

Bring Your Ideas to Life

CONCEPT ► DESIGN ► ANIMATION

Motion Design Project Workflow

Bringing a project from initial idea to finished animation can be a lot of work! Start strong by thinking through your steps, not getting ahead of yourself, and keeping your clients, teammates, and yourself on track. Not every project will need every step, and your order may change a bit depending on specifics, but this should be a good guideline.

- Initial idea / concept / client brief.
- Work with client / team to confirm scope & budget, and solidify this in a contract when working with clients.
- Write script or work with scriptwriter. Create visual descriptions as needed to communicate proper context.
- Gather visual references and lay them out into a mood board. This helps to communicate overall visual style.
- Draw rough thumbnail sketches to solidify visual ideas and create a framework for moving shot-to-shot.
- Choose a few key sketches to refine into “finished” style frames. This helps to communicate the intended final look. In many cases, you may end up creating fully-realized design boards for every major moment in the piece.
- Lay your sketches out into a storyboard, and align each frame with the appropriate script segment. You may go through multiple versions of a storyboard as you refine your designs and ideas, starting with rough sketches and ending with the refined designs.
- Create an animatic - a simple, roughly-animated video that helps visualize timing using your designs, along with voiceover and music. All included elements may be rough/temporary or refined, and this also may go through multiple versions. It's recommended you start this early in the process, so you don't waste time refining designs that end up being cut from the final piece because they don't fit the timing or final concept.
- **If you're working with a client or creative team, nearly every step above should be a check-in milestone. Major changes get harder as you get further into a project, and get even harder once animation begins! Communication NOW is the key to ensuring you don't have to move backwards LATER.**
- It's finally time to begin animation! You'll typically start with a rough (“blocking”) pass to further confirm the timing of each scene or segment. You may also choose to animate a few key moments to near-final status - similar to refining your sketches above - to confirm the feel of the final animation before moving into the full piece.
- During or after animation, you'll want to be collecting and refining the audio; gathering final voiceover & music selections, and making music edits as needed to follow the timing of your piece. Music & VO may drive animation or vice-versa. You'll typically be doing this work outside your animation program, or may choose to work with an audio specialist.
- Once animation is complete, there may be additional compositing, editing or other visual “finishing” to be done. This may happen in your animation software or in a video editing program.
- Present the project to your client or team, and collect feedback.
- Make revisions as needed. If you were careful about check-ins early on, hopefully you won't have many!
- Deliver the “final” version(s) of the project. This may involve multiple sizes, aspect ratios, or edits (thanks, social media).
- Invoice & get yourself paid!
- For projects you're proud of, take the time to add it to your portfolio and put together a case study, so your future clients and teammates can see how creative, organized and efficient you are at bringing ideas to life.