The Snowman of Doom

A Beginner's Guide to 3D Modeling

for Neverwinter Nights

OK, hi! :-)

I go by TheBarbarian, I'm an internet weirdo from the Neverwinter Nights modding community over at Neverwintervault.org, and I'm going to be walking you through the steps that are necessary to create an evil snowman 3d model for Neverwinter Nights: Enhanced Edition from scratch in Blender.

If you already have Blender installed and know how to navigate and select objects in Blender, then you're only going to need to install the Neverblender plugin, to be able to import and export Aurora MDL files.

This is what we'll be covering over the course of the tutorial:

Part I
1.1) - Crafting the Mesh
1.2) - UV Mapping / Texturing
1.3) - Exporting as a Placeable
1.4) - Adding a Placeable Appearance to NWN

In this part, I'm going to show you how to craft a basic snowman mesh, texture it, and get it into the game as a placeable object. At this point, the model will essentially be furniture; it's going to sit there unmoving, and generally just be decorative (if evilly so).

Part II
2.1) Rigging the Mesh
2.2) Exporting as a Creature
2.3) Adding a Creature Appearance to NWN
2.4) Altering Existing Animations
2.5) Making an Animation from Scratch

During this part, I'm going to be showing you how to rig the snowman to an existing creature model, and how to set up creatures in Neverwinter Nights that use your custom snowman appearance.

By the time we're done with this tutorial, you should be able to make and modify your own placeable and creature models. Never again shall you be bound by the limits of what is already there! IA! IA!

Note that this tutorial is at this point in time a work in progress, and may yet be subject to further changes. :-)

Love, TheBarbarian.

Preface

Preface! You need to set up your working environment before you can get started.

This section is a little bit of a cop-out on my part, as I'm going to be providing you with links to other instructions by other people rather than write up my own. I'll consider it justifiable, though, since I'm quite sure I wouldn't be able to do a better job no matter how hard I try. The existing guides for this are pretty impeccable. :-)

1.) Installing Blender

First things first. To use Blender, you need to *have* Blender:
https://www.blender.org/

Download the executable, run the executable, and follow the installation instructions included in the installer. Note that the tutorial was set up using version 2.79.

This is where you'll find Blender's official documentation:
https://docs.blender.org/manual/en/latest/getting_started/installing/introduction.html#install-blender

2.) Installing Blender plugins (Neverblender)

Neverblender is a Blender plugin developed by Symmetric (Hi, Symmetric! :-D) over at the Vault (Neverwintervault.org). We're going to need this to import and export Aurora MDL files.

At the time this document was created, this is the active project page for Neverblender:
https://neverwintervault.org/project/nwn1/other/tool/neverblender-27

Symmetric provided detailed installation instructions for Neverblender over here:
https://nwn.wiki/display/NWN1/NeverBlender#NeverBlender-Installation

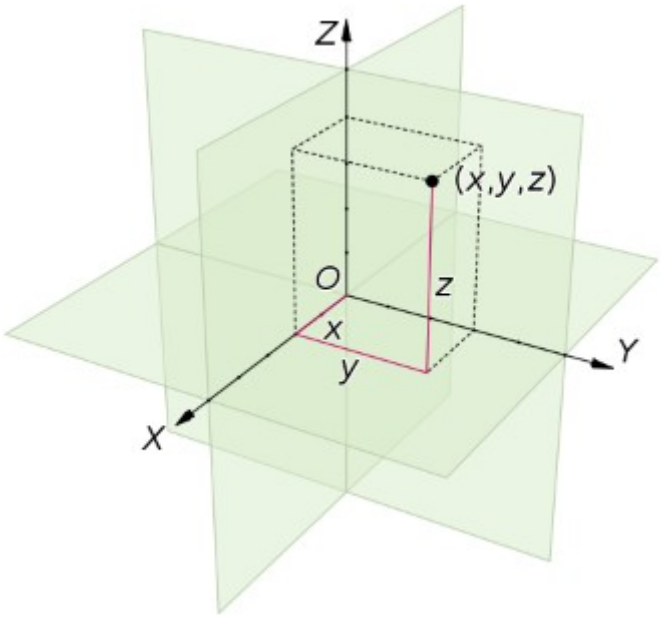
3.) Blender navigation and use

If you're completely unfamiliar with the controls in Blender, or in 3D-Modeling software in general, then they can be a bit disorienting at first. I'll need you to be able to move/pan/rotate the camera, as well as select objects. Everything else, we'll cover during the tutorial.

Here is the Blender Foundation's own video tutorial on basic navigation and the user interface:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCkHNxOf9lE

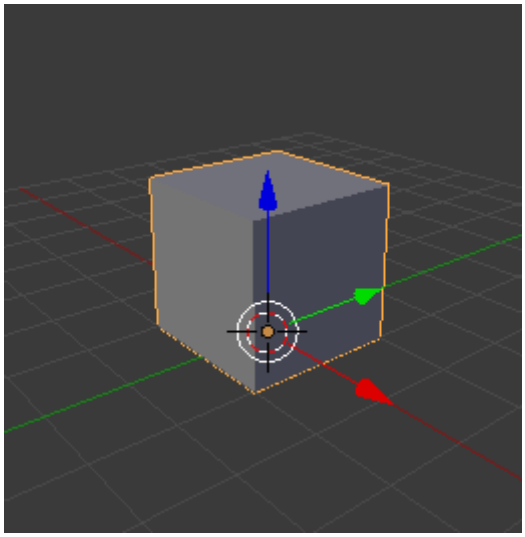
And the written variant, from the user manual:
https://docs.blender.org/manual/en/latest/editors/3dview/navigate/index.html

I also want you to know that we are going to be operating within a Cartesian coordinate system. You don't need to read up on what that is unless you really want to; we won't be doing anything particularly math-y. What we're out to do here is more along the lines of shaping and painting clay. But know that this is the setup of the space within which you'll be working:



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The three axes **X**, **Y**, and **Z** will be your main helpers for orientating yourself. When moving, rotating, or scaling, you will also be able to specify that you only want to move/rotate/scale along a particular axis - or that you want to exclude a particular axis.



By default, X is red, Y is green, and Z is blue.

During the tutorial, this is going to matter whenever you're trying to move, rotate, or mirror something, as you may want (or need) to specify along with axis you will move, rotate, or mirror your selection.

That'll do; with this information slotted away for future reference, we can get going. :-)

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HOTKEY REFERENCE SHEET

Adding to current selection:	Hold **SHIFT** while **clicking** on something
Deleting current selection:	**DELETE**, then **D**
Creating a new object:	Hold **SHIFT** and tap **A**
Select Linked:	**Point at mesh**, then hit **L**
Move selection:	**G**
Scaling selection:	**S**
Rotate selection:	**R**
Specific axis only:	**G/S/R**, then **X/Y/Z**
Exclude specific axis:	**G/S/R**, then **SHIFT+X/Y/Z**
Extruding faces:	**E**
Inserting faces:	**I**
Beveling:	**CTRL+SHIFT+B** or **SHIFT+B**
Marking a seam:	**CTRL+E**, then **A**
Placing a loop cut:	Hold **CTRL+R**, then **click** on mesh (look for purple lines)
Smooth selected (Mesh):	**W**, then **O**
Hide selected:	**H**
Unhide hidden:	**ALT+H**
Toggle Falloff:	**O**
Increase/Decrease, or Zoom:	**Scroll Mouse Wheel**
Merging:	**ALT+M**
Separating Parts:	**P**
Joining Objects or Triangles:	**ALT+J**
Undo action:	**CTRL+Z**
Redo undone action:	**CTRL+Y**
Unwrap UVs:	**U**, then **U** again