

Tools of the trade

By now your story should start to take shape. Your screenplay and your storyboard are full of ideas, characters, fantastic settings and you can't wait to bring your words and drawings to life?

The time has now come to know what tools are needed to make a stop-motion animated short film.

First of all, it is important to understand what stop-motion is, i.e. the technique used in animation cinema with which, by taking hundreds of pictures of each action and then putting them together one after the other, you can give the viewer the feeling that your character and its surroundings move!

After all, this process, based on images that are put together and then reproduced at high speed (normally 25 images for every second), is how cinema was born at the end of the 1800s, and is still how cinema is made today, even if with digital equipment.

Talking about equipment, let's see what you need for the realization of your project:

- First of all, you need a camera to take pictures. In this case we recommend any smartphone or tablet.
- To make it easier to create a stop-motion movie it could be very useful to download an app that helps you and simplifies many stages of your work. There are many and they are all very handy. The one we use in our videos is called Stop Motion Studio. There is both a paid version (pink icon) and a free version (blue icon). The free version will work perfectly for your project. Stop Motion Studio is available for both iOS and Android systems.

- It is very important that photographs are always taken from the same angle and that there is no movement during shooting. To avoid a "seasickness" effect, with blurry or out-of-focus images, we advise you not to hold your smartphone or tablet in your hand, but to fix it to a stable frame. It could be a tripod, a selfie stick, or a homemade frame made from pieces of wood or solid cardboard and held together by rubber bands or laundry pins.

- One last point to pay attention to is the light. We recommend that you make your short film in a room where sunlight does not directly enter. With the stop-motion technique, it can take several hours or days to make a single scene and during this time the sunlight will undergo great changes, creating unwanted light and shadow effects. One solution is to darken the windows with curtains or simply close the shutters and use artificial light to illuminate the scene. You could use a spotlight, but a regular desk lamp is fine too.

Your animator's station is ready: a camera, an app, a support for the camera and appropriate lighting.

Now you can start making your first trials to see if everything works, like in the example of the space rubber and the pencil rocket, or of the ball moving quickly towards the viewer. And remember: if you have doubts or questions you can write to locarnokids@locarnofestival.ch at any time.



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