Digital Media Life Hacks

Animation

Animation tools allow you to add a little fun and variety into your digital projects. Animated videos (especially using free tools) are generally short, but can get a large amount of information across in that short time. In order to add your animated video to a larger digital project, you can screencast the animated video and then add narration – either while screencasting or later using a video editing tool. In a video editing tool you can combine your animated video with other types of clips in order to make a final product that uses various technologies.
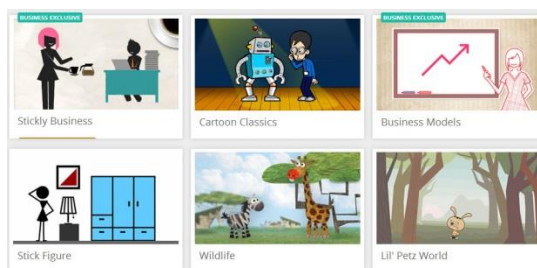
Step 1

Start by creating an account with the online animation tool of your choosing. There are many tools available online for creating animation, and they vary widely in the level of skill required. See the Animation tab for more information on different tools available.
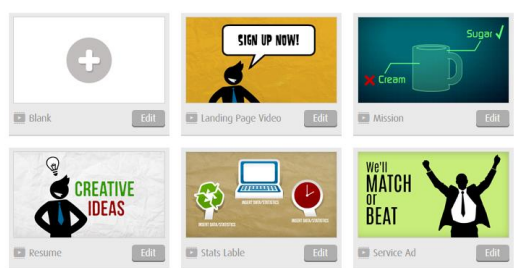
Step 2

Once you've created an account, animation programs will have you start with a template or theme. The basic templates or themes are free with additional themes that cost money. The free versions are typically sufficient to create digital media projects.

Example themes from GoAnimate!
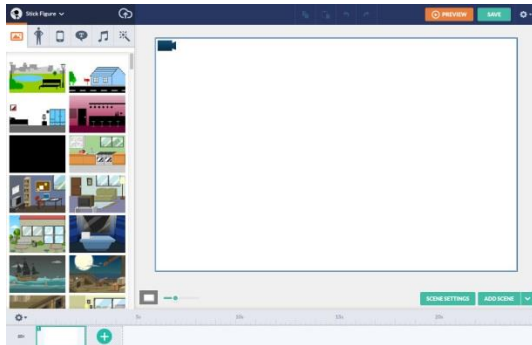

Example templates from PowToon

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Step 3

Once you have chosen a template, you can add backgrounds, characters, props, and motion to create your animation. Animation programs will provide free tutorials in their help sections on how to use the software.   It is helpful to work from a script.

Example animation screen from GoAnimate!

Example animation screen from PowToon

Step 4

Once you've created your animated video, download it if the tools allows you to do so. If not, record it using screencasting software. There are a variety of free screencasting tools available. Choose one that can save in MP4 format. This will make it easier to edit in a variety of video editors. Play your animation and capture it using the screencasting software you've chosen. If the animation program adds its logo to the free version, you can frame the screencast in such a way that crops out the logo when filming. This can also be done in the editing process in Step 5. You can either add narration at this point by reading a script while the animated video is playing, or you can wait to add narration in a video editing program (the latter is preferred if you are merging several clips together). You should end up with a continuous video saved in MP4 format.

Step 5

Upload your screencast into a video editing program. You may decide at this point to add or rerecord your audio. If so, eliminate your audio and rerecord using the video editing program's audio recording features.

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Step 6

Add transitions to the video using video editor's transitions features. Keep these subtle. [Add music and sound effects](#). Make sure the music doesn't overshadow your animation and narration. Music does not have to play continuously to be effective. Use the audio fade in/fade out options to add emphasis or for transitions between major sections.

Step 7

Add [title and end clips](#). One of your end clips should be a works cited/reference slide documenting where you got your information, images, music, etc.

Step 8

Publish or export as an MP4 video file and upload to YouTube. [Add closed captions to your video](#) and share with the world!