

# Media Codes & Conventions

## Codes and conventions

### **What are codes?**

Codes are systems of signs, which create meaning. Codes can be divided into two categories – technical and symbolic.

Technical codes are all the ways in which equipment is used to tell the story in a media text, for example the camera work in a film.

Symbolic codes show what is beneath the surface of what we see. For example, a character's actions show you how the character is feeling.

Some codes fit both categories – music for example, is both technical and symbolic.

### **What are conventions?**

Conventions are the generally accepted ways of doing something. There are general conventions in any medium, such as the use of interviewee quotes in a print article, but conventions are also genre specific.

### **How codes and conventions apply in media studies**

Codes and conventions are used together in any study of genre – it is not enough to discuss a technical code used such as camera work, without saying how it is conventionally used in a genre.

For example, the technical code of lighting is used in some way in all film genres. It is a convention of the horror genre that side and back lighting is used to create mystery and suspense – an integral part of any horror movie.

Source: <http://media-studies.tki.org.nz/Teaching-media-studies>

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