Save Your Work

"Back in the early 90s I was working at Creative Insights using 3d Studio, not Max, in the days when it did not even have an undo function or autobackup. I was working on a groove modeling and had put in around fours hours of work when there suddenly the power went out. All the work I had done in that time was lost, and I had to stay overtime to redo the work.

So remember to make a backup often—at least after every half hour to be safe. 3ds Max users can set up the autobackup for convenience. Maya users have no autobackup at present. So they need to click that *Save* button often.

Save incremental backups. This means that as you work you save occasional backups of your mesh at different stages. Remember **not** to overwrite your current file.

A fellow artist working on a stadium building for a sports project that I was a part of began having problems when porting the files to the game engine. We never could find a reason why, but bright guy that he was, he had a version of his mesh from a few steps back that did work. So he only had to redo the work needed to bring that version up to date.

Another way of making incremental backups is saving a version before collapsing a stack in *max* or deleting a history in Maya. As you build a mesh object you tend to leave your stack or history open, so you can go to an earlier version to make changes if needed. There are however certain operations where you need to collapse the stack or the field becomes too unwieldy and you must collapse it. Before doing so save a version with the stack or history and then collapse it. Next time do not click *Save*. Instead click *Save As* so that you do not overwrite the file.

In the end collapse the stack, delete the history, and delete the reasons why. A game engine does not need all that data from your modeling stack. In fact it will delete everything but the final information on the mesh. However your file size does matter. When I was working at Accolade many years ago, our team was loaned a newbie artist for some low polygon mesh work. He did beautiful work, but his files tended to be quite large. It turns out that he had recently got out of an art school where they taught him to always keep the stack on his model. Model with stack 200k, model without stack 60k. There's only limited room on a disk and in the machine memory; so the final mesh files should be as small as possible. Additionally as a modeler your mesh is often sent on up the line to a rigger or an animator. You do not want these people to have access to your modeling stack. Currently the trend in gaming is to specialize. This means that the people receiving your mesh may or may not know a lot about modeling. Unfortunately in almost every

company that I've worked, people think they know a lot about all aspects of 3D work. They may think something is wrong with your mesh and decide to fix it for you in the stack. Big problems can result. It's just sloppy work to send a model with stacks; a rigger or animator needs just the final mesh."

Mike Dunhour
2D and 3D Expert