

Shot Matching Checklist

COLOR GRADING
COURSE
LEVEL 2 ·
INTERMEDIATE

Match a mixed-camera scene invisibly, step by step, with a scope check at every stage. Numbers, not eyeballs.

Your eyes adapt to a shot within seconds — two clips that "look matched" on your screen fall apart the moment they cut together. Run the same order every time and confirm each step on the scopes.

1 Pick & balance a hero shot

Choose the shot that best represents the scene — well exposed, good contrast, a clean neutral or a clear face. Balance it completely first, exactly as in 1.6: **exposure** → **contrast** → **white balance (parade)** → **saturation (vectorscope)**. Everything else gets dragged to this, so it has to be right.

SCOPE CHECK

Fully balanced on all four scopes before you move on.

2 Grab it as a reference still

The instant the hero is balanced, grab a **reference still** into the gallery. This is your target for every other shot in the scene. Label it clearly so you remember it's a reference, not a grade to reuse.

3 Compare directly

Drop to the next shot and pull the still up as a **wipe compare** (right-click → wipe, or Ctrl-W). For a whole run of clips, select several and switch the viewer to the **selected-clips split view** — the *scene cut-through* — so you can see the scene playing as one.

SCOPE CHECK

Scopes set to RGB parade for both shots.

4 Match on the parade, region by region

Drive the second shot's channels until its parade shape *replicates the reference's* — not until all three channels line up (that's balancing), but until the relationship matches. Work **shadows** → **mids** → **highlights**, one channel at a time. If the subject fills a different amount of frame in each shot, resize the reference so skin reads fairly before you trust the trace.

SCOPE CHECK

Skin lands on the vectorscope's skin-tone line in both shots.

5 Propagate

Once a shot matches, copy the correction to its neighbors (middle-click the still, or copy/paste the node), then fix only what differs. Keep the match on the first node so any look added later rides on top and stays consistent across the scene.

Automated vs. manual

Resolve's automated match — right-click the key shot → **"shot match to this clip"** — is a fast first pass. It gets the ballpark, but shadows and a lingering cast usually still need a manual finish on the parade and curves.

RULE

Auto for the rough draft, manual for the finish. The automated match guesses; the parade doesn't.