



Common Mistakes on this Assignment

Proper Time Scheduling

The number one error that students make on this assignment every year is not setting up a schedule and budgeting their time. Regardless of how much time the instructor gives you, you must stick to a schedule. Typically, this would be a 3 week assignment.

They usually put off doing anything for the first week and then start in on some thumbnails and rough keys the second week. The problem with this is that the instructor doesn't get to look at the keys and give you feedback. The second week class is for fine tuning the timing and correcting any minor errors. If you're only showing keys at this point, you won't get the timing feedback at all.

This is an assignment that runs about 10 seconds in length or 120 drawings (give or take a few). You know how long it takes you to do a drawing. Do the math. 10 minutes each = 1,200 minutes or 20 hours of drawing. 30 keys would take you 5 hours.

Last Minute Inbetweens

This falls into the error above but happens at the very end, just before the assignment is due. You keep putting off the drawing and wait until the night before to complete the remaining inbetweens. Pulling an all-nighter to get the assignment done for the next day is never a good idea.

You need more breaks for stretching and because you're more tired, you draw slower, or the quality of the drawing is lower and you make more mistakes than you would if you were doing it during the day.

The end result is that you skip a few inbetweens just to get it done - typically on the end recovery action... just where it needs those extra inbetweens to smooth out the action.

Missing inbetweens means the assignment is incomplete.

Not Thinking the Action Through Properly

Many students will just jump right into this assignment without taking the time to think it through. Ask any veteran animator if they do this and they'll say something like, "Only if I want to get fired." We're moving into the realm of acting now and acting requires planning.

You must visualize the action in your head and act it out physically to help you understand the real timing, even if you're doing something more exaggerated and cartoony, it must be based on reality.

Not Giving the Character a Clear and Readable Emotion

Just having the character walk up the stairs and down may be technically challenging for you but we are progressing into the "How and Why" of the animation. The character needs to engage the audience. If the audience doesn't care about what the character is doing, you've lost them. Make them feel the same emotions that the character is having. In order for them to feel the emotions, the character has to show the emotion in the first place. We do this through the physical attitude of the character, their movements and timing. These are all calculated things that you must think about beforehand and plan to do.

Keeping to the Basic Principles

All your animation will be rooted in the basic principles that we covered in the first semester:

- Timing
- Spacing
- Slow-in/Slow-out
- Squash & Stretch
- Overlapping Action
- Anticipation
- Action
- Reaction
- Recovery
- Descending Energy

Think about the assignments that we did and think of how they can be applied to the actions that you're doing now. They're all the same, just applied in a different way.

Believing in Yourself

It may sound goofy until you experience it for yourself, but you will have moments where you will stop and say, "What am I doing here? I can't do this! What was I thinking???"

Self-doubt can be very debilitating if you let the thoughts grow and fester (I like trying to put that word into a sentence).

The fact that you are in an animation program at all should prove that you are capable of doing this. It's up to you to determine how far you want to take it. This really isn't rocket science, although it can feel like it at times. I've said before that the main difference between an amateur and a professional is that professionals drive themselves to do the best they can every time they do whatever it is they do. They do this by actively thinking about what it is they are doing.

As animators, you need to actively think about every line that you draw. If it isn't where you want it or where it should be, erase it and redo it. If a drawing doesn't look right, get rid of it and do it again.

This isn't something that will just come upon you suddenly. You'll need to practice it a lot. eventually, you'll get to a point where it seems easy to other people, but it's still something you need to work at.

On the up-side. There will be times when it seems like everything you draw is magic! It just seems to flow out of your pencil with a minimum amount of effort. Be happy about this and enjoy the moment.

Believe in yourself and your abilities. There will be ups and downs, good drawings and bad drawings. Throw out the bad ones and try to make the next one better.

I've seen lots of students over the years, good students and bad students, talented and not so talented. I've seen students who were really talented but bombed out because they weren't driven to succeed and on the flip side, I've seen students with not so much talent, push themselves to become really amazing artists and then go on to work with some major studios on some great films.

I personally believe anyone can do it... if they really want to.