

Stop Motion Animation Workshop 2 Designing & Making Characters and Scenes

What you need:
Something to write, draw and colour with



Something to write or draw on.
Paper for sketching.
Larger Sheets of Paper for the backdrop.
Something to model with.
Modelling Clay (non-drying) or Plasticine.



What you end up with:
A completed character and backdrop for your stop motion animation!





Character design can be a very complicated and in-depth process, some animation companies spend millions of pounds developing and designing a character and that can take a long time to carry out and that is before any animating takes place.

If you don't have the time or the budget don't worry - you can still create fun and interesting characters to populate your stories.

There are some important things to consider when designing and making characters that will take us a short amount of time so we'll set you a task at that point and ask that you pause the video then to complete the task and then go back and continue the video.

Hopefully at the end you should have a character ready to be stop motion animated and a background for them to act in.

So let's get into this!

First of all we are going to look at designing the character you want to build.

In animation we generally concentrate on 3 key areas in the look of our characters as well as the story that the character needs to tell.

Those 3 key areas are...

1: Silhouette

Do they have a recognisable shape even when they are shown just as a black object?



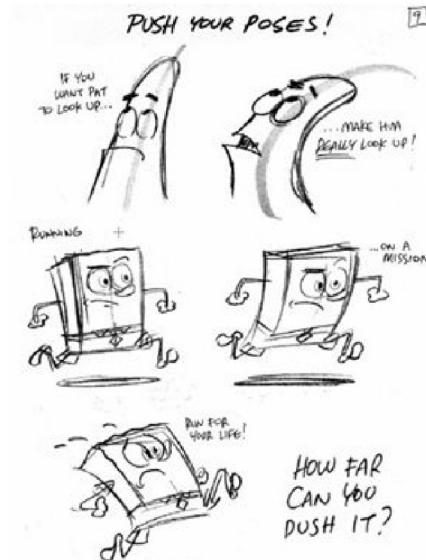
2: Colour

Helps to tell your story by reflecting the overall mood, famous characters also tend to have dominant colours.



3: Exaggeration

Are there features that will emphasise your character's personality?
Exaggeration also helps to tell your story.



When looking at character silhouettes we begin to recognise some basic shapes.

Those shapes can tell the audience something essential about your character:

SQUARE

Reliable, trustworthy, solid.

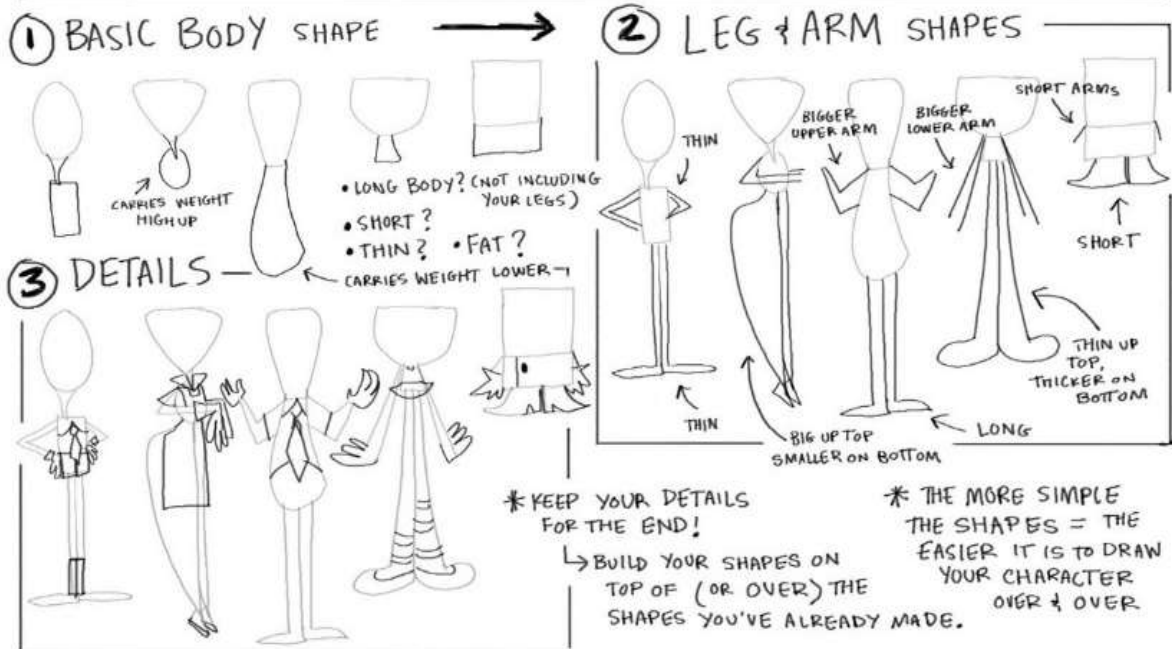
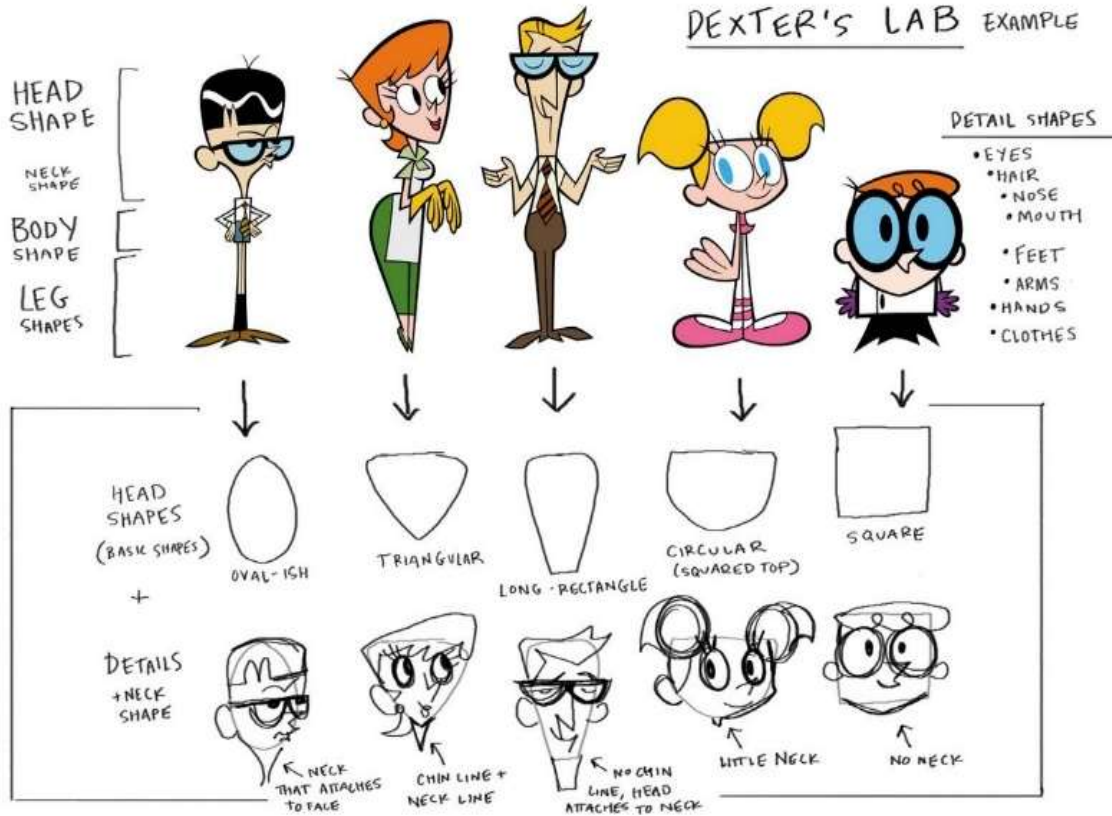
CIRCLE

Loveable, cute, cuddly.

TRIANGLE

Edgy, dangerous, different.

THINK IN SHAPES



Colours can indicate different moods or character traits.



CHALLENGE 1:

Look for images that are related to the character that you want to design.

To help you to design your characters you should always do some research or look at reference material – all good animators do this!

Look online for some reference material for your character and save some images. Group them together possibly as a mood board that will help to focus your mind on the important features to include in your own character design.

EXAMPLE:

My character that accidentally sets off in a rocket ship

I want her to be a young girl about 12, of Indian origin, possibly in a traditional type outfit that she has adapted in a modern quirky style, she has to be quite independent, intelligent and headstrong, willing to take risks.

Now you won't be able to represent everything on your mood board on your character but there may be 1 or 2 things that will help you to define what you are looking for – for me it's the skateboard and the bindi – the small red mark on the forehead.



CHALLENGE 2:

Do some simple sketches of your character



Remember!

Refer to your research!

Try to include features that tell you something about the character or the story.
Think about silhouette & shape, colour and exaggeration.

Don't worry about creating a masterpiece these are just simple visual notes.

CHALLENGE 3:

Model your character!

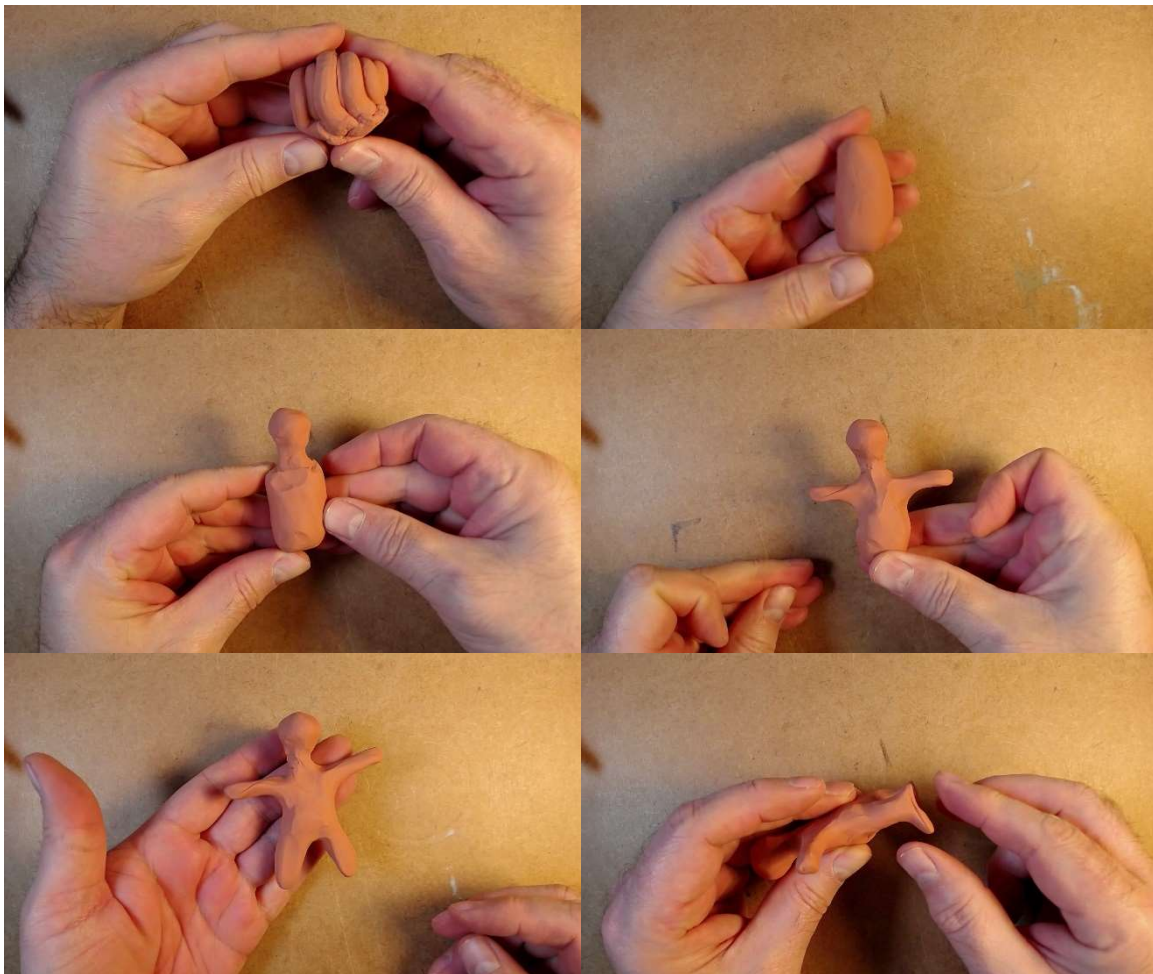
Now we move onto modelling your character in plasticine or modelling clay.

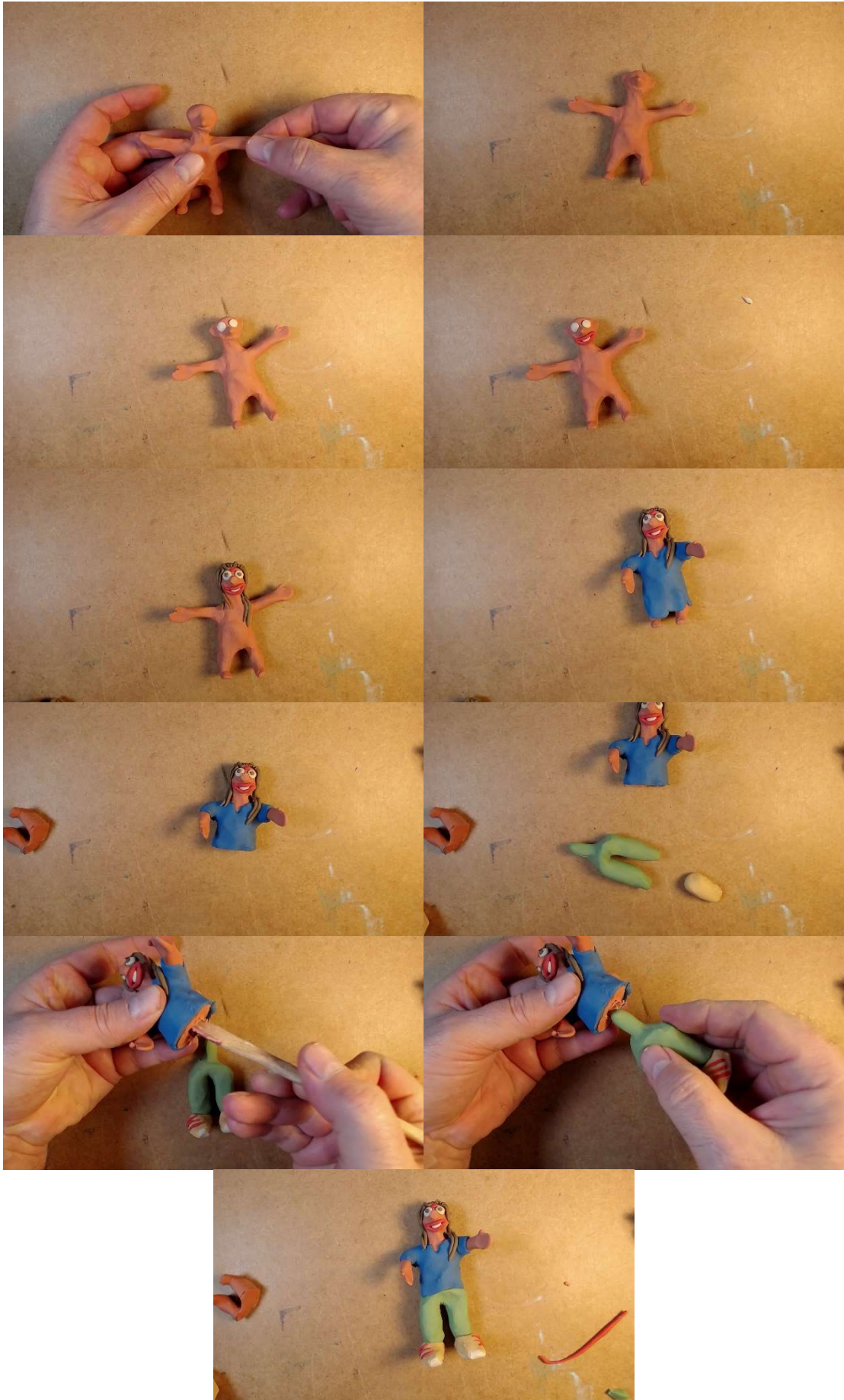
Pause the video often while you are doing this.

Start by softening the clay by squeezing, stretching, twisting and pressing until it begins to warm and softens enough making it easier to mould.

There are no rules to making your characters so any way that works for you is okay.

Remember though your character needs to be able to move in way that helps to tell your story, so make the sure the arms or hands are long enough and detailed enough to do that, or that your character can move in the way you want it to.





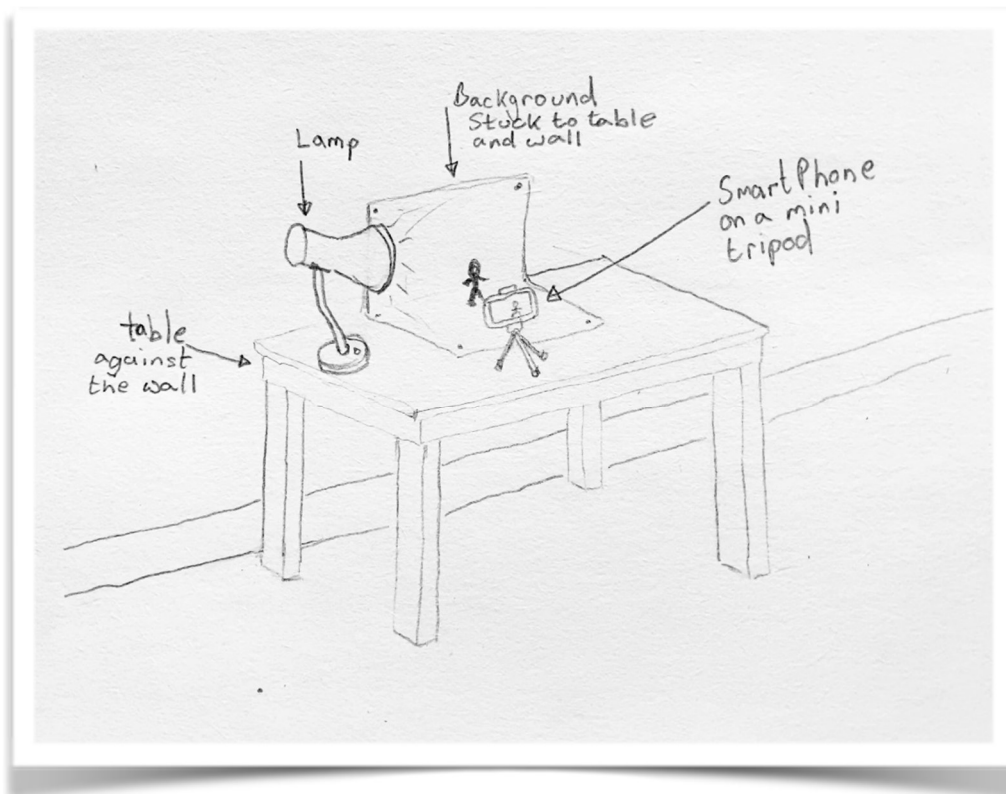
CHALLENGE 4:

Make your background

You could do the same sort of research into your background(s) as you did for your character, collect images of things you want in your background to help you construct your own.

Think about the colours you use and the mood you are trying to put into that scene, also think about the shapes you use as well for the same reasons.

You will need to make sure your background is big enough so that the camera you use doesn't see the edges, it may help to set everything up as you would when animating and look through the camera with your character to judge how big the backdrop needs to be.

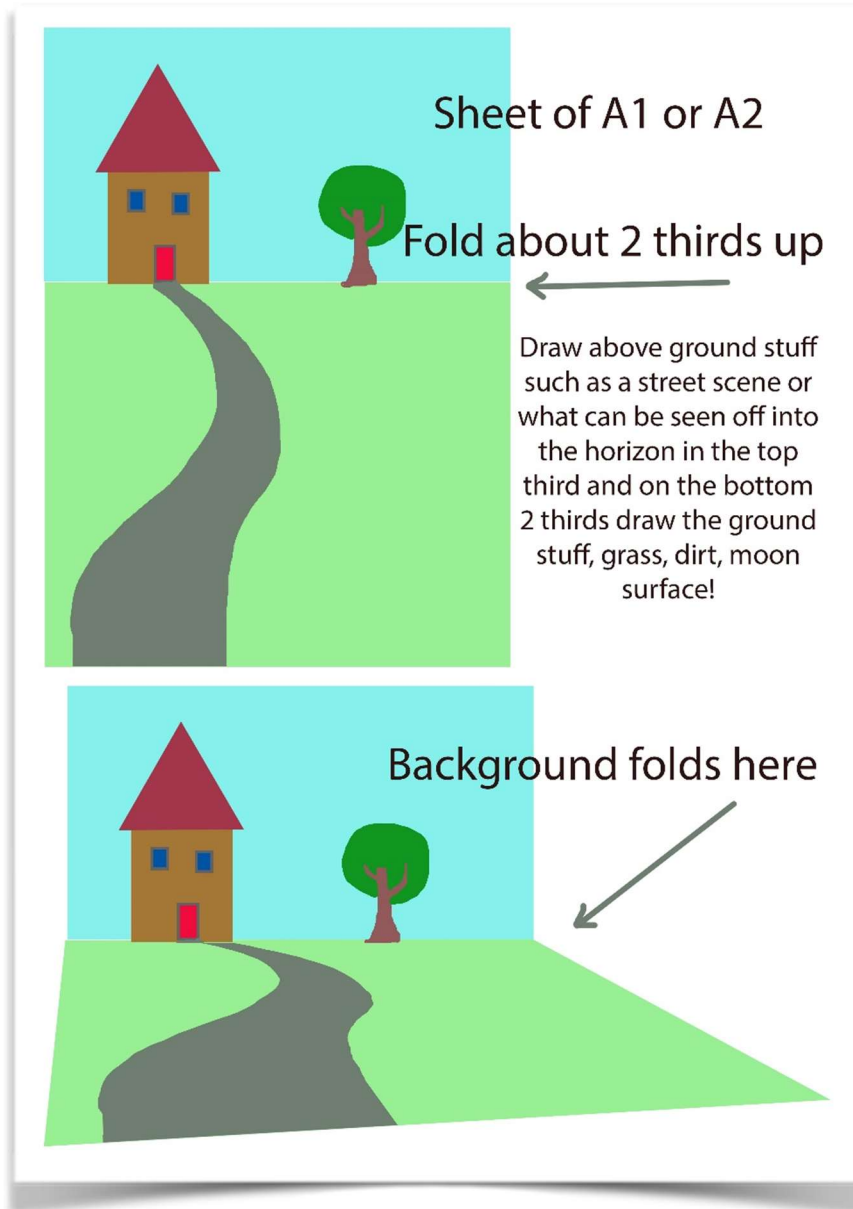


You will need a larger sheet of paper or some sheets of A4 joined together for the backdrop.

You will also need some pencils, coloured pens, crayons, paint or oil pastels to colour in your backdrop, try not to use chalky pastels as the powder will get onto your characters and will smudge and mark the backdrop.

Think about the staging of your scene, like in a theatre the stage won't have too many things in it to allow the actors to act and be seen clearly by the audience - it's the same in filmmaking and most definitely the same in animation.

Start by gently folding your paper to see the separation of the ground from the stuff above ground. I would recommend folding it about 2 thirds of the way up with the shorter end being for the stuff above ground.



Sketch lightly in pencil first, then when you are confident everything is in the right place add your colours.



Attach your background in place using some sticky tack to stop it moving around while you are animating.



Position your camera so that all it sees is your background and nothing else.

Now you're ready to animate.

You should have a complete character(s) & background(s) ready for the next Animex Academy Workshop where you get to create motion and learn about stop motion animation production!

Written and prepared for Animex Academy by Robin Webb © 2021 Teesside University