

CHARACTER DESIGN

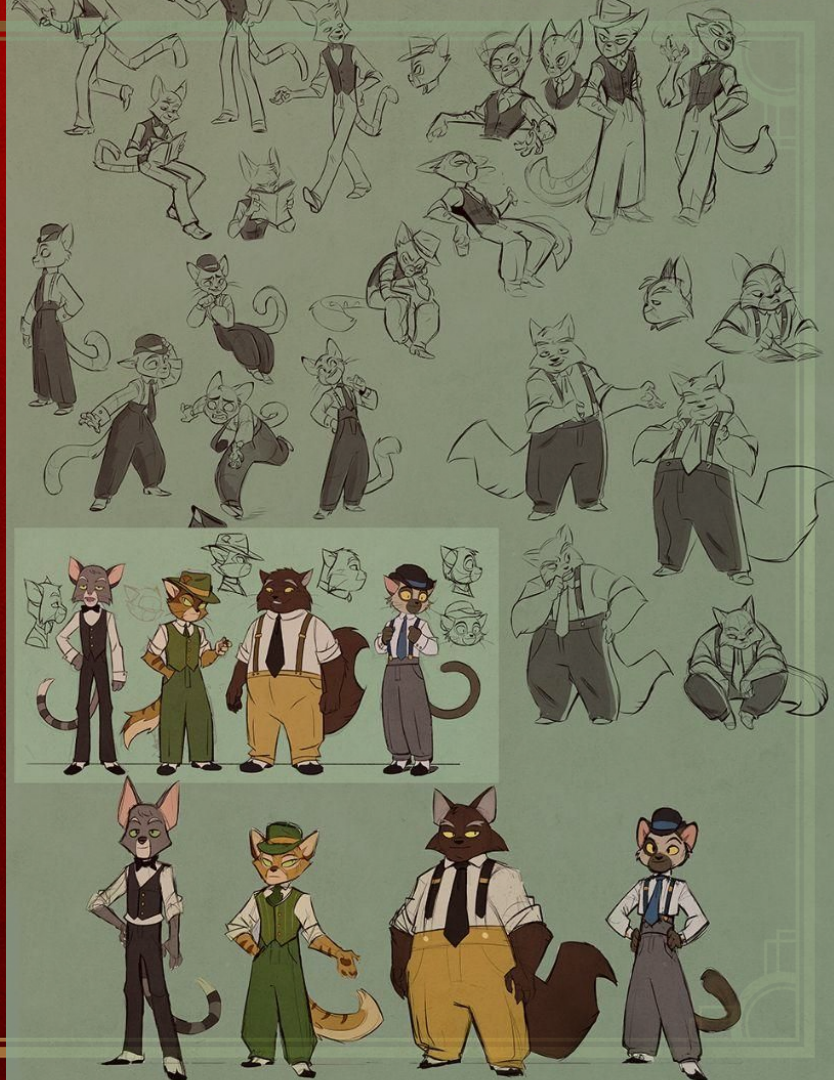
for Animation



Design

Think about it, won't you?

- Animation Style / Medium
 - What kind of design will be functional for what you're trying to achieve artistically?
- Communication & Clarity
 - Do your characters need to do a lot of human-like acting? Is it more abstract than that?
- Consistency
 - How to keep the character looking solidly like themselves scene to scene?
- Complication Factor
 - What will your budget and schedule allow for?
 - Sometimes less is more.



Line Economy



Milt Kahl, known masochist.

Shere Khan looks great, obviously, but he'd still look great with far fewer stripes.

Ask which details are meaningful? Which contribute to the silhouette or some other important aspect of the design?

Meanwhile, which simply add clutter or interfere with clarity of expression or action?

Creating appealing designs with minimal linework is not a downgrade - it's an artform of its own. It takes real skill.

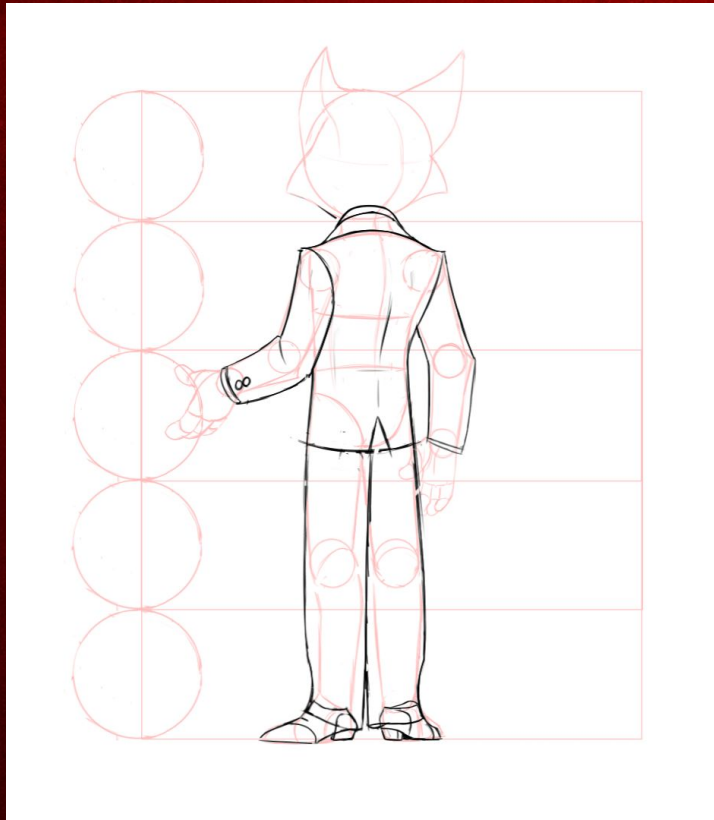
Translation



Silhouettes



Turnarounds



A really solid turnaround can be strung together into an animation.

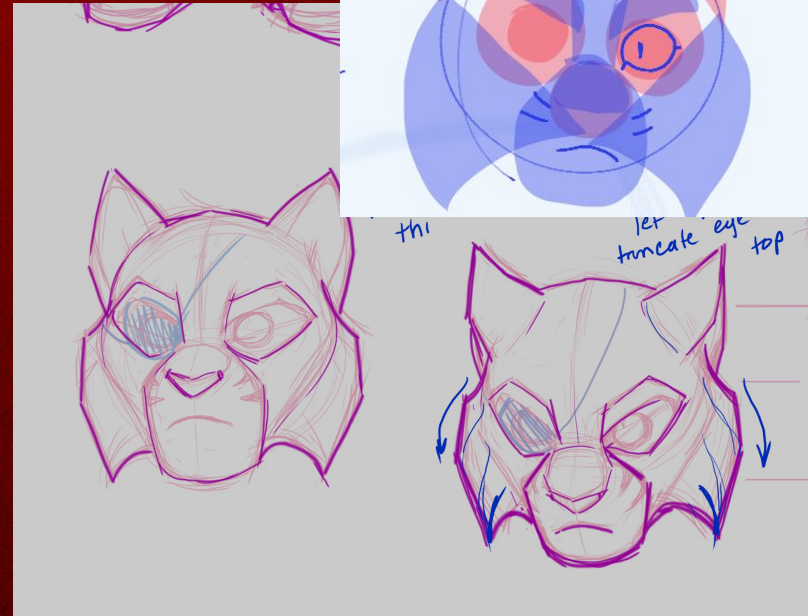
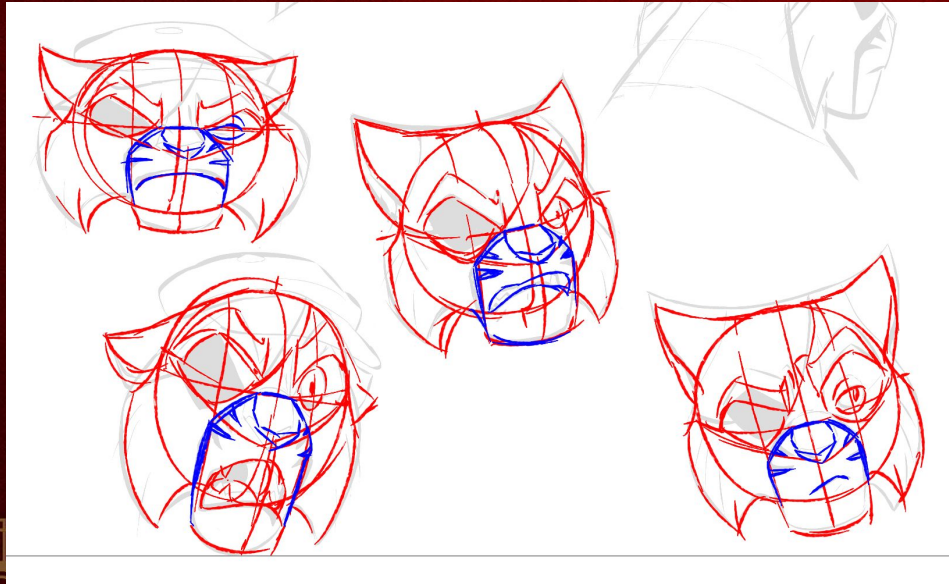
Especially graphic characters are designed to be flat - think Family Guy or even parts of Mickey Mouse. Their turns prioritize design over volumes.

But if you're trying for a 3D style construction, you'll want a really solid turnaround.

Done properly, the turnaround can be looped into an animation. Are features lining up? Do volumes make sense?

Construction

Avoid floaty features and inconsistency by using sensible construction and anchor points.



Breakdowns

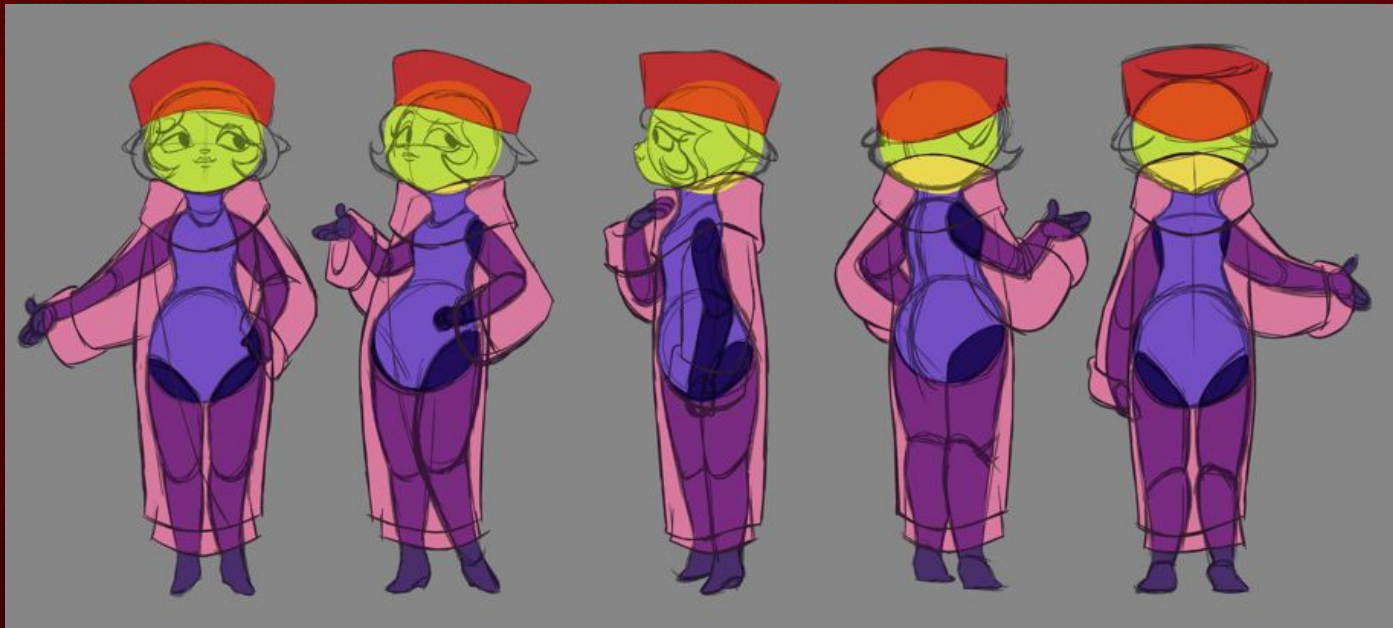
Define the 'maquette' - understand how your character moves.

Understand their volumes.



Breakdowns

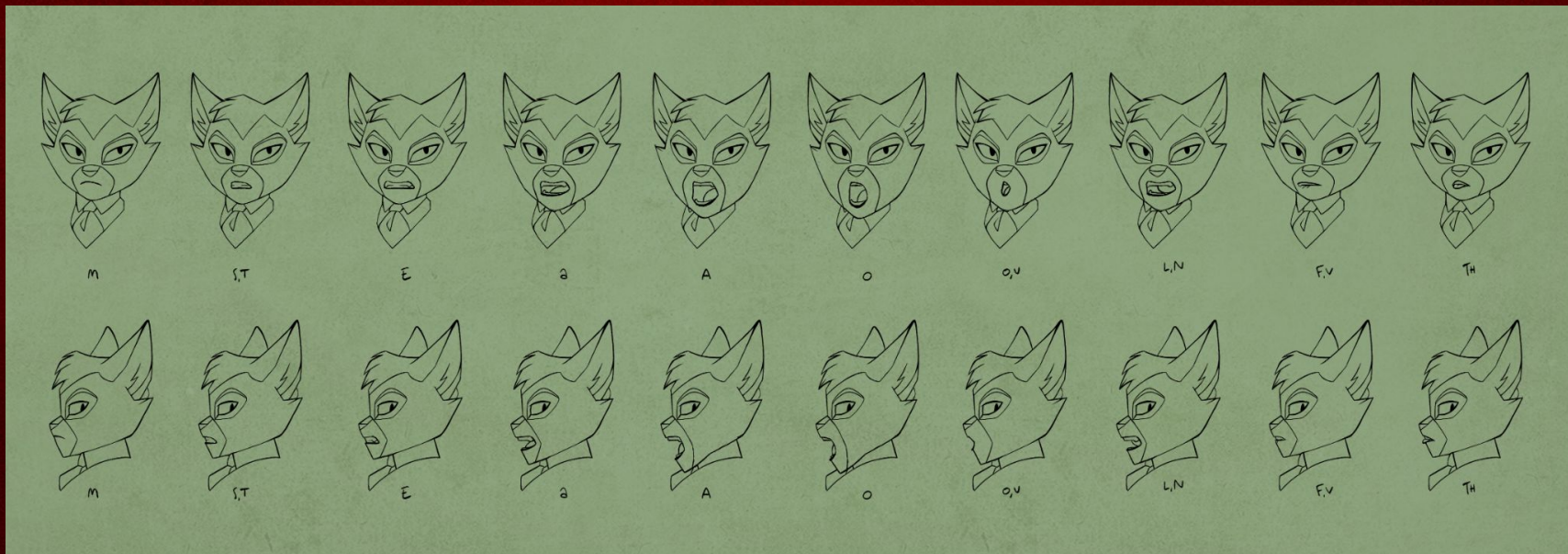
Define the form beneath loose fitting garments so that a very thick sleeve isn't interpreted as a very thick arm in animation.



Mouth Shapes

Are you animating a talkie? Got some characters who won't shut their gob?

Well, you'll need to define what that looks like! With phonemes!



Mouth Shapes

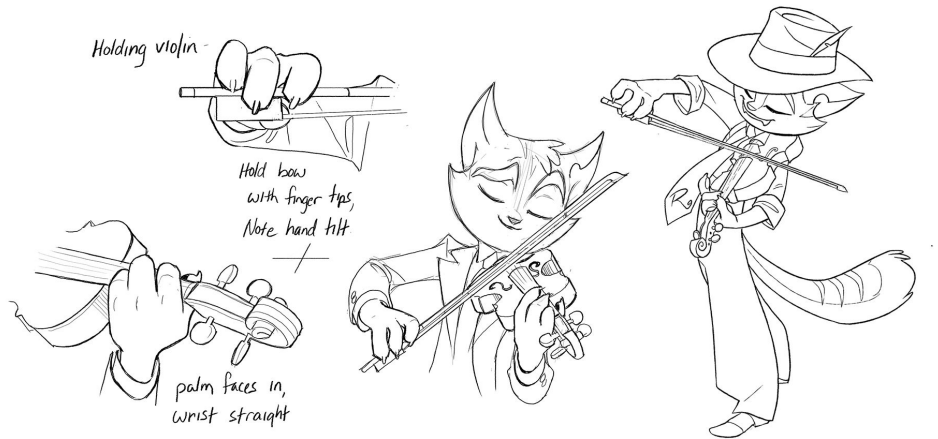


Poses / Special Cases

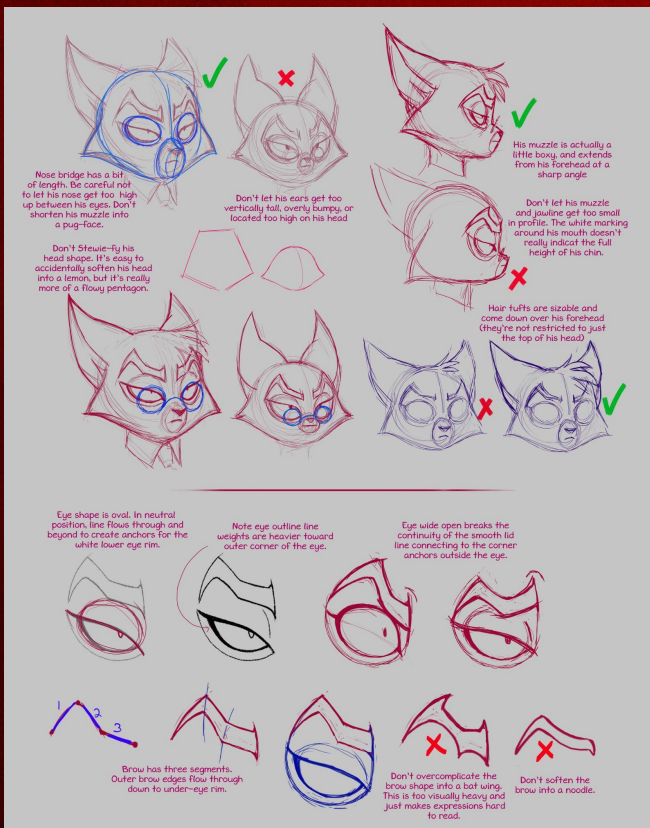


In what unique ways does your character move? How do they carry themselves?

What weird variants might you need for specific story beats?



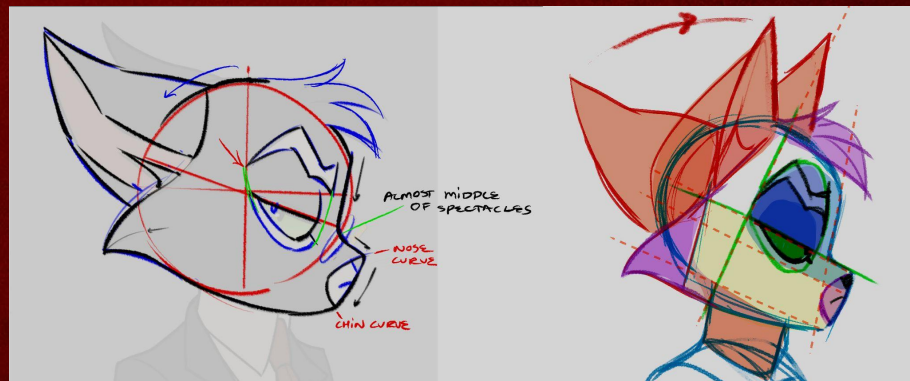
Rules and Regulations



Do's and Don'ts will save you so many hours of note-giving to the animation team.

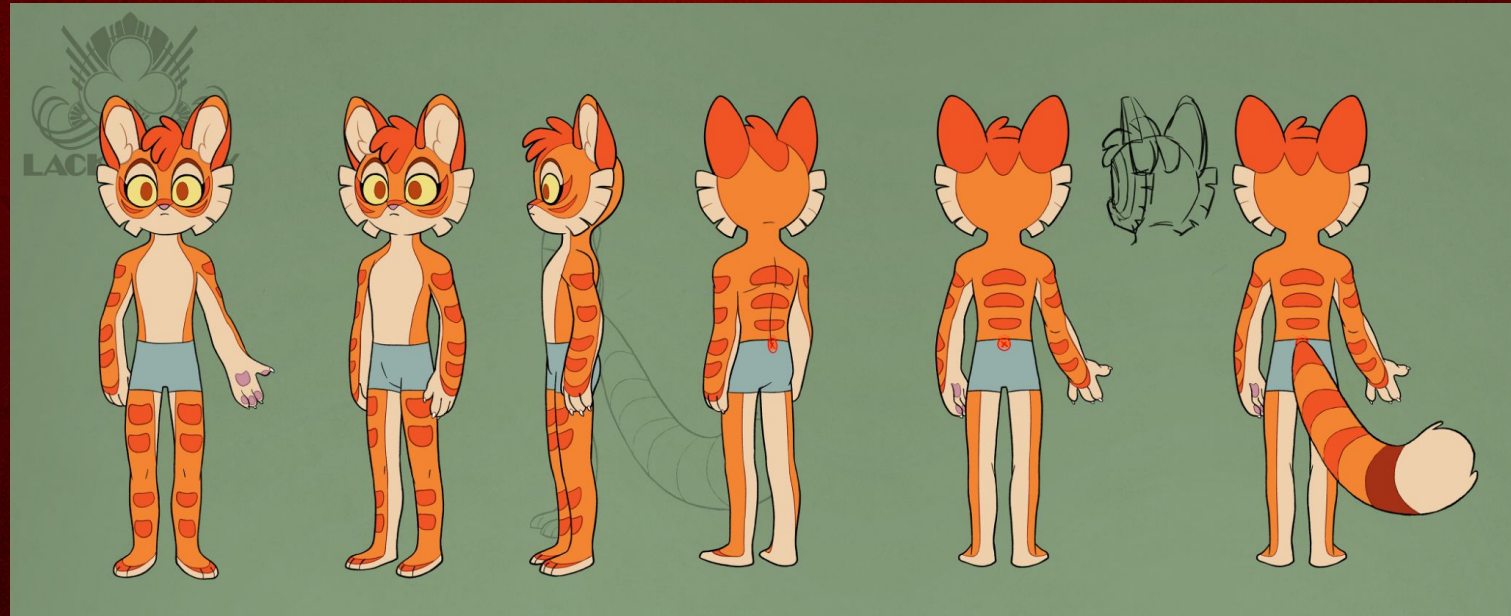
How do line weights work?

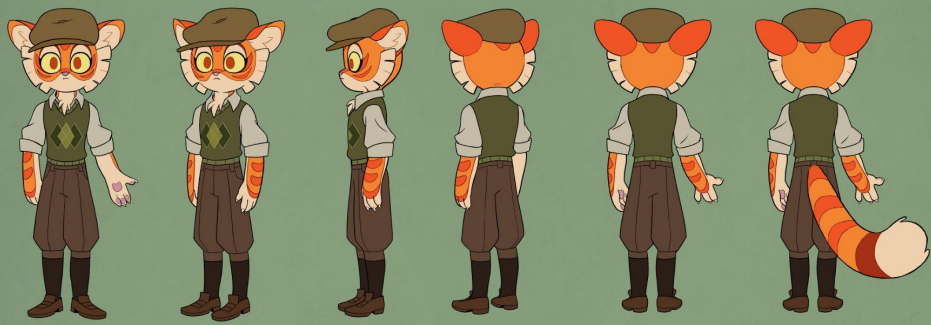
How do this character's stupid giant ears move?



Dress-up Dolls

If you need a lot of clothing changes or variants of your character, it helps to do a mannequin turnaround that you can paper-doll variations onto.





Size Charts

Don't leave animators guessing character sizes in relation to each other, and in relation to their surroundings.



Color Palettes



I don't know. Pick some colors. Whatever.

Seriously, though, rein in your palette. Just as with line economy. You get a stronger design with deliberate choices and limitations, and you will save your paint and comp teams massive headaches.

Base colors, but consider what lighting scenarios you'll need to work with. (And HOW will you handle lighting? ...Just kidding. That's a whole other panel presentation.)



- GEL - SOFT LIGHT
- SHADOW - MULTIPLY
- SHIRT COLLAR SHADOW
- BOUNCE OVERLAY
- OVERHEAD SOFTLIGHT
(under shadow layer)
- HIGHLIGHT, HIGHLIGHT GLOW



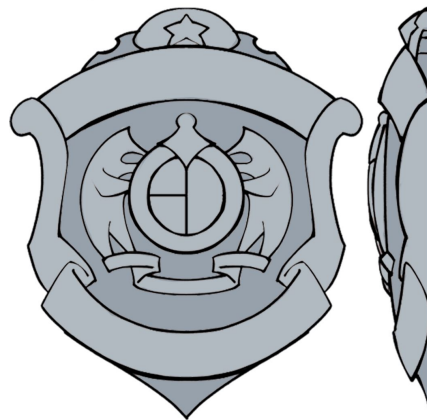
Rigs?

Even if you're going with a predominantly hand animated approach, rigs can be used in conjunction.

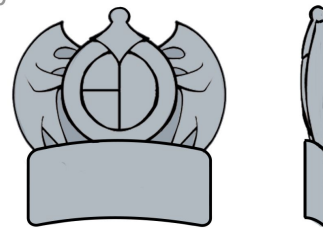
Sometimes it's the best solution to spare animators having to repeatedly draw complicated details at multiple angles.



Chest Badge



Hat Badge



Final Thoughts

As a creator / showrunner / design lead your job is seeing the project through and making it look as good as possible. Be great!



...without making your animators crash out.