



# CHARACTER ANIMATION BOOTCAMP

## STAGING STRATEGIES

### SETTING THE STAGE

Of all the animation principles Staging is perhaps the most broad covering a wide range of topics and issues to consider. The roots of Staging are unsurprisingly in the theater and film arts, and transcend not just animation style, but animation itself. Despite being such a broad topic at its core the concept of Staging is very simple; staging is the presentation of an idea so it is absolutely clear. The “idea” can be a concept, action, or story point that you are trying to communicate with your animation.

### STAGING IN STAGES

We can improve the clarity of communication by manipulating “staging” at different levels in the production.

#### STAGING AT THE LAYOUT AND CAMERA LEVEL

##### IDEA - “Lost in the Woods”



A close up of his face does communicate emotion but what is he afraid of? Where is he?

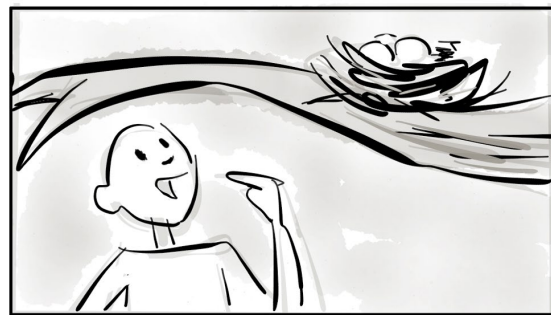


A long shot is better. Posture & face can say “fear” but now we can see his location & situation.

##### IDEA - “Sees a Nest in the Tree”



With this idea a long shot doesn't work because it's too subtle an idea for this distance.



Here, a medium shot is much clearer and communicates the idea instantly.

Camera placement and framing can also help with emotional clarity.



For example, a high angle can make a character feel small, alone and vulnerable



While a low angle can make a character feel big and powerful



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Consider the layout of characters and backgrounds so that the characters have room to move and can be clearly seen in and around background elements.



### STAGING AT THE ACTION LEVEL



When staging an action consider it's motion through the frame and orientation to the camera. Be willing to sacrifice perfect "realism" for clarity.



An audience can only absorb one action or idea at a time, so don't try and stage multiple actions on top of one another or add too many distractions from the single action being communicated.

It's also important to consider the character's physical orientation to the camera when making staging choices.



If we're trying to communicate "reaching into pocket" this staging makes it harder to clearly see what he's doing...



...whereas using the front arm makes the gesture much more clear.



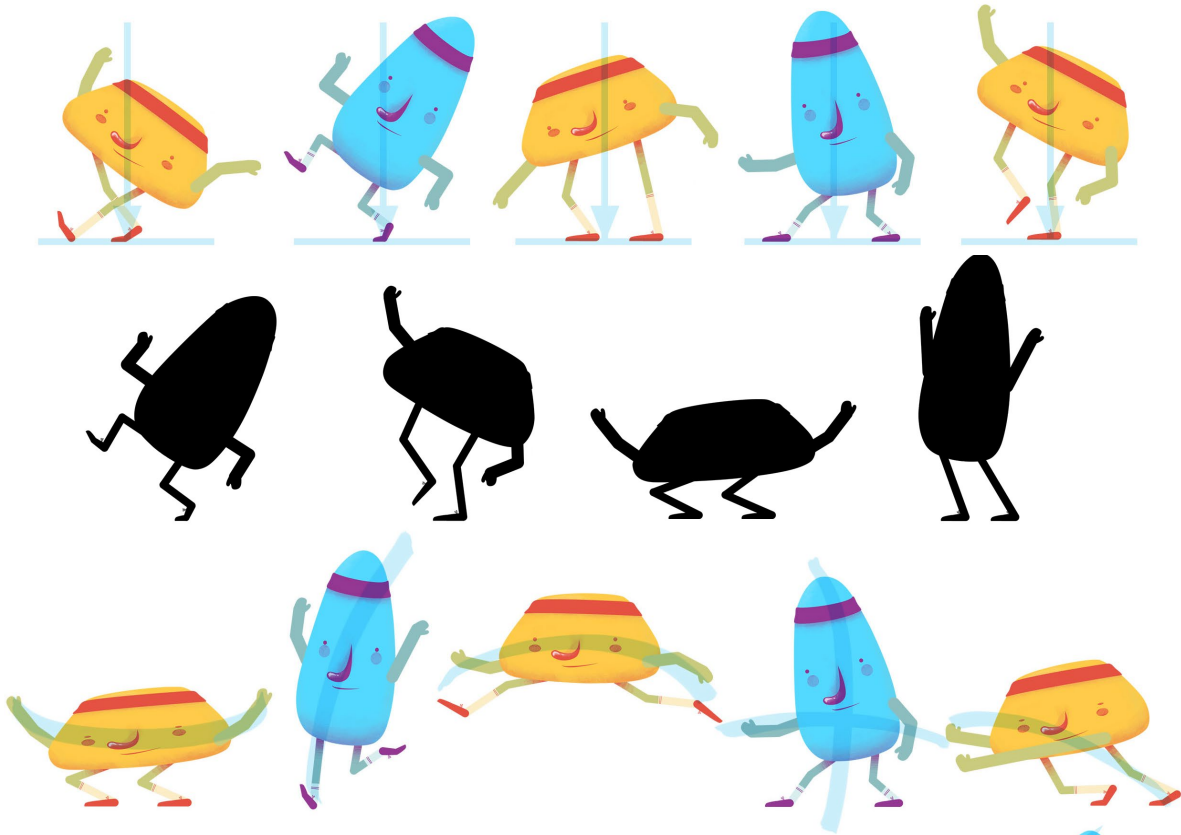
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### STAGING AT THE POSE LEVEL

We had already begun our discussion of staging on the first day when we talked about clear poses. Clearly staged poses lead to clearly staged actions.

- Clear sense of balance or imbalance communicates weight.
- Clear silhouettes make poses easier to read.
- Clear lines of action also make poses easier to read help communicate forces at work.



### START EARLY

If you begin to think about staging very early in your process it becomes easier to continue to make good staging choices as you go. So make sure...

...thumbnail, production, or presentation storyboards...

...thumbnail and preliminary sketches of scenes and backgrounds...

...thumbnail sketches of poses for actions...

... are all carefully staged so that they are completely, absolutely, and undeniably CLEAR!