LESSON 34

Floating Balloons

60 minutes | Introduction to Animation

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Get ready to animate balloons rising into the sky using Wick Editor! In this engaging activity, you'll create slow, vertical motion with subtle drifting to achieve a soft, floaty effect, learning the basics of easing and light animation.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the basics of animation using Wick Editor to create motion.
- Apply easing techniques to simulate gentle, floaty movements.
- Develop skills in frame-by-frame animation for smooth transitions.
- Explore creative ways to depict natural elements like wind and air.
- Master previewing and refining animations for desired effects.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Open https://www.wickeditor.com/, click Editor and confirm it loads and runs on your school network, as some filters block online editors.
- One device per pupil, each able to draw with a mouse or trackpad and save a downloaded file locally.
- Have a projector ready to demonstrate tweening and keyframes live, as these are hard to explain in words alone.

Floating Balloons

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

- Introduction
- Create a New Project
- Drawing Your First Frame
- Using a Tween
- Adding Floating Motion
- Adding a String
- There's Always Room For More!
- Previewing Your Animation
- Save and Exporting

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Introduction. Show a real balloon rising, or describe one, and draw out that it never travels in a dead straight line. Set that drift as the goal for the animation.
- 2. Create a New Project. Walk everyone to the Editor together and check each screen shows a blank canvas before moving on. Latecomers to this step will fall behind fast.
- 3. Drawing Your First Frame. Demonstrate grouping the two ovals: select both with Shift held, then Ctrl and G. Stress that ungrouped shapes will tween separately and split apart.
- 4. Using a Tween. Model this live on the projector. Show stretching the frame, clicking the diamond keyframe icon, then moving the balloon at the far end. Pause and let them mirror each click.
- 5. Adding Floating Motion. Emphasise small nudges up and slight tilts between keyframes, not one big jump. Tell them the tween fills the gaps, so a few points make smooth motion.
- 6. Adding a String. Show adding and renaming a new layer first, so the string sits separate from the balloon. Redraw the string each frame to follow the drift.
- 7. There's Always Room For More! Only start a second balloon once the first floats well. Remind them each balloon needs its own layer and a different speed or path for variety.
- 8. Previewing Your Animation. Have pupils turn off onion skinning before pressing play for a clean preview. If it looks too fast, add frames between movements rather than starting over.
- 9. Save and Exporting. Show where the downloaded GIF lands and agree a naming pattern of lesson name plus pupil name, so files are findable afterwards.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils expect the balloon to move on its own after one keyframe, without setting a second position at the end of the stretched frame. Show that a tween needs two keyframes: a start and an end. Have them set both and press play to see the in-between positions appear.
- Pupils draw the string on the same layer as the balloon, so it tweens oddly or overlaps. Point out the layers panel and have them add and name a separate String layer, then redraw the string frame by frame to follow the float.
- Pupils make large jumps between keyframes and the motion looks jerky, not floaty. Explain that small changes between frames read as smooth. Have them add more points along the tween and slow the rise.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Pre-load a project with a balloon already drawn and grouped so they can start straight at tweening. Pair them with a partner who has the first tween working and have them talk through each click together.
- Developing: Ask them to explain back what the diamond keyframe icon does before they add the string layer. Prompt one deliberate side-to-side tilt in the rise rather than a straight vertical path.