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Chapter Contents

Bringing a Cartoon Character to Life

The time has come for us to start designing and rigging the cartoon character we will be using for this project. There are many elements to consider, especially when it comes to creating a skeletal structure for your character. Don't worry, this chapter will guide you through the entire process and before you know it, you will have the star of your production ready to go!

Thinking about Design

At this point, you probably have a basic idea of what you want your character(s) to look like. Every cartoonist has his/her own style that gives the overall cartoon a unique look. Think about your favorite cartoons for a moment and analyze how everything is constructed. John Kricfalusi's *Ren & Stimpy* combined exaggerated character movements with retro-painted backdrops. By adding in the realistic close-up shots, they showed that when something disturbing or gross is introduced, you will have a very interesting mix of elements coming into play.

Looking at more modern works, such as Seth MacFarlane's *Family Guy* and *American Dad*, you will notice that all of the characters have a distinct style that definitely carves its own identity. The characters seen in these shows typically have large round eyes, are viewed at a three-fourths angle, and contain exaggerated facial features (such as chins or foreheads). While Kricfalusi and MacFarlane's styles are miles apart, one thing is the same their consistency to their own styles.
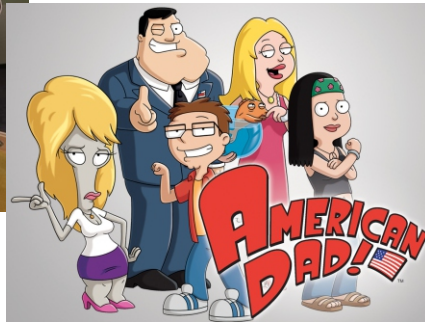

Ren and Stimpy exaggerated characters

Seth MacFarlane's Family Guy and American Dad

Being consistent with consistency

No matter how you decide to draw your characters, whether they appear realistic or more cartoony and exaggerated, it's important to keep your character designs consistent throughout. It would be quite jarring to the audience if you had a character that looks like one from Ren & Stimpy and a character that looks like one from Seth MacFarlane's Family Guy interacting with one another. Could this be done? Of course, and a creative cartoonist could think of a clever plot device to carry it out. However, as a general rule, it's best to find a style, practice it, perfect it, and then evolve with it. When in doubt, examine one of your favorite cartoons and pay attention to the character designs.

Like with the Draw tools, **frame 0** (as shown in the following screenshot) is your home base when it comes to creating and editing your bones. You can also experiment with bone movements while in frame 0, without affecting the animation of your project. Be sure to keep this in mind as you start to learn the Bone tools upnext.

Frame 0
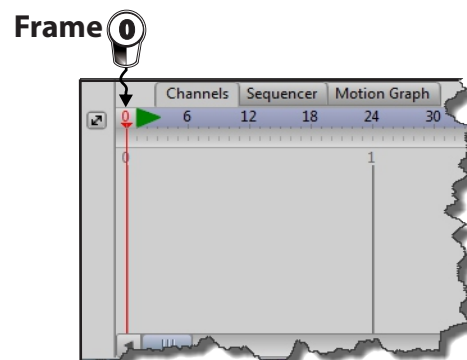
6 Bringing a Cartoon Character to Life

Laboratory Activities

Layer Binding Dee

Lab Exercise 6.1

Task: Bind bones to its layer.
Expected Output File: None
Work File: Dee the boy.png

Video Tutorial: Bone Rigging Tutorial.mp4

(1) Launch the Anime Studio Application from your desktop. You may start viewing the video tutorial.

(2) Open the character "Dee the Boy " that you made earlier. Check how the character looks in your right. If you have not created it yet, look for the Dee.anime in the work files folder.

(3) On the Layers Panel, create a new Bone Layer and, name it "**Character Bone**" and drag all the other layers inside this bone, as shown in the snapshot.

(4) Add bones on all of the parts of this character as shown. Use the tools below to accomplish this. Bone details are shown in the picture right.,

   Add Bone (A)   Select Bone (B)

(5) When you are done, notice the points of the character don't react to the bone when you use the Manipulate bone tool. This is because your points are not binded yet to the bone. To bind points you need to use the Bind Layer tool.

   Bind Layer

(6) To bind the layers, on the Layers Panel, select the Head Group Layer then on the Bone Tools click on the Bind Layer tool and click the Bone that represent the Head. To test if this bone works, use Manipulate Bone tool to check if the bone moves along with the Head.

(7) Now we will try to bind the body. Click on the Body layer then click or use the Bind Layer tool then click the bone of the body. This time the body bone is now binded to the body layer. Again test the body bone using the Manipulate bones tool and move the bone if the body goes with the bone.

(8) Do the same steps on the other layers and the bind all bones to the layer it represents.

(9) Save this project file to your folder.

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