

# LEARNING BLENDER: A HANDS-ON GUIDE TO CREATING 3D ANIMATED CHARACTERS BY OLIVER VILLAR



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## Review

“Villar has captured the excitement of Blender as a 3D modeling, animation, and motion graphics tool in one straightforward, easy-to-follow textbook. The Blender software is growing in popularity and now more than ever is considered one of the must-have tools in the tool shed for 3D.”

–Dr. Tim J. Harrington, Solution Manager, Academic IT

“Learning Blender is a great introduction for anyone wanting to learn how to create and edit in 3D using Blender, the free open-source application. Learning to work in 3D can be tough, and Villar uses characters to teach many different techniques, including modeling, lighting, shading, rigging, and animation. The book is filled with great tips and tricks, and can help anyone learn how to work in 3D.”

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“Learning Blender: A Hands-On Guide to Creating 3D Animated Characters by Oliver Villar is definitely a valuable addition to your library of golden resources! It doesn’t simply show you the hows and whats, but the whys.

The emphasis on fundamentals is something this book is very strong at. I highly recommend this to anyone wanting to know more about the modernized Blender and character creation in general.

Simple, intuitive, and very refreshing!”

–Reynante M. Martinez, Blender Guru

## About the Author

Oliver Villar has been drawing since he was a kid. His interest in art led him to 3D, which he’s been studying since 2004. He used commercial 3D software before discovering Blender in 2008. Since then, he has used Blender professionally as a 3D designer and tutor. In 2010 he founded [blendtuts.com](#), a Blender tutorials site. He is currently co-directing Luke’s Escape, a short, 3D-animated film made with Blender.

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Create Amazing 3D Characters with Blender: From Design and Modeling to Video Compositing

Learning Blender walks you through every step of creating an outstanding animated character with the free, open source, 3D software Blender, and then compositing it in a real video using a professional workflow. This is the only Blender tutorial to take you from preproduction to final result, and it's perfect for both 3D novices and those who've used other 3D Software.

Focusing on Blender 2.71 and above, 3D-professional Oliver Villar explains all the basics, including Blender's interface, controls, and how to manipulate objects. Once you've mastered the fundamentals, you'll follow a realistic 3D workflow through a complete project.

You'll find chapters on every aspect of the character creation: design, modeling, unwrapping, texturing, shading, rigging, and animation. Once your character is ready and animated, you'll learn how to integrate it into a real video using camera tracking techniques, lighting, and compositing. Each skillset is taught hands on, and available online video tutorials (more than 5 hours) will guide you through Blender's trickier tasks.

By the time you're done, you'll understand how the whole process fits together, and how to use Blender to create outstanding characters for all media. You'll also build strong Blender skills you can apply in any 3D project, whether it involves characters or not.

Learn How To

- Master Blender's innovative user interface, navigation, and selection techniques
- Create your first scene with Blender and get comfortable with its core tools
- Prepare for projects so they'll go as smoothly as possible
- Use modeling tools to create a 3D character
- Bring your character to life with color, textures, and materials
- Create your character's skeleton and make it walk
- Make the most of Blender's Camera Tracking tools
- Add lights to your 3D scene
- Render with Blender Internal or the powerful new Cycles render engine
- Composite your 3D character into a real video
- Switch to Blender from 3ds Max, Maya, or XSI

Register your book at [informit.com/register](http://informit.com/register) to access all of this book's production files, plus bonus video tutorials, and a useful Blender keyboard shortcut reference.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

Jenuvyel's Book review for Learning Blender, by Oliver Villar

By Jenuvyel

At first glance, I wondered how well Villar’s book and companion videos would be over other Blender books and video tutorials. His materials proved to be much more effective. The two other Blender books I’m familiar with cover all of Blender’s controls and how they work. This book instead focuses on how you work those controls by completing an animation project. And though there are many video tutorial series online, none of them that I know of are directly supported by the voluminous information of an entire book.

Before I read this book, my skills in Blender were very limited, dabbling infrequently off and on for the better part of a decade. At this slow, undisciplined pace, I have only recently crawled out of my modeling infancy in Blender, and am now looking forward to focusing on materials, texturing, rigging, and all the rest.

This book & videos were so thorough that I still learned quite a lot of new things relating to modeling. And through all the extensive learning in the other areas, I found where my skills are weakest; UVs (I've got to learn GIMP) and animation. (Are you going to write in-depth books on these topics?)

I was pleased with several well defined concepts that I can't recall learning elsewhere. For example, my previous understanding of UVs has grown from piecing together how it worked through various unrelated tutorials. Reading the opening paragraphs of Chapter 8 was finally enlightening.

Also a minor yet very pleasing point on Villar's videos, at the opening of each he mercifully indexes the specific times for locating each major learning point. This is excellent for reviewing and replaying certain parts. I can't recall seeing any online tutorials do this. Such is one difference between professional and amateur.

Overall, Villar's program is one very extensive, multimedia tutorial series focusing on creating everything for a mere 6 seconds of animation. It is a breathtaking and challenging amount of efforts for such a short result. It will give you a much greater appreciation for all those VFX and animated shows you watch. Such efforts are well worth it if you are inspired to pursue them. And, I was left inspired after completing it.

Excellent job, Señor!

P.S.: You can view my book-related animation project results on BlenderPDX.org (<http://blenderpdx.org/jens-book-review-for-villars-learning-blender/>), the international CG group that supports me.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Great book with tons of clear and very useful information

By Juan Carlos Meza Gómez

I teach Digital Animation at University of Guadalajara, this book is great in the way Oliver handle every chapter explaining from basic to complex in a clear and comprehensive way, I did a small description about each chapter hope it would be helpful if you are thinking on getting this book.

I The basics of Blender

You'll find from Blender history to differences and similarities between 3D commercial software and Blender, the basics to start working directly in Blender with clear and simple examples starting on Installing the software in almost any platform to continue learning almost every single corner of Blender's interface and basic functionality at the end of this chapter you'll feel confident manipulating, editing objects, working with lights and getting renders from the two included render engines, Blender render (Internal) and Cycles, too much information to handle in this chapter. If you are a beginner better not to jump this part and if you are an educator sure you'll find a lot of small details that may be valuable.

I can tell extra material conformed by video tutorials that complement perfectly all the written information about Blender interface and basic functionality.

II Beginning a Project

This chapter takes a subject that most of the people like me would have had at the beginning of the journey when everything was excitement and every one want to make everything, Olver describes very clearly and in the exact amount of information needed to understand the stages on working a project, then he talks about the processes that may be taken into account when creating a 3D character giving an overview of every single stage previously explained but now applied to character creation taking a 2D approach in a screencast video with Krita showing the last version of the character.

This chapter explain concepts that will open the eyes to beginners, Olivier suggest complementary activities that will help you to consolidate theory.

### III Modeling in Blender

In the first part of this chapter you'll find all you need to know about modelling in Blender almost every single trick from basic concepts like vertex, edges and faces to the most advanced features, it will take time to get familiar with so much information but it is worth. For this part in the extras material of this book you'll find a couple of videos that will use the modeling basics they are very clear and easy to follow.

The second part of this chapter starts with elementary topics about 3D topology and modeling methods then you start preparing your work area with background images and you'll get step by step images sequences that explain every single detail on modeling the character eyes, face, torso, arms, legs, hands and accesories, Oliver choose well recording screencast about the head creation it is the most complex part of the model. I just missed a simple narration or at least background music for this video.

### IV Unwrapping, Painting and Shading

Like in the last chapters the author talks about theory at the beginning of the chapter in this case he Unwraps the concepts of Unwrapping and UV mapping then he take a look to Blender interface of the UV/Image Editor explaining every piece of it, later he start with the Mark Seams concepts and examples going through basic uv test grids and adjusting the mesh to get a test UV map applied to the character face, then he shows a reference body image that shows the body mark seem and then he shows how to package your UVs once you get everything in place you'll get into Painting Textures in Blender in this part he makes a simple sketch do to Blender limitations on Painting Textures then he exports it to finish the color textures in Photoshop of course you can try creating this on GIMP or Krita.

The last part of this chapter is dedicated to apply materials and shaders to the model, well explained at the beginning of this sections all the concepts Oliver takes the two possible approaches Blender offers, Internal and Cycles here we can see how internal require more time to get setup while cycles is considerably faster to achieve slightly different results.

### V Bringing your character to life

Here you'll learn how to rig your character, learning the basics starting with the basic part of an armature a bone and its parts, going through creating bone groups, learning how to create IK configurations and something about FK (I would've preferred to get more detail on creating IK and FK chains and why not bending extremities, well those are my wishes and I understand this book has its own goals that achieves very well) you'll also learn how to make skinning and adding weights to meshes and also learning how to make a facial rig using drivers. It is included on the extras a hole video tutorial explaining how to rig the legs.

In my experience I can say that rigging is a very tricky process where you must have to be aware where every single thing is, so I would recommend to everyone that is starting with rigging to pay attention closely to any single tiny tiny indication. Being organized and perceiverant you'll learn a lot in this chapter

In the second part you'll get introduced to animation, of course animation is a very very big topic that is not only moving a character, but you'll get all you need to know about Blender's animation system from Time line to Graph Editor and NLA Editor creating a Walk Cycle and learning basic technical concepts, if you want to know more about animation there is also a long way to walk.

### VI Getting the final result.

This is the last chapter and it is great you'll be able to join reality with 3D generated imagery.

You'll learn the components of the Movie Clip Editor how to track live action video to be combined with your final character render.

The first step is how to track your scene then you'll place your character and how to render with specific

paces when it is done you'll get introduced to the Node Editor where you'll learn how to combine both sequences using render layers.

I think it is a great resource to beginners and for advanced users might work as a great reference book for those little details that might be forgotten from time to time and for educators I believe it is a great resource of knowledge with concepts and examples that are explain in a very clear and friendly way.

I really would like to see a material like this in spanish.

Congratulations to Oliver for this great work and to all the people that contributed to its creation.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

PwrPen book review of Learning Blender

By PwrPen

The book is well organized by each part of the process steps as Villar takes us through the pipeline process of turning his 2d sketch of "Jim" into a colorful moving 3d character. Good for beginners and for experienced Blender users there are several tips and tricks that one might miss or forget so this book makes a good review in that respect. There is also a large set of downloadable movies and Blender files that come with the book. These movies greatly reinforce each part of the learning process.

Unlike other tutorials this book does not note every key stroke. Instead it teaches concepts and techniques which are supported by the videos and with the exercises at the end of each chapter. More specific exercises might be in order, such as with rigging to gain further understanding though.

Modeling is usually emphasized in books and videos so that beginners and intermediate hobbyist can see what they are creating. There are dozens of screen shots that show what is going on, but due to Blender's black background they are sometimes difficult to see where the vertex lines are located. Also the author may have used a MAC instead of PC so some of the orientation view commands might be reversed, such as 3 = Left view vs. Ctrl. 3 = Right view on PC.

Rigging can be plagued with unseen issues that even an intermediate user might not catch. Villar does a good job of noting some of these issues and how to fix them. In Video 12 you can even see Villar getting tripped up as he endeavors to explain several concerns. While this video could be edited to remove some of the issues that occur in rigging, it does benefit the viewer in showing just how many things are going on at once. For the reader this is when the Villar videos become invaluable as he shows several ways of catching and, more importantly, fixing things.

The tracking and compositing sections of this book definitely add to the end goal. Like rigging, doing much more than a walk cycle or additional film compositing would take another book each. But within this book's scope this was an added treat which brings the reader to a natural conclusion that they can use for any of their own videos.

The book's cover doesn't work for this hobbist. I don't see any connection between the character 'Jim' in the book or any of the chapters, so don't judge this book by its cover! Nor did the formatting of the table of contents make me feel confident in the material.

Overall though, this is a good book for learning Blender. I tested all the reading material and I would recommend it to any new Blender user with the understanding that this is not a project that anyone can do without experiencing hiccups. And as Villar would say, "There you have it!"

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