

Blue Hat Recipes

Introduction



Blue Hat recipes are about the storytelling production process, and workflow. All the steps needed to finish an animated film are demonstrated from beginning to end in the Blue Hat recipes.

You don't have to be a great animator to tell a visual story. Beginner quality animation is okay if the story is clever and entertaining! On the other hand, great animation can NOT make up for a poor story.

Blue Hat recipes reveal our process of inventing stories worth animating. Our methods work because we have minted hundreds of animators using our secret recipes, and they put story first.

We will invent a movie idea, storyboard it, write witty dialogue, gather our ingredients and utensils, size things up, hypothesize timing, rig our characters, layout our scenes, animate, record our voices, add sound effects, edit and upload! We model our system every step of the way. If we can do it, you can too! Let's cook up an animation!





Recipe 1: Inventing A Story

What You Will Learn

Brainstorming a list of characters, settings, and problems will help to generate a team-based palette of story ideas. Doing this exercise under time constraints (we suggest 15 minutes) makes it great for small groups. If any character/setting/problem combination on your finished list strikes your fancy at this phase, it may be worthy of a short animation.

Why Is This Important?

This way of inventing stories is extremely engaging. It diffuses ownership too. If three different people generate the parts of each idea, negative feelings are avoided when most of the ideas on the list are eventually cut out. All we need is a tiny germ of a story idea, with a big juicy problem, to get the team's creative mojo in motion.



Inventing a Story

A great way to invent a story in group settings. Take turns. Go Fast. Keep it simple. One character. One setting. One Problem. Each idea has to come from a different person.

Character

Setting

Problem



Recipe 2:

Stick Figure Storyboards

What You Will Learn

You will learn to use a *Storyboard* as a decision making tool. A *Storyboard* will help you come up with the solution to your character's problem. You will understand why to use Long shots, Medium shots, and Close-ups. You will discover that this *Storyboard* will be the blueprint for your movie.

Why Is This Important?

Storyboarding solves two problems. First, it forces us to make choices and conclusions about the character/setting/problem. Every scene choice generates the question, "What happens next?" The answer is what happens in the next scene. Second, we map out the camera positions. *Long shots*, *Medium shots*, and *Close-ups* are used for very specific reasons. These camera positions are a powerful, silent character in your movie.



Use Pencil!

Stick Figure Storyboard

Use the most basic stick figure drawings possible, and sketch the answers to following questions:

What does the audience see when the movie begins? Sketch this scene in #1

What happens next? Keep asking this question for every scene. Sketch the answer.

How does it end? Sketch the ending frames. Choose your shots wisely.

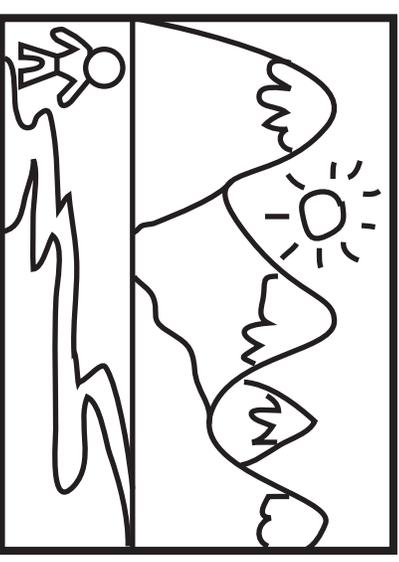
Shot _____				
1	2	3	4	5
Shot _____				
6	7	8	9	10

Camera Positions: Long Shot

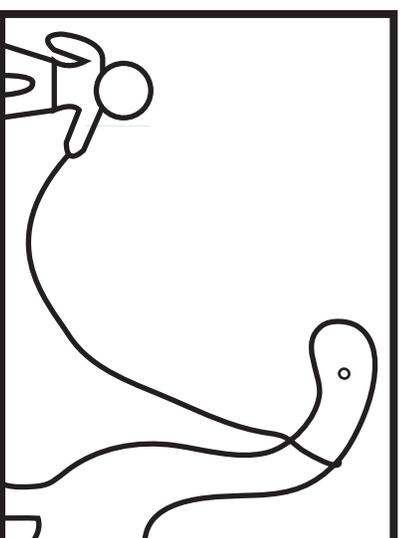
Why Long Shots?

Take the camera a "long" ways away to get the big picture or context!

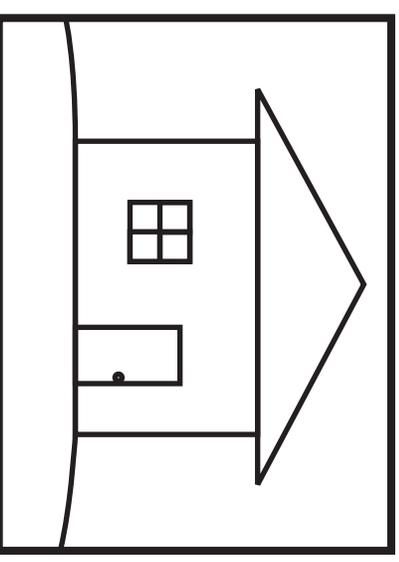
For Settings



Size Differences



Show Where Characters Live

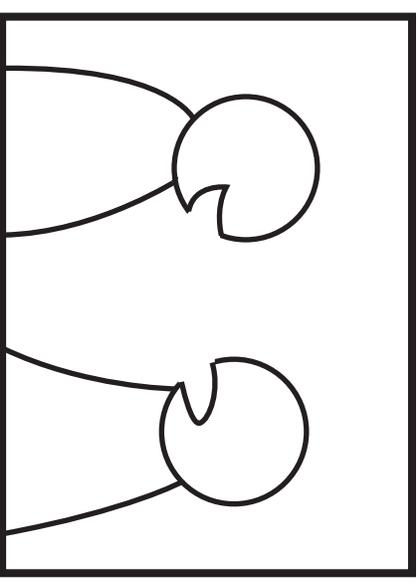


Camera Positions: Medium Shot

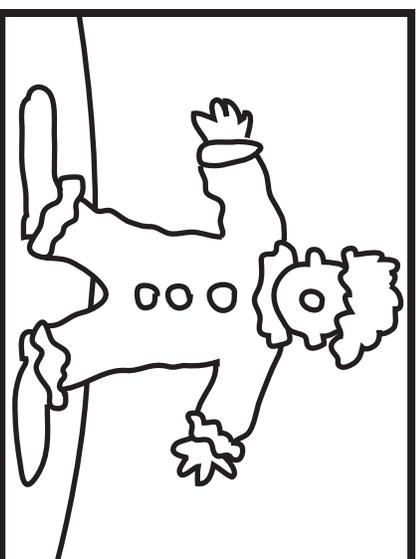
Why Medium Shots?

Use medium shots to give us a good look at your character(s).

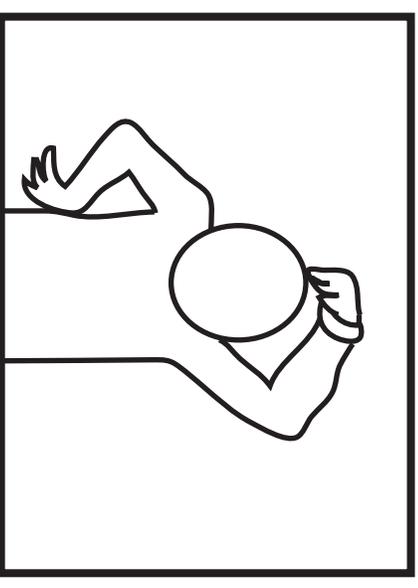
Characters Speaking



Sense of Costume



Body Gestures

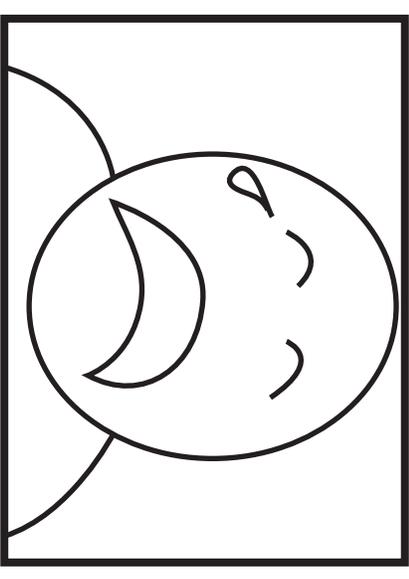


Camera Positions: Close-up

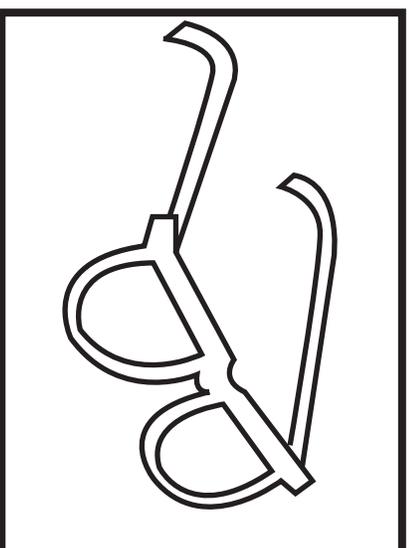
Why Close-Ups?

Move your audience with emotions, and clue them in with details

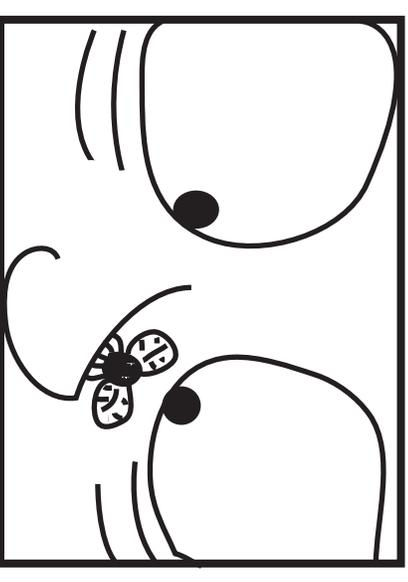
Any Feelings



Objects or Details



Extreme Close-Ups Emotions & Details



Recipe 3:

Brainstorming Dialogue



What You Will Learn

You will learn there are many many ways we can say the same thing. In this brainstorming exercise you will generate a list of phrases, puns, idioms, and word play which may apply to a story like this, in a setting like this, with a character like this.

Why Is This Important?

The word play your characters use in voice-overs can be the most entertaining part of your movie. We'll take any puns, idioms, or clever word combinations as dialogue options. Write down any zany idea.

A lot of the ideas will be un-usable, but others will be unbelievably clever and inventive.

This list will incubate and hatch even more ideas when we revisit it in later lessons.



Brainstorming Dialogue

Fill this space with:

Word Play - Idioms - Puns - Rhymes - Acronyms



Recipe 4:

Utensils and Ingredients

What You Will Learn

You will learn that table-top cut-paper animation is the fastest easiest way to make an original animation. You will learn that markers, pencils, crayons, paper, tape and scissors are all you need to bring creative worlds to life.

We sometimes throw clay into the mix too, but in a very limited, flattened-for-the-table-top, sense.

Why Is This Important?

We are making an original story from scratch. Using pre-made characters like Legos or toys as our main characters limits original expression. We want to demonstrate how to start from nothing and end up with an unique animated story. Designs with hand-made paper cut-outs and drawing utensils make the final product a truly unique blend of technology and hand-crafted goodness.



Ingredients & Utensils Checklist

Utensils

Scissors

Markers

Crayons

Colored Pensils

Pencils

Large Ziplock Bags

Ingredients

Masking Tape

Ream of Construction Paper

White Paper

Other (Glitter, Clay, Cotton, Eyeballs)



Recipe 5:

(S.L.T.) Sizing, Layout, Timing

What You Will Learn

You will learn how size your characters for *Long*, *Medium* and *Close-up* shots. You will understand why the size of your cut-outs is important.

You will also learn the *Rule of Thirds*, which will guide you in composing elements of a scene according to time-honored Hollywood practices. Finally, you will hypothesize the time signature of each scene. Hypothesizing how many pictures each animated scene may require based on a 15FPS frame rate.

Why Is This Important?

Sizing, Layout, and Timing (S.L.T.) are the most challenging principles for new animators. We've discovered new animators work too fast, too small and haven't a clue about placement of props.

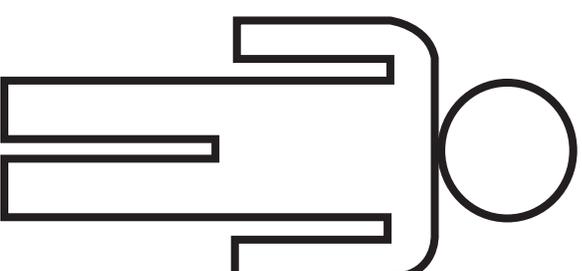
This lesson hopes to clue them in ahead of time.



Sizing Guide 1

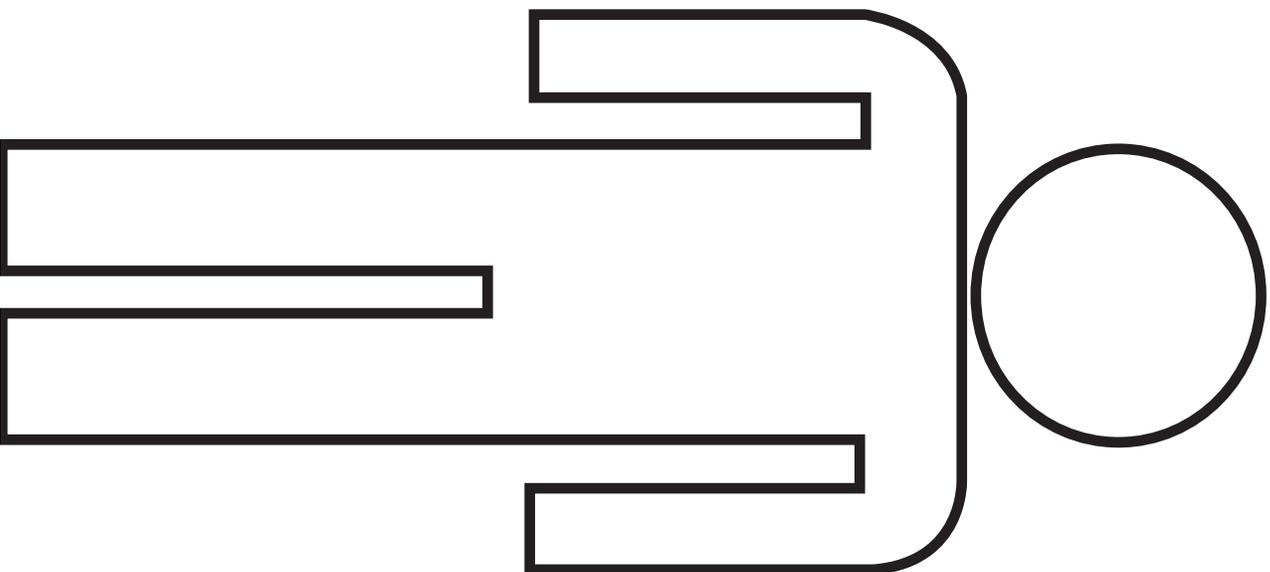
Long Shots

If you character is in a long shot, make about this size.



Medium Shots

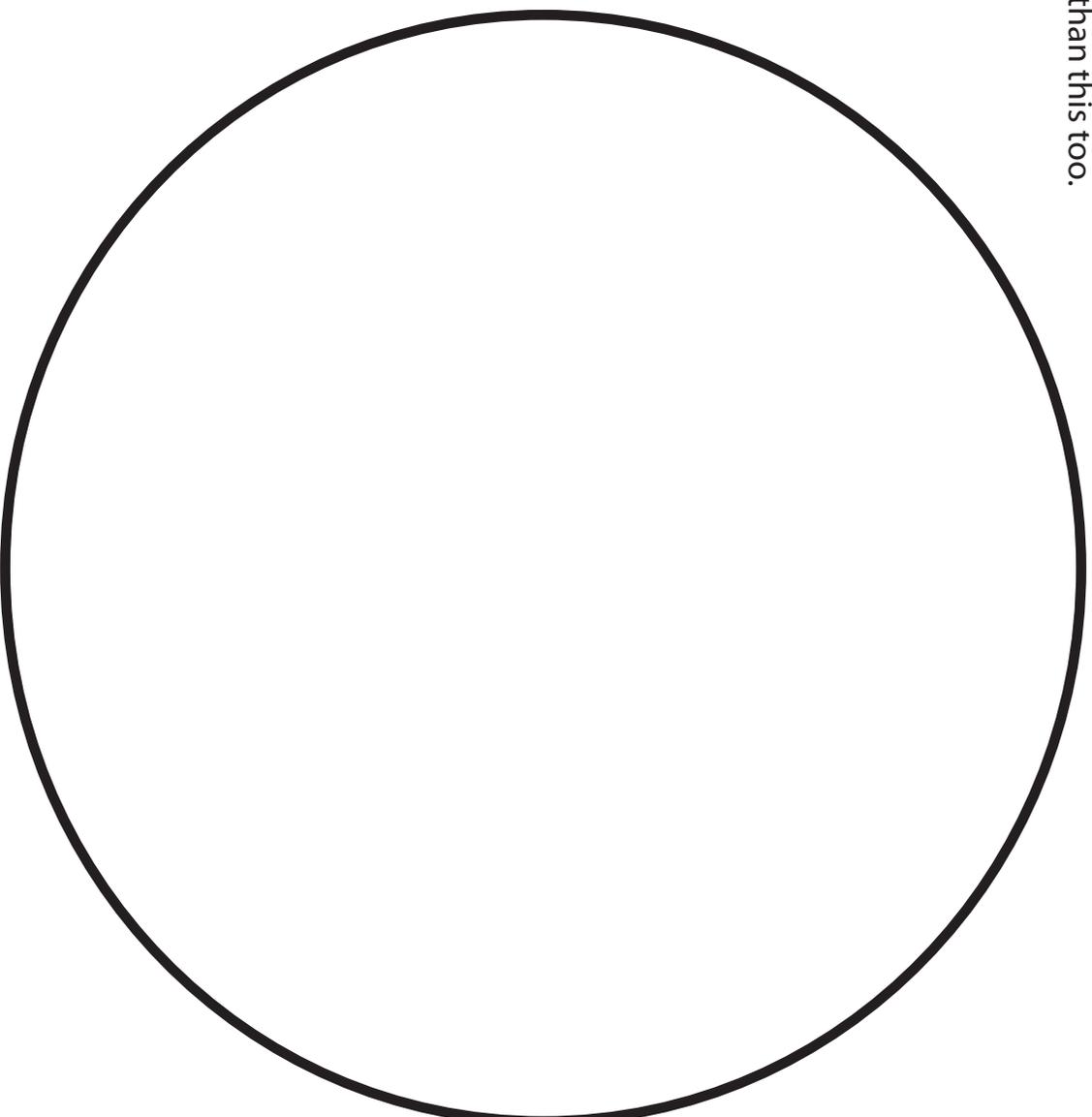
Make your character large enough to fill the screen. Medium shots help us focus on the pose, costuming, and speaking.



Sizing Guide 2

Close-Ups

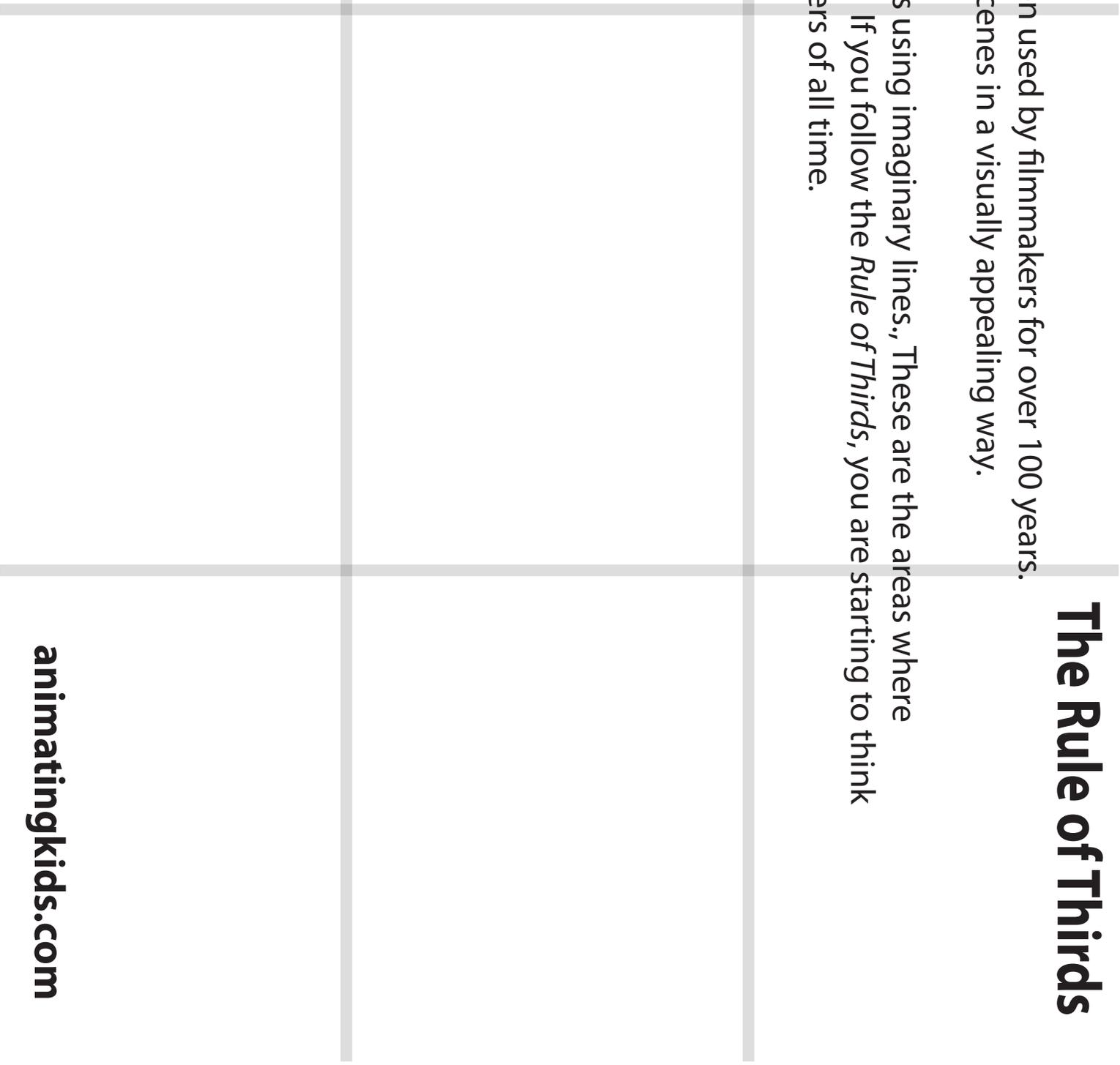
Make your character's face big enough to fill the screen.
The face can be bigger than this too.



The Rule of Thirds

The *Rule of Thirds* has been used by filmmakers for over 100 years. It helps us organize our scenes in a visually appealing way.

Divide a screen into thirds using imaginary lines. These are the areas where the eye naturally focuses. If you follow the *Rule of Thirds*, you are starting to think like the greatest filmmakers of all time.





Recipe 6:

Shooting The First Scene

What You Will Learn

You will learn how to lock-down your camera and sets in preparation for your first animated scene.

You will understand how to frame your scenes through a viewfinder. You will learn how to add sound to a scene. You will organize your props in a ziplock bag for safe keeping.

Why Is This Important?

A mistake 90% of young animators make is not locking down their cameras and sets. We tape the scenes down to the table and tape the props to the background of each scene with small tape loops.

The only items which need to be loose are the animatable bits. Everything else needs to hold still. So we lock all un-animatable items down.

When finished with the silent animation, we add sound. This is the cherry on top of our masterpiece.

