

The Basic Storyline

Planning an animation starts with an idea. The idea is expressed in the form of a story. The story has a beginning, middle, and an end. The story can be simple or complex. It can be very straightforward, or it can be convoluted. The more complex the story, the more work required to animate it.

It is best to express the idea in as few sentences as possible. Stick to the key concepts, or action points. For example

Resistors at Work or Resistance is Not Just for Dissidents

An energy source, for example a battery, is applied to a resistor. The energy is measured in Volts (think of it as pressure).

Energy, in the form of electrons, flows through the resistor

The resistor converts some of the energy to heat (it gets hotter).

Electrons leaving the resistor have less energy than when they entered.

Hot Chocolate gets Suspended

Chocolate powder is added to hot water

The mixture is stirred thoroughly

The mixture is uniform

Time elapses

All the chocolate settles to the bottom of the container

The water is clear again

The key to effective animation is having a clear understanding of what you are trying to say.

Presentation

When the story is determined, the presentation needs to be sorted out. Is it serious, comedic, happy, and sad? What devices will be used to illustrate the key ideas?

Using the **Resistors at Work** example above, possible presentations include

One

The battery and resistor are characters with legs, arms, etc. The resistor is asleep

The battery walks up, holds both the resistor's hands in its hands and forces electrons through the resistor

The resistor starts to turn red and sweat

Two

The battery, resistor, and wire are just objects

The battery contains very energetic little electrons. They are characters with arms, legs, etc that like to march around very quickly and precisely.

The wire is a hollow tube

The resistor is a corridor with protruding hair-like filaments that electrons must push aside to get through.

An animated character connects the battery to the resistor with the wires.

The electrons march energetically into the resistor

The electrons work hard getting through the resistor, getting overheated as they do. The resistor gets hot

The electrons exit the other side and go back to the battery, looking tired and dragging their feet, where they get rejuvenated.

As you can see, many approaches are possible. Developing the animation storyboard will provide additional ideas for expanding the approach, and for modifying it.

Storyboard

The storyboard is a standard sheet that has places to indicate key frames and anecdotal information about them.

Scene		Panel		Scene		Panel	
Action				Action			
Dialogue				Dialogue			
Timing				Timing			

Figure Storyboard Template

Used with the example above, it might look like this

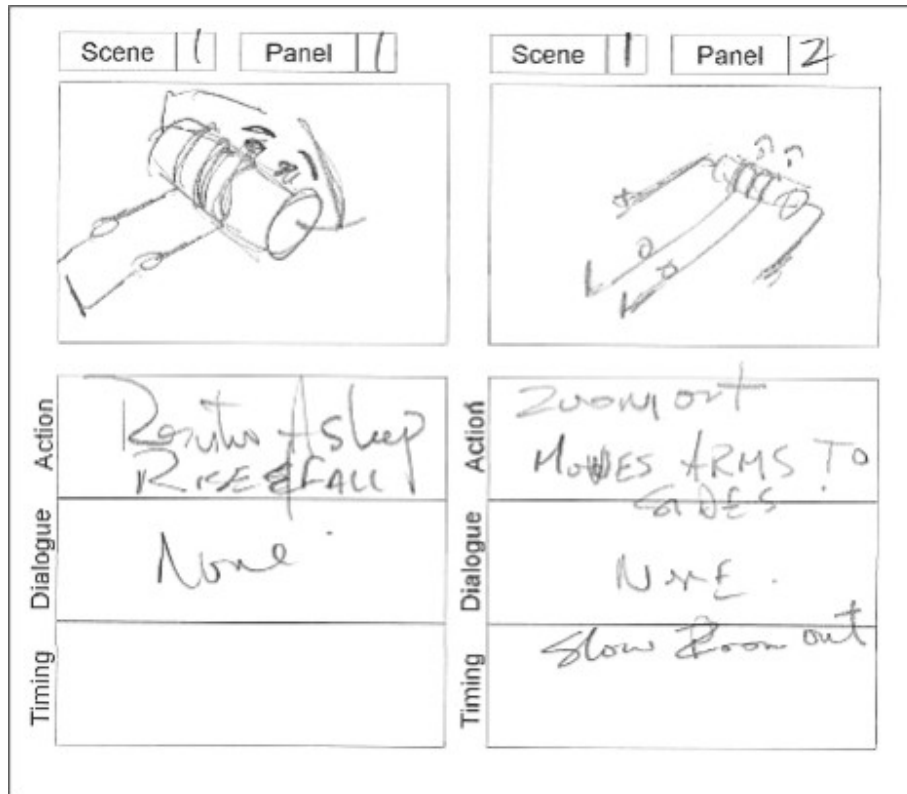


Figure Storyboard Example

Storyboards enable you to think through the elements of the story and work out the details of the presentation. Elements for a [great storyboard](#) include

- use a variety of shots, some close-up, some wide
- create tension by showing the audience things the characters can't see
- use establishing shots to show the viewer the total scene
- use cutaways to show little details
- use extreme close-ups
- use point of view shots—show what the character sees
- use enough drawings to show the action

Exposure Sheet

The exposure sheet is a complete list of cels, along with information about how they are used, sound, voice, and other effects. Exposure sheets are created for the camera operator to use when filming the animation. A typical exposure sheet is shown below.

Scene		Title				Animator		Footage		Sheet #	
Action	Dialogue	4	3	2	1	Bkg	Camera Instructions				
	1										
	2										
	3										
	4										
	5										
	6										
	7										
	8										
	9										
	0										
	1										

Explanation of terms

- **Sheet #.** sheets are numbered sequentially
- **Action** is a note on what is happening in the frame
- **Dialogue** is the part of a sound that is made in the frame
- **4, 3, 2, 1,** are the cel layers that are stacked up for the frame. #1 is the lowest, sitting on top of the background layer. #4 is the highest
- **Bkg** is the background cel for the frame

For Additional Information

- [An Introduction to Storyboarding](#)
- [Concept to Creation: Story and Storyboards](#)
- [Illustrated Glossary of Animation Index](#)
- [Lessons in Drawing for Animation](#) (4 parts)