

Creating Machinima In There



Welcome to the aspiring machinamist's guide. Here you'll learn how to get started creating quality videos inside There.com. From your initial idea to finished video, we'll share all the basics to help you get started. It's really easier than you imagine it is, and we think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

What is Machinima

Machinima is the art of creating a short movie inside a virtual environment. Machinima in There is a bit different than in other 3D environments, since your avatar actors are actually played by real people. This can be both an advantage and a challenge. Remember, machinima is art, not science. The conventional rules can be bent to help you better communicate your vision.

Pre-Production Tips

It helps a lot to prep your computer before you start filming. Adding more RAM and a secondary hard drive to your computer, if possible, will increase the quality of the footage you shoot. You can also partition your hard drive so that you have a segment dedicated solely to recording. If you experience an unusually low frame rate while filming, try closing all of your unused applications.

It's generally a good idea to organize your shooting locations so you won't be moving from place to place with everything. Sometimes it's more productive to shoot your scenes out of order. Visualize your final video before you start shooting. In doing this, you'll be more concise when filming and thus save time when doing your final edit.

Before you start filming, it's a good idea to outline your idea and create a script. By organizing your ideas this way, you'll cut down tremendously on shooting time, including time spent filming "pick up" scenes later. Story boarding your idea is also great for organizing your shoot. A story board is a series of rough sketches depicting people, places, and objects needed for key shots.

Keep composition in mind while mapping out your scenes. A well composed scene will give a sense of normalcy and stability; it will not distract the viewer. Composition should be subtle and help reinforce the mood of your scene.

Remember to take your time while filming. If you're moving the camera too quickly, the video can become jittery and distract from what you're filming. It's always easier to speed up a shot in post production, than to slow it down.

Helpful Terminology

There are terms in the film making industry that simplify the creative process. Writing, directing, shooting, and editing terms all help to convey the ideas to others. The following are just a few to get you started:

- ▶ **Pan** – Pivoting the camera from side to side
- ▶ **Tilt** – Pivoting the camera up and down
- ▶ **Zoom** – Moving the camera closer and farther
- ▶ **Tracking** – Moving shot that follows the subject
- ▶ **Long Shot (LS)** – Typically shows the entire subject placed in some relation to its surroundings
- ▶ **Mid Shot (MS)** – Typically shows the subject from the waist up
- ▶ **Close Up (CU)** – Tightly frames a person or object close up
- ▶ **Big Close Up (BCU)** – Closely frames the subject so the background is barely seen
- ▶ **Cut** – Direct switch from one shot to another
- ▶ **Dissolve** – The gradual replacement of one shot to another
- ▶ **Wipe** – When one shot pushes the other off the screen
- ▶ **Fade** – Gradual replacement of a shot with a black screen
- ▶ **Wash** – Gradual replacement of a shot with a white screen

Basic Software

Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to create a quality piece of machinima without spending a single penny. Here is a list of some basic software you can use for little to no money.

Video capture software:

- ▶ **Taksi**: A free utility that allows you to take screenshots and record video clips of your favorite games and other 3D-graphics applications.
<http://taksi.sourceforge.net/>
- ▶ **FastCapPro**: (\$35) is a versatile Windows game utility for you to real time record OpenGL and DirecX games, perform benchmark and capture game screenshots.
<http://www.ejoystudio.com/>
- ▶ **Fraps**: (free to try, \$37 to buy) A universal Windows application that can be used with games using DirectX or OpenGL graphic technology.
<http://www.fraps.com>
- ▶ **Guncam**: (14 day trial, \$19.95 to buy) A game recorder and screen capture tool that allows users to create video from games and other programs. Guncam can turn this video into AVI files, animated GIF files, and even JPEG screen shots.
<http://www.growlersoftware.com/>
- ▶ **ACA Screen Recorder**: (free to try \$29.95 to buy) Captures the action from your Windows screen and saves it as a standard, easily edited, AVI (Audio-Video Interleaved) movie file.
<http://www.acasystems.com/en/screenrecorder/index.html>

Audio editing software:

- ▶ **Audacity**: Free, open source software for recording and editing sounds.
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
- ▶ **Wavosaur**: A free sound editor, audio editor, wav editor software for editing, processing and

recording sounds, wav and mp3 files. Wavosaur has all the features to edit audio (cut, copy, paste, etc.), produce music loops, analyze, record, and batch convert.

<http://www.wavosaur.com>

Video editing software:

- ▶ **Adobe Premiere Pro CS3:** (free trial; \$799 to buy) Efficient tools for creative editing. Comprehensive video-format compatibility. Work faster with powerful and flexible editing tools. Play video with nested audio sequences in real time without rendering.

<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere/>

- ▶ **Pinnacle Studio 11:** (\$49.99) Preserve, edit and enjoy your video memories. Pinnacle Studio's simple three step process quickly and easily guides you through capturing, sharing and enhancing your home movies.

<http://www.pinnaclesys.com/PublicSite/us/Products/Consumer+Products/Home+Video/Studio+Family/>

- ▶ **Sony Vegas Video:** (free trial; \$79.95 to buy) Vegas Movie Studio software is the easiest way to create captivating movies and slideshows to share with friends and family or online.

<http://www.sonycreativesoftware.com/products/vegasfamily.asp>

- ▶ **Windows Movie Maker:** (free) With Movie Maker 2.1, you can create, edit, and share your home movies right on your computer. Build your movie with a few simple drag-and-drops. Then share your movie via the Web, e-mail, or CD.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/updates/moviemaker2.msp>

Inworld Filming Techniques

- ▶ **Using the client side camera controls:**

Pressing CTRL + ALT + U will bring up a smaller secondary window containing various camera controls. Don't be afraid to experiment! If your camera angle locks up on you, simply close the client and start again.

- ▶ **Avatar based camera movement:**

Changing your perspective into First Person View will cause your avatar to become a camera. Using your arrow keys to move forward and backward will give you the effect of zooming in and out. Holding Shift (or being in action mode) and pressing your right and left arrow keys will give you a panning effect. You can also move the camera around independently while in Standard or Body View by holding the CTRL + SHIFT keys and moving your mouse. If you have a scroll wheel, it can be used to zoom in and out.

- ▶ **Using the Setting Manager to adjust screen resolution:**

- On the There Menu, click There > Customize > Toolbars and Tips > Settings Manager
The "Settings Manager" Control Panel will be displayed in the Client window. Click on the resolution in the list you wish to run your Client at and your Client will automatically resize to the resolution you choose.

- ▶ **Hiding the UI and voice lines** will create a cleaner more professional looking film in the end.

- Hiding the UI can be done in two simple steps:
 - To turn off name tags through the There Menu by going to There > Customize > World > Nametags and clicking show none.
 - Go into action mode through the There Menu by going to There > Customize > World > Action Mode

- Hiding Voice Chat Lines:
Pressing CTRL + ALT + L will unlock your local host window. Now open a browser window in the client and enter the following URL:
<http://localhost:9999/environment/top?variable=hideSpeech&value=0&modify>
Modify the 0 to a 1, click save and close window. You can turn the chat lines back on by changing the 1 back to a 0.

▶ **Tips for composing your scene:**

- Keeping in mind the 'rule of thirds' can help make your scene more pleasant to view. Divide the shot into nine equal parts (two equally-spaced horizontal lines and two equally-spaced vertical lines). The four points formed by the lines should be used to align features
- It's a good idea to leave head room around the top and sides of the frame so that if people move during the shot, their faces don't shift out of the scene.
- When tracking a moving subject try to keep more space in front of them rather than behind, this is called lead room. Doing this will give the impression that the viewer can see where the subject is going.
- Utilizing looking room (the same as lead room) will reinforce the direction of your subject's gaze.
- A tip on subtitles if you plan on using them: make sure to compensate with some dead space on the bottom of your scene so the subtitles will be easy to read.

▶ **Creation of sets to use in world**

- One of the greatest things about filming machinima in There is being able to build your own sets. If you are not a builder by trade, you more than likely know one you can ask. Offering compensation for their time and effort goes a long way.
- It's also possible that something you need for your scene is already in world and available at auctions. Many builders are happy to offer bulk discounts, so it never hurts to ask.

- ▶ **Directing other avatars** can be tricky, but if you state your filming intentions clearly so that everyone is on the same page, your shoot should go quickly.

Post-Production Tips

▶ **Editing and Transition tips**

- Using quick cuts in action sequences and slow dissolves in scenic shots help to reinforce the tone of your piece.
- If you're working with music, try to time your transitions to the beat.
- Don't over-use the custom transitions provided in your video editing software. Usually, subtle is better in this regard.
- In general, the wider the shot and the more detail it shows, the longer it should be on screen. A general rule of thumb for an establishing shot (the first scene in your film) is to hold the frame for approximately seven seconds, depending on the amount of detail.

▶ **Adding titles and credits**

- Make sure to use a legible font and balance it in your shot (remember the rule of thirds previously mentioned).
- The main title should run for approximately 5 seconds, possibly a bit more if your title is longer.
- A good way to time ending credits would be to read them aloud and time it, and then add on about another third of the time. So if it takes you 18 seconds to read through the credits, the final run time should be 24 seconds.

- ▶ **Links to Public Domain music:** Make sure you read the fine print here. Some of these sites require payment of a small fee before you can legally use their music, while others just require a simple link to their website in your credits.

- **Freeplay:** <http://freeplaymusic.com/>
- **YouLicense:** <http://www.youlicense.com/>
- **PartnersinRhyme:** <http://www.partnersinrhyme.com/>

- **NewGroundsAudio:** <http://www.newgrounds.com/audio/>
- **FlashKit:** <http://www.flashkit.com/>
- ▶ **Tips on utilizing music to edit scenes**
 - Let the rhythm of the song suggest the pacing of your shot changes. Shots and edits should match the tempo of the song
 - Be sure to match your music to your film. Action films should have upbeat fast tracks while tense scenes and scenic shots should have more dramatic music.
- ▶ **Compression and file types.**
 - Compression types cut down on file size while keeping the quality the same while you render your video. Most video editors have compression files installed and you are able to select the one you want while saving your movie file.
 - When saving your movie file, you'll be able to choose the file type. AVI, WMV, MOV, and MPG are all common extensions and work on most machines.

Sharing Your Work

Once you've finished your work of art, you'll want to share it with your friends. You can share your work on your own website, use a video sharing website.

The following are links to various **video sharing communities** on the web:

- ▶ **AtomFilms** – Since 1998, AtomFilms has evolved from an online video pioneer into one of the world's leading brands for independent entertainment.
<http://www.atomfilms.com>
- ▶ **Crackle** – Crackle, a Sony Pictures Entertainment Company formerly known as Grouper, is a streaming entertainment network dedicated to the discovery and development of pioneering video creators across a diverse range of genres.
<http://www.Grouper.com>
- ▶ **Google Video** – Whether you produce hundreds of titles a year or just a few, you can give your videos the recognition and visibility they deserve by promoting them on Google - for free. Signing up for the Google Video Upload Program will connect your work with users who are most likely to want to view them.
<https://upload.video.google.com>
- ▶ **iFilm** – IFILM is a leading online video network, serving user-uploaded and professional content to over ten million viewers monthly.
<http://www.iFilm.com>
- ▶ **LiveVideo** – LiveVideo.com is a video hosting website which has a more community type feel.
<http://www.LiveVideo.com>
- ▶ **Yahoo Video** – A branch of Yahoo where you can find watch and share videos.
<http://video.yahoo.com>
- ▶ **YouTube** – Founded in February 2005, YouTube is the leader in online video, and the premier destination to watch and share original videos worldwide through a Web experience.
<http://www.YouTube.com>
- ▶ **Vimeo** – Use Vimeo to exchange videos with only the people you want to. Different privacy options are available, so you can choose exactly who can see your videos, and others can do the same.
<http://www.vimeo.com/>

If you want to make your video available for download and you don't have your own website to use for hosting, there are plenty of free file **sharing sites** on the web. Here are just a few:

- ▶ **FileFactory** – FileFactory lets you host files up to 300MB for free. You don't have to register and there is nothing to download. Your files can be downloaded an unlimited number of times.
<http://www.filefactory.com/>
- ▶ **SendSpace** – Free unlimited uploads and downloads. 300MB per file
<http://www.sendspace.com/>
- ▶ **YouSendIt** – Send files up to 2GB for free with no ads, basic tracking, 14-day expiration, and unlimited downloads.
<http://www.yousendit.com/>
- ▶ **TransferBigFiles** – Send files up to 1GB for free (limited to 20 downloads)
<http://www.transferbigfiles.com/>
- ▶ **MegaShares** – Free 1.5GB upload with an unlimited number of downloads.
<http://www.megashares.com/>
- ▶ **MailBigFile** – Free, no registration necessary. Send up to 100MB files easily.
<http://www.mailbigfile.com/>

What's next?

- ▶ **Join There's YouTube group!** When you join the group, you'll be able to add your own There based videos and possibly be featured in the There Fun Times!
<http://www.youtube.com/group/There>
- ▶ **Submit your video to There!** If you've made a There-related movie or video and would like us to include it in our video listing, please send an e-mail to community@there.com. The subject line should say "Video submission", the title of your movie, and the name of your avatar or production company. Note: Do *not* send your movie file. In the e-mail, simply include a link to the movie's location, along with a short description of the plot or content.
http://info.there.com/idx/15/241/article/There_Videos.html
- ▶ The most important rule of all? Have fun! Creating machinima can be very rewarding as long as you remember to have fun with it!

Happy
Filming!

