



# The Animation Process

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Notes from a Lecture by Ollie Johnston

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PDF by Jon Hooper 1999

# Notes on Animation from the brain of Ollie Johnston

1. Don't illustrate words or mechanical movements. Illustrate ideas or thoughts, with the attitudes and actions.
2. Squash and stretch entire body for attitudes.
3. If possible, make definite changes from one attitude to another in timing and expression.
4. What is the character thinking?
5. It is the thought and circumstances behind the action that will make the action interesting.

e.g.: A man walks up to a mailbox, drops in his letter, and walks away.

or

A man desperately in love with a girl far away carefully mails a letter, in which he has poured out his heart.

6. When drawing dialog, go for phrasing ( simplify the dialog into pictures of the dominating vowel and consonant sounds, especially in fast dialog.)
7. Hit your pose 4 frames before articulating dialog, but use identical timing of the mouth as on the X-sheet. (Some suggest articulating dialog 2 frames before its placement on the sheet.)
8. Changes of expression, and major dialog sounds are points of interest. If possible hold the character still for time. If the head moves too much you won't see more subtle action.
9. Don't move anything without a purpose.
10. Concentrate on drawing **Clearly**, not **Cleanly**.
11. Don't be careless.
12. Everything has a function. Don't draw it before knowing why.
13. The facial expression should not be contradicted by the body. The entire pose should express the thought.
14. Use thumbnails, explore all avenues to get the clearest picture in your drawing.
15. Analyze a character in a specific pose for the best areas to show squash and stretch. Keep those areas simple.

16. Picture in your head what it is you're drawing.
17. Think in terms of drawing the whole character, not just the head or eyes, etc. Keep a balanced relationship between all parts of the drawing.
18. Strive for the most effective drawing.
19. Draw a profile of the drawing you're working on, every once in a while. Check the proportions against each other. The profile will usually clarify any perspective problem.
20. The break in the eyebrow usually relates to the high point of the eye. Keep this relationship consistent.
21. The eye is pulled by the eyebrow muscles.
22. Keep skull size consistent, but get a plastic quality in the face; cheeks, mouth and eyes.
23. Keep drawings loose. Strive for a rhythmic quality.
24. Animate simple shapes.
25. The audience will lose the first 6-8 frames of your scene.
26. Does the secondary action contribute to the main idea, or confuse it?
27. Think of your scene in continuity, visually and emotionally. Don't animate for the sake of animation.
28. Actions can be eliminated, and staging "cheated", if it simplifies the composition of the scene and does not disturb the audience.
29. Spend most of your time planning your scene before you draw.
30. Steps for animating a 4 legged character:

Work out the acting first. Pose your main attitudes. Then animate the legs. Finally adjust the up and down motion of the body in accordance to the phase of the stride.

# Preliminary Thinking (Before you Draw)

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1. What is the purpose of your scene in the picture?
2. What is the emotion of your scene?
3. What is the rhythm of your scene?
4. What is the focus? That is where do you want the audience to look, the character, 2 characters, or 3 characters?
5. Does your scene have hook-ups to the scenes before and after? (Hook-up for velocity as well as position)
6. Can you pose your scene on eights for approval?
7. Can you visualize the scene in your head?
8. Can you act out the scene with your own body? What does it feel like?
9. Have you talked your idea over with the director?
10. Have you understood your layout?
11. Can you hear the highs and lows in your dialog? Have you diagramed it?
12. Do you have a cassette of the dialog?
13. Have you timed your scene with a stop watch or metronome and noted the results on your x-sheet?
14. Have you thumbnailed your action?
15. Is your action within the 1:85 cut-off?
16. Can you find a similar scene (action) in the film library? Please don't rediscover the wheel.
17. Do you have model sheets for the character?
18. Inform the assistant director of the pick up. And put scene chip on the board with your name on it.
19. Does your scene require camera mechanics?
20. Is your action too complex? How simple can you make it?
21. Do you have a daily routine (study) for improving your skill level?