

The Workspace

Creating an animation in Maya involves the manipulation of many graphic elements such as curves, surfaces, colors, and textures. Information about these elements is stored in Maya as numeric values that can be viewed in a number of different ways. In Maya's workspace, you can choose how you want to view a scene and access different tools to alter its 3D information. Maya offers several ways of accessing and altering your scene, giving you the flexibility to build workflows that best suit the way you work.

USER INTERFACE ELEMENTS

When you first launch Maya, the workspace is presented to you with a number of user interface (UI) elements. Each is designed to help you work with your models, access tools, and edit object attributes. Initially, you should learn the locations of the UI elements so you can easily find them while you work.

MENU SETS

While Maya's first six menus are always available, the remaining menus change depending on which Menu Set you choose. This helps focus your work on related tools.

MENUS

Menus contain tools and actions for creating and editing objects and setting up scenes. There is a main menu at the top of the Maya window and individual menus for the panels and option windows.

STATUS BAR

The Status Bar contains shortcuts for a number of menu items as well as tools for setting up object selection and snapping. A Quick Selection field is also available that can be set up for numeric input.

SHELF

The Shelf is available for you to set up customized tool sets that can be quickly accessed with a single click. You can set up shelves to support different workflows. Press **Shift+Ctrl+Alt** when selecting a menu item to add it to the Shelf.

LAYERS

Maya has two types of layers. **Display Layers** are used to manage a scene, while **Render Layers** are used to set up render passes for compositing. In each case, there is a default layer where objects are initially placed upon creation.

QWERTY TOOLS

The "qwerty" hotkeys can be used to Select (q), Move (w), Rotate (e), Scale (r), and Show Manipulators (t) as well as access the last tool used (y) in the scene.

TIME SLIDER

The Time Slider shows you the time range as defined by the range slider, the current time and the keys on selected objects or characters. You can also use it to "scrub" through an animation.

RANGE SLIDER

This bar lets you set up the start and end time of the scene's animation and a playback range if you want to focus on a smaller portion of the timeline.

HELP LINE

The Help Line gives a short description of tools and menu items as you scroll over them in the UI. This bar also prompts you with the steps required to complete a certain tool workflow.

COMMAND LINE

This bar has an area to the left for inputting simple MEL commands and an area to the right for feedback. You will use these areas if you choose to become familiar with Maya's MEL scripting language.

CHANNEL BOX

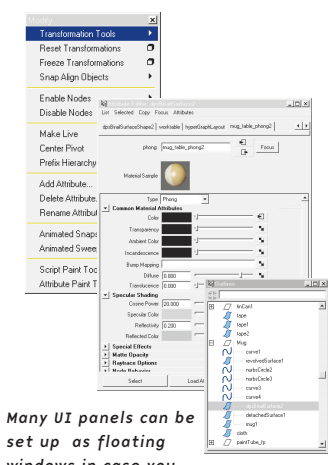
The Channel Box lets you edit and key values for selected objects.

PLAYBACK

The Playback controls let you move around time and preview your animations as defined by the Time Slider range.

CHARACTERS

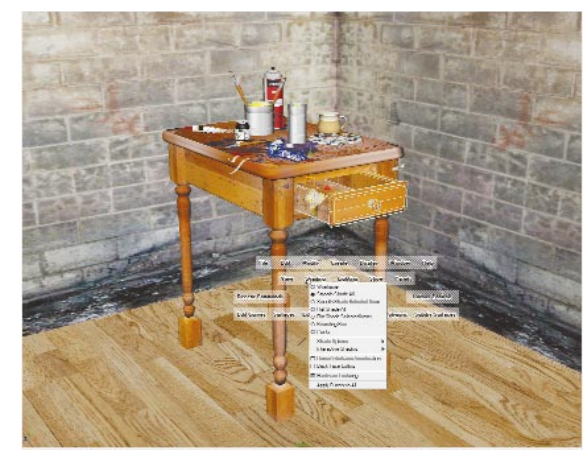
The Character Menu lets you define one or more characters, then prepare them for being animated.



Many UI panels can be set up as floating windows in case you need them just temporarily. Menus can also be broken off from the Main Menu bar in case you need to focus on the menu's contents.

SIMPLIFYING THE USER INTERFACE

All of the UI tools that are available when Maya is first launched can be turned off or on as needed. In fact, you can turn them all off and focus on one single view panel if this is how you like to work. In this case, you would use interface techniques such as the Hotbox, Hotkeys, or the right mouse button to access tools and options.



This is a single shaded view panel with the hotbox being used to access tools. Most likely, you will configure the workspace somewhere between this minimal setup and the default setup.

THE HOTBOX

The Hotbox gives you access to all of Maya's menu items and tools right at your cursor position. When you press and hold down the **Space bar** on your keyboard, after a short delay the Hotbox appears. The Hotbox is fully customizable and lets you focus on the tools you feel are most important to your workflow. The **Hotbox Controls** let you turn off the main menu and the panel menu in the workspace. When the menus and panels are off, you can focus entirely on using the Hotbox.

COMMON MENUS

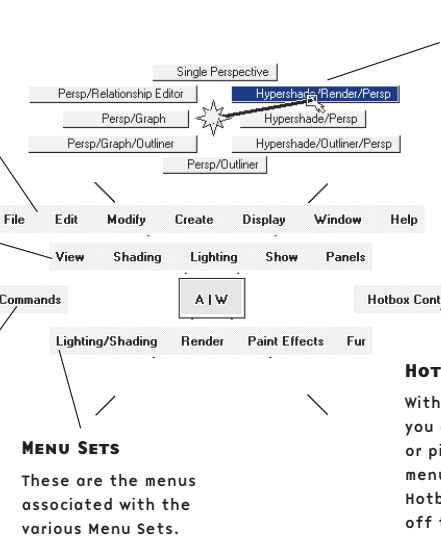
These are the menus that are always available on the Main Menu bar.

PANEL MENUS

These are the menus that are associated with the active panel.

RECENT COMMANDS

Recent Commands display a list of the last few tools and actions used. This is useful when commands are repeated several times.



MARKING MENUS

In the four quadrants and in the center of the Hotbox, you can access marking menus that are designed to help you set up your workspace.

HOTBOX CONTROLS

With the Hotbox Controls you can turn on all menus, or pick and choose the menus you want in the Hotbox. You can also turn off the workspace menus.

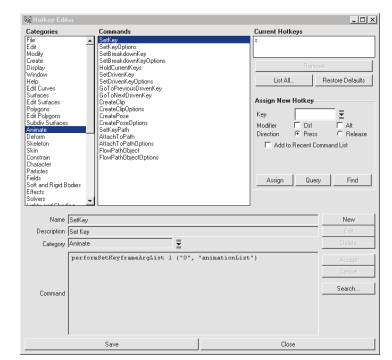
The Workspace

setAttr "spotlights.pelCenterOfIllumination" 17.56598; setAttr "spotlights.rotate" -type double 3 0 0 12.56598; setAttr "spotlights.translate" -type double 3 0 0 31.9657; setAttr "spotlights.illumination" 2 31.9657; setAttr "spotlights.translate" -type double 3 10.2 10.2 1.9 50.08; setAttr "spotlights.shapel.cenAngle" 65.764707; setAttr "spotlights.shapel.useDepthMapShadows" on;

HOTKEYS

Hotkeys will give you quick access to many of the tools found in Maya. To set up Hotkeys, select **Windows > Settings/Preferences > Hotkeys**. The Hotkey Editor lets you set up either a single key or a key and a modifier key such as Ctrl, Shift, or Alt, to access any tool in Maya that is listed in the Editor.

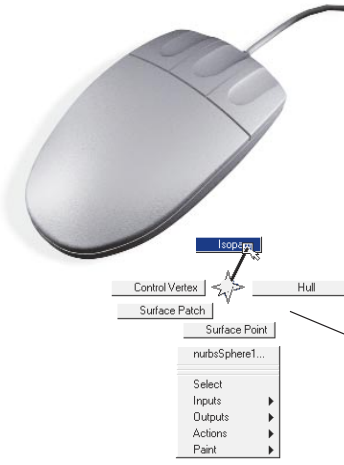
It is also possible to build custom commands using a MEL (Maya Embedded Language) script. This feature allows you to set up the UI to completely reflect your own workflow.



The Hotkey Editor gives you access to all of the tools in Maya.

MOUSE BUTTONS

Each of the three buttons on your mouse plays a slightly different role when manipulating objects in the workspace. Listed here are some of the generic uses of the mouse buttons. When used with modifiers such as the **Alt** key, they also aid in viewing your scene.



LEFT MOUSE BUTTON

This button is used to select tools and objects, and access visible manipulators.

MIDDLE MOUSE BUTTON

This button is used to edit objects without the manipulator. This button is also used for click-dragging.

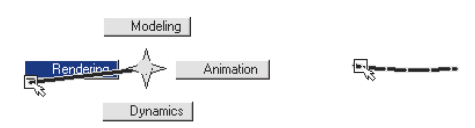
RIGHT MOUSE BUTTON

This button is used to invoke context-sensitive menus and marking menus such as the one on the left.

MARKING MENUS

Marking menus are accessed by selecting a Hotkey and clicking with your left mouse button. The menu appears in a radial form so that all your options are simply a stroke away. Once you learn the location of the menu options, you can quickly stroke in the direction of an option without having to see the menu itself. Because the menu is radial, it is very easy to remember the location of each menu option. It will only take a short time for you to master this way of accessing tools.

You can set up your own marking menus by building them in **Windows > Settings/Preferences > Marking Menus**, then assigning the new marking menu to a Hotkey.



FIRST USE

When you first use a marking menu, press the **Hotkey**, click and hold it with the mouse while you view the **Options** then drag to the desired location in the menu.

EXPERT USE

As you become an expert, you can quickly press the Hotkey and click-drag to the desired location in the menu. The menu doesn't appear and your selection quickly flashes by.