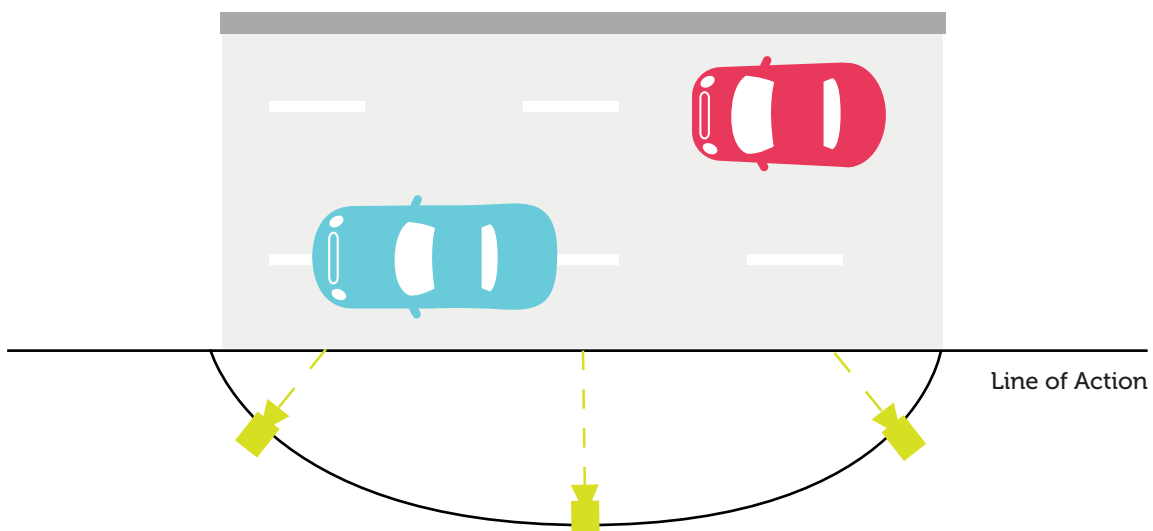


Line of action: An invisible line connecting two actors onscreen. It's a 180-degree angle, which, as you may recall from math, is just a straight line.

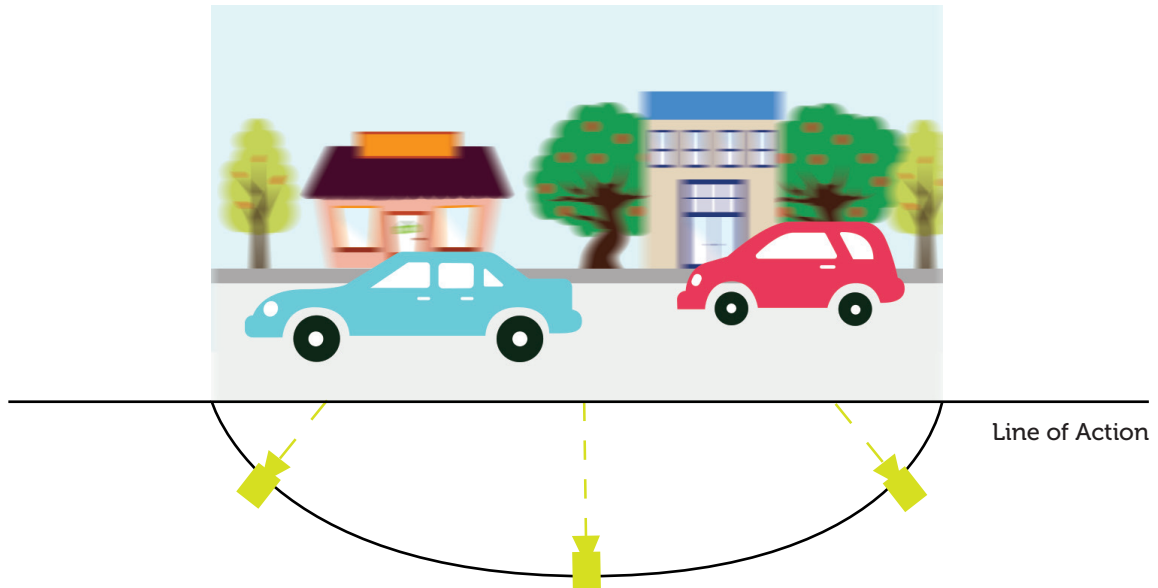
Notice how these two characters are always on the same side of the screen, even when filmed from three different angles. The boy in blue is always on the right side of the screen.

What the 180-degree rule does:

Here's an example. Imagine a car chase scene in a movie. Two cars are moving at high speed, one chasing the other. Once the director has established the shot, she can use the 180-degree rule to help the audience follow what's happening.



From the side, you'd see something like this:



Imagine if the director started filming on one side of the line of action...



And then jumped to the other side of the line.



It looks like the two cars are about to drive into each other! To show that the cars are driving in the same direction, one chasing the other, the camera must never cross the line of action.

Try It!

With your smartphone or video camera, film two people talking for a minute or two. Then, turn off the camera, cross the line of action, and start filming again.

When you watch what you've filmed, what do you notice about the action? Now that you've tried it, why do you think filmmakers stick to the 180-degree rule?

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Can you think of a case where you might want to break that rule?

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