Creating animated movies with young children

This step-by-step description is part of the resource "Young children creating animated movies" published 25.04.2022
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QR-code to
the video

Animated movies

An animated movie is a multi-media production where many still photos are played back in quick succession to create an illusion of movement. It feels like magic to see a toy character move - especially when you have been involved in making the movie. If you are making an animated movie for the first time, it is recommended to start by making a test movie to get used to the equipment and technique!

An animated movie can be made from a self-created story or based on a well-known fairy tale or song, maybe related to a theme. Have an open mind to the children's magical creative processes and feel free to add some surprising elements. As shown in the video, it is important to actively involve the children in all parts of the process.

1. Creating the story

Let the children share their thoughts and ideas about the story, either by using a mind map or by letting the children draw. Decide **who** the movie is going to be about, **what** they will do and **where** the action will take place. The more details you plan, the easier it will be to animate.

2. Creating props

Create or find characters for the movie, and create the background. Different types of characters may be combined; it is important that the characters are about the same size, able to stand by themselves and sturdy enough to be moved <u>many</u> times. If elements in the background are attached with sticky clay, it is possible to move them as part of the movie.

3. Preparing the animation

Attach the props well with sticky clay or tape, so that nothing moves during the process. It is recommended to animate on a low table, by a wall.

A tablet stand may be built of Duplo-blocks; it is then easy to adapt the height of the stand to the background. Remember to secure the stand well with sticky clay.

Photographer: Steinar Figved, Skylight

Before starting to animate, it is important to make sure that the tablet "sees" what the children want it to see - and nothing else. It is important to ensure this **inside** the specific app to be used (e.g. StopMotionStudio).

Open the app and click *the plus sign* to start a new project. Make sure the toolbar is at the bottom of the picture frame, horisontally.

Place one of the characters in the centre of the picture frame, take a couple of photos and ensure that the camera is focused on the characters and that everything looks fine.

Click *the red button* to take the photos.

It is recommended to adjust the movie's speed to 5-6 frames per second - which is a suitable pace when young children are creating animated movies.

Click *the wheel* to change the movie's speed and other settings (e.g. adjusting the movie quality, photo size, transitions, etc.).
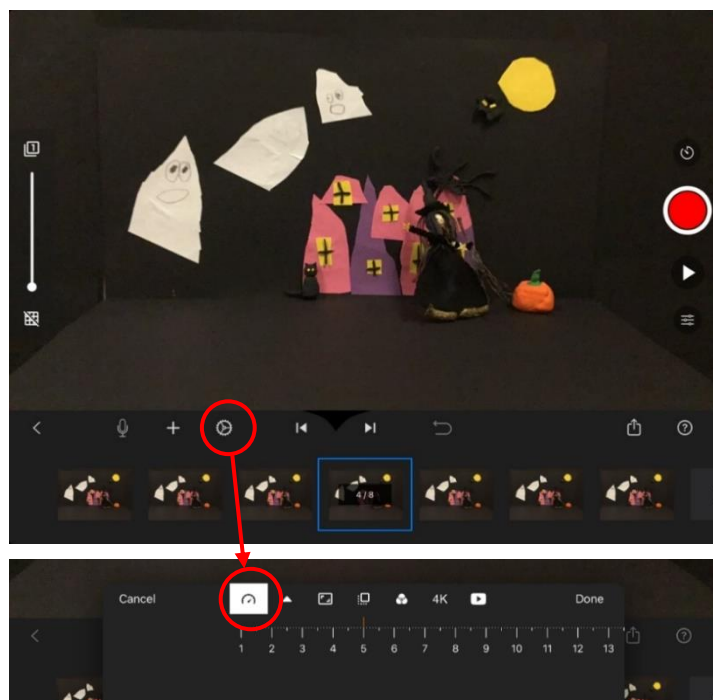
Screen photo from the app StopMotionStudio

4. Animating

- One child (the "animator") moves a character a <u>small</u> step and then walks away from the table.
- Another child (the "photographer") takes a photo. Take only one photo after each step.

When animating, we are creating an illusion of movement - making it look like the character is moving. This process must be repeated <u>many</u> times. To make a short 30-second-scene, between 100 and 200 photos are needed. It is better to take too many photos than too few. It is easy to increase the movie's speed later, if necessary. It is also easy to delete unecessary photos in the app afterwards, but almost impossible to insert new photos.

For the best possible result, it is important to remind the photographer to wait until the animator has moved completely out of the frame before taking a photo - to avoid hands and shadows in the photos. It is important to watch the tablet during the process, to ensure that the tablet sees what you want it to see, and that nothing moves.

As long as the tablet is not moved, the children may look at what they have created as much as they like during the process.

Creating several short movies rather than one long one is recommended – it is easier to edit a short movie than a longer one.

Complete an entire scene before ending the activity.

It is adviced to duplicate the unedited movie before editing, as a backup (see section 7).

Click *the question mark* to display the help text in the app.

The app saves automatically.

Click < to return to the start screen.

Skjermbilde fra appen StopMotionStudio

5. Editing – part 1

When a movie or scene is finished, it is ready for editing. Sometimes it is easier to notice unwanted elements, such as hands or shadows when scrolling through the photos, other times it is easier to notice such things when watching the movie. It is important to finish all editing **before** adding audio recordings.

Skjermbilde fra appen StopMotionStudio

Click a photo for editing.

- Deleting: Select one or more photos, click *delete*.
- Copying: Select one or more photos, click *copy*. Click where the photo(s) are to be pasted, click *paste*.
- Moving a photo: Mark, copy and paste as described above.

Adjusting the speed:
- If the movie's speed is too slow or too fast: change the number of frames per second.
- If you want parts of the movie to move slower or maybe you want a short stop in the movie: duplicate one or more photo(s).
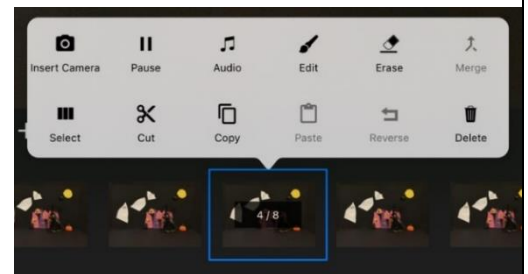
6. Recording sound

In an animated movie, there are endless audio possibilities: the children's voices or songs may be recorded, self-made sound effects may be recorded, or sound effects and/or music from the app may be added. This may be done in the animation app (e.g. StopMotionStudio) or in a movie editing app (e.g. iMovie). If you would like to use music, it is important to choose music without copyright limitations, enabling you to share the movie afterwards.

When recording sound, it is important to be **completely** silent.

Find the photo where you want to add sound, click the microphone and *record*. To help the children to start talking at the right time, you should agree to a "start signal".

Click *stop* and *play* - and listen to the audio recording. If you are satisfied, the recording may be saved, otherwise you can make another recording.

6. Editing – part 2

There are several editing options that are worth trying, e.g. in the animation app or in a movie editing app (e.g. iMovie). Should you want to make a longer movie, it is recommended to divide it into several scenes. First, edit each scene separately in the animation app; then, export all scenes to a movie editing app for further editing.

When the movie is finished, save it in the camera roll, enabling it to be viewed it in other apps or other digital devices.

Click and hold to select a movie. The different options will appear: Click *export movie* and *save video* to save the movie in the camera roll.
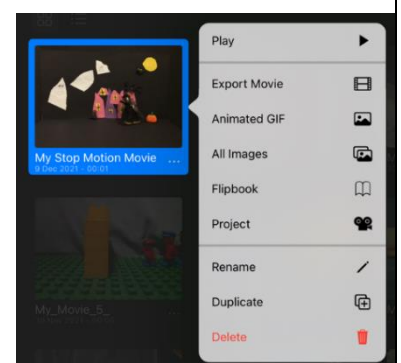
Skjermbilde fra appen StopMotionStudio

7. Watching the movie

Watch the movie and share it with the children's peers and parents.

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