

The Playground

60 minutes

Introduction to Animation

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Get ready to create a fun animated playground scene! You'll animate a bouncing ball and a swinging motion using simple shapes across at least five frames. Use onion skinning for smooth transitions and tell a little story with your design.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the basics of creating a simple animated scene using fundamental animation principles.
- Apply techniques for animating multiple motions, such as bouncing and swinging, within a single project.
- Develop skills in using animation tools like onion skinning to achieve smooth transitions.
- Create a short visual story using basic shapes and minimal frames.
- Demonstrate the ability to preview, tweak, and export animations for sharing.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Open <https://www.wickeditor.com/> on the classroom device and click Editor to confirm the school filter is not blocking it and it loads.
- One device per pupil, each able to reach Wick Editor in the browser.
- Check pupils can download a file to the device, as the lesson ends by exporting a GIF.
- Have a finished playground GIF of your own ready to show what two motions and a smooth bounce look like.

The Playground

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Introduction

Starting Your Project

Drawing the Playground Background

Using Layers

Using Onion Skinning for Smoothness

Animating the Bouncing Ball

Hiding a Layer

Adding the Swinging Motion

Previewing and Tweaking

Save and Exporting

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Introduction. Set the brief plainly: two different motions, at least five frames, a story told with simple shapes. Point to your example GIF so they see the target before they start.
- 2. Starting Your Project. Walk everyone to New Project together so nobody is left on the wrong screen. Tell them to leave the default canvas size alone for now.
- 3. Drawing the Playground Background. Stress this is the still background only, drawn on the first frame. A ground line and one or two shapes is plenty. Stop them over-decorating before any animating happens.
- 4. Using Layers. Have everyone make and name three layers before drawing more: Background, Ball, Swing. Show that you must select a layer first, then draw, or it lands in the wrong place.
- 5. Using Onion Skinning for Smoothness. Turn onion skinning on for the whole room and explain the faint shapes are the frames either side, there to line up the next position, not part of the drawing.
- 6. Animating the Bouncing Ball. Model one bounce: small drops down, a squash at the ground, back up. Emphasise small changes between frames give smooth movement; big jumps look jerky.
- 7. Hiding a Layer. Show the eye icon hides a layer without deleting it, useful for working on the swing without the ball in the way. Remind them to click it again to bring the layer back.
- 8. Adding the Swinging Motion. Get them working on the Swing layer only. A small side-to-side rotation across frames is enough. Check each pupil now has two clearly different motions.
- 9. Previewing and Tweaking. Have them press play and count aloud: two motions, five frames. If it runs too fast or slow, show the frame rate in project settings rather than redrawing everything.
- 10. Save and Exporting. Insist they rename the project with the lesson name and their own name before exporting. Wait with them for the GIF to finish downloading before anyone moves on.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils draw the ball or swing on the Background layer, so everything moves or nothing separates cleanly when they animate. Before they add a second frame, ask them to click each layer and check what lights up on the canvas. Move stray shapes onto the right layer.
- Pupils think onion skinning is part of their drawing and try to keep or colour the faint frames. Toggle it off and on for them so they see the faint shapes vanish. Explain it is a guide only and the animation never shows it.
- Pupils make one big jump between frames and expect smooth motion. Play their animation back beside your example. Point out the ball should move a little each frame, so more frames with small steps means smoother movement.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Get them to the first bouncing ball frame with you before they attempt the swing, one motion working is a win. Pair them with a partner who is comfortable adding and naming layers.
- Developing: Ask them to explain their frame order back to you so they can see where a jump is too big. Prompt them to use hide-layer to focus on one motion at a time rather than juggling all three.
- Proficient: Challenge them to add a third element that moves, such as a swinging pendulum plus a rolling ball plus a rising sun. Ask them to time the swing so it slows at the ends and speeds through the middle, like a real pendulum.