



What is Widescreen?



When you measure the length and height of a television display or screen, computer monitor or any other form of video display the ratio of these measurements is called the aspect ratio.



The two most common aspect ratios in use today are 4:3 (used in older style televisions) and 16:9 or commonly known as widescreen (newer modern displays). The aspect ratio has

nothing to do with whether the television is High Definition or Standard Definition.

Displaying Wrong Aspect Ratios

To demonstrate what happens when the wrong aspect ratio is displayed, the following examples use a football to show the differences when viewing the correct and incorrect aspect ratios.

If viewing a 16:9 movie on a 4:3 display, distortion will occur and the picture will be squeezed making objects appear thinner than they are. The top image has a correct 4:3 aspect ratio movie being displayed and the lower image has a 16:9 movie being displayed clearly showing the distortion or squeezing.



Similarly if a 16:9 movie is played on a 4:3 display, again distortion will occur, with objects appearing to be dragged out or stretched, appearing wider than they are. This effect is clearly seen with the two examples on the left: the top image having a correct 19:9 aspect ratio movie being displayed and the lower image having a 4:3 movie being displayed.



Most modern appliances such as DVD Players, TVs or Set Top Boxes allow you to specify the aspect ratio in their set up menus. If the pictures on your display don't look right, check your owners manual and set the adjustments to the following to ensure the correct viewing.



A 4:3 display set up to view 16:9 or letterboxed programs.



A widescreen or 16:9 display set up to view 4:3 or Pillerboxed programs.

What Aspect Ratio Should I Film In?

As a rule you should always film in widescreen (16:9). This future proofs your footage, as almost all viewing in the future will be done on widescreen displays. However, there are still occasions where filming in 4:3 is still preferable, as would be the case if your target audience will be almost exclusively viewing on older 4:3 displays. Also, check your camera, as not all cameras will film in widescreen. With some cameras a 4:3 frame is stretched to fit a 16:9 frame, commonly known as anamorphic, resulting in inferior picture quality.

Remember the ways to adjust the aspect ratios settings shown above so that no productions should be shown in the incorrect aspect ratio.

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