

The 12 Principles of Animation

Animation Theory



Originally developed by Disney animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, the 12 Principles of Animation are still used to this day to bring characters to life.

1. **Squash and Stretch** – Give the character or shape a sense of flexibility when it moves, making it look more alive.
 2. **Anticipation** – A little movement before the big action helps the audience know what's coming.
 3. **Staging** – Make sure the most important subject is easy to see and follow.
 4. **Straight Ahead and Pose to Pose** – You can draw every movement in order or plan the main poses first to bring the animation to life.
 5. **Follow Through and Overlapping Action** – This happens when parts of a body or clothes keep moving after the main action stops.
 6. **Slow In and Slow Out** – Subjects start and stop moving slowly, not all at once.
 7. **Arcs** – Most things move in a curved path, not in straight lines.
 8. **Secondary Action** – Small extra movements make the main action more interesting.
 9. **Timing** – Control the speed of your subject through weight, emotion, and more!
 10. **Exaggeration** – Making actions or feelings bigger (or smaller) helps tell the story better.
 11. **Solid Drawing** – Even cartoons need to be drawn with good shapes and balance.
 12. **Appeal** – Characters and actions should look fun and interesting to watch.
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