Setting up your First Document

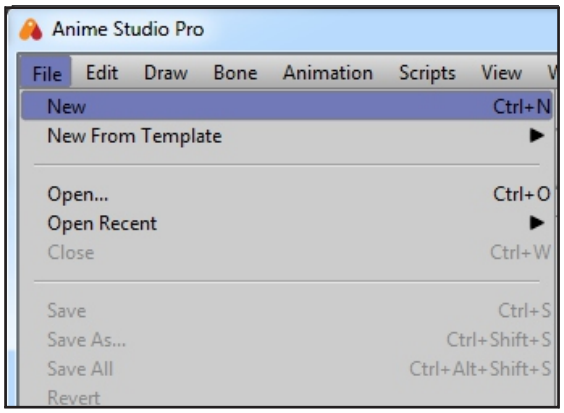
Lesson 4

Now that you have configured your software settings, it's time to set up our first document that we will be working on in Anime Studio. Setting up your document parameters early on is important, especially when you consider how the frame rate and resolution can greatly alter the final outcome. Changing either of these settings when you have animation and assets on screen can greatly alter the performance of your animation. So be sure to set your parameters first!

Creating a document

You can create a document at any time by cliking the **File** menu and choosing **New**, see screenshoot(right). If you have a project file currently open, a tab will be created for the new document. The same applies if you are opening existing project files. You can jump back and forth between these documents by simply clicking on the corresponding tabs.

You can close a project file at anytime by clicking on X next to the document's tab. When closing a tab, you may be asked to save any changes before exiting. As a general rule, it's important to save often! Create a new document now so that we can adjust the settings.



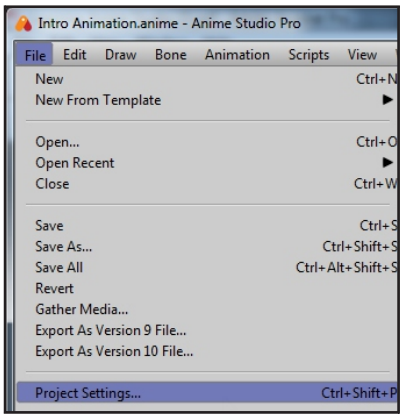
HINT...

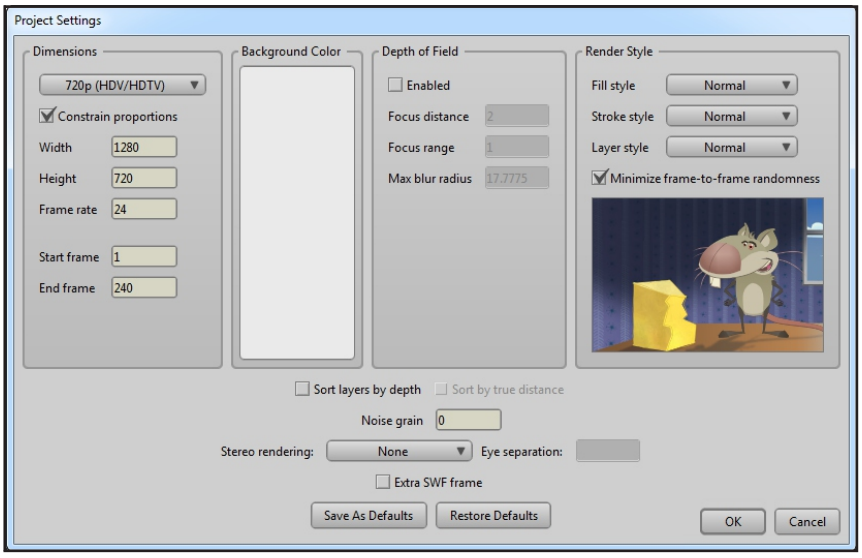
Exploring the practice files

You can follow-on the steps of this books and use the practice files provided, it is usually located at your desktop and locate the SeLS Templates folder, then navigate to the Animation folder.

Adjusting Project Settings

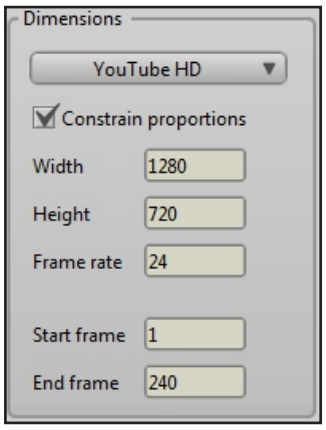
With your new document now open, go to **File** and choose **Project Settings**. This will open up the settings panel for your current document, as shown in the following picture/screenshots below:



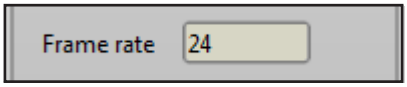


There are a few considerations to make when looking at this panel. These settings will change depending on your project's needs. In the case of this book, the following is what we will be doing:

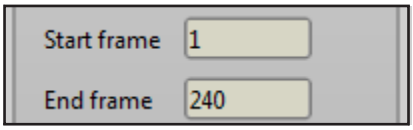
- The **Dimensions** section dictates the size of our document or what we anticipate the resolution of the video to be at export. You can adjust the dimensions manually if you wish (by inputting numbers in the **Width** and **Height** fields). However, Anime Studio has some built-in presets that are useful when wanting to conform a project to an industry standard resolution. For the case of the cartoon we will be making, let's choose **YouTube HD** from the drop-down menu. This will give us a resolution of **1280 x 720**. This is a good resolution for Internet distribution. You can go higher with this resolution if you wish, but this size should keep things manageable for most computers that are running Anime Studio.



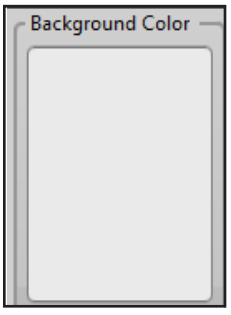
- The **Frame rate** option, which is also adjusted when choosing a resolution template, dictates how many frames per second our animation will contain. It's very important to decide on your frame rate early because if you change it when animation is in place on your timeline, it can disrupt the flow, audio syncing, and more. The higher the frame rate, the smoother your cartoon is going to look. Of course, this also means you will need to animate more frames per second to compensate. A good rule of thumb is animations made for cinema run at **24 frames per second**. Animations made for television run at **30 frames per second** (usually converted from 24 or 12 frames per second). Nowadays, you may even find videos that push 60 frames per second. While in the end this will come down to personal preference, we will be using 24 frames per second for our project. This should already be set if you chose the YouTube HD preset from the drop-down menu.



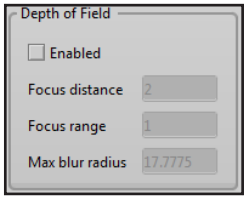
- The **Start frame** and **End frame** fields allow you to control what part of your animation will be included when it's time to export. It's usually hard to determine this in the beginning as animated scenes can vary in length. These numbers can also be adjusted before you decide to export out a scene. For right now, leave the numbers as they are. These options are shown in the following screenshot:



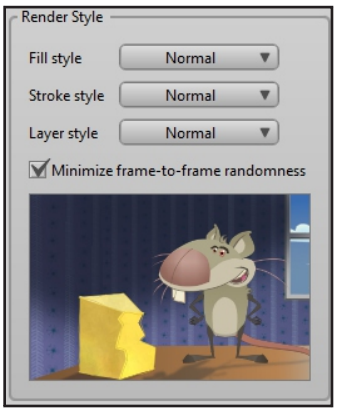
- The **Background Color** section adjusts the color of your background when you export out an animation. This will not adjust the color in the editor, so the changes are not apparent until you render out a frame or sequence. The background color can also be useful if you plan to export out separate elements of your animation and compile them in another program. This is referred to as keying or matting. We will be leaving the background color to the default setting for this book.



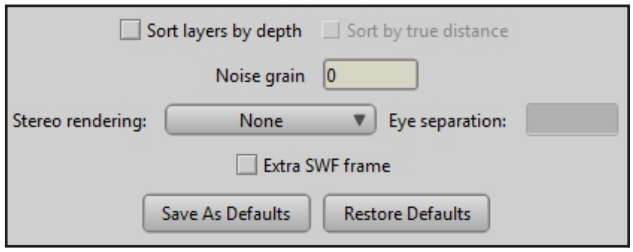
- The **Depth of Field** section allows us to simulate a camera lens and blur out certain objects, depending on their distance from our Anime Studio virtual camera. Sometimes, it's easier to create the depth of field effect manually, either through blurring layers in Anime Studio or through a video editor. For this book, we will be leaving this option off.



- Choosing options in the **Render Style** section can adjust the way your cartoon looks through various style filters. This can generate some interesting results if you're trying to spice up the look of your cartoon. Choosing a type of **Fill style** will alter all the fills of your objects while Stroke style will change the look of the lines. **Layer style** will apply the chosen effects to all your layers. We won't be using any of these styles for the cartoon in this book, but they may be useful for you in future projects.



- The **Save as Defaults** button, which is located at the bottom of the Project Settings panel will allow you to save the settings you just changed, so that for future documents you don't have to worry about adjusting the resolution and frame rate. Click on this button; that way you won't have to worry about adjusting these settings again as you move through this book. If you ever decide that you want to have the default settings back, simply click on the Restore Defaults button, as shown in the following screenshot:



Summary

It may not seem like it now, but planning, outlining, and writing are incredibly important when creating a successful cartoon animation. This book will develop your skill in animation and to get going on your animation adventure with the creation of a simple animated scene. However, when it's time for you to start working on your own projects, you will want to take all of the suggestions for planning and writing in this section to heart. Finally, preparing your document and settings in advance will help with your workflow later on (and prevent some potential headaches).

In the next chapter, we will have more hands-on activities using the software, specifically the draw, fill and many tools. Discussion on the differences between tablet and mouse drawing are included. The advantages of vector drawings over bitmap graphics are also mentioned in the next chapter.

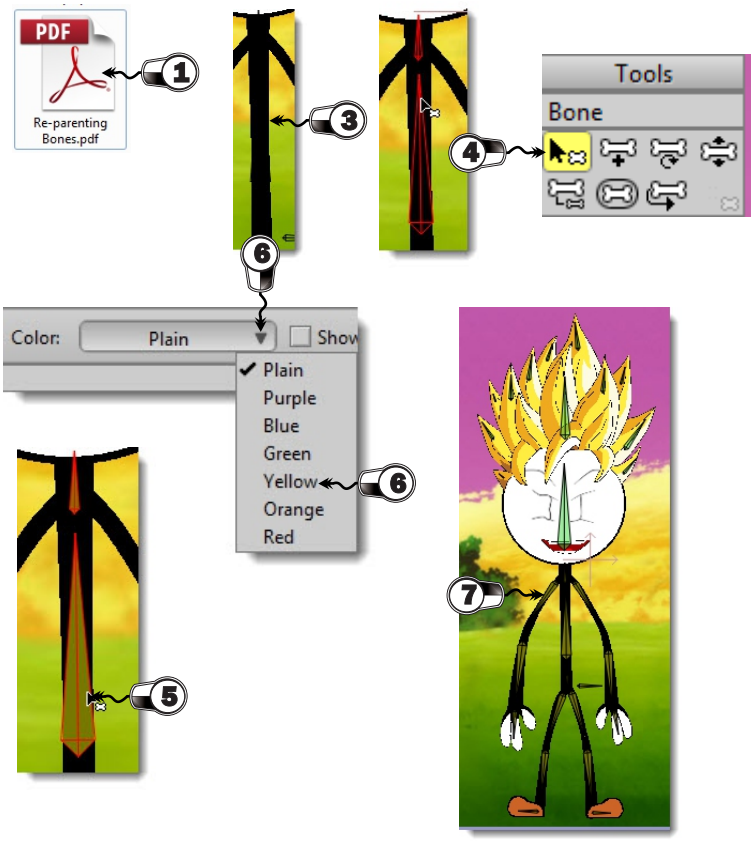
Part 2

Animating with Anime Studio

Laboratory Manual

COLORING AND RE-PARENTING BONES

Lab Exercise 2.4
Task: Re-parenting Bones
Expected Output File: Re-parenting Bones.pdf
Work File: None

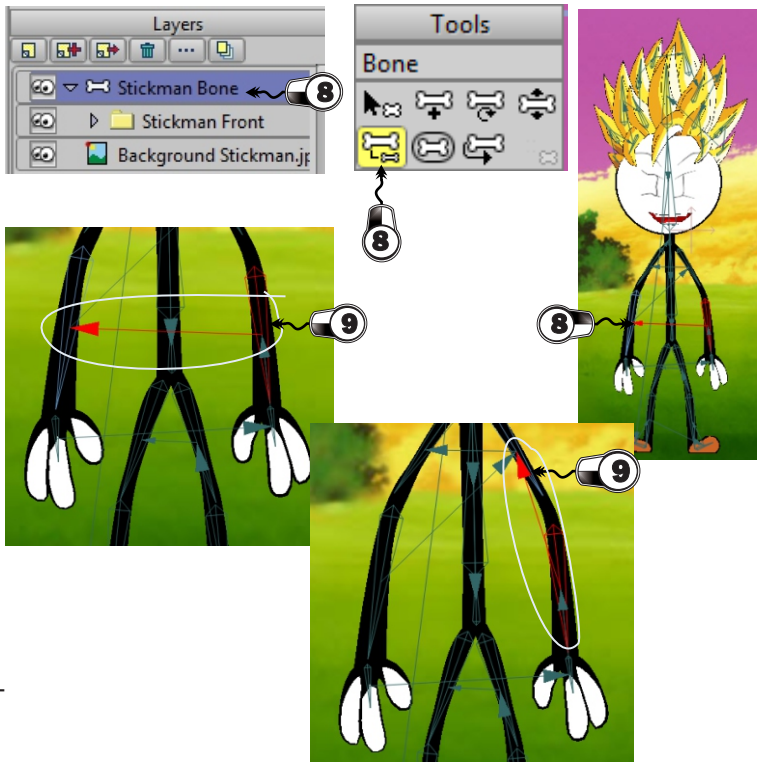


1. View the expected output file indicated above.
2. Open the activity Lab Exercise 2.3 that you've made earlier.
3. Some of the bones are set but not clearly seen. Let's color the bones to easily identify them. Color the Torso, Shoulder-Neck Bones with a yellow color. To do this follow the succeeding steps.
4. Click the **Select Bone Tool**.
5. To select multiple bones, hold down the Ctrl or Shift key on keyboard, then click each bone.
6. When bones are selected, click on the **color** yellow from the drop-down menu located at the top bar.
7. Continue coloring the bones of the other parts of the Stickman's body, choose the colors of your preference. When done proceed to Re-parenting Bones.

Re-Parenting Bones

From your previous activity, you added each bone without considering the order of the child-parent bone setup. Now to prepare our character for animation we need to setup the bones properly.

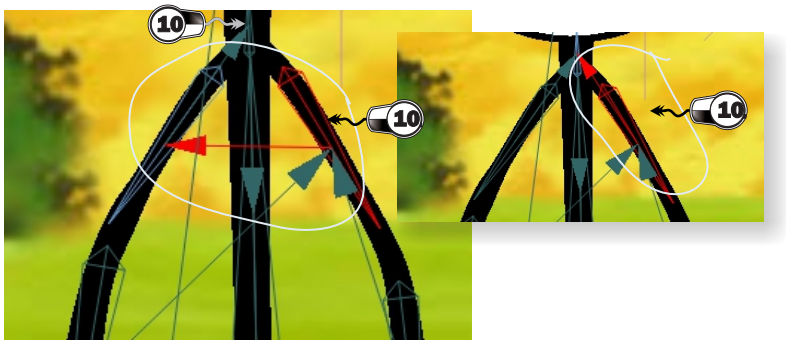
Obviously if the child bone is not pointed to its parent bone, there is disorder, so we need to re-parent this bone. To see this in action follow the next steps below.



8. Be sure that the Stickman Bone layer is selected, then click on **Re-parent Bone tool** to see if each part is connected to the parent bone. The arrow as shown indicates each child bone connected to its parent bone.
9. Use the Pan & Zoom tool to focus and clearly see the arrows. The picture shows a bone arrow in the arm crosses to the other arm. We need to re-parent this bone to the upper arm bone.
   Now, hold down the **ALT key** from the keyboard then click that child bone, after that release the ALT key then click the upper bone which is the correct parent bone, this is how to re-parent bones.

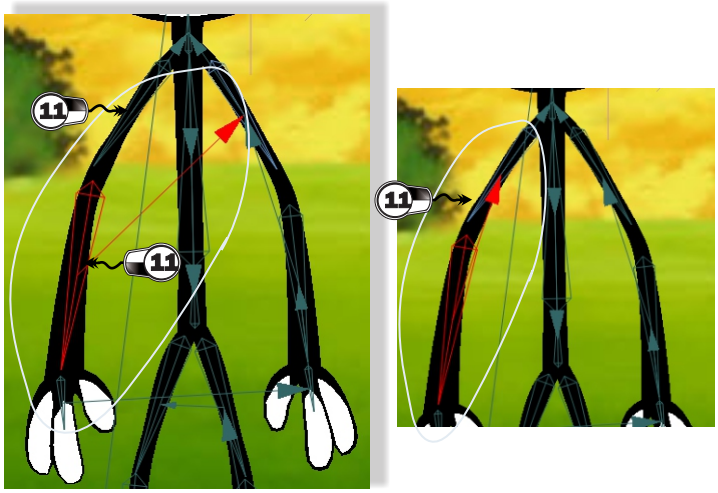
   Notice that the arrow has transfered to the correct parent bone as shown.

10 Let us now proceed to the next bone, of which this was the parent bone on our previous step, this bone now becomes the child bone of the upper/parent bone. Hold down the **ALT key** then click that bone, you will see that this bone is not correctly connected to its parent bone, release the ALT key then click the upper bone which is the correct parent bone. Congratulations! you know now how to re-parent a bone.



Notice that the arrow has transfered to the correct parent bone as shown.

11 Now let us examine the other arm, use the steps on how to re-parent each bone. Re-parent now the lower arm bone, as shown. Hold down the **ALT key** then click that child bone, you will see that this bone is not correctly connected to its parent bone, release the ALT key then click the upper or its parent bone. At this point you already have an idea on how child-parent bone should be.



In order for you to fully understand the child-parent bone concept, you can test your own body parts. At which part moves together? when you move your head, what are the parts that go together?

12 It is time for you to check completely all the bones of Stickman, if it needs re-parenting, you have take those steps on how to re-parent bones. The picture shown is a complete and proper bone setup of Stickman. Notice that all the arrows flows to each of the parent bone from each corresponding child bone.

13 When your done, save your project to your folder.