



Pencil

Traditional Animation, Simple and Free

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Pencil Animation

www.pencil-animation.org

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Introduction

Any animator remembers how they started. There was two thousand years of history behind traditional animation but none of it seemed important as they thumbed through their first flipbook, watching the lines and colors move in beautiful arcs and trying to understand how something could be stationary and moving at the same time. At that moment, they were mesmerized by these moving pictures and determined to make their own. They wanted to make the lines dance for others like the lines danced for them.

Other choices

If this sounds like your story, then you know how hard it was to find a computer program that specializes in traditional animation.



The first animation program people think of is Adobe Flash. But Flash, like most current options, creates vector-based animation instead of traditional animation. Vector-based animations use layers of colored shapes to create their animation instead of an entire drawing. A vector-based animation looks like it's sliding or bending, not moving and turning like a traditional animation. It looks robotic, not alive.

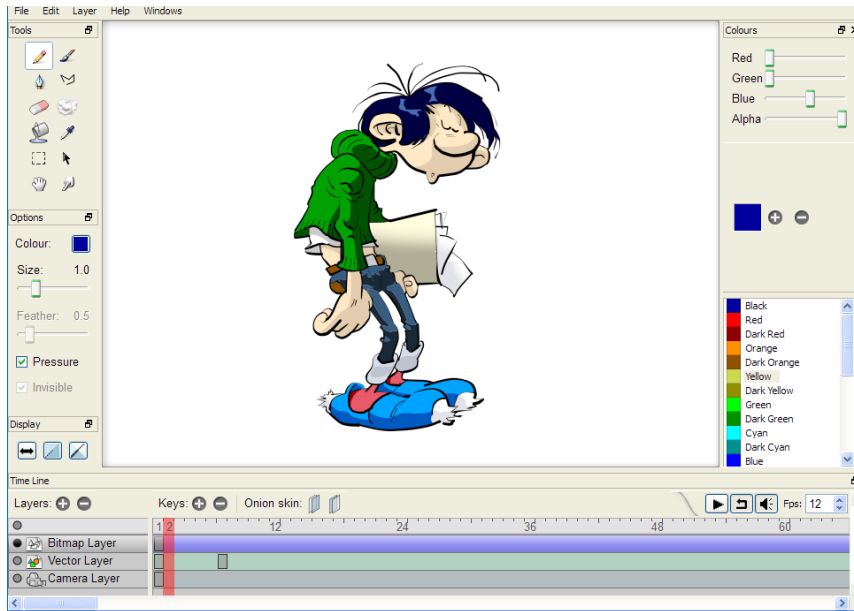
There are a number of programs that specialize in traditional animation, like ToonBoom Animation Studio, a large, powerful program capable of exceptional animations. Those capabilities come with a hefty price. ToonBoom charges \$329 for the basic version of its software. This is not unusual. Some programs charge over \$600. The programs are excellent tools for professional animators but the cost is prohibitive to people exploring the field for the first time.

Aspiring animators around
the world use Pencil to
**bring their
imagination to life.**

And even if cost wasn't an issue, the learning curve might be. Professional programs are filled with buttons and menu options. There are multiple brushes, tracing tools, and many other instruments. To newcomers, this complexity is daunting and also misguided. No one walks into an art studio and looks for the paintbrushes. The canvas is the most important part. Unfortunately, in many programs, the paintbrushes are winning.

The free solution

The field may be cluttered with expensive and intimidating options but there is a high-quality free option for people exploring the field or transitioning from paper and pencil.



Pencil was created in 2006 when Pascal Naidon, searching for a free traditional animation program, found Patrick Corrieri's "Pencil Planner" program and decided to improve it. Pencil has become one of the leading free traditional animation programs with a strong user community that continually develops the program.

Pencil may be free, but that doesn't mean it lacks powerful features.

Drawing tools

Pencil contains a number of brushes, coloring tools, and erasers that can be customized to the exact size and color you need. Bitmap and vector tools are included, just like professional programs. And if you have an image you want to incorporate, Pencil includes an import tool as well.

Layer options

Pencil offers a big canvas to play with but offers the ability to create multiple layers. That way you won't have to redo your entire canvas when only one thing changes. And don't be fooled: animations do not have to be silent. Pencil has tools for importing sound layers as well. Finally, there's also a camera tool, which lets you define a certain camera area for uploading or exporting.

Simplicity

There are no cascades of menu options or walls of special paintbrushes in Pencil. The clean, uncluttered interface keeps the focus on the creation, not the tools. Open the program and start drawing immediately. Pencil makes it easy for anyone to make animations.

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Share your creations

Pencil includes the option to export to multiple formats, such as editable X-sheets, image sequences, and Flash/Shockwave files. The Mac version of Pencil can also export to a movie file using QuickTime. Aspiring animators around the world use Pencil to bring their imaginations to life and share them with others.

Van's story

Pencil has been used by thousands of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Some of them have left feedback on the forums.

A user named Van found Pencil after months of looking for a free animation program. Van was trained in the arts a long time ago but realized that he wanted something to play with, a place where he could try out some of his old animation dreams. "I've wanted to ever since I was a kid," he wrote.

Van hadn't been able to find a program that he liked. Everything was too complicated or had a bad interface. This was a big problem for him, since Van wanted to have fun making animations with his five-year-old daughter. An interface that was too awkward or complex would frustrate his daughter. His chance would be gone.

After finishing his project,
Van wrote,
**"This is the most fun I've
had with a computer."**



And then Van found Pencil—by accident. A link from another page took him to the Pencil website. He hadn't even searched for it. But Van downloaded the program and started testing it. He quickly discovered how much he enjoyed it and how much he had been looking forward to this very thing.

In six days, Van created 1,300 frames of animation.

Two weeks later, he finished his project, an imaginative animation set to Joe Satriani's "The Power Cosmic." After exporting his project and uploading it to YouTube—where it received many enthusiastic comments—he returned to the forum to write, "This is the most fun I've had with a computer ever."

Conclusion

If you are exploring traditional animation or looking to recapture the excitement of creating your own flipbooks, look no further. Pencil is the best free choice for computerized traditional animation.

Pencil runs on Mac, Windows, and Linux systems. Download your copy, browse the gallery, and read the forums at www.pencil-animation.org.