



Middlemost Post Storyboarding Guide!!

Hey there hotshot storyboard artist!! We already know you can board, so John and Howie put together this guide to achieve an overall sense of visual style with the boards and characters, plus things we like to see. Generally, the show is kept flat for comedy with dynamic shots inserted here and there when it makes sense, such as for action or movie parodies. Keeping it simple ensures the gags read, and that character's personalities shine.. Clarity is key!

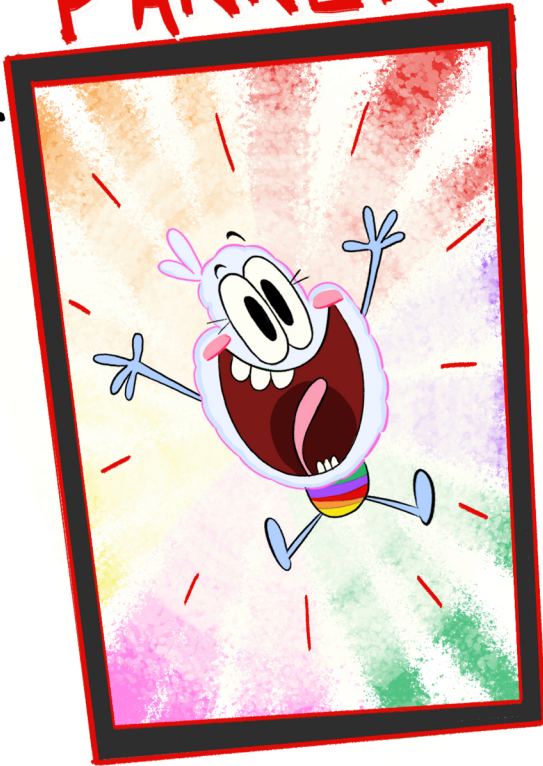
We'll break up this handy dandy guide into two sections:

- 1) Character Theories
- 2) Storyboard Style



1) MMP CHARACTER THEORIES!

PARKER

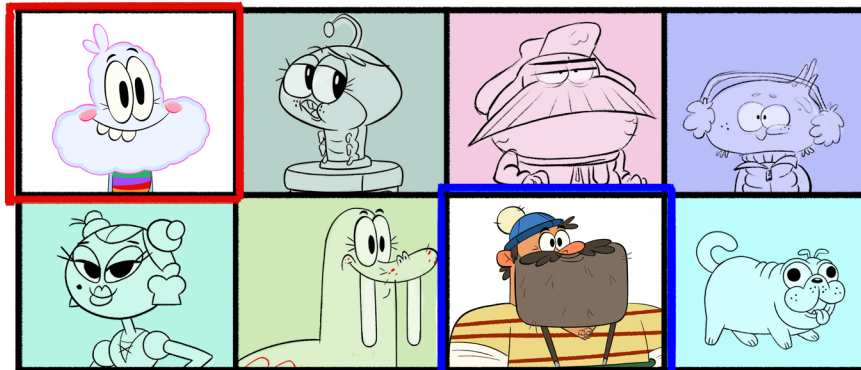


-VS-

ANGUS



PLAYER 01



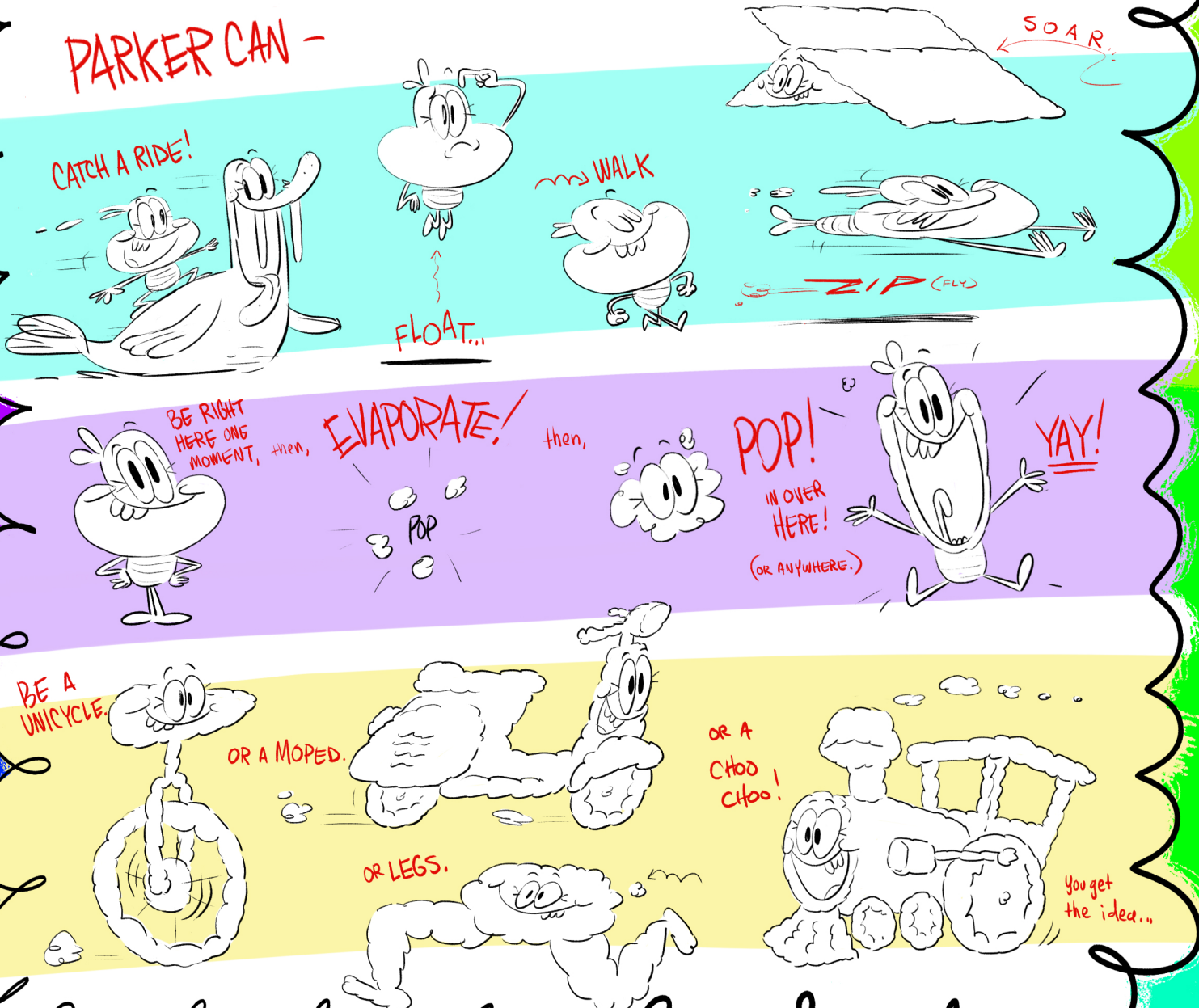
PLAYER 02

MMP is a show based on characters and personalities, so let's think of the characters like a videogame! Parker, Angus, and Russell have different weights, attributes, and personalities that dictate their movement and expressions. When you think like this, it will help you find the comedy and acting within the characters. It's up to you, the board artist, to PUSH PUSH PUSH everything to the max! But always remember the visuals and storytelling go hand and hand.

PARKER

Neither he or she, just 100% CLOUD! Think light, airy, and zippy. A puff of air! Whatever you can imagine a cloud to be, Parker can be! A hammer? YES! A goose? HECK YEAH! The Empire state building? Well, let's not get too carried away. Things Parker can transform into should be similar to, or near, Parker's size. The time is NOW to get inventive and be creative!! Always lean into Parker's physicality to move story, and keep things interesting and FUNNY!

PARKER CAN -

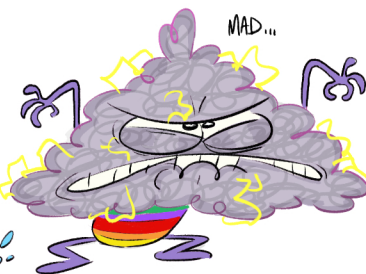


Parker can go places where the other characters can't...

So place the lil nimbus wherever you darn well please!!

Just like the actual weather, Parker's moods can be just as sporadic! We're talking **lightning storms, rain, gale force winds, HAIL, TORNADOS!!!**

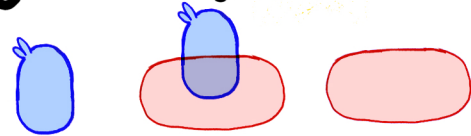
Go big with the expressions, and use Parker's cloud-ness and morphing ability to really **PUSH THESE POSES!!!!**



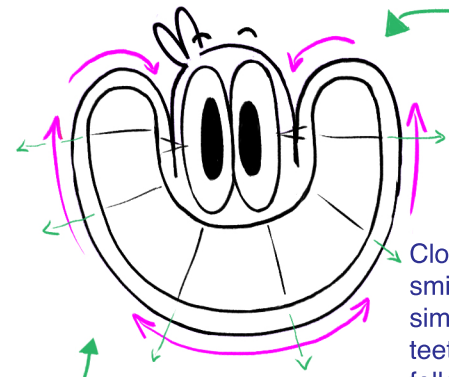
* When Parker has a negative emotion, try to find a way to make it funny, too. We wanna feel bad for the kid, but not uncomfortable.

PARKER

Head, Mouth, and Teeth notes.



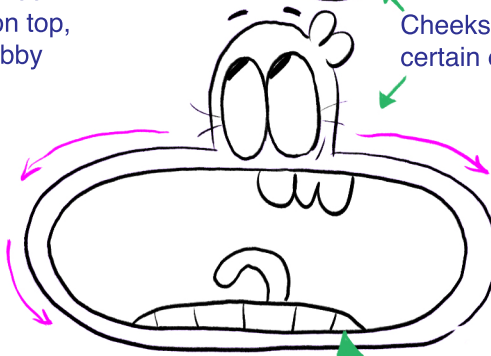
Parker's face has a lot of squash and stretch, and generally follows the shape of the expression. There are two forms here, the **HEAD** and the **MOUTH**. Try to keep the outline for both, rather than making them form together, **LIKE HERE**



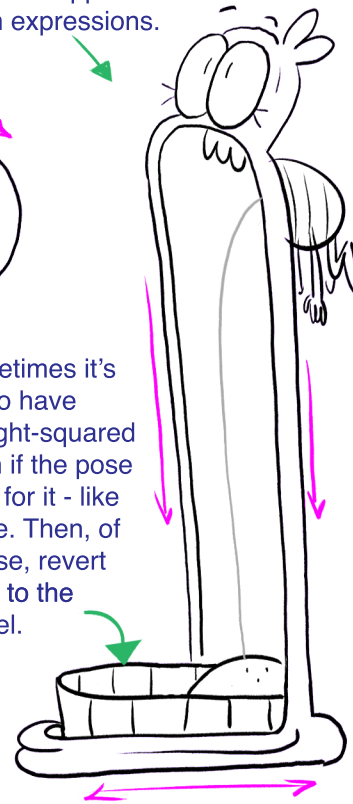
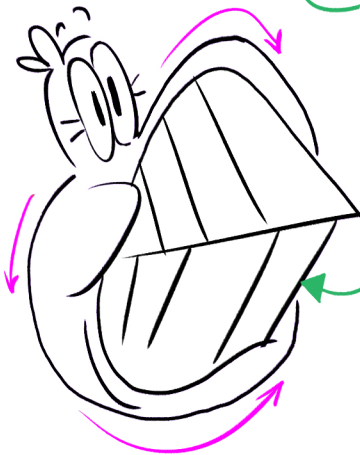
Closed smile is simple with teeth lines following the curve.

Parker has three round teeth on top, and cute chubby cheeks.

Cheeks disappear in certain expressions.

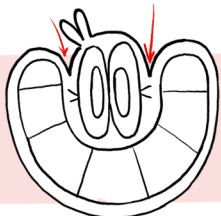


Sometimes it's OK to have straight-squared teeth if the pose calls for it - like these. Then, of course, revert back to the model.

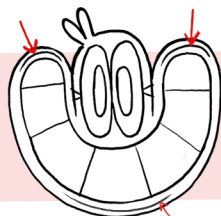


Parker's 3 bottom teeth only show up in BIG expressions.

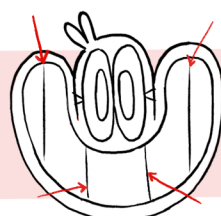
DON'TS...



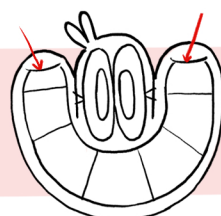
Don't forget to keep the head forms defined.



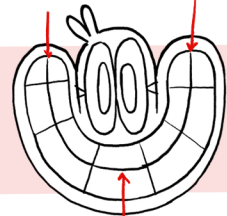
Don't add too much detail. Keep it simple.



Don't use vertical lines to indicate teeth. Follow the mouth shape form instead.



Don't add cheeks to every expression. Some just don't need 'em!



Don't draw the line separating the teeth.



He's more "anime cute" than wrinkly and gross,
but you can be gross if it's gag/story specific.

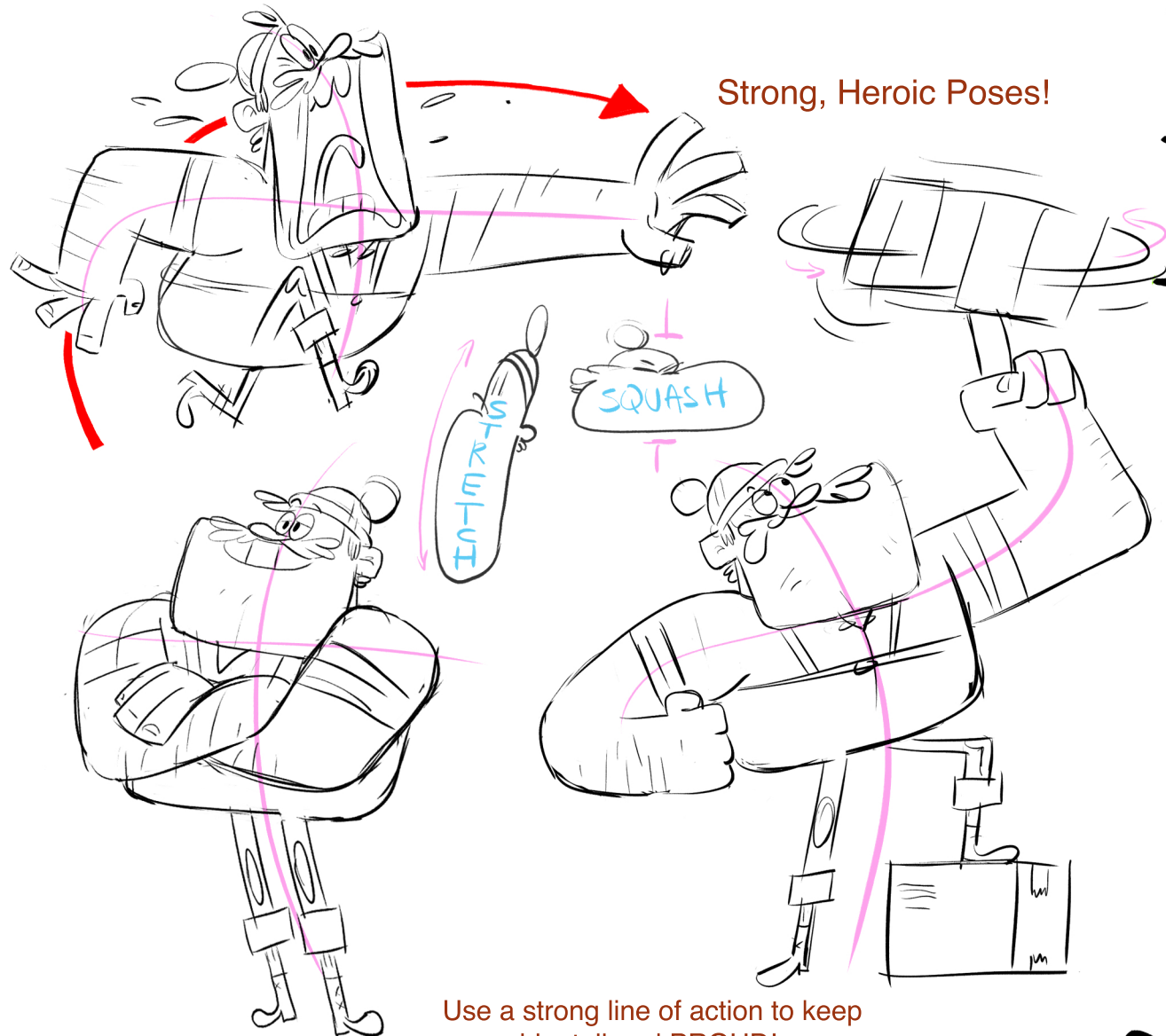
SOME
PARKER
DOODLES!





ANGUS

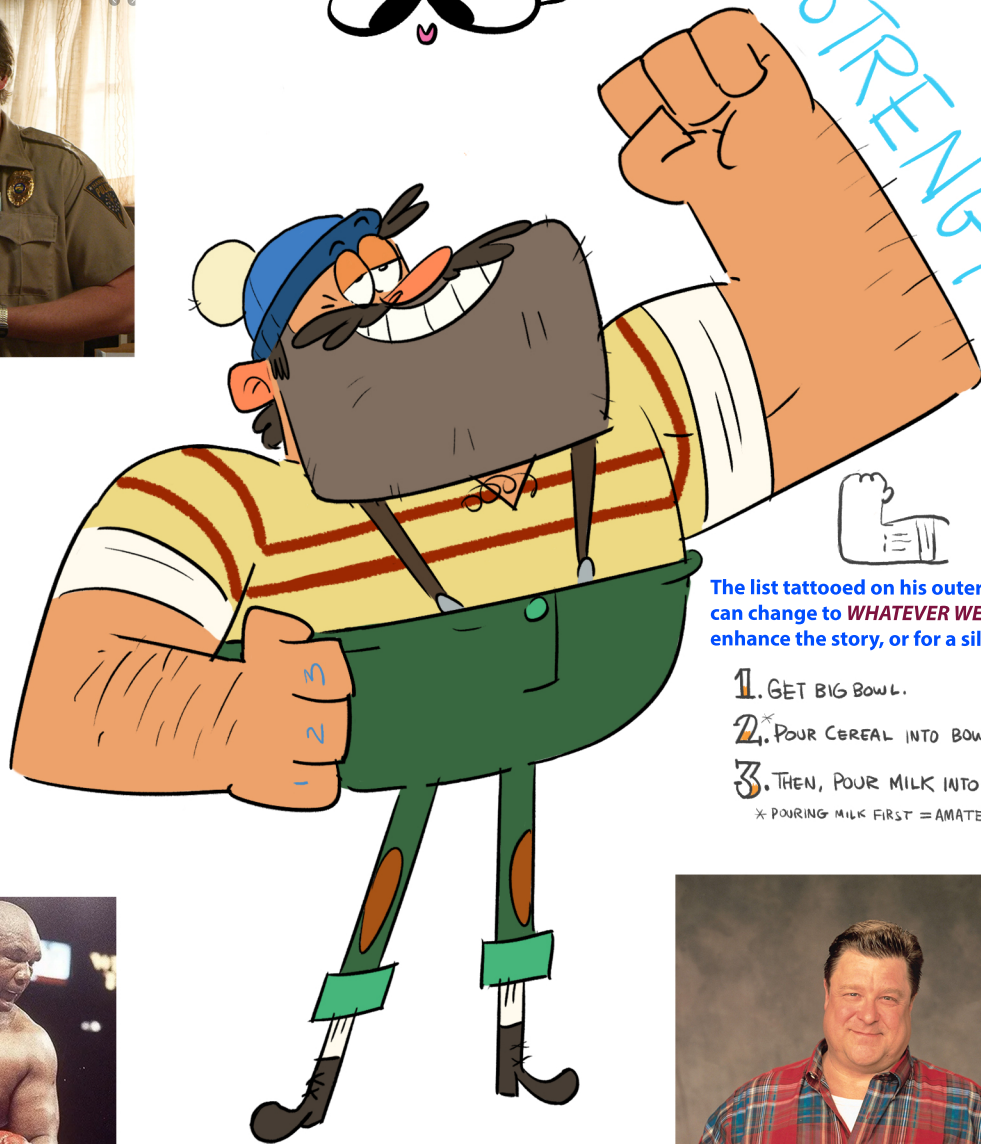
Angus is big and heavy and somewhat slow, and doesn't zip around like Parker does. Remember this contrast when he's with Parker: Parker will be the crazy one flying around the scene, while Angus will remain stoic, BUT, he'll still have those **big expressions** when needed!



Use a strong line of action to keep him tall and PROUD!



STRENGTH!!



The list tattooed on his outer bicep can change to **WHATEVER WE WANT** to enhance the story, or for a silly gag!

1. GET BIG BOWL.
 2. *POUR CEREAL INTO BOWL.
 3. THEN, POUR MILK INTO BOWL
- *POURING MILK FIRST = AMATEUR HOUR!



When storyboarding ANGUS, always find ways for him to show his **STRENGTH!** This is his super power, however, he's definitely not Incredible Hulk, or a super fit body builder... think Jim Hopper/John Goodman/George Foreman strong. Not fat, but not fit either (corn-fed strong.) Whenever possible, shoot for a hero pose, and maybe have him "bust out of his shirt he's posing so hard!" This characteristic will only make him funnier when he's knitting a pair of socks or soaking in a cozy bubble bath, which are two of his favorite things to do on the down low.



Let's chat about Angus's mouth and teeth. Below are some examples of what **TO DO** and what **NOT TO DO**.



Mouth is a bean-ike shape with only 3 big round teeth! YES!



Bean-like shape with only vertical teeth line. YES!



Mouth isn't a continuing bean shape. NO!!!



Teeth are squared off. NOOO!!



The horizontal line separating upper and lower teeth. NOOO!



YEE-HAW.

...



How about these though??

HECK YEAH!



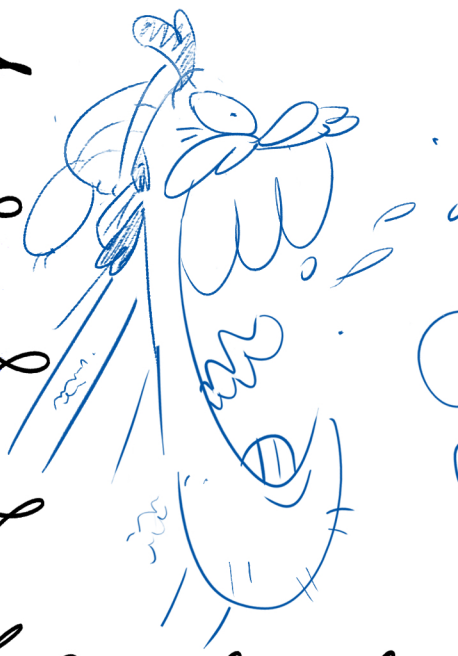
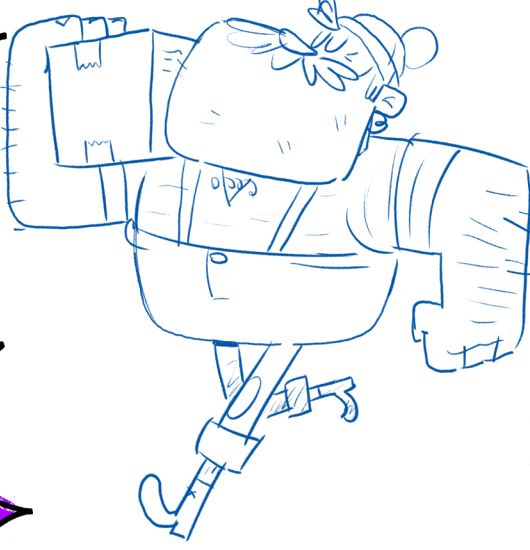
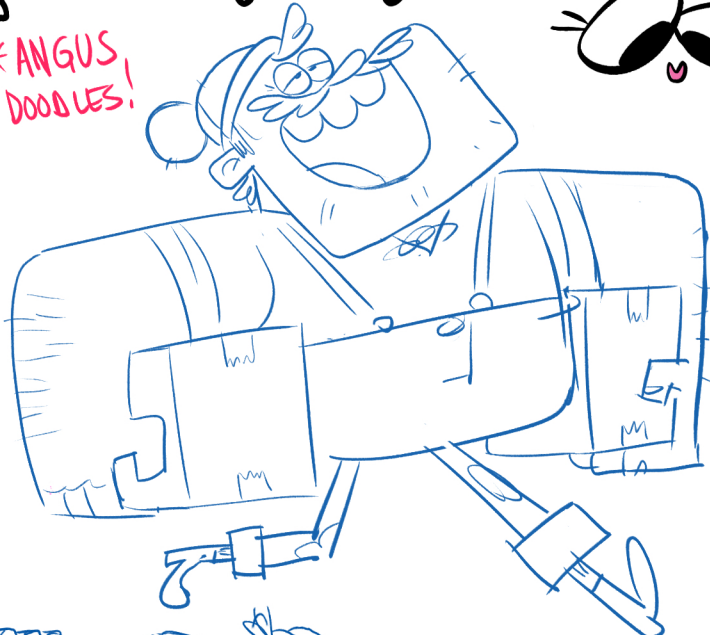
Use Angus's moustache for expressions, too!



But, you just said NO squared teeth? Well, in this instance, the squared off teeth work to sell this expression! This shouldn't be used too often, but in some cases it's cool to go in this direction, and should be called out in the board.

This also works! The bottom row of teeth can change to help sell an expression! His teeth, too, can stretch with the face shape!

*ANGUS
DOODLES!





* MORE ANGUS
DOODLES!



*RUSSELL

Her appearance, odor, and food preference can confirm without a doubt, she is a large flippered marine animal known as a WALRUS. Take one look at her personality, and you might swear she's a dog!

• Constantly wagging tail

• Spots

• Adorable puppy dog eyes

• Whiskers

• Panting tongue

• Drool. LOTS OF DROOL!

• Doggie paddles

*ACTING NOTE

Even though Russell can't speak, she is a **STRONG** supporting actor in this show. Think of her as a Chewbacca, R2D2, Abu (Aladdin), or in some ways Scooby-Doo (minus the verbal skills). At times, Russell is very aware of the room and is tracking conversations. She often is the smartest one in the room at times. Her facial expressions will tell us how she feels about any given situation. Example: Jim from The Office. She's not always thinking, though. Sometimes, Russell is purely an energetic pet just happy to hang with her buddy. Think dog with a ball.

SO how in the heck can we express what she's feeling if she can't say it?? **EASY-**

*BY USING HER:

• TAIL

• EYES

• SNOUT

• TEETH

• MOUTH

• EYE BROWS

• FLIPPERS

• EYE LIDS

POSE!

• LINE OF ACTION

• BODY LANGUAGE

Push that pose!! Use her whole body to show expressions!

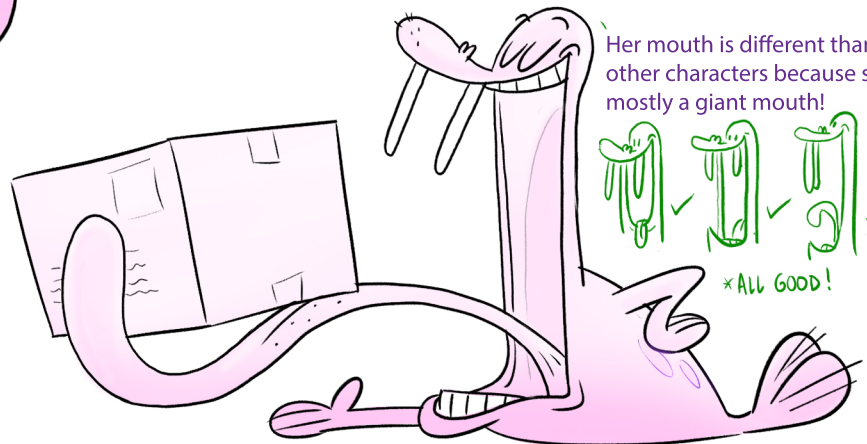
RUSSELL has an essential role at the Middlemost Post because of her special stomach ability. Her **MAGICAL TUMMY** allows her to store all the mail that needs to be delivered (and then some) making her one of the most unique mail delivery truck-vessel-things in the world!



ENVELOPES, PACKAGES, PARCELS
BOXES, SHELVES, SPICE GRINDER,
ENCYCLOPEDIA, BICYCLE TIRE,
POGO STICK, TORTILLA PRESS...

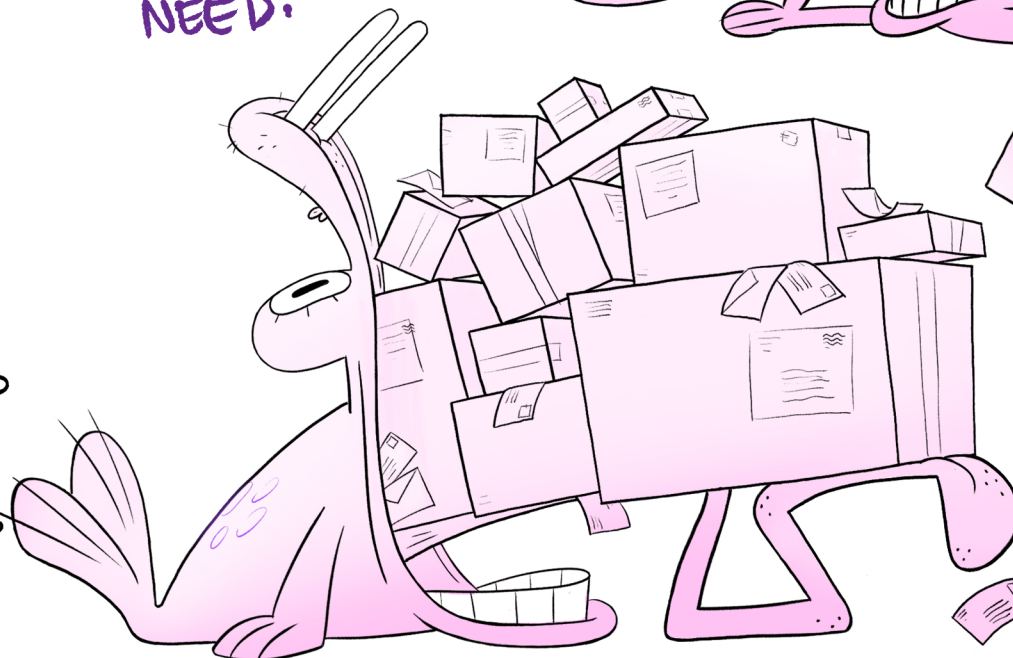
Inside her belly looks like an infinite Amazon warehouse where you can probably find Parker, who stops in on the reg. What's inside there exactly? **WHATEVER YOU NEED THERE TO BE!!** You can use her stomach contents as a comedic secret weapon in your storyboards! **SO GET CREATIVE!**

- SHE CAN GET YOU THAT ONE PACKAGE YOU NEED.



Her mouth is different than the other characters because she is mostly a giant mouth!

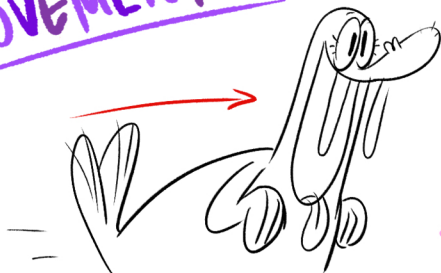
*ALL GOOD!



- OR ALL OF THE PACKAGES!

OR, whatever you want to have her produce for a gag!

*RUSSELL
MOVEMENT



*SLIDES IN
(MOST COMMON)

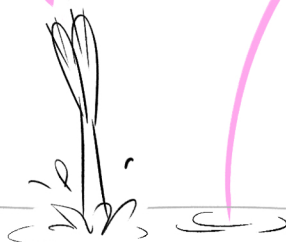


- OR - ZOOMS



*DIVES IN!
(SAND, SNOW, DIRT...)

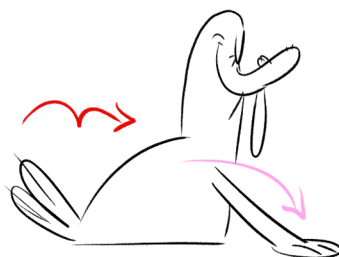
*SWAN DIVE!!



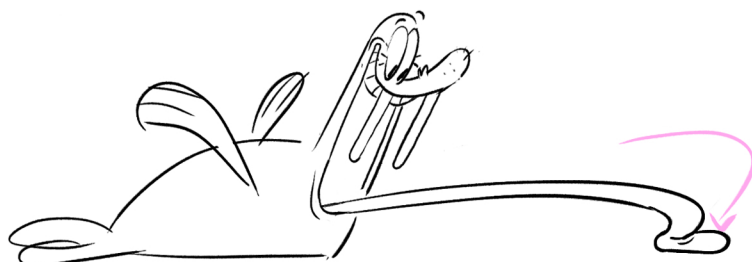
*NO
SPLASH.



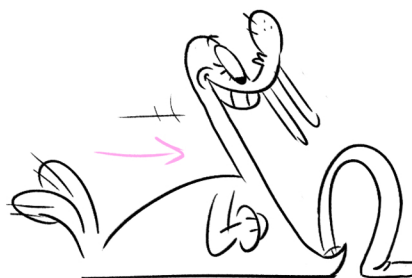
*THE FLIPPER STRUT.



*BIPED...
(ON OCCASION.)



*TONGUE "INCH WORM"

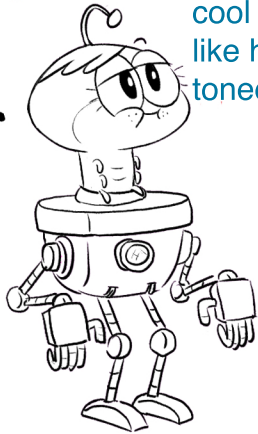


*AND - WHATEVER ELSE
YOU CAN THINK OF!

MORE MT. MIDDLEMOST CHARACTERS

LILY

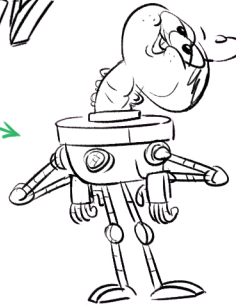
- is a subtle actor, keeping cool and calm like her mono-toned voice.



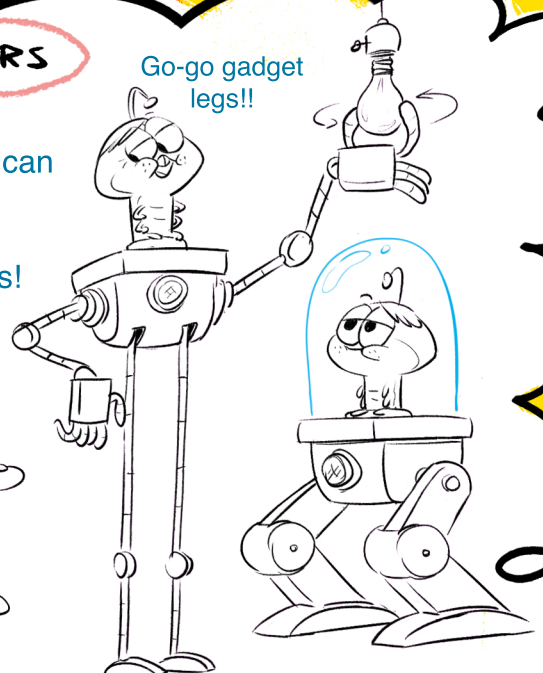
Her suit on the otherhand, is a very lively machine that she expresses herself with.



Her expressions can go big, too, BUT save it for those special occasions!



Go-go gadget legs!!



She's an inventor, so anything is possible when it comes to her suits.

MAMMA JAM + JELLY



Momma Jam nearly floats when she walks, while Jelly is a happy little prancer.

The toast pattern on the bottom of Mamma Jam's dress has a doggie door just the perfect size for Jelly to fit in!



MAYOR PEEVES + RYAN

The Mayor is always shivering cold, and generally up to no good: villianious poses, seedy gestures, and "oh so pety."



Ryan is pretty much the nicest person you'd ever meet. His loyalty to the Mayor transends understanding. One time Ryan physically layed down over top of a lava puddle to keep the mayor's feet from getting burnt.



2) Storyboard Style

Fear not! MMP doesn't have a fancy pants boarding style that goes against everything you've learned before. Instead, MMP follows tried and true classic filmmaking techniques that you're probably already using!

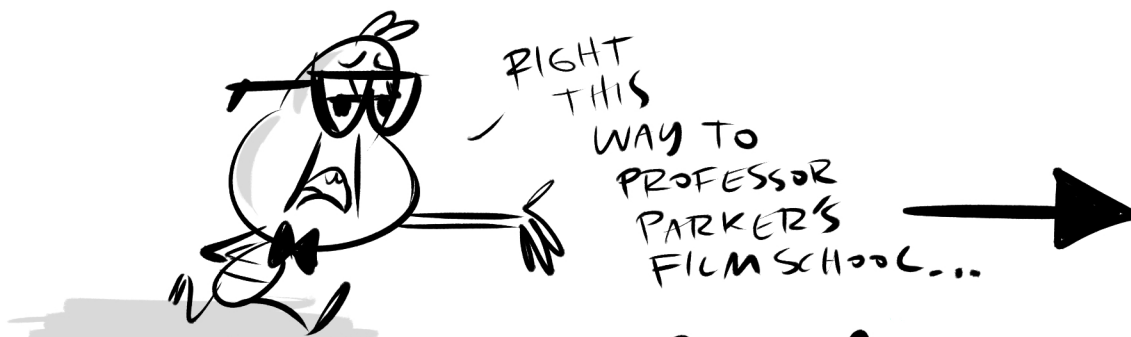
So then why write this thing?? The idea here is to put all the things that John and Howie think will work best with the type of stories we want to tell into one place- this guide! Some of these things you might already do in your boards! Some you might not! And that's all OK! We want your episode to feel like your episode, BUT still feel like they're in the MMP world. This guide will hopefully help you get there.

We think our characters have unique stories to tell and we want everyone to show that in the clearest possible way in their boards. One of the most important things in storytelling is...

CLARITY.

So! We ask that you look at this style guide not as a DO IT THIS WAY OR ELSE kinda thing, but as a way to learn what's best on how to board these characters as clear as possible in their world.

Hey, who knows! You might learn a thing or two! (Or not.)





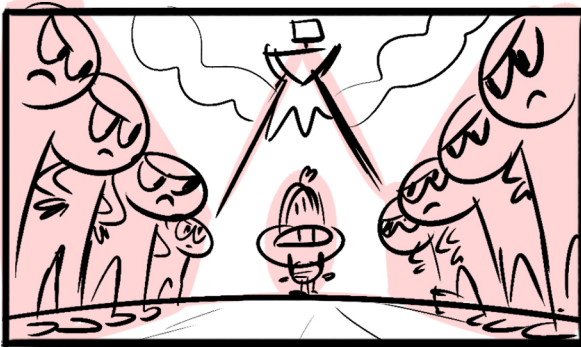
Keep it FLAT, SIMPLE, AND ECONOMICAL!

with....

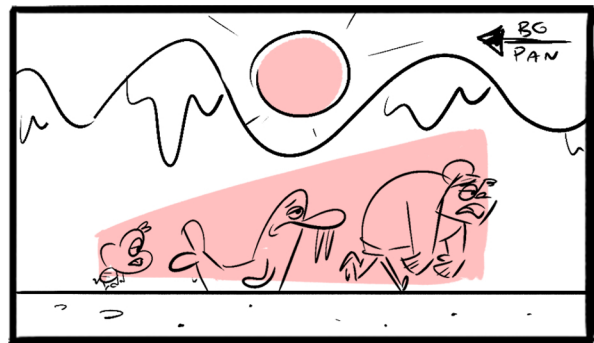
Balanced (NOT WONKY) Compositions

Generally, your shots should be composed of balance and symmetry. Like ballet! (I guess? I just made that up!) Thinking of the characters and BGs as SHAPES will help with the scene's symmetry and using "flat" center framing will make sure you're extra clear with your scene's focus. Sounds complicated! It's not. It's actually making things SIMPLER and CLEARER for the viewer.

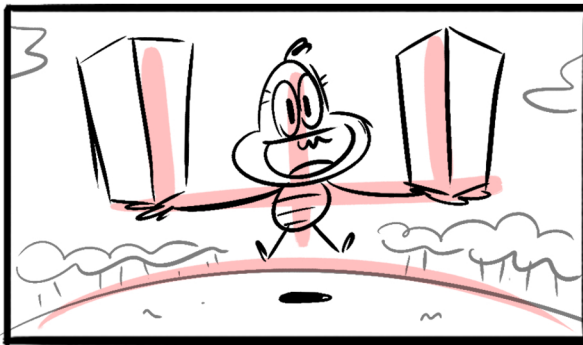
You'll still be able to add your cool dynamic shots but only when they make sense! Such as for action, movie parodies, or a gag!



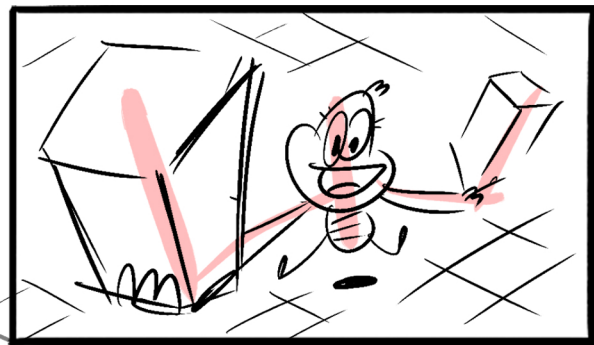
OUR EYE GOES
RIGHT TO OUR
TROUBLED HERO!



USING THE CHARACTER'S
HEIGHT AND SHAPES
MAKE A NICE BALANCE!



YES! CLEAR AND BALANCED!
IT'S OBVIOUS PARKER WANTS
US TO CHOOSE A BOX!

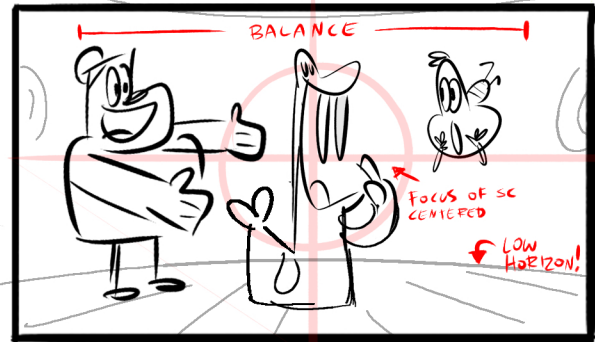
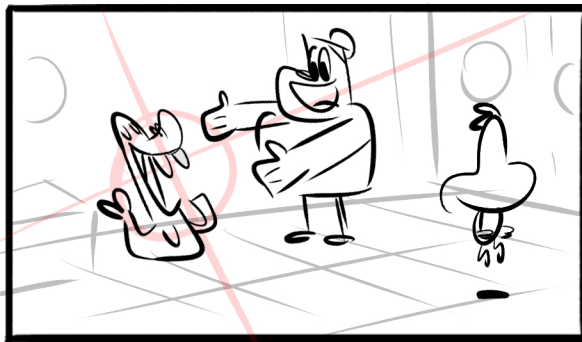


NO! WONKY!
WHY IS IT A DOWNHILL?
WHAT'S THE FOCUS HERE?



Balance Compositions Cont. Center Framing

Try to compose your shots with your characters/action staged in the CENTER of the scene. The viewer's eye will wander less because the shot will be clear and simple. Combine this with a balanced composition!



INSTEAD OF THIS..... DO THIS!

SURE, THIS IS OK... BUT
IT CAN BE EVEN CLEARER...

NOW OUR EYE GOES RIGHT
TO THE FOCUS OF THE SC-
RUSSELL'S NEW TOOTH!

Did you know that all your favorite movies use this technique? They do! Let me freely admit I am not the genius that discovered this whole center framing idea. After Mad Max: Fury Road came out, some smarty pants on Youtube made a whole video about the center framed action in the movie. You watch FR and you would never even notice it, but you FEEL it. The less your eye wanders around a shot, the more you are engaged in the storytelling. I'll say it again: CLARITY IS KEY. Does this mean every shot in your board should be centered? No! But try it and see how it helps with your storytelling.



NOTE
HOW THE
ACTORS ARE
POSED AS IF
FOR A PHOTO!
LESS MOVEMENT
= LESS CONFUSION.
TRY IT IN MMP
TO CONTRAST
WITH THE ZANINESS
OF YOUR GAGS!

Kubrick!
Wes Anderson!
We're not here to rip off
these great directors, but
learn what we can from them
and apply these techniques
to our storytelling. Remember:
They didn't invent this stuff neither.
They learned it from somewhere
and applied it in their own "style".



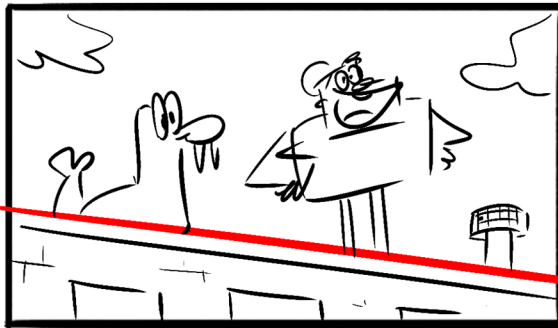
Reference:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR7ejkmf8Y4>

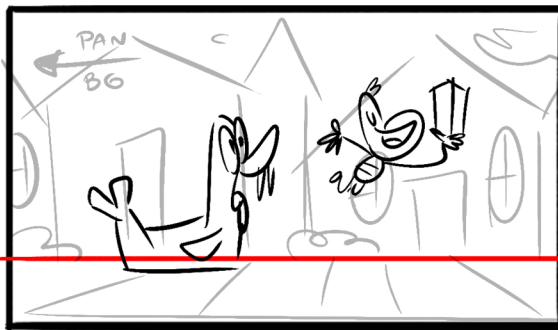
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID-g2feq_KM



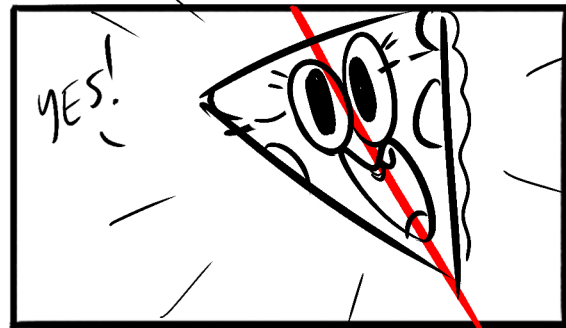
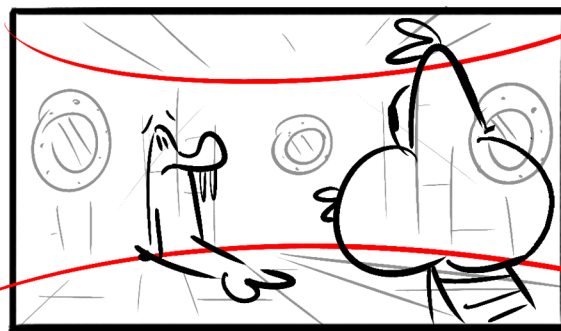
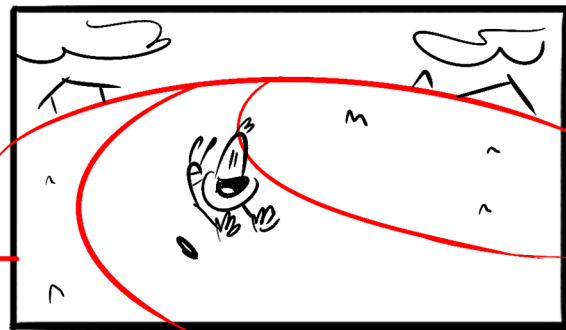
More examples on how to keep your shots well staged and balanced!



STRAIGHT LINES
AND SIMPLE CURVES
FOR YOUR HORIZON
LINE.



KEEP
LOW

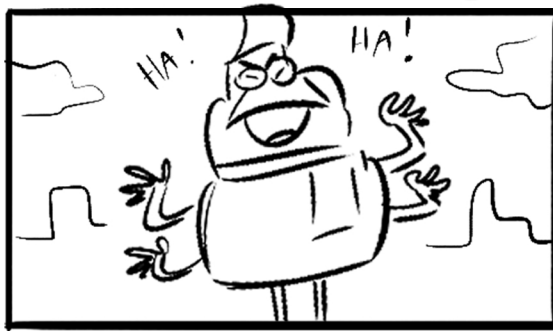


STRONG ANGLED LINE OF ACTION FOR MED SHOTS!
DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO DO THIS? NO! BUT IT
HELPS WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF THE
CHARACTERS IN THIS CASE.



When to be DYNAMIC

Fancy an upshot or downshot? Sure...but they better have meaning! If Mayor Peeve is being a real sinister jerk, then YES, let's have an upshot. Make these shots count and use them sparingly.



KINDA BORING...



YES! NOW WE CAN
FEEL THE JERKINESS!

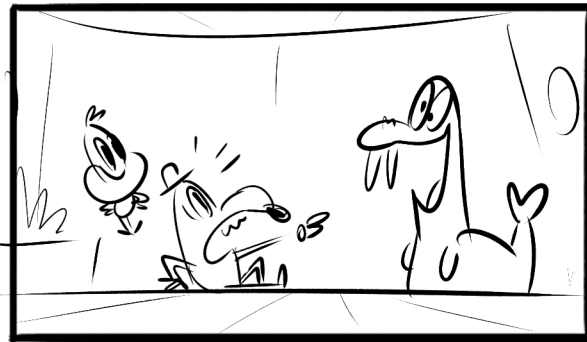


ACTION!

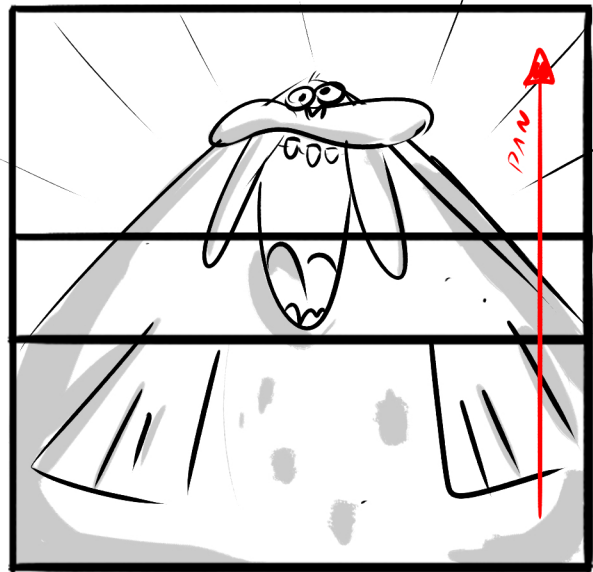


When to be DYNAMIC (Cont.)

For a gag!



SCARED GUY: WHAT...



...WHAT IS THAT
THING?!

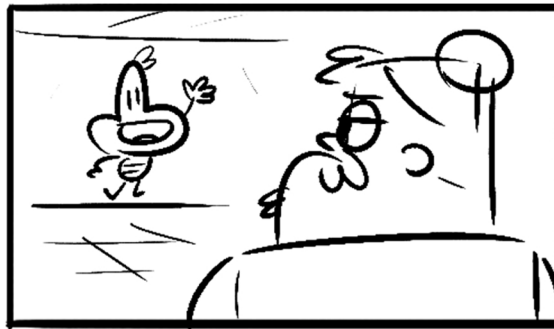


CUTTING TO A SILLY
UPSHOT OF RUSSELL REALLY
SELLS THE ABSURDITY
THAT THE "SCARED GUY"
THINKS SWEET RUSSELL
IS A MONSTER!



Dialogue and Conversation: SIDE NOTE!

Stay away from over the shoulder shots for dialogue! This isn't some CBS drama! Instead think of interesting and creative ways to keep the characters alive.



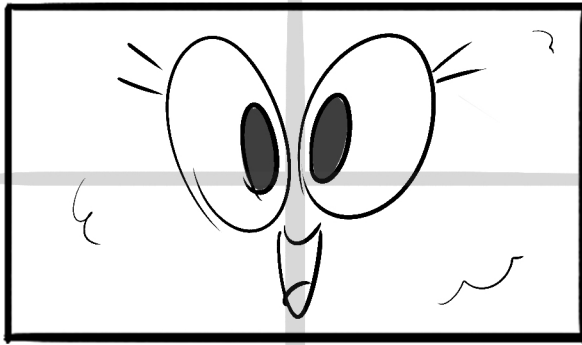
HI ANGUS! I'M REALLY
EXCITED SO WHY
AM I IN THIS
BORING SHOT?!



I'M FREE! NOW THE
BOARD ARTIST CAN
DO FUN THINGS
WITH ME!



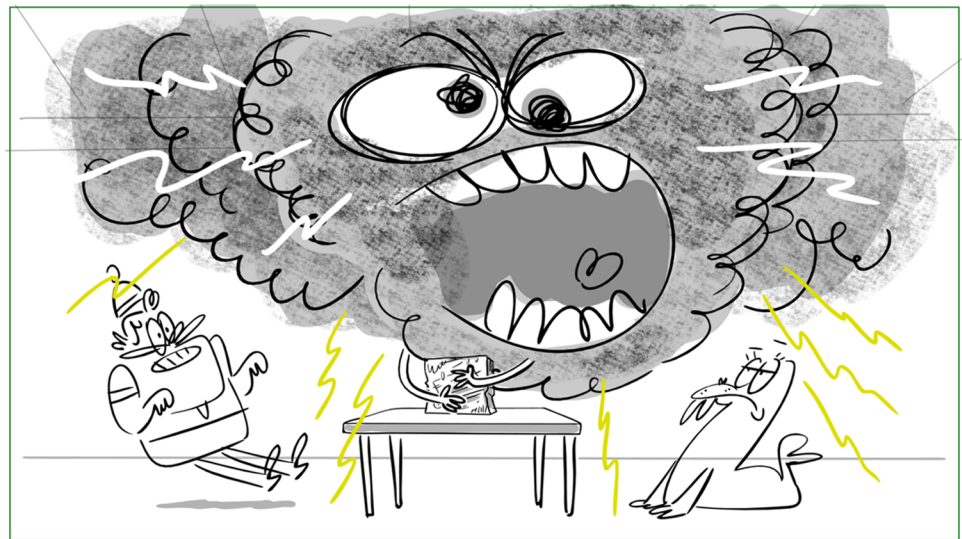
Balanced Expressions!



BOTH OF THESE ARE FINE
BUT THE ONE ON THE LEFT
REALLY HITS THE AUDIENCE

Be mindful of the character's sizes as they hit their big expressions and poses!

STILL
BALANCED!
AWESOME!





Being Subtle for those Heartfelt Times

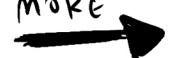
Almost every story on MMP will have a “heartfelt” moment. These moments will contrast the over-the-top cartooniness of the show, so these scenes really need to hit home. Framing and posing is super important here! Limit the movement of the characters and be subtle with your acting. Have the characters poised like a photo!

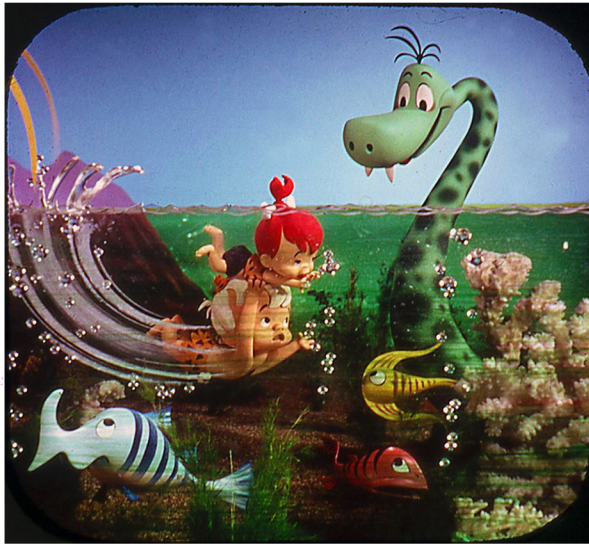
We won't bore you with things you already know, like lines of action and clear silhouettes... We'll just have a reminder here to say YES, OF COURSE, WE WANT STRONG POSES!! For all scenes, not just heartfelt ones.

These cool View Masters are well posed, balanced, and pretty damn amazing for the amount of subtleties they got with these models...and in a photo too!
Let these inspire you...



MORE

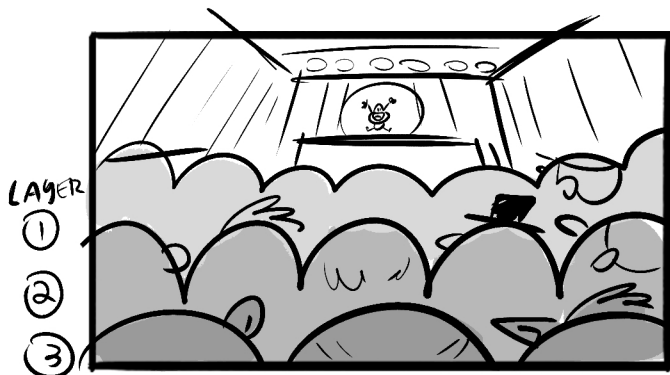




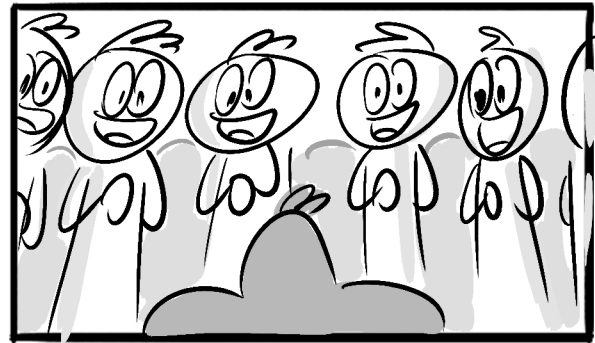


Crowds

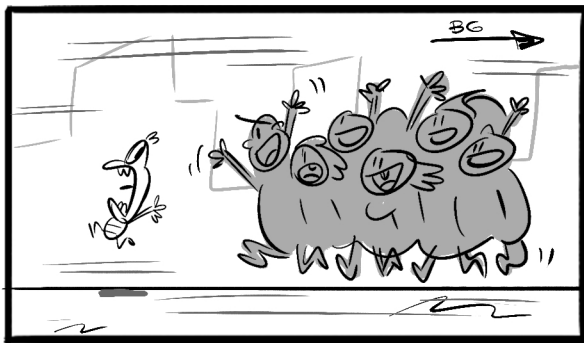
Oh, thank heavens!! You don't work on a show where you have to draw hundreds of individual characters for crowds!! Here on MMP, we'll handle crowds with a simplified design sensibility. This will make it easier for design and animation... and you!



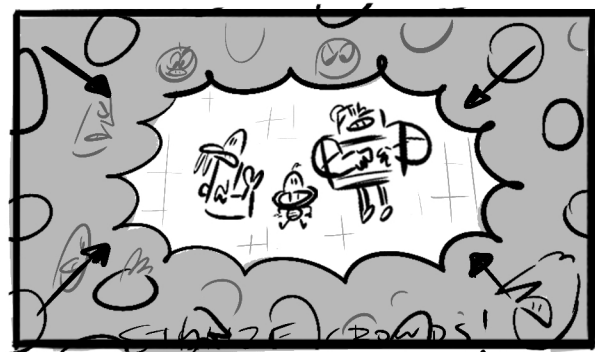
ROWS OF PEOPLE ON
DIFFERENT LAYERS -
ANIMATION CAN SLIDE UP
AND DOWN



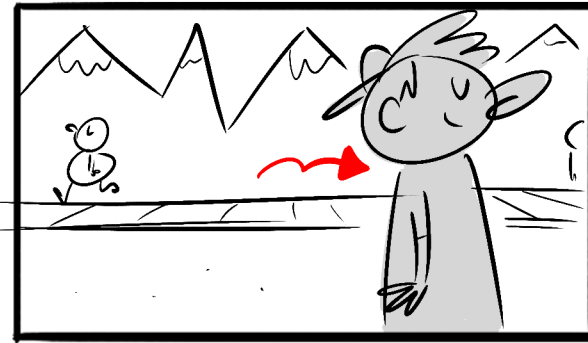
BE SYMMETRICAL!



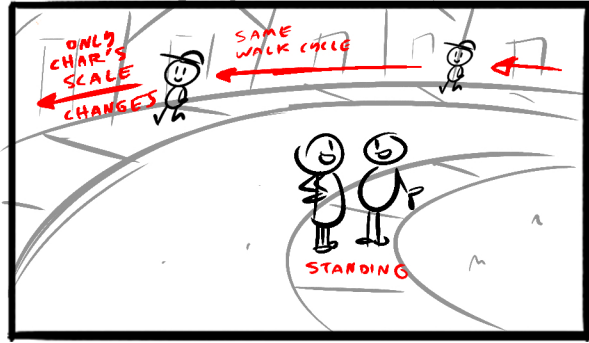
LUMP PEOPLE TOGETHER
INTO ONE SHAPE
FOR RUNNING CROWDS



THE "OH NO! WE'RE SURROUNDED"
SHOT



FOR STREET CROWDS,
IT'S OK TO CUT
OFF THE LEGS OF
WALKING FOREGROUND
CHARACTERS!



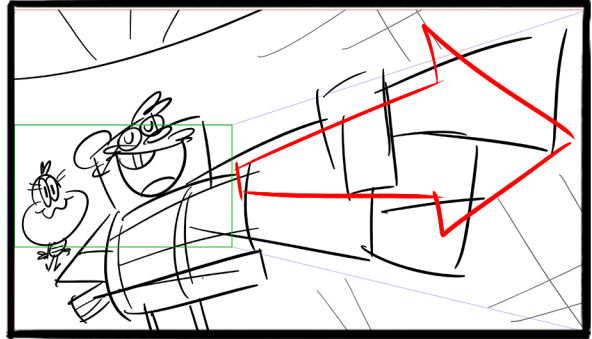
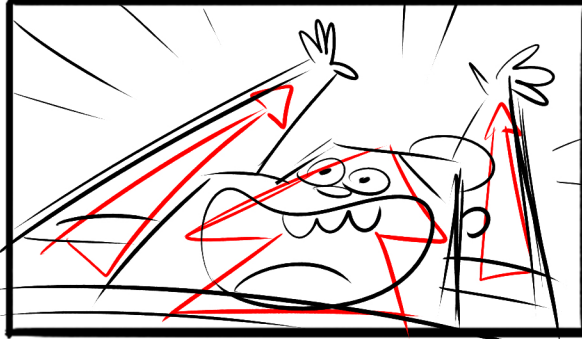
CHEAT IT SO
CHARACTERS DON'T
WALK DIAGONALLY -
KEEP L → R R ← L



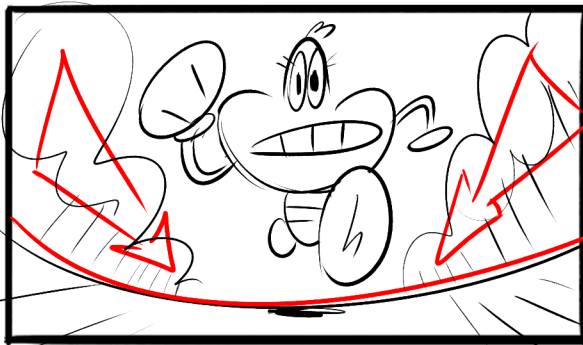
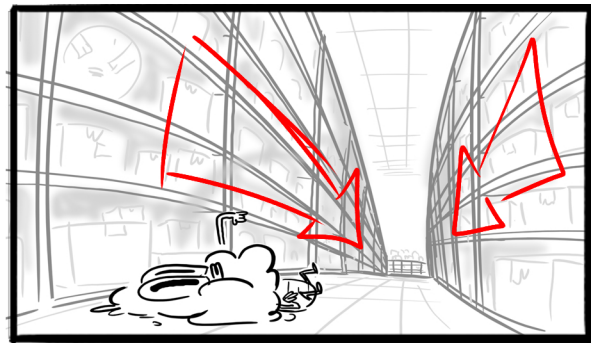
THESE TIPS
WILL REALLY
HELP
ANIMATION, TOO.



Pushing Perspective with the Characters and BGs to Break Up Flatness



USE
SPARINGLY
FOR
MAXIMUM
EFFECT!



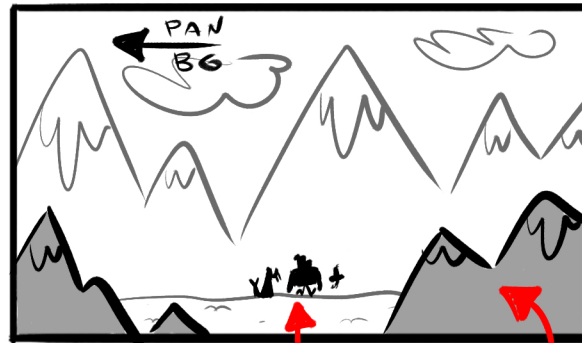
THIS IS SEVERAL
THINGS!
CLEAR!
BALANCED!
DYNAMIC!



Scale

Using scale is the CHEAPEST and, maybe, the most effective way to add depth to your board! But wait - there's more ways to use scale than just for BGs. Try it for action - and even dialogue! Since our show is animated in Harmony, it's super easy for animators to scale the characters. If you use it right it won't look cheap! Or, maybe it will? That could be funny!

BGs:



BIG
VS
SMALL

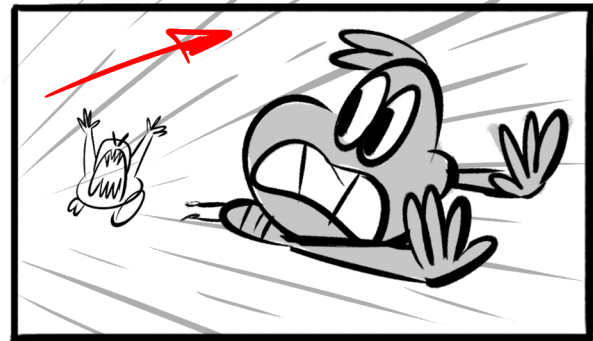
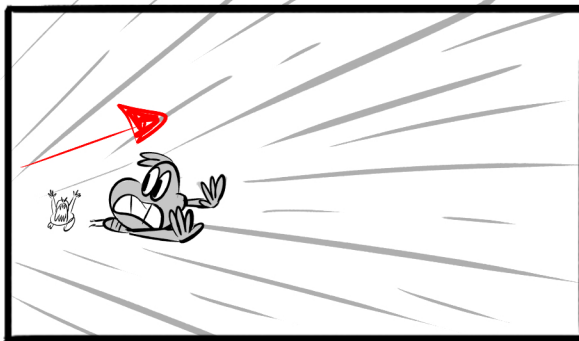
HOT
TIP!
VARY THE BG
SHAPES TO BREAK
UP THE MONOTONY!

SILO
THE
CHARACTERS
WHEN THE SHOT
IS THIS WIDE!
IT'S EASIER TO
READ!

USE
FOREGROUND
ELEMENTS!

CONTRAST!!

Action:



THIS COSTS \$0 TO ANIMATE!



SCALE (Cont.) Dialogue and Conversation

Blah blah blah, characters talking...UGH. Can't we just draw crazy cartoon antics all the time?! It's a fact of life these days, we're gonna have to board conversation - even on a show like MMP. Using SCALE for these shots is just one way to make it a little more interesting!



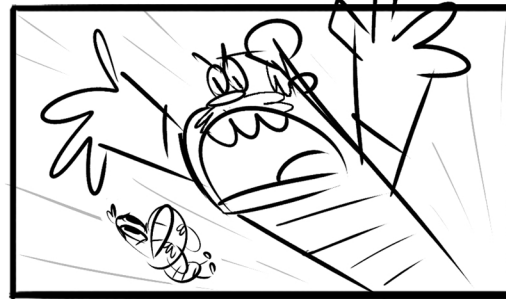
↑
USING SCALE HERE
REALLY SHOWS US
HOW PISSED
ANGUS IS!

←
PARKER
IS
SMALL...
HE'S NOT
IN CONTROL
OF
THE SC

WOAH, CAN WE
REALLY GO THAT
BIG WITH OTHER
CHARACTERS?!



YES!
AS LONG AS
IT FITS
THE STORY!

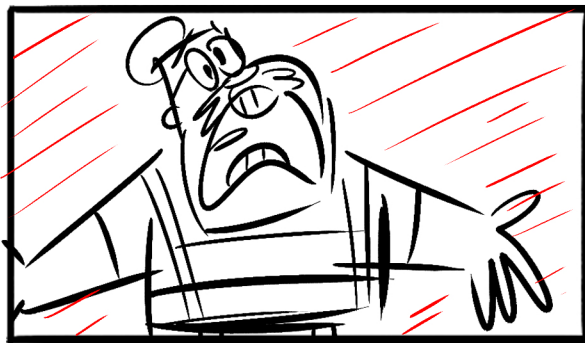


Experiment with SCALE in your own fun ways!!



Negative Space

Have the characters breathe in your shots. Let's frame a little wider (but not too wide) so we have room around the characters for their acting. Try not to overlap characters (unless it's for something specific), or cut off arms and legs (if it's someone with long legs, that's fine). If it's a big gesture and an arm goes off screen for a couple frames, that's OK!



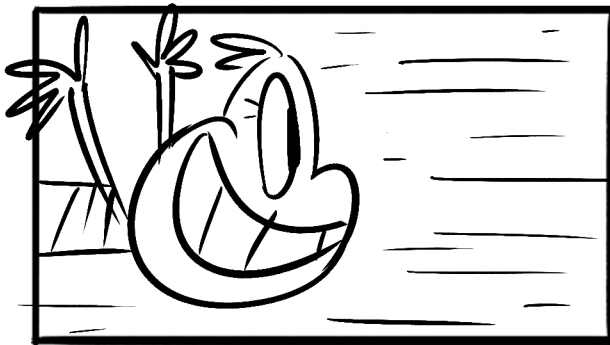
✗ NO! TOO TIGHT AND HAND IS CUT OFF



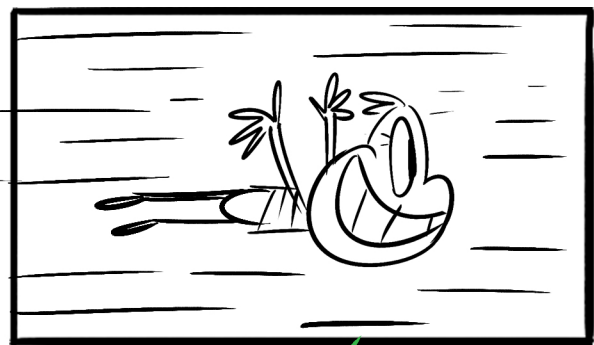
✓ YES!

Tips on Framing Parker!

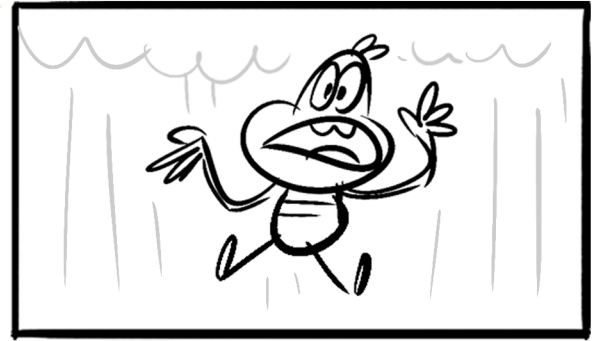
When our pal Parker is flying, don't cut off half his body- we won't be able to tell he's flying!



✗



✓



Try to ALWAYS frame Parker wide instead of going in for a medium shot. He's a little guy, so framing him wide keeps him feeling smaller than Angus and others.



INTERESTING...

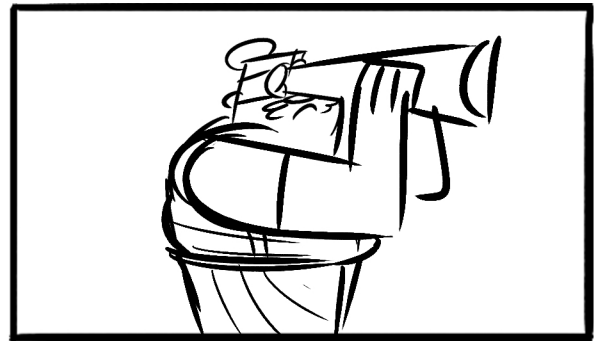
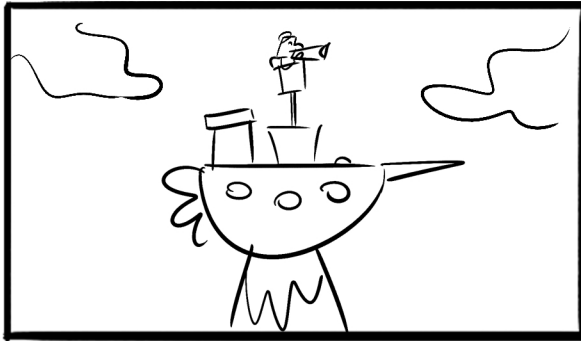


The Economy: AKA Being Cheap but Looking Like \$\$\$

Sooner or later, the art dept will unleash fire and fury onto the storyboarders that there's too many BGs, and things need to change. THIS. HAPPENS. EVERY. SHOW.

So let's just start right from the beginning with ways we can get the BG count down. Some might think it'll make the show look cheap. No way! I call it giving a show "style".

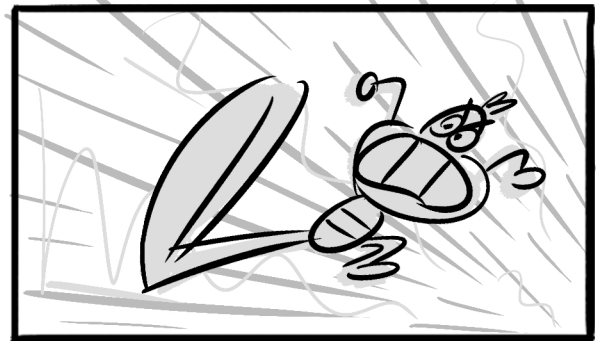
Establish, then CUT IN!



Color Cards!



ZIP pans!





The Economy (Cont.)

Camera

More easy ways to make your episode look like \$\$\$ is doing some camera tricks, such as...

- Drift truck Ins and Outs
- Drift pans
- Slow pans to FAST pans, and vice versa
- Slow truck Ins to FAST truck Ins, and vice versa
- Snap truck Ins and Outs

All of these moves are acceptable!! Just like in ANIME! Which is exactly why I didn't draw any reference. Just watch some anime. Seriously.





Being Stupid

Yes, being stupid on this show is ENCOURAGED!! When it feels right, MMP can use mixed media. ...and we leave it up to you to find that right moment! Examples of what you can use are...

- Live Action
- Stock Photos
- Stop Motion
- Crappy Puppets
- Purposely Crappy Drawings
- Sliding Characters/Flash Tweening
- WHATEVER YOU CAN THINK OF!!!



*Don't make these stupid moments a habit: Use them sparingly (OR NOT AT ALL) per episode!!



Cutting Around the “Shoe Leather”

shoe leather A pejorative term for shots, or even scenes—usually without dialogue—that serve only to move characters geographically, as in walking up to a house, getting on an airplane, etc. Dialing a phone, getting dressed, paying the taxi driver, and other time-consuming actions may also qualify as “just shoe leather.”

When we cut together animatics of your episode, they will be tightly edited. We’ll try to let things breathe when we can, but cramming these stories into 11 minutes is always a challenge! Cut out the SHOE LEATHER of a scene and, instead, find a rhythm where you can hard cut to move things along.

Example: Parker loses his job

Shoe Leather Way

- Parker messes up
- Angus says “Sorry kid, this isn’t working out”
- Parker walks to the door with Angus who gives him his coat and suitcase. Some dial.
- Parker exits, and Angus closes the door and sighs
- Outside Parker thinks and exclaims “Did I just get fired?”

Minimum 5 Scenes

The MMP Way

- Parker messes up
- Angus says “Sorry kid, this isn’t working out”
- Cut to Parker outside with the door slamming in his face, holding his suitcase and coat. “Did I just get fired?”

Maximum 3 Scenes



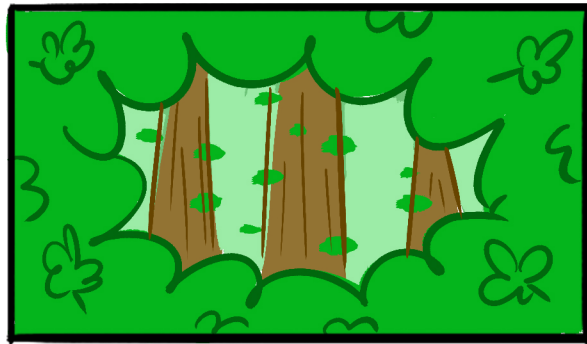
Staging for the Mt. Middlemost Neighborhoods

Our neighborhoods have different characters and environments, so let's try using that to our advantage when boarding! Let's think about their designs to make them really feel unique from one another.

I will leave this up to you to really figure this out if you choose to! We think this will be a neat way to give each neighborhood a different feel when Parker, Angus, and Russell visit. Here's the jumping off points:

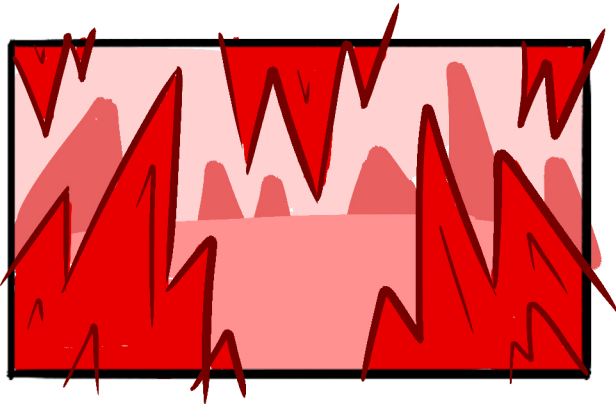
GREEN WOOD

- BIG FLUFFY SHAPES



RED RIDGE

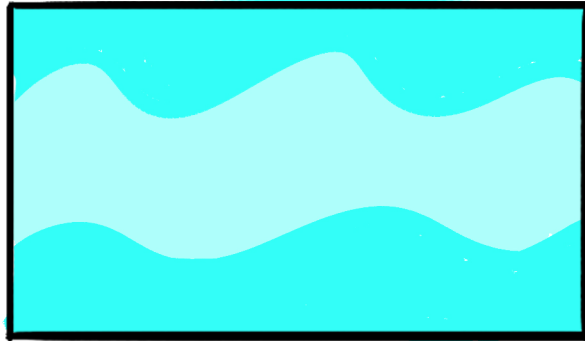
- HARD + JAGGED!





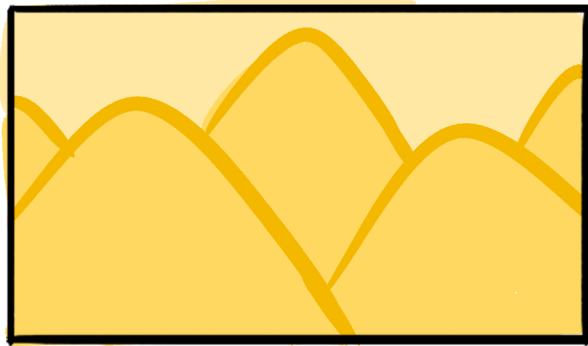
BLUBERG

- WAVY



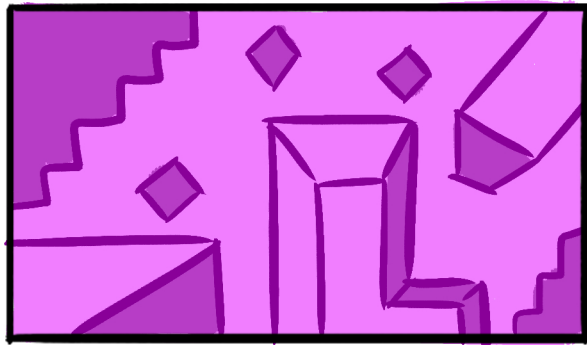
YELLOW SPRINGS

- SOFT
CURVES



PURPLETON

- ACID TRIP!
- MOSTLY STRAIGHTS





In Closing...

This storyboard style guide isn't about "rules". It's to get everyone on the same page with what can be accomplished in MMP, and how to make your boards as clear as possible for gags and story.

No rules?! What the F did I just read?? Yes, that's right. At the end of the day, WE TRUST YOU. It might be OK to have a wonky shot in there! A high horizon line! An out of place upshot! You just better have a reason for it. If you think a story point or gag would work better by doing the opposite of what's in this style guide, then go for it! Storytelling, whether writing or framing the visuals like us, should be about risk-taking. We WANT you to have the freedom and not be tied down to a "style". We want you to invent, create, and experiment - but, most of all - BE CLEAR with what you're telling. CLARITY IS KEY!!