

## Animation Mentor Frequently Asked Questions

### ***When was Animation Mentor founded? What is the background of your founders?***

AnimationMentor.com was founded in 2005 by three experienced professionals - Bobby Beck (CEO and cofounder), Shawn Kelly (cofounder) and Carlos Baena (cofounder). As CEO, Beck oversees Animation Mentor's day-to-day business, educational programs and culture.

Before Beck launched Animation Mentor, he worked for Pixar Animation Studios, Tippett Studios, and Walt Disney Feature Animation. Beck was a character animator for the movie *Finding Nemo*. In addition to their roles in defining the school's direction, Kelly works as a senior animator at Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) and created animation for the movie *Transformers*, while Baena works as a full-time animator for Pixar Animation Studios where he worked on *WALL-E*.

### ***Why was Animation Mentor founded?***

The Animation Mentor founders saw a need in the market for industry-trained animators who were ready to step into production jobs because many of the traditionally trained art school graduates did not have the skills to work in a production environment. The big demand, as they saw it, was that too many art schools focused on teaching the software and neglected the art behind animation. Animation Mentor was founded with one core question in mind: "If we were to start over again how would we want to learn?"

### ***What does Animation Mentor offer? How is it different from other animation schools?***

Animation Mentor started from the ground up with a philosophy that the best way to learn is through the time-tested practice of apprenticeship. The school combines this idea with a custom-built state-of-the-art online education program taught by real-world professionals, or "mentors."

Animation Mentor brings students together from around the world to learn from mentors who are studio professionals, and each other. After graduation, this online community is a rich and vibrant resource for alumni as a place of support and learning as they advance in their careers.

Mentors work at industry leading studios such as Pixar Animation Studios, Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), Sony Pictures Imageworks, Blue Sky Studios, and many others. In fact, Animation Mentor's connection to studios gives graduates an opportunity to be involved with major animation productions such as 2008's *Horton Hears a Who!* Graduates of the program are able to take the skills learned at Animation Mentor, and immediately apply them to succeed as a professional animator in the studio environment.

By graduation, every student has produced a demo reel and receives support from Animation Mentor to land their first job.

### ***What makes Animation Mentor unique is that it delivers a much more personal and interactive learning experience over other online educators because of its:***

- Focus on character animation
- Online mentor/apprentice teaching model
- High level of interactivity with mentors and other students
- Networking opportunities through the online community
- Innovative use of production-style tools and technology
- Web 2.0 proprietary tools such as eCritiques®, and live Question & Answers sessions
- Personal support
- Caring environment

***How does learning animation online differ from learning it in a brick and mortar environment?***

The online learning environment provides students from all over the world access to the world's best professional animators. They learn from six different mentors over the course of the 18-month program who provide individual guidance, direction and critiques of their work to help them become studio-ready character animators. Other benefits include:

- Students can work and raise a family while in school
- Students don't have to relocate to Los Angeles or the Bay Area
- Students receive more one-on-one time with mentors than they would in a traditional brick and mortar school
- The online campus and e-tools allow students to network, share feedback and input on and assignments, and get coaching and support from upper-class members, each other, and campus mentors, all from the comfort of their own home.

***How is your mentor program different?***

Animation Mentor has strong relationships with some of the film industry's best animators from major studios. The school also hires mentors who freelance or own their own companies. The school's mentors provide valuable inspiration, guidance, and real-world experiences that enable students to succeed as a professional animator in a studio environment.

***How long does it take to complete the Animation Mentor training program?***

It takes 18 months to complete the Animation Mentor training program, including approximately 20-40 hours of course work each week.

***What's the profile of the average student?***

Typically, the student has some college experience, or is in an entry-level job and wants to start a career in animation. The most successful students have a degree and are working professionals who want to get ahead. There are more men than women, and ages range on average from early to late 20s and 30s with some students in their 40s and 50s.

***Where do your students live?***

55% of Animation Mentor students are from the U.S., and the school has students and graduates from more than 86 countries in every continent except Antarctica. These students live in major urban centers such as New York, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Paris, Sydney, Dubai, Singapore, Mumbai, and in small towns and cities wherever there is high-speed Internet.

***How difficult is it to be accepted into Animation Mentor?***

There are a limited number of qualified students that are accepted into the program each term. As a result, acceptance is on a first come, first served basis and includes a basic entry exam that all applicants take as part of the screening process.

***What are the top things a student needs to know to excel or do well in the school?***

Students need to have the passion, self motivation and time to take full advantage of the 18-month intensive program. A background in art or animation is not required, but helpful, as is a spark to creatively interpret the world around them. The Animation Mentor curriculum is based on the industry standard software program Maya, so a foundational knowledge of this program is helpful.

***Do you help graduates obtain employment? And, who employs graduates?***

There is currently a high demand for graduates. Animation Mentor works closely with top studios to identify and place students within their open positions. Graduates are currently working at over 200 studios including Pixar Animation Studios, Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), Sony Pictures Imageworks, Walt Disney Animation Studios, DreamWorks Animation Studios, Electronic Arts, Blue Sky Studios, and Tippett Studios.

***What are some of the feature films that graduates have worked on?***

To name a few, *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, *Bee Movie*, *Transformers*, *The Golden Compass*, *Horton Hears a Who!*, and *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*.

***Do mentors undergo any training to help them prepare to deliver instruction of course materials?***

Mentors undergo an orientation program and are given guidelines and criteria for how to provide effective critiques and Q&As. However, they are already experts in the field and are well-qualified to teach students so they don't need any "training" in the material. They act as the directors giving assignments and critiquing work just like they would on the job.

***What kind of diploma or certificate do students receive upon graduating from Animation Mentor?***

Graduates receive a certificate in Advanced Studies in Character Animation approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education.

***What are your business goals?***

Animation Mentor's goal is to be the best animation school on the planet!

"We strive to be the most innovative, creative, caring, and fun animation school in the world and are dedicated to inspiring and supporting our students to reach their dream of becoming a character animator. We accelerate their learning curve by delivering the pure essence of what they need to know to get where they want to go, in a nurturing and supportive environment."

– Bobby Beck, CEO and cofounder