



# 10

INSPIRATIONAL  
TIPS FOR ANIMATION  
AND VFX

# ARTISTS



**ANIMATION MENTOR**®  
The Online School of Animation and VFX™



## Don't be Afraid to Fail.

Fail as often and as badly as possible; and every time you fail, just learn a little bit and get a little bit better, and then you fail again and you learn something, and you get a little bit better. A lot of students are very timid about their work and are scared to put themselves out there and really try something.... But I say just go for it and it's fine if you fail. You're supposed to be failing right now. You're students. So fail, learn, and get better....That's how I got where I am now.

### Shawn Kelly

Animation Mentor Cofounder and Lead Animator at Industrial Light & Magic

## Be Humble.

Attitude plays a MAJOR role in your success. Who wants to work with a jerk? I don't, and I'm sure you don't. This does not mean that you need to let someone walk all over you, either. Build confidence in who you are, share your thoughts, and respect those of others. Remember, there's more than your way to tackle a challenge.

### Bobby "BOOM" Beck

Animation Mentor Cofounder and CEO and animated on Pixar feature films including *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles* and *Cars*

## Tailor Your Reel.

Do NOT try to make a one-size fits all demo reel. This works in small companies, but for the main studios it may hurt your chances more than anything else. Make your demo reel specific to the position and studio for which you are applying. If you're applying as an animator to a big animation studio where departments are very specialized, then everything on the reel should say only 'animation.' It should not say 'texturing' or 'lighting' or 'modeling.'

### Carlos Baena

Animation Mentor Cofounder and animated on Pixar feature films, including *Monsters University* and *Toy Story 3*

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# Live a Life.

The most important animation lesson that I could ever leave with you all: and it's a lesson that could never fully be completed, and that is: live a life. Don't study animation; study life. In order to observe life, you have to have a life. Live. Observe. Animate. In that order.

**Andrew Stanton**

Director of *Finding Nemo* and *Wall-E*

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## Work Collaboratively.

Working on a collaborative project during school would be a solid way of demonstrating an understanding of the production pipeline. A 15 or 30 second animation shot can be parceled out among several individuals. Everyone on that team has an area of responsibility and are working within a pipeline – towards a common goal – on schedule and on budget! Working collaboratively is a key ‘soft skill’ and is another good outcome of working on a team within a pipeline.

## Network, network, network!

Industry affiliations are an easy way to stay connected with like-minded people, as well as being visible to potential employers. For example, volunteering at events like SIGGRAPH or CTNx are huge opportunities for learning, exposure to the industry, and working professionals on an on-going basis.

### Marilyn Friedman

Animation Mentor VFX board member and former  
Head of Outreach at DreamWorks Animation

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## Be a Team Player.

Develop those technical skills, hone your eye, learn the tools, but always remember that [VFX is] a Team Sport, and everyone wants to work with Good People who work hard to make the whole process work as smoothly as possible.

### Ben Fischler

Animation Mentor VFX Fundamentals Curriculum Director  
and Visual Effects Supervisor at Laika Studios

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## Never Stop Learning.

Hiring animators who are both hungry for knowledge and have the ability to gracefully implement a variety of directorial changes creates a dynamic, fun atmosphere in the studio, even during tough times.

## Embrace the Culture of Critique.

For an animator to succeed in the industry, he or she must absolutely be able to receive, interpret, and implement critique in a non-reactive, forthright manner.

**David Tart**

Animation Director at Pivot VFX and  
Animation Mentor mentor

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## Always Remember the Principles of Animation.

Regardless of whether you do pose-to-pose, layering animation, or whatever, you've still got to worry about weight, and timing, and all the basics that get you a solid performance.

**James Brown**

Animation Supervisor at Tippett Studio

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