# YOUR ANIMATED JOURNEY
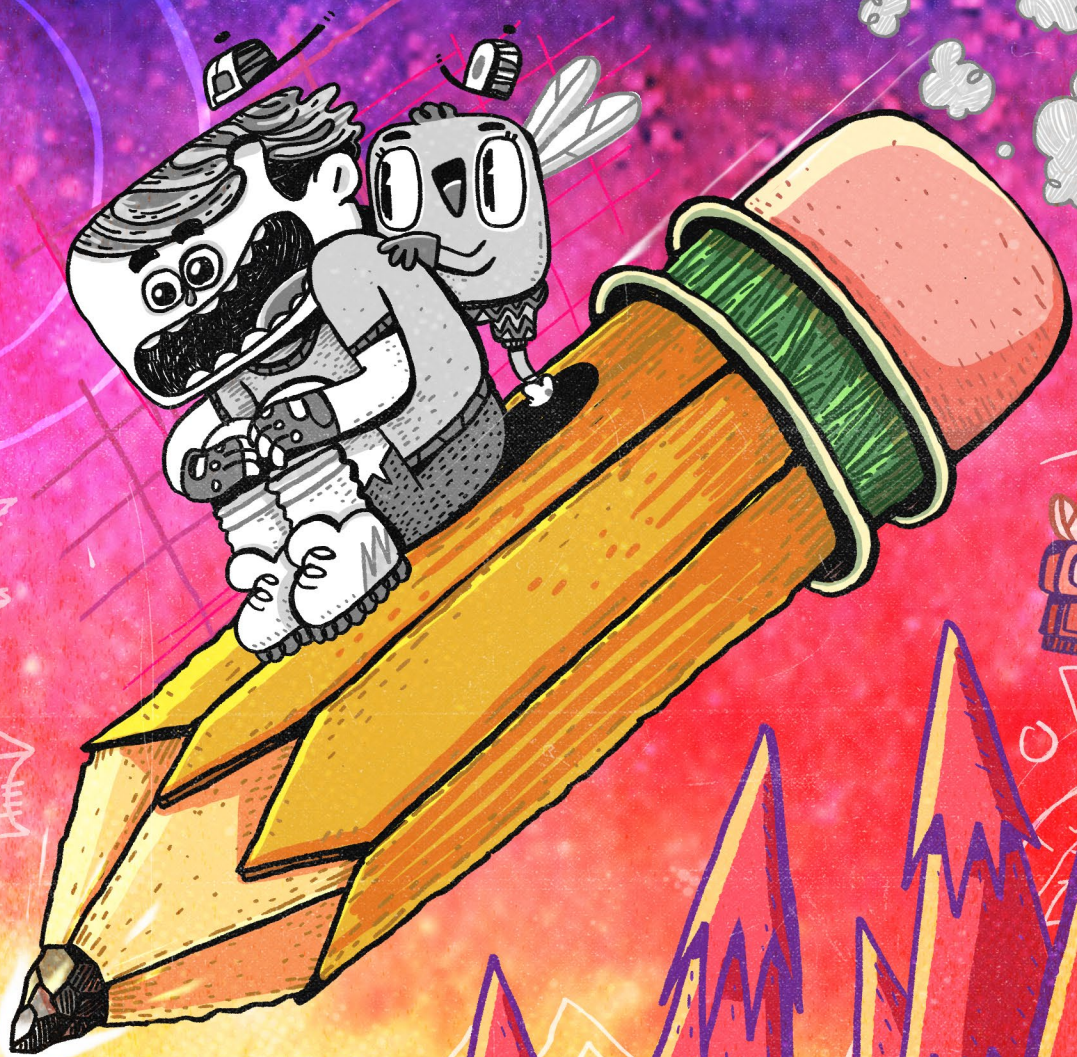
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WRITTEN BY: JOSHUA PINKER          COVER BY: JOEL MACKENZIE

# YOUR ANIMATED JOURNEY

By
Joshua Pinker

https://www.youranimatedjourney.com/

Your Animated Journey, LLC.

# Table of Contents

# 1

## What This Book Is All About

*The calm before the storm*

Congratulations, you did it! I'm so proud of you!  By opening up this book, you are taking your first step forward. A step toward learning about something new. A step toward something fun and exciting. A step toward what could be your next career. In this book, I am going to guide you through everything that goes into ... drumroll please ... **BEING AN ANIMATION ARTIST!**

When you search online for information about animation, you will get all kinds of results. You will get things like video tutorials for learning new software, books to purchase that discuss the history of animation, and podcasts featuring people discussing new animated films and shows coming out. You'll even see old videos showing you how Popeye the Sailor was traditionally animated on paper (I do recommend watching videos like that because they're pretty interesting).

However, there is not much information out there on how to be an animator — nothing about how to network with other people in the industry, how to personally handle freelancing for multiple clients, or even useful information on how much money you should be making. I am constantly receiving queries from students and artists, who ask a lot of the same questions about the industry. I have held Skype talks with animation classes and felt that the knowledge I was sharing was very valuable to the students. So, I decided to take my knowledge, experience, and the common questions that I receive and put it ALL into this book. That's the real reason I wrote this book.

After I graduated from school, I had to learn all of these lessons on my own, through trial and error. It's near-impossible to learn these things at school because the industry is always changing. On top of that, there are so many different paths you could take that it's difficult for teachers to prepare you for every potential outcome. You could work on video games, independent animated films, 3D animation, 2D animation, stop motion animation, storyboards, rigging, character design ... the opportunities seem endless. These possibilities all fall under the same umbrella of "animation," but each one gives you vastly different life experiences. However, I

still think that the foundation of achieving a successful career in each of those categories is the same. In this book, I will prepare you to take on any of those career paths with confidence, as well as provide help and advice for once you are involved in the industry.

I understand this is only the introduction of the book, but I must put in this disclaimer: This industry is not for everyone. I don't mean to scare you away, but it's the truth. My goal is to help you become a successful animation artist. I will not be teaching you how to do smooth animation, or how to master Toon Boom Harmony. I'm a pretty good animator, but it's impossible to say that there is any one "correct way" to do animation. When I started my first job, I animated the way they taught me in school. I said to myself, "Okay, remember the order: anticipation, over shoot, settle." After I had done my work, the supervisor messaged me, asking "Dude! What are you doing? I need snappy animation! Get from point A to point B quick! Like four key frames." So, that's what I did. But then when I got to my next job, I did snappy animation and the director messaged me: "Dude! What are you doing? This is too snappy. Give me some overshoot and settle at least." You'll quickly learn that every show has different styles and requirements. That's why I'm leaving the practical side of animation out, and just sticking with the professional development side of the job, because it's just as (or even more) important to know and understand the steps to building and growing a career. Information to help you advance your skills in animation is available everywhere, with just one click, but the ins and outs of the industry are harder to find. That's where this book comes in.

I think it's safe to assume that you are reading this book because you are interested in becoming, or are in the process of becoming, an animator. It's important to mention that being an animation artist might not be the right role for you. However, that doesn't mean that there isn't another position within the production process that might be a perfect fit for you! Keep an open mind and consider other aspects of the industry that might interest you. We will explore those roles later on in the book. You can still be involved in making cartoons, without actually doing the animation part.

Finally, this book is not intended to be read cover-to-cover (though you can if you want to!). Instead, it's meant to be used as a guide that you can reference when you need help with a certain topic. You can just navigate to the chapter that fits the struggle you are having, and find advice that can help. For the most part, the chapters flow in a logical order of events (I have my editor to thank for helping me achieve this). Once you master one chapter, you are then prepared for the next obstacle. I want this book to be helpful to people who are starting out and have no idea what the hell they are getting themselves into, and useful for people who are currently working in the industry, but still need that extra bit of information to push them in a better direction.

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# About the Author

Before we get started, I have to be selfish for a second and talk about myself. You're probably wondering "Who is this Josh guy? Why is he so damn confident?" Well, my name is Joshua Pinker and I am a professional 2D animation artist. I am originally from New Jersey, and have been working in the animation industry since 2014. I have worked for 16 different animation studios. I have worked on cartoon series such as *Teen Titans Go!, Unikitty, Daniel Tiger's Neighbourhood, Corner Gas Animated, Xavier Riddle, Doomsday Brothers*, and *WildKratts*. I've also animated on web series such as *Cyanide and Happiness* and *DC Superhero Girls*.

I felt that I was the perfect person to put this book together because I have been through it all. I went to university for four years and studied animation. I was a summer intern for a well-known animation studio. I have worked full-time in-house at multiple studios. I have freelanced from home for studios that were on the other side of the country. I have even moved to another country for a job opportunity. I love what I do, and I want others to experience the success that I have had. Let me tell you, there is no better feeling than paying all your bills and then going on vacation with the money you made from making cartoons!

Growing up, I was not an artist. I didn't like to draw, or want to visit art museums. I only got a C in art class when I was in high school. Instead, I played a lot of sports in school, and that made me become a very competitive person. Around my junior year of high school is when I started to wonder: "What do I want to major in at college?" I knew that whatever I decided would likely then turn into my career. I already knew I didn't want a job where I would have to put on a suit every day, or have to work with boring people. I liked comic books, but didn't have a passion for illustration. I liked video games, but at the time, 3D seemed very complicated.

So, I decided I would pursue animation, working on 2D cartoons. I already knew that it was very niche, and a very specific field of study and work. However, I felt that it was the perfect fit for me. It's something that I thought would make me feel happy and, in a way, feel like I never have to "grow up." I attended The Art Institute of Boston, which was a part of Lesley University. After graduation I had one goal in sight: I wanted to make cartoons for television. It was definitely a difficult start, but I refused to quit. As I began to find work, each project I completed created a domino effect that opened up door after door of new opportunities. I knew my persistence and my drive to accomplish my dream would take me far. Two years after graduating, I was working on a show for Cartoon Network.

Everything I write moving forward is based on my opinions, and based off my own experi-

ences. I'm not going to sugarcoat things. I'm going to be straight and to the point, and give you the honest truth. Since I am a 2D animation artist, a lot of information will slightly favour that career path. But don't worry, because there is also a Q&A chapter featuring advice from people of all different positions. That chapter will give you a little variety in information, while at the same time backing up my advice throughout the book. Regardless of the position (3D animation, storyboarding, rigging, etc.) that interests you, the information and advice is still relevant. So buckle up your imaginary seat belts and get ready for this awesome ride! It's going to be a lot of work, but trust me when I say that in the end, it will all be worth it.

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*I do not own the rights to any images of existing characters, content from studios, or original artwork from artists. I have been given permission to use any outside content featured in this book*

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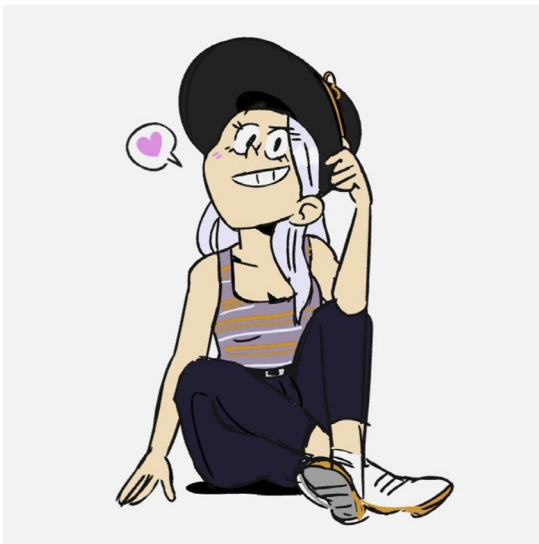


*Artwork by: Kacie Hermanson*

# 2

# The Animation Pipeline

*Cartoons on a conveyor belt*

When I was in college learning animation, I was creating everything, as most students do. I was designing the characters, making the animatics, animating the characters. The whole kit and kaboodle. Based on that experience, I thought this was what is required of an animator. Some people, especially clients that hire artists, think that all animation artists are responsible for doing everything that goes into making a cartoon. While that is true for someone who is an independent artist working on their own film, outside of that scenario, it's not true. Every stage that is involved in the production of making a cartoon has its own dedicated position, and each requires a different set of skills than the next. It is important as a student to understand all the stages that go into making a cartoon. This will allow you to understand how the whole machine operates, even when you're just a small gear turning inside of it all.

This is why you should keep your mind open when applying for work. Maybe animation isn't your thing. No matter how much you try, your characters are just not looking that great in motion. That's okay, and you shouldn't beat yourself up about it. Maybe your drawing skills are through the roof! In that case, you would be great at storyboarding, or maybe character designs. There are always other possibilities that allow you to still be involved in the production of a cartoon. You don't always have to apply for an animator position because you went to school for animation.

What a lot of people don't know is how an actual animation studio goes about making a cartoon. This process is what is called the "production pipeline" — the series of events and steps that go into making a cartoon, from just a cool idea, all the way to airing on TV Saturday morning for the kids to zone out to (so mom and dad can have a moment alone for once). That got a little dark there, but you know what I mean. So, how does an animation studio make the magic happen? I can't think of a better explanation than the following blog post, written by animation studio Sun & Moon.

# sun & moon

## Our Production Process

# How we make animation at
# Sun & Moon

So you'd like to get some animation made but you're unsure of what's involved? Or maybe you're just curious about how we do things? Well, you're in the right place! We want your experience of working with us to feel easy, enjoyable and that you are in expert hands. This simple guide explains our animation production process – so you can see what you've got to look forward to!

## Pre-Production

**Meet:** We meet and chat through your project in person. We like to get to know you and it's the perfect place to start bouncing around ideas. A video or conference call can be just as good if time is tight or we're oceans apart.

**Brief:** If you already have an idea that's a great start but equally we enjoy the challenge that a blank sheet of paper and an open brief represents. We'll establish the scope of your project and advise you on the best way forward.

**Script:** We work to your script or help you create one that says exactly what it needs to. We'll help you to tell your story in a way that will inform, engage and entertain your audience.

**Design:** We'll find the look and feel of your film with our versatile team of designers and illustrators. If you've seen something you like – share it with us for inspiration. We'll create some style frames to show how your finished film will look.

**Storyboard:** Our story artists plot the action and figure out the most effective way to deliver your message in a series of static images. It's quick and easy for us to make changes at this stage.

**Voice Over:** We help you find the right voice to tell your story, or work with one you have already chosen and supplied.

**Animatic:** The storyboard is timed out to the ideal length of your film, setting the tone and pace. Basic movements are blocked out so that you can see everything is working. Once you are happy, this is the blueprint for your film.

# Production

**Build:** Your animation is one of a kind, so all characters, props and environments will be created from scratch and made ready for animation.

**Animation:** This is where things really start to get moving, quite literally. Characters start to walk, talk, think and feel. Your ideas truly come to life. It's our favourite part of the process and pretty much why we do what we do.

**Sound Design:** Working closely with talented composers or music track, we provide a bespoke sound design that adds extra depth and emotion to your story, ensuring your film is pitch perfect.

**Compositing:** All of the film's animated elements are brought together, layer by layer and scene by scene, into one place, ready for the final touches to be applied. A shadow here and a sparkle there make all the difference.

# Post-Production

**Final Mix:** Voice over, music and sound effects are mixed and tweaked to the animation to ensure that it hits all the right notes.

**Render:** All our hard work is committed to the final picture. Your beautiful creation is now ready.

**Grade**: If your film is for TV or Cinema it goes through a grade process, to make sure it meets broadcaster specifications.

**Delivery:** We deliver your final film in whatever format you need. Congratulations, you are the proud owner of a Sun & Moon animation and you can now show it off!

# That's a wrap

We're done and dusted and stood with our arms folded in triumph...or cheering and raising a glass – either way, we've been on a journey together and are both happy with the results.
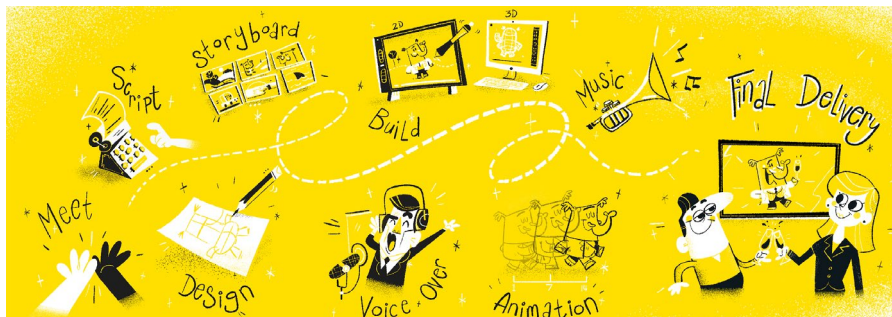
I wanted to include this chapter right at the start of the book to give you a wide-eye view before moving forward. I also wanted to give you a lot of information right up front, so you get a sense of what you're getting yourself into. Maybe there is an aspect listed above that you didn't know about, but you're interested in learning more. Maybe this changes your perspective on what you thought you knew about the process of creating animation today. This animation pipeline is pretty much standard across the board, but may differ a little based on the size of the studio. With that being said, I hope this gets you excited to continue on to the next chapters!