

rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people

Rig It Right: Maya Animation Rigging Concepts Computers and People

rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people is more than just a catchy phrase—it captures the essence of what it takes to bring digital characters to life in a believable and efficient way. Whether you're an aspiring animator, a technical artist, or simply curious about the behind-the-scenes magic in computer animation, understanding the core principles of rigging in Maya is essential. This process isn't just about manipulating models; it's where art meets technology, and people meet computers to create seamless movement and personality.

Understanding Rig It Right: The Basics of Maya Animation Rigging

When you hear the term “rig it right” in the context of Maya animation, it refers to the practice of building a digital skeleton and control system that allows animators to move and pose characters naturally. Maya, a powerful 3D software developed by Autodesk, is widely used in film, gaming, and other digital media for its robust rigging and animation capabilities.

Rigging is the bridge between static 3D models and dynamic animations. Without a properly constructed rig, characters would be stiff, robotic, or difficult to animate. So, rigging isn't just about technical know-how—it requires a deep understanding of anatomy, motion, and the animator's needs.

The Role of Computers in Animation Rigging

Behind every smooth animation lies extensive computational work. Maya's rigging system leverages complex algorithms to simulate bone hierarchies, skin deformation, inverse kinematics (IK), forward kinematics (FK), and constraints. These computational processes enable characters to bend, stretch, and twist in ways that mimic real-world physics.

Computers handle the heavy lifting—calculating joint rotations, skin weights, and control interactions in real-time. This interplay between computer processing and human creativity is crucial. The rig must be optimized not only for performance but also for ease of use by animators. A rig that is too complex might slow down the system, while a rig that is too simple could limit expressive possibilities.

People: The Heart of Animation Rigging

While computers do the math, people bring the soul. Rigging artists act as the vital link between the technical and creative teams. They must understand the animator's workflow and anticipate the kinds of movements a character will need.

Good riggers communicate closely with modelers and animators to craft rigs that are intuitive and versatile. They apply knowledge from human and animal anatomy, biomechanics, and motion studies to design control systems that feel natural. This human-centered approach ensures that rigs not only function well technically but also inspire creativity and storytelling.

Key Maya Animation Rigging Concepts to Master

To rig it right in Maya, it's important to familiarize yourself with several foundational concepts that underpin effective rigging workflows.

Skeleton Creation and Joint Placement

The rigging process begins with creating a skeleton—a hierarchy of joints placed within the model. Proper joint placement is critical because it affects how the mesh deforms when animated. For example, joints should align with anatomical pivot points, such as elbows, knees, and shoulders.

Maya's joint tool allows riggers to place joints precisely and create parent-child relationships, ensuring that movement in one joint affects connected joints naturally. Mastering this step sets the stage for smooth deformations.

Skinning and Weight Painting

Once the skeleton is in place, the model's mesh needs to be bound to it—a process called skinning. Skinning assigns vertices of the 3D model to specific joints so they move together. However, not all vertices belong strictly to one joint; many will be influenced by multiple joints.

Weight painting is the technique used to fine-tune these influences. By "painting" weights, riggers control how much each joint affects surrounding vertices. This step is crucial to avoid unwanted mesh distortions like collapsing or stretching during animation.

Inverse Kinematics (IK) vs. Forward Kinematics (FK)

Understanding the difference between IK and FK is a game-changer for rigging. FK involves animating joints one by one from the root to the tip—ideal for rotations like arm swings. IK, on the other hand, controls the chain of joints by moving the end effector (like a hand or foot), and the software calculates the intermediate joint rotations automatically.

Maya allows riggers to set up IK/FK switching systems, giving animators flexibility to choose the best method depending on the animation's needs. This flexibility is a hallmark of professional rigs.

Control Curves and Custom Attributes

Control curves are the animator's interface with the rig. These are visually distinct shapes placed in the scene, often color-coded and easy to select, that manipulate the rig's joints and deformers. By creating clean and intuitive controls, riggers improve the animator's workflow significantly.

Custom attributes can be added to controls for additional parameters, such as finger curls, facial expressions, or muscle flexing. These attributes allow animators to create nuanced performances without diving into technical complexity.

Integrating Computers and People: The Collaborative Nature of Rigging

Rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people is not a solo endeavor. It's a collaborative process that involves multiple disciplines working in harmony.

Communication Between Departments

Modelers, riggers, animators, and technical directors all need to communicate their requirements and limitations. For instance, a rigger needs to know if an animator requires exaggerated movements or realistic physics simulations. Similarly, understanding the polygon count and topology from the modeler helps riggers optimize the rig's performance.

Tools and Scripts to Enhance Efficiency

Modern rigging in Maya benefits greatly from custom scripts and plugins. Many

riggers write Python or MEL scripts to automate repetitive tasks, such as joint placement or control creation. These tools reduce errors and free up time for creative problem-solving.

Moreover, software like Autodesk Maya's HumanIK or third-party plugins provide advanced rigging solutions that integrate seamlessly with animation pipelines.

Tips for Rigging Success: Rig It Right Every Time

Whether you're new to Maya rigging or looking to improve your skills, keeping these tips in mind can help you rig it right:

- **Plan Ahead:** Understand the character's range of motion and animation requirements before building the rig.
- **Keep It Clean:** Organize joints, controls, and hierarchies logically to avoid confusion later.
- **Test Early and Often:** Animate test poses and movements to identify issues before finalizing the rig.
- **Optimize Performance:** Avoid unnecessary joints or complex setups that could slow down playback.
- **Document Your Rig:** Provide notes or guides for animators on how to use controls and special features.

Learning Resources and Communities

The rigging community is vibrant and supportive. Platforms like CGSociety, ArtStation, and specialized forums offer tutorials, scripts, and discussions on rigging challenges. Maya's official documentation and numerous online courses also provide structured learning paths for mastering animation rigging concepts.

Exploring these resources can help riggers stay updated with industry standards and innovative techniques, ensuring they continue to rig it right in an ever-evolving field.

Animation rigging in Maya exemplifies a beautiful synergy between computers and people—where cutting-edge technology meets human creativity. By embracing the core concepts, collaborating effectively, and continuously learning,

artists can create rigs that empower animators to tell compelling stories with fluid and expressive characters. Rig it right, and the magic unfolds.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the importance of 'Rig It Right' in Maya animation rigging?

'Rig It Right' emphasizes creating clean, efficient, and user-friendly rigs in Maya, which ensures smoother animations, easier troubleshooting, and better collaboration between animators and technical artists.

How do computer and people factors influence animation rigging in Maya?

Computers provide the technical capabilities and software tools like Maya for rigging, while people bring creativity, problem-solving skills, and understanding of anatomy and motion to design rigs that are both functional and animator-friendly.

What are the fundamental concepts of animation rigging in Maya covered in 'Rig It Right'?

Key concepts include joint placement, control rig creation, skinning, constraints, and creating intuitive control interfaces that facilitate natural and efficient character animation.

How can animators and riggers collaborate effectively using the principles from 'Rig It Right'?

By following standardized naming conventions, creating clear control setups, and maintaining open communication, animators and riggers can ensure rigs meet animation needs and reduce workflow friction.

What are common challenges in Maya rigging that 'Rig It Right' helps to address?

Challenges such as complex joint hierarchies, control confusion, performance issues, and maintaining rig flexibility are addressed by advocating for organized, modular, and well-documented rigging practices.

Additional Resources

Rig It Right: Maya Animation Rigging Concepts, Computers, and People

rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people form the backbone of contemporary 3D animation workflows, where the intersection of technology and human expertise shapes the final visual storytelling. In the evolving landscape of digital animation, mastering the rigging process in Autodesk Maya is not merely about technical prowess but also about understanding the dynamics between software capabilities and the animator's creative vision. This article delves into the critical components of rigging in Maya, exploring foundational concepts, the role of computers in automating and enhancing rig creation, and the indispensable human element that ensures rigs function intuitively for animators.

Understanding Maya Animation Rigging Concepts

At its core, rigging in Autodesk Maya involves constructing a skeletal framework that allows 3D models to move in a realistic or stylized manner. The complexity of rigging ranges widely—from simple joint hierarchies for basic limb movement to advanced rigs incorporating deformers, constraints, custom attributes, and control interfaces. Rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts emphasize a balance between technical detail and usability, ensuring rigs are robust enough to handle intricate animations while remaining accessible to animators.

The rigging pipeline begins with the creation of joints and bones, which define the model's structure. Riggers then apply skinning techniques, binding the mesh to the skeleton, allowing vertices to follow joint transformations. Advanced setups leverage inverse kinematics (IK) and forward kinematics (FK) systems for flexible control over movement. Additionally, riggers often build control rigs with NURBS curves or shapes that serve as handles for animators, streamlining the animation process.

The Importance of Modular and Reusable Rigs

One of the prevailing rigging philosophies within Maya's animation community is modular rigging. By designing rigs in interchangeable segments—such as separate rigs for arms, legs, and facial features—riggers can reuse components across projects, saving time and maintaining consistency. This approach also allows for easier troubleshooting and iterative improvements, which is vital when working in collaborative environments or tight production schedules.

Modularity supports scalability, a crucial factor in larger productions where characters might require quick adaptations for various animation styles or technical requirements. The rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts

encourage riggers to build systems with flexibility in mind, incorporating parameters that can be adjusted without dismantling the entire rig.

The Role of Computers in Maya Rigging

Computers serve as the indispensable engine behind Maya's rigging capabilities. The software's robust architecture leverages computational power to process complex rig setups, run simulations, and provide real-time feedback during animation. High-performance workstations equipped with multi-core CPUs and dedicated GPUs enhance rigging efficiency by reducing lag, enabling smooth viewport interaction, and accelerating rendering of test animations.

Automation tools and scripts, often developed using Maya's embedded scripting languages such as MEL or Python, exemplify how computers extend human capability in rigging. These scripts can automate repetitive tasks like joint placement, attribute creation, or control generation, freeing riggers to focus on creative problem-solving and refinement.

Balancing Automation with Creative Input

While automation streamlines many aspects of rigging, it cannot substitute the nuanced understanding that experienced riggers bring to the table. Computers excel at handling standardized processes, but creativity and foresight are necessary to anticipate animation challenges and design rigs that accommodate them. For example, automated skin weighting tools can apply initial bindings, but manual tweaking is often required to achieve natural deformations, especially in complex areas like shoulders or facial expressions.

Furthermore, the integration of physics engines and procedural animation within Maya rigs demonstrates how computational power can augment rigging sophistication. However, these systems require careful tuning by riggers to align with the artistic intent and maintain animator-friendly controls.

People: The Human Element in Maya Rigging

Despite advances in technology and automation, people remain central to the success of rigging workflows. Rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts highlight that riggers act as intermediaries between the digital character and the animator, translating artistic needs into technical solutions. Their expertise ensures rigs are not only functional but intuitive, allowing animators to focus on performance rather than technical hurdles.

Collaboration between riggers, modelers, and animators underpins effective

rigging. Communication channels must remain open, with riggers gathering feedback to refine control schemes and address usability concerns. This human-centric approach helps prevent bottlenecks in production and fosters a creative environment where technology serves the storytelling process.

Skills and Best Practices for Rigging Professionals

Successful riggers combine a deep understanding of anatomy, mechanics, and software proficiency. They must also possess problem-solving skills and patience, given the iterative nature of rig development. Best practices include:

- Maintaining clean and organized node hierarchies for ease of debugging.
- Implementing user-friendly control interfaces tailored to the animator's workflow.
- Documenting rig functionalities and limitations clearly for team reference.
- Testing rigs extensively with varied animation scenarios to ensure reliability.

Moreover, continuous learning is essential due to Maya's evolving toolsets and industry trends. Engaging with the rigging community and staying informed about emerging techniques enhances a rigger's ability to adapt and innovate.

Comparing Maya Rigging with Other Platforms

When evaluating rigging solutions, Maya holds a dominant position in the animation industry, particularly for feature films, TV, and game development. Its comprehensive toolset, combined with scripting flexibility, provides a professional-grade environment for riggers.

Other software like Blender and 3ds Max offer rigging capabilities but differ in scope and user experience. Blender, for instance, is gaining traction due to its open-source nature and rapid development cycles, while 3ds Max integrates well with architectural visualization pipelines. However, Maya's widespread industry adoption ensures robust community support, extensive tutorials, and plugins dedicated to rigging.

This ecosystem advantage reinforces the relevance of rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts, as riggers benefit from a wealth of resources and shared knowledge—an often overlooked but critical factor in mastering

rigging.

Pros and Cons of Maya Rigging

- **Pros:** Extensive rigging toolset, powerful scripting capabilities, industry-standard, strong community and support, integration with other Autodesk products.
- **Cons:** Steep learning curve for beginners, resource-intensive requiring high-end hardware, licensing costs can be prohibitive for freelancers or small studios.

Understanding these trade-offs helps studios and artists make informed decisions about investing time and resources into Maya rigging workflows.

The Future of Rigging: Integrating AI and Machine Learning

Looking ahead, the convergence of rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning may redefine the rigging landscape. Early experiments with AI-assisted rigging suggest potential for automating joint placement, skin weighting, and even procedural control generation with unprecedented accuracy.

However, the human element will remain crucial in overseeing AI outputs, ensuring rigs align with artistic goals and production constraints. As these technologies mature, we can expect a hybrid approach where computers handle routine tasks, and riggers focus on creative and problem-solving aspects.

In this evolving context, riggers who embrace both technological advancements and foundational rigging principles will hold a competitive edge.

The interplay between rig it right Maya animation rigging concepts, computational power, and human expertise continues to shape the animation industry. As Maya evolves, so too will the techniques and philosophies guiding riggers, ensuring that computers and people together craft characters that move, emote, and tell stories with compelling authenticity.

Rig It Right Maya Animation Rigging Concepts Computers And People

rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people: *Rig it Right! Maya Animation Rigging Concepts, 2nd edition* Tina O'Hailey, 2018-07-27 Rig it Right! breaks down rigging so that you can achieve a fundamental understanding of the concept. The author will get you up and rigging with step-by-step tutorials covering multiple animation control types, connection methods, interactive skinning, BlendShapes, edgeloops, and joint placement, to name a few. The concept of a bi-ped is explored as a human compared to a bird character allowing you to see that a bi-ped is a bi-ped and how to problem solve for the limbs at hand. Rig it Right! will take you to a more advanced level where you will learn how to create stretchy rigs with invisible control systems and use that to create your own types of rigs. Key Features Hone your skills every step of the way with short tutorials and editable rigs that accompany each chapter. (17+ rigs!!). Read Tina's 10 Rules of Rigging and build the foundational knowledge needed to successfully rig your characters. Visit the companion website and expand your newfound knowledge with editable rigs, exercises, and videos that elaborate on techniques covered in the book. Companion data filled with example files at http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/_author/ohailey/ AR(Augmented Reality) enabled images throughout the book! Coffee is not required - but encouraged.

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rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people: **Rig it Right! Maya Animation Rigging Concepts** Tina O'Hailey, 2013-03-20 Rigging a character can be a complicated undertaking. Move from a bi-pedal character to a quad- or poly-pedal and, well, things just got real. Where do you begin? Unlike all of those button-pushing manuals out there, Rig it Right! breaks down rigging so that you can achieve a fundamental understanding of the concept, allowing you to rig more intuitively in your own work. Veteran animation professor Tina O'Hailey will get you up and rigging in a matter of hours with step-by-step tutorials covering multiple animation control types, connection methods, interactive skinning, BlendShapes, edgeloops, and joint placement, to name a few. The concept of a bi-ped is explored as a human compared to a bird character allowing you to see that a bi-ped is a bi-ped and how to problem solve for the limbs at hand. After you have moved beyond basic bi-pedal characters, Rig it Right! will take you to a more advanced level where you will learn how to create stretchy rigs with invisible control systems and use that to create your own types of rigs. Hone your skills every step of the way with short tutorials and editable rigs that accompany each chapter. (17+ rigs!!) Read Tina's 10 Rules of Rigging and build the foundational knowledge needed to successfully rig your characters. Visit the companion website

(www.focalpress.com/cw/ohailey) and expand your newfound knowledge with editable rigs, exercises, and videos that elaborate on techniques covered in the book. Coffee is not required - but encouraged.

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rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people: Learning Maya 5 Alias Wavefront, 2003-09-30 ...the best book out there for learning how to do MAYA rigging and animation. --Ian Cairns, Editor, MAYA Association Learning Maya 5: Character Rigging and Animation will teach you everything you need to achieve effective character set-up and animation in Maya. Learn what you need to become a true puppet master! New for Maya 5! Updated from the popular Learning Maya: Character Rigging and Animation, the book's latest edition will allow you to explore powerful new features in Maya 5 such as IK/FK Blending and Parent Constraints. We've also updated Melvin to a polygonal model from a NURBS path model to make him easier to manipulate. In addition, you'll take advantage of updated graphical selectors and controls that will make your rigs more customizable and easier for artists to work with. Features: This book will allow you to explore character rigging that is based on a human character - walking you through the process as you rig arms, legs, a face, and more. Learn the fundamentals of properly setting up a character to avoid pitfalls as you animate. Starting from an introductory level, this book covers advanced concepts in a comfortable format. Each topic is explored in both theory and practice so that you'll be able to complete easy-to-follow, step-by-step tutorials. In addition, you'll take advantage of valuable chapter-by-chapter overviews provided in QuickTime format on DVD-ROM. Offered by one of the book's authors, Bill Dwelly, an Alias|Wavefront(TM) Certified Instructor, these helpful movies will allow you to gain additional insight as you work through the book. With this book you will: * Create Skeleton Chains and edit Joint Orientation. * Render particles with hardware graphics and software techniques. * Set up Single Chain, Rotation Plane, and Spline IK Solvers. * Use Set Driven Key to create powerful control systems. * Use of both Forward and Inverse Kinematics. * Simulated the deformation of clothing using Wire Deformers and Set Driven Key. * Drive Joint Rotation with a Blendshape Slider to help consolidate your control windows. * Understand the difference between Smooth and Rigid Binding. * Use Pole Vector constraints as a fast and easy way of achieving realistic motion in arms and legs. * Create a complex and subtle character deformations.

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Alias Learning Tools, 2004-06-22 Learning Maya 6: Character Rigging will teach you everything you need to achieve effective character set-up and animation in Maya. Learn what you need to become a true puppet master! Get hands-on experience with the innovative tools and powerful techniques available in Maya as you learn to make your rigs more customizable and easier for artists to work with. Learning Maya 6: Character Rigging will allow you to explore character rigging based on a human character - walking you through the process as you rig arms, legs, a face and more. You'll learn the fundamentals of properly setting up a character to avoid pitfalls as you animate. Working with a low-count polygonal model, you'll learn to work with complex joints such as shoulders and hands. Learning Maya 6 | Character Rigging teaches you to make the right decisions in the planning stages so that you can save time and frustration at the animation stage. Each chapter includes a theoretical discussion to help you understand the concepts at play, as well as easy to follow step-by-step tutorials so that you can start working right away. The book also includes an accompanying DVD-ROM featuring chapter-by-chapter overviews offered by Alias Certified Instructors. Gain additional insight and assistance from these valuable bonus discussions. You'll also take advantage of Maya Beginner's Guide: Animation to help you get started right away! With this book you will: * Use layers to organize your work * Create Skeleton Chains and edit joint orientation * Set up Single Chain, Rotation Plane, and Spline IK Solvers * Use Set Driven Key to create powerful yet simple control systems * Understand and use of both Forward and Inverse Kinematics. * Simulate the deformation of clothing using Wire Deformers and Set Driven Key * Drive joint rotation with a Blendshape Slider to help consolidate your control windows * Understand the difference between Smooth and Rigid binding. * Use Pole Vector constraints as a fast and easy way of achieving realistic motion in arms and legs. * Create complex and subtle character deformations through the use of Clusters and Lattices. What you need to use this book Maya Complete 6, Maya Unlimited 6, or Maya Personal Learning Edition. A DVD-ROM drive or set top player.

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rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people: Beginner Character Rigging Tj Galda, 2013-02 In this book you will learn all of the basics required to rig any character in Maya. The book covers everything from joints to wires, from the connection editor to pruning small weights. With over 30 example files, 200 images, and countless step by step tutorials, you will be shown exactly how to rig a foot and leg, a hand, and much more. The thing that separates this book from the competition is answering the question of Why?. The book covers exactly what is a gimbal lock and how do you avoid it? What axis should you use as your primary one? How do I add an influence object to fix a rig already in progress and why would I use a joint in some cases? Knowing why things are done the way they are will allow you to innovate and create new rigs. Knowing why will allow you to troubleshoot someone else's rig, and progress far beyond being a beginner. This book will help the beginner build a solid foundation and is a great addition for any character rigger using Maya. Proceeds donated to charity.

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rig it right maya animation rigging concepts computers and people: An Essential Introduction to Maya Character Rigging Cheryl Briggs, 2021-02-11 While some rigging books focus too much on the theory of rigging and provide little instruction, others do the exact opposite and offer no reasoning behind the button-pushing. An Essential Introduction to Maya Character Rigging, 2nd Edition, however, offers a perfect balance. Cheryl Briggs' text is built for the classroom, with step-by-step tutorials that guide the reader through the rigging process. With vibrant screenshots and a plethora of helpful tips, this book provides a strong foundation in character rigging for anyone who wants to pursue 3D animation or more advanced rigging topics. Features Provides readers with fundamental techniques to give them a firm grasp on Maya character rigging. Thorough step-by-step tutorials, which provides instruction on how to create biped, quadruped, and prop rigs. Continuous updates and further support can be located at www.cherylcreates.com Cheryl Briggs (formerly Cabrera) is an award-winning animated short film director. She has advised and guided aspiring animators, game artists, and visual effects artists for 20 years. Since 2009, Cheryl has taught all aspects of production in the Character Animation specialization in the School of Visual Arts and Design at the University of Central Florida. She also taught as Professor of Animation at the Savannah College of Art and Design from 2001 to 2009. Cheryl is currently on the Board of Directors for the Animation Hall of Fame. She also is a member of the Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques (SIGGRAPH), the International Animated Film Society (ASIFA-Hollywood), Women in Animation, Women in Film and Television, and the Society for Animation Studies. Cheryl is also an Autodesk Certified Professional and an Autodesk Certified Instructor in Maya. She is the author of An Essential Introduction to Maya Character Rigging (Focal Press, 2008), Reel Success: Creating Demo Reels and Animation Portfolios (Focal Press, 2013), and Animating Short Stories: Narrative Techniques and Visual Design (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). Cheryl holds a B.A. and M.Ed. in Education and an M.F.A. in Computer Art with a specialization in 3D Animation. She is a digital artist and animator that blends the lines between digital imagery and the traditional painting medium. She has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions in the

United States and her work is featured in several private collections. Her award-winning students have been featured in animation festivals worldwide, and many have gone on to work within the entertainment industry.

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empty canvas and master the art of weight painting in Blender. You'll delve into the intricacies of rigging humanoid characters, gain a deep understanding of the essential buttons and techniques, and discover invaluable success-boosting tips. Starting with simple mesh deformation using a single bone, you'll progress steadily toward the mastery of fully rigging a human character, all while comprehending the reasons behind each step in the process. Furthermore, the book leaves you with a selection of advanced techniques, fully explained, paving the way for a natural progression in your artistic journey and allowing you to continuously refine and enhance your skills. By the end of the book, you'll excel at crafting character rigs, seamlessly meeting professional pipeline demands in diverse teams and studios. What you will learn Understand the basic terminology of rigging and learn how to create and modify rigs Find out how bones interact with topology Get to grips with weight painting through the mesh Know when and how to add constraints such as Inversion Kinetics, Point To, and Child Of Make rigs visually appealing with advanced techniques such as shape keys and bone drivers Familiarize yourself with advanced techniques used by industry leaders Who this book is for If you are an animator, modeler, or someone who wants to start rigging with a solid foundation, then this book is for you. You'll need no prior knowledge of Blender to get started with this book, as we'll go step by step with shortcuts and UI pointers provided.

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