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Chapter Contents

Exploring Layers and Timeline

Now that we have an understanding of how the drawing tools work, it's time to take a look at the different features that will allow us to bring our characters and scenes to life. As our projects progress, it will become clear that layers play a huge role in organization and enable different features for us to use. Our success will also rely on how well we are able to utilize the different timeline types and camera tools.

Simplifying Layers

Have you ever made a sandwich? You probably have. At the very least, you've seen or eaten one (and if you haven't, you should stop reading this book and explore life a bit more because, seriously, everyone should know what a sandwich is). Typically, a sandwich is made up of different ingredients. As an example, you have a slice of bread on top, lettuce and tomato underneath, a piece of cheese, then some meat, and finally another piece of bread. Looking at this sandwich overhead, the top slice of bread hides the rest of the ingredients, unless the lettuce, tomato, meat, or cheese tends to poke out from the sides. There's usually a certain order to the ingredients, but they can be removed or rearranged to change the makeup of the sandwich. When you examine one piece of the sandwich by itself, it's not very remarkable.

Combined with the other ingredients, it creates something more complex and unique. This, in a nutshell, is how layers work in Anime Studio. If this analogy made you hungry, go make a sandwich. This book isn't going anywhere.

Each layer in Anime Studio has its own entity or ingredient that makes up the entire animation. You can make as many layers as you wish; it just depends on how you want to organize your project file. For instance, it's usually standard practice to create separate layers for most elements of a character: head, eyes, nose, mouth, and so on. There are other artists who will only make one layer for all the items on the face, as an example. You may want to place multiple assets on a layer should you plan to use actions, which is a bit more complex and something we won't be touching on much in this book. As we start creating more complex assets, you will slowly discover which workflow best suits you.

Layers can be arranged by clicking and dragging in the Layers panel on the right-hand side. When one layer overlaps another, the objects in that top layer will appear over the bottom layer on the canvas. This can be adjusted so that layers are based on the depth of your canvas, but we won't be exploring that option in this book as the layer hierarchy method is the default and most commonly used. When you select a layer in the Layers panel, you can only edit that layer, which prevents you from accidentally altering anything else in the project file.

The **Layers panel**, along with housing our layers, allows us to create, delete, and duplicate layers. This will become very important as we start to create layers for the cartoon we will be making. Duplicating a layer has the advantage of retaining all of the properties of another layer. This could then allow you to use the copied layer as a reference and make adjustments with a foundation in place. The Layers panel can be seen in the following screenshot:
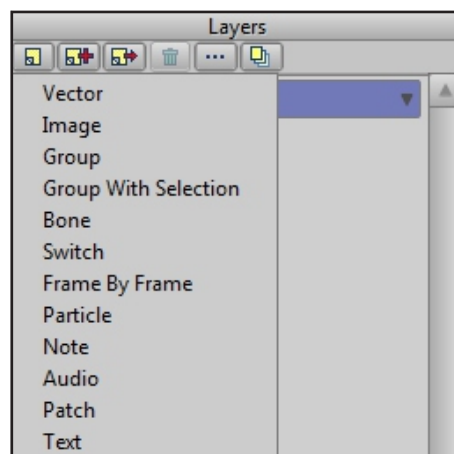
Layers have options that can be accessed by double-clicking on the desired layer in the Layers panel (or by clicking on the icon with three dots). From there, in the Layers Settings panel, you can do many different things including renaming and choosing a label color. Layer options can change depending on which layer type you have selected. We will be exploring this panel between now and *Chapter 4, Enhancing Your Art with the Layer Settings Panel and Style Palette.*

4 Exploring Layers and Timelines

Laboratory Activities

FOLLOW PATH & FLIP

Lab Exercise 4.1

Task: <u>Animate a car using Follow Path tool</u>
Expected Output File: <u>Boy Driving.mp4</u>
Work Files: <u>Road.png & Car.png</u>

① View the expected output file indicated above.

② Launch the Anime Studio.

③ Create a new Anime Studio document.

④ On the Layers panel, double-click and rename the **Layer 1** to **Path.**

⑤ Create a new layer drop-down menu and choose Image for this layer. A window will pop-up, locate the **road.png** in the same folder

⑥ Create a new image layer for the **car.png**, follow the steps when you create the previous layer **road**.

⑦ Drag the **Path** layer above the **road** image layer, as shown.

⑧ We will not be needing the car for now so let's hide it, click on the eye box to hide the **car layer**. While the **Path** layer is selected use the **Add Point** tool to create the path as shown.

⑨ When done, unhide the car image layer. Click on the eye box as shown. While the **car layer** is selected click the **Follow Path** tool. This time the path that you have made with the Add Point tool earlier is now visible. Click the starting point of this path, your car now changes position as it responded & moves initially to that point.

⑩ Now move to **Frame 72** in your Timeline Channels tab to mark our last stop for the car to travel or take, then click the last point of the path. The car moves to the last point that you have just clicked. Noticed in the Timeline that you have created the an action to frame 72.

⑪ Click the **Play** button in the Timeline or scrub the Timeline pointer to view the animation created by the path.
 At this point, the car is so big as shown in the previous step, it is not proportionate to the road, so move to Frame 0 then start **resizing** as it goes to the path using the **Transform Layer** tool . As it reaches nearer to the last point of the path it gets bigger in size. Use the **Flip button** when it reaches the curve road. View again the expected output file to counter- check what we mean here. If done, save this project to your folder.