Character animation

**Goal**: make characters that move in a convincing way to communicate personality and mood.

Walt Disney developed a number of principles.

Computer graphics animators have adapted them to 3D animation.

Reading

Required:


Recommended:

- Michael Comet tutorial (source for the ball and green bug examples in this lecture): http://www.comet-cartoons.com/3ddocs/charanim/index.html
Animation Principles

6. Overlapping action
7. Secondary action
8. Straight-ahead vs. pose-to-pose vs. blocking
9. Arcs
10. Slow in, slow out
11. Exaggeration
12. Appeal

We will consider each...

: flatten an object or character by pressure or by its own power.
: used to increase the sense of speed and emphasize the squash by contrast.

Note: keep volume constant!
Squash and stretch (cont'd)

FIGURE 4a. To slow action, an object's position overlaps from frame to frame which gives the action a smooth appearance to the eye.

FIGURE 4b. Squashing occurs in a faster action when the object's position doesn't overlap and the eye perceives separate images.

FIGURE 4c. Stretching the object so that it's positions overlap again will relieve the squashy effect.

[Lasseter]

Squash and stretch (cont’d)

The famous self-filled blower trick, a guide to maintaining volume in any animatable shape. Proof that sound and shape can be centered with the simplest of shapes.

[Thomas and Johnston]
**Staging**

Present the idea so it is unmistakably clear.

Audience can only see one thing at a time.

Useful guide: stage actions in silhouette.

In dialogue, characters face 3/4 towards the camera, not right at each other.

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**Timing**

action, and the reaction. Don't dwell too long on any of these.

Timing also reflects the weight of an object:

- light objects move quickly
- heavier objects move more slowly

Timing can completely change the meaning of an action.

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**Timing (cont’d)**

The many meanings of a simple head turn:

- NO inbetweens: hit by a tremendous force.
- ONE inbetween: hit by a brick, frying pan.
- TWO inbetweens: nervous tic, muscle spasm.
- THREE inbetweens: dodging a thrown brick.
- FOUR inbetweens: giving a crisp order (move it!)
- FIVE inbetweens: a more friendly order (c’mon!)
- SIX inbetweens: sees a sports car he always wanted.
- SEVEN inbetweens: trying to get a better look...
- EIGHT inbetweens: searching for something on shelf.
- NINE inbetweens: considering thoughtfully.
- TEN inbetweens: stretching a sore muscle.

[Thomas and Johnston]
**Anticipation**

An action has three parts: anticipation, action, reaction.

Anatomical motivation: a muscle must extend before it can contract.

Prepares audience for action so they know what to expect.

Directs audience's attention.

**Anticipation (cont’d)**

Amount of anticipation (combined with timing) can affect perception of speed or weight.

**Follow through**

Actions seldom come to an abrupt stop.

Physical motivation: inertia
Follow through (cont’d)

Overlapping action

One part initiates ("leads") the move. Others follow in turn.

Hip leads legs, but eyes often lead the head.

Loose parts move slower and drag behind (sometimes called "secondary motion").

Overlaps can apply to intentions. Example: settling into the house at night.

- Close the door
- Lock the door
- Take off the coat
- etc...

Each action doesn’t come to a complete finish before the next starts.

The Wrong Trousers

Jurassic Park
Secondary action

An action that emphasizes the main point but is secondary to it.

Straight-ahead vs. pose-to-pose vs. blocking

pose: Define keyframes and "inbetweens".

Blocking: Computer graphics animators adaptation

- Start key-framing at the top of the hierarchy.
- Refine level by level.
- Keyframes for different parts need not happen at the same time.

Straight-ahead vs. pose-to-pose vs. blocking (cont’d)

Screenshot from Maya
Arcs

Avoid straight lines since most things in nature move in arcs.

Slow in and slow out

An extreme pose can be emphasized by slowing down as you get to it (and as you leave it).

In practice, many things do not move abruptly but start and stop gradually.

Exaggeration

Appeal

The character must interest the viewer.

It doesn’t have to be cute and cuddly.

Design, simplicity, behavior all affect appeal.

Example: Luxo, Jr. is made to appear childlike.
Appeal (cont’d)

Note: avoid perfect symmetries.

Animation artifact

Animation artifact

- One artifact per group
- 60 seconds... shorter is usually better. Don’t make an animation that feels like “slow motion”!
- Snapshot 5pm Thursday, December 8
  - Nothing fancy, just something that will help people remember which artifact was yours during voting.
- Artifact 10am Friday, December 9

Artifact voting

- “Up” DVD
- 1st place: “Up” DVD + mystery prize!

Animation production

More broadly animation is about making “movies” and encompasses:

- Story
- Art design
- Modeling
- Cinematography
- Motion
- Rendering