Praise for Sams Teach Yourself
3ds Max® in 24 Hours

“Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours by Stewart Jones is the perfect book to start an artist who has never used 3ds Max and is new to 3D. Stewart has put in enough detail and challenges to give readers a solid grounding in techniques while leaving room to explore on your own. Stewart writes with humor, making something that could be dry interesting and fun to read. I enjoyed going through the book and even picked up a few tips along the way that I didn’t know in Max. I would recommend the book without hesitation to students and artists looking for a great start to quickly feel accomplished instead of frustrated with all aspects of 3D production in 3ds Max 2014.”

—Brad Clark, Cofounder, Rigging Dojo.com

“Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours—’challenge accepted!’ If you are looking for a textbook to guide you through the intricacies of Autodesk 3ds Max, this is the 24 for you. Blending a perfect balance of technical and demonstration, Stewart’s witty, stylish, and pointed approach to introducing 3D modeling, animation, and the 3D modeling production environment is well worth staying up all day and night to read.”

—Dr. Tim J. Harrington, Teaching and Learning Applications Analyst

“Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours is a great way to learn the basics of working in 3D on a computer. This is a fantastic book for anyone who wants to start in this field.”

—Gregory Scott Johnson, Professor of Game Development, SCAD

“For anyone looking to get a solid foot into the 3D industry, Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours is the perfect solution to get you started. Stewart Jones puts his years of experience into 24 simple and concise ‘hours’ that make learning the basics fun and then build into more advanced steps as you work your way through. Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours is the perfect guide to putting that first foot forward and opening the door to the exciting world of 3D.”

—Matthew Johnson, Principal 3D Artist
“Sams Teach Yourself Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours not only gets the reader started with 3ds Max, it gives a comprehensive survey of all aspects of 3D. Through clear and succinct tutorials, readers will learn to model, rig, skin, animate, create particles, utilize dynamic, fur, and even experience a little scripting. Sams Teach Yourself 3ds Max in 24 Hours has everything needed to get the successful digital artist proficient in 3ds Max in a short 24 hours. You’ll keep this on your shelf as a go-to resource guide for 3ds Max.”

—Tina O’Hailey, Dean of Digital Media, SCAD
Sams Teach Yourself
3ds Max®
in 24 Hours

Stewart Jones

SAMS 800 East 96th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240 USA
Contents at a Glance

Preface ............................................................................................ xvii

HOUR 1 Introduction .......................................................................... 1
  2 Exploring the Interface ................................................................. 11
  3 Navigating the Viewports ............................................................ 31
  4 Primitives and Transforms .......................................................... 41
  5 3ds Max Modifiers ..................................................................... 61
  6 Sub-Object Exploration ............................................................... 71
  7 3D Modeling ............................................................................. 85
  8 Materials and Textures ............................................................... 109
  9 Computer Animation ................................................................. 131
  10 Illuminating Scenes Using Lights ............................................... 145
  11 Adding and Editing 3D Cameras .................................................. 157
  12 Rendering for Production .......................................................... 169
  13 Combining Techniques to Create a Showcase ......................... 185
  14 Rigging Objects for Easier Animation ......................................... 201
  15 Influencing Geometry Using Skinning Techniques .................. 217
  16 Character Animation ............................................................... 233
  17 Dynamic Simulations ............................................................... 255
  18 Particles and Effects ................................................................ 269
  19 Cloth, Hair, and Fur Creation ...................................................... 287
  20 Mental Ray Rendering ............................................................... 301
  21 3ds Max Project Management Techniques ............................... 315
  22 Combining Advanced Techniques to Create a Showcase .......... 331
  23 Scripting in 3ds Max Using MAXScript .................................... 351
  24 Conclusion ............................................................................. 365

Index .............................................................................................. 377
# Table of Contents

Preface  
HOUR 1 Introduction  
   What This Book Covers  
   This Book’s Structure  
   What Is Autodesk 3ds Max?  
   Getting Autodesk 3ds Max  
   Extra Stuff  
   Disclaimer and Disclosure  
   Summary  
   Q&A  
   Workshop  
   Exercise  

HOUR 2 Exploring the Interface  
   The Interface Elements  
   Quad Menus  
   Summary  
   Q&A  
   Workshop  
   Exercise  

HOUR 3 Navigating the Viewports  
   3D Space  
   The ViewCube  
   SteeringWheels  
   Viewport Navigation Controls  
   Viewport Configuration  
   The Viewport Layout Tab  
   Summary
# HOUR 7 3D Modeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Cartoon Face</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Spaceship</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Futuristic City Planet</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Modeling Techniques</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# HOUR 8 Materials and Textures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Material Editor</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying Textures to Objects</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning Multiple Materials</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVW Mapping</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# HOUR 9 Computer Animation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Animation Concepts</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Animation Tools</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Steps into Animation</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivot Points</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# HOUR 10 Illuminating Scenes Using Lights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ds Max Lighting Introduction</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Lights</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photometric Lights</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding Lights to a Scene</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Summary .............................................................................................. 154
Q&A ....................................................................................................... 154
Workshop ............................................................................................ 155
Exercise .............................................................................................. 155

HOUR 11 Adding and Editing 3D Cameras ........................................ 157
  Camera-Based Concepts ...................................................................... 157
  3ds Max Cameras .............................................................................. 159
  Animating Cameras .......................................................................... 164
  Cameras and Modifiers .................................................................... 166
  Summary .......................................................................................... 166
  Q&A .................................................................................................. 166
  Workshop .......................................................................................... 167
  Exercise ............................................................................................ 167

HOUR 12 Rendering for Production ................................................... 169
  An Overview of Rendering in 3ds Max ........................................... 169
  Quick Rendering .............................................................................. 170
  Rendering Tools .............................................................................. 172
  Still Image Rendering ...................................................................... 178
  Animation Rendering ....................................................................... 178
  Summary ........................................................................................ 181
  Q&A ................................................................................................ 182
  Workshop ........................................................................................ 182
  Exercise ........................................................................................... 183

HOUR 13 Combining Techniques to Create a Showcase .................. 185
  Stages Explained ............................................................................. 185
  Stage 1: Preparation ......................................................................... 186
  Stage 2: Materials ........................................................................... 189
  Stage 3: Camera ............................................................................... 192
  Stage 4: Animation ......................................................................... 193
  Stage 5: Lighting ............................................................................. 194
  Stage 6: Final Changes ................................................................... 196
  Stage 7: Rendering .......................................................................... 198
HOUR 14 Rigging Objects for Easier Animation
Hierarchies and Linking ........................................ 201
Bone Tools ............................................................. 205
Forward and Inverse Kinematics ............................. 207
Creating a Custom Rig ............................................ 210
Using Character Studio (Biped) .............................. 211
Using CAT (Character Animation Toolkit) ............... 212
Summary ............................................................... 214
Q&A ...................................................................... 214
Workshop ............................................................... 215
Exercise ................................................................. 215

HOUR 15 Influencing Geometry Using Skinning Techniques
What Is Skinning? .................................................. 217
Influence Area and Envelopes ................................. 218
The Skin Modifier .................................................. 219
Manual Skin Weighting ......................................... 223
Setting Up Characters for Animation Use .................. 228
Summary ............................................................... 231
Q&A ...................................................................... 231
Workshop ............................................................... 231
Exercise ................................................................. 232

HOUR 16 Character Animation
The 12 Principles of Animation .............................. 233
The Bouncing Ball .................................................. 242
Summary ............................................................... 252
Q&A ...................................................................... 253
Workshop ............................................................... 253
Exercise ................................................................. 254
HOUR 17 Dynamic Simulations 255
The MassFX Toolset 255
Creating Keyframed Animation from Dynamic Simulations 259
Causing Destruction with MassFX 261
Summary 266
Q&A 267
Workshop 267
Exercise 267

HOUR 18 Particles and Effects 269
Space Warps 269
Non-Event-Driven Particle Systems 273
Event-Driven Particle Systems: Particle Flow 275
Summary 283
Q&A 284
Workshop 284
Exercise 285

HOUR 19 Cloth, Hair, and Fur Creation 287
Simulating Cloth 287
Simulating Hair and Fur 292
Summary 299
Q&A 299
Workshop 299
Exercise 300

HOUR 20 Mental Ray Rendering 301
Mental Ray Introduction 301
Common Render Settings 304
The Mental Ray Daylight System 306
Daylight and Additional Lights 311
Summary 312
Q&A 312
Workshop 312
Exercise 313
## HOUR 21 3ds Max Project Management Techniques

- **Scene Workflow** 315
- **Naming Conventions** 323
- **Project Setup and Folder Handling** 325
- **Project Management in Production** 326
- **Summary** 328
- **Q&A** 329
- **Workshop** 329
- **Exercise** 330

## HOUR 22 Combining Advanced Techniques to Create a Showcase

- **Stage 1: Getting Started** 331
- **Stage 2: Preparation** 332
- **Stage 3: Project Management** 332
- **Stage 4: Creation** 335
- **Stage 5: Layout** 337
- **Stage 6: Camera and Lensing** 341
- **Stage 7: Animation and Visual Effects** 342
- **Stage 8: Lighting** 344
- **Stage 9: Final Changes** 345
- **Stage 10: Rendering and Output** 346
- **Summary** 347
- **Q&A** 348
- **Workshop** 348
- **Exercise** 349

## HOUR 23 Scripting in 3ds Max Using MAXScript

- **Programming and Scripting Basics** 351
- **The MAXScript Tools** 352
- **Basic MAXScript Scripting** 355
- **Using MAXScript to Create User Interfaces** 359
- **Summary** 362
- **Q&A** 363
- **Workshop** 363
- **Exercise** 364
About the Author

Stewart Jones started his visual journey in graphic and multimedia design. He has since moved into the computer graphics industry, where his focus has been on animation and visual effects. Now a company director and freelance VFX/CGanimation consultant for the film, TV, and games industries, he has previously served in multiple roles in media and entertainment, including mentor and course author, animator, technical animator, character technical director, and computer graphics supervisor. Stewart also wrote Digital Creature Rigging.
Dedication

For the person who is always there for you. You know who that is.

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the guidance and support of some amazing people. I hope they all know how thankful I am for their help, and I’d like to take a little time here to mention a few of them as they totally deserve the recognition for their awesomeness!

Kirsty, I love you. You’re amazing. Thank you for always making everything better and my life so fantastic; without you, I’d be a wreck—or even more of a wreck than I currently am!

Thanks to my parents, Carol and Keith. Your love and support mean everything to me; I can’t thank you enough for always being there for me.

Susan and Nana, thank you for all your support and being there to listen to my random chats. Oh, and of course thank you so much for that first “super-awesome” computer you bought me that allowed me to start my journey into 3D.

Nathan, although your face did not appear in this book (like it did in my last one), thank you for being the one who introduced me to 3ds Max way back in the day. I know that an older version of this series of books helped you start out on your own 3D journey, and I hope my version will do the same for others. Thanks for being a great friend!

A big thank you to everyone in the CG industry, as well as all the friends I’ve made at so many places throughout the world. Your drive, determination, and incredible talents keep pushing me forward. Keep up the great work, everyone; I’m sure I’ll see you around!

Thank you to my technical editors: Brad, Greg, Tim, and Matt. The feedback, notes, comments, critiques, and thoughts you shared with me made this book so much better than it would have been without you.
We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we’re doing right, what we could do better, what areas you’d like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you’re willing to pass our way.

We welcome your comments. You can email or write to let us know what you did or didn’t like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

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Preface

Welcome! Please sit down, make yourself comfortable, and relax. Before you get started on your 24-hour-long journey into the world of 3D and Autodesk 3ds Max, let’s take a bit of time to get to know each other.

I’ll start. My name is Stewart, and most people call me Stu. I’ve been doing this kind of thing for a while now…. Well, not typing creepy messages like this one, but you know—3D stuff. Like a lot of other folks, I started out my journey watching cartoons as a kid, and through a series of twists and turns, I ended up in this creatively technically artistic (that’s a new term I just created right there) field of 3D and the “entertainment industry.”

All right, so I’ve introduced myself. Who are you? This is probably much easier for you to just tell me, but as there is no one else here, I’m going to take a wild guess, and hopefully I’m somewhere in the right area with it. Right, hang on while I channel my psychic abilities.¹

You’re human. Yes, most definitely. I see someone who is taking the first steps into the world of 3D. I also notice that you want to learn more about Autodesk 3ds Max and what it has to offer as a leading 3D software application. Yes, you are eager to start your adventure, and you’re a little bit sick of me rambling on. And you’re starting to think that I might be actually a bit crazy. Or maybe you have picked up the wrong book completely!

Am I right? I am, aren’t I?

I knew it! Are you impressed?

Of course you’re not! That was, obviously, a completely wild guess, and I may have hit a home run, or I could be way off target, but only you and I know which it is! Well, that guy behind you does as well. Just kidding! Or am I?

Enough with this babble! I do know that you’re here to expand your mind and learn new and wondrous techniques that will set you on the path to 3D excellence. Thank you for choosing to take the first steps of your journey with me. Let’s have some fun.

¹I have no actual psychic abilities, just so you know!
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You are able to see an object because light reflects from the object into your eyes, which send the data to your brain so it can process the data and form an image. You can’t see without light—honest! Just as in nature, illumination in 3ds Max happens through a complex interaction of lights and objects.

Light can come from a number of sources, the most obvious being the sun, our source of natural lighting, and from bulbs, which handle our real-world artificial lighting. It makes sense, then, that 3ds Max also provides a number of lighting options that allow you to replicate both natural and artificial lighting within scenes.

This hour, you are going to take a look at the various lighting options available to you and how you can use them to illuminate your 3D worlds and scenes.

### 3ds Max Lighting Introduction

Lights in the real world allow you to see things, and the lights in 3ds Max do exactly the same thing. In addition, you can assign qualities to the lighting tools available in 3ds Max to enable them to cast shadows, project images, and even manipulate the atmospheric lighting effects.

The basic lighting tools are located in the default creation area in 3ds Max—the Create tab of the Command Panel. The Lights category is the third icon from the left, which looks like a studio spotlight; this category is home to the lighting tools.
Two main subcategories of lights are available: standard lights and photometric lights. You can create lights just as you do any other objects, and you can also transform them by using the Move, Rotate, and Scale tools.

Before you jump in and start creating lights, it’s important that you know that 3ds Max automatically provides a default lighting setup when you start the program. Read on to learn more.

**Default Lighting**

3ds Max provides you with default lighting if you have not specified (created) any lights yourself. This allows you to view any objects you create without having to worry about lighting the scene first. The default lights disappear as soon as another light is created, and they magically reappear if all other lights in the scene are deleted.

**Shadows**

Shadows are areas where light is obstructed by an object, causing a darker area than its surroundings. 3ds Max supports various types of shadow-casting options, and unlike in real life, you have the ability to make only some lights cast shadows and others not. Work through the following Try It Yourself to get a taste of this.

### TRY IT YOURSELF

**Casting Shadows Using Default Lighting**

Follow these steps to see how the default lighting in 3ds Max casts shadows on objects you create:

1. In a new scene, create a plane (a standard primitive, not an aircraft).
2. Create a sphere.
3. Move the sphere around to see how the default lighting in 3ds Max casts shadows onto objects.

**Ambient Light**

Ambient light is general lighting that affects an entire scene; it is also called global ambient. It has no source or direction but affects everything in a scene uniformly. Because ambient light has an effect on everything, you can use it to your advantage to create a specific atmosphere or simply to adjust the overall color of a scene.

Figure 10.1 shows the Environment and Effects window, where you can manually adjust the ambient light for a scene.
FIGURE 10.1
The Environment and Effects window gives you access to the ambient light properties for each scene.

NOTE

Changing the Global Ambient Light Settings

You can press the 8 key to bring up the Environment and Effects window, where you can adjust the Ambient setting. Alternatively, you can open this window by selecting Rendering, Environment from the main menu.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Changing and Manipulating the Global Ambient Light Settings

It is incredibly simple to change the Global Lighting options in a 3ds Max scene, and these steps show you how to do just that:

1. In a new scene, create some standard primitives or simply open a scene that you have worked on previously that includes some geometry.
**Standard Lights**

These standard lights are the “standard” lighting solution available for 3ds Max. Yeah, I know, you kind of worked that one out for yourself, didn’t you? These lights are truly “3D” lights—that is, they are created in 3D (of course), but they have no comparison to real-world lighting solutions. Sure, a spotlight is something that you know from the real world, but the spotlight solution available in the Standard Lights list doesn’t compare to any real-world parameters. This might not seem like a big deal right now, but when you start having to think about realistic lighting solutions and how the temperature of a light affects its color, you’ll see that these real-world parameters would come in pretty handy!

To create lights in 3ds Max, you have to head over to the Create tab, just as we usually do when you want to create something. In the Create tab, under the Lights category, we see two subcategories, Standard and Photometric, as shown in Figure 10.2.

The Standard subcategory in 3ds Max give you a few good options to choose from:

- **Target Spot and Free Spot**—Spotlights cast a resizable beam of light either toward a target or in a general direction.

---

2. Open the Environment and Effects window by either pressing the 8 key on your keyboard or selecting Rendering, Environment from the main menu. As shown in Figure 10.1, the Environment and Effects window contains two tabs that separate the Environment and Effects options. You need to worry about only the first tab (Environment) for now.

3. Ensure that the Environment tab is open and find the Common Parameters rollout, which should be right at the top. The first section of this rollout contains options for changing and affecting the background of the main scene.

4. Scroll down the Common Parameters rollout until you come to the Global Lighting options.

5. Find the Tint option under Global Lighting and click the white square to bring up a color picker.

6. Manipulate and choose a color by using the color picker. Notice that your scene objects are tinted in the color you are choosing. As you can see, changing this color can have a dramatic effect on the visual look of a scene.

7. Change the Level option in this section to intensify or decrease the effect that the tint has on the scene. Also try out the Ambient option, which behaves just like the Tint effect. (The effect of the Ambient option is hard to see in your viewports, but you can see it in renders quite easily. You’ll learn about renders and rendering in Hour 12, “Rendering for Production,” so make a note of where this ambient light setting is so you can find it again in a few hours.)
Standard Lights

- **Target Direct and Free Direct**—Direct lights cast parallel rays of light in a single direction, just like the sun. You can target these rays to a specific direction or simply rotate the Free Direct version.

- **Omni**—Omni lights cast rays in all directions from a single source, just like a real-world light bulb. In fact, the default lighting uses two of these omni lights in its setup.

- **Skylight**—The skylight replicates daytime lighting for your scene.

- **mr Area Omni and mr Area Spot**—These two lights are similar to the omni and spotlights you’ve already seen; however, you use them specifically when you’re using the Mental Ray (mr) rendering system. If I were you, I would just forget about these lights for the moment, until you dip your feet into Mental Ray rendering in Hour 20, “Mental Ray Rendering.”

![FIGURE 10.2](image)

Standard lighting is available in the Lights category on the Create tab. There are eight standard lights to choose from!
Figure 10.3 shows the options available in the *Standard* subcategory.

![Figure 10.3](image)

**FIGURE 10.3**
The *Standard* subcategory offers a total of eight lighting options.

---

### Photometric Lights

Choosing the *Photometric* subcategory limits the number of different lights you can create. However, unlike the lights in the *Standard* subcategory, lights in the *Photometric* subcategory behave like real-world lighting solutions.

The photometric lights have settings that relate directly to real-world light measurement values, such as *Intensity* and *Temperature*. These values are often easiest to understand if you’re used to a bit of DIY or just general real-world lighting, although using them can take a little more time to set up correctly than using the standard lighting options. However, 3ds Max comes with a number of templates that can help you out, and they make it as easy as choosing *40W Bulb* for a 40-watt bulb. Nice!

These are the options in the *Photometric* subcategory:

- **Target Light**—You can aim a target light at a specified target, using the target sub-object provided with this light.

- **Free Light**—You can aim these lights by using the *Move* and *Rotate* tools.

- **mr Sky Portal**—Once again, this is a Mental Ray–specific lighting option, and I advise you to leave it alone for now as it’s a little too complex for your 3ds Max experience.

Figure 10.4 shows the few options you have available in the *Photometric* subcategory.
Adding Lights to a Scene

Now that you know about both the standard and photometric lighting solutions, as well as some background on shadows and ambient light, you can start lighting your scenes. In fact, creating a light is as simple as clicking the button for the light you want, clicking in the scene, and changing some options. Give it a go!

VIDEO 10.1

Creating a Flashlight Beam

This video shows you how to create a flashlight beam, using the Omni and Free Spot standard lights.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Using Standard Lights to Create a Flashlight Beam

Creating standard lights is incredibly simple. In the following steps, you will use a spotlight to create a beam of light that is emitted from a flashlight:

1. Open the file SAMS_Hour10_TorchStart.max. In this scene, a battery-operated flashlight is pointed directly at a gray wall. You need to add lights so that the flashlight illuminates the wall as you would expect.
2. On the Create tab, click the Lights category, and then move to the Standard subcategory. You will use a spotlight for the flashlight.

3. Click the Free Spot button and then click once in the scene to create it. Right-click to end the creation process. (If you don’t right-click, you’ll be creating spotlights.) By adding a spotlight to the scene, you force 3ds Max to remove the default lighting setup that it usually uses. This leaves your scene completely dark. However, if you move and rotate the spotlight around, you should notice that it now casts light. You need to position the spotlight correctly, but it’s going to be a little difficult to do that with the scene being in total darkness.

4. Open the Create tab once again, and in the Lights category, stay in the Standard subcategory and click the Omni button. Click in the scene to create an omni light. Your scene brightens up once again.

5. Position your spotlight as shown in Figure 10.5.

**FIGURE 10.5**
The spotlight is correctly positioned in the scene so that it illuminates from the flashlight beam.
6. With the lights in place, edit some of their parameters to improve the look of the scene. Click the omni light in the scene and then open the Modify tab.

7. Scroll down and expand the Intensity/Color/Attenuation rollout so that you have access to the Multiplier parameter. Change the Multiplier setting to 0.1. This makes the scene a little darker than it was before.

8. In the viewport, click the spotlight and open the Modify tab.

9. Scroll down the Modify tab and expand the Intensity/Color/Attenuation rollout. Time change the Multiplier parameter to 5.0. This should make the spotlight super bright.

10. Still in the Modify tab, find and expand the Spotlight Parameters rollout. Change the Hornspot/Beam parameter to 1.0. Also change the Falloff/Field parameter to 95.0. You should now have something that looks a little like Figure 10.6.

![Image of a scene with lights]

**FIGURE 10.6**
By editing the lighting parameters, you have enhanced the look of the scene and the spotlight beam of the flashlight.
154  HOUR 10: Illuminating Scenes Using Lights

CAUTION

Don’t Go Lighting Crazy!

With each light you add to a scene, the computational costs of the scene increase. Got one or just a few lights in your scene? No problem! Got way too many lights? At best, your scene’s performance will suffer. In a worst-case scenario, it could crash 3ds Max or possibly your whole computer system. Adding another light to a scene increases the calculations 3ds Max has to do. I’m not saying you shouldn’t use as many lights as you need. Just be aware that there are some limitations in terms of performance at a system level.

Summary

Lighting can really impact the visual appeal of a scene you are working with. This hour covers the lighting options in 3ds Max, and you’ve even tried out some lighting for yourself. You should be armed with enough skills and information to be able to light your own scenes way better than the default lighting does.

Q&A

Q. Why is lighting so important in 3D?

A. In 3D, just like in the real world, lighting can have a dramatic effect on both the look and feel of a scene or environment. It can help set the tone and mood for a whole animation or just a single still frame.

Q. Why are there two subcategories, Standard and Photometric, for lighting in 3ds Max?

A. Photometric lights contain real-world parameters, which can be a little daunting for those new to lighting in 3d Max; however, using them is the preferred method for lighting more realistic or explicitly lit scenes. Standard lights give you non-real-world parameters that are easier to use and can still give great effect, but in a less-daunting way. In general, photometric lights are more complex but give more accuracy, and standard lights are simpler to use but require more trial and error to get something to look exactly how you want it to.
Q. How many lights can you add to a scene?

A. It depends on your computer’s hardware. Each light you add increases the calculations that 3ds Max has to perform. The more lights you have in a scene, the longer it takes for the calculations to complete. With better hardware, 3ds Max can do more calculations, but there will always be a limit to the calculations a computer system can do. A good rule of thumb is to use the lowest number of lights possible to achieve the results you are looking for.

Workshop

Lighting can dramatically improve the look and feel of a scene. This workshop asks a few questions that you should now be able to answer, and it includes an exercise that challenges you to create a lighting setup that requires the use of photometric lights.

Quiz

1. When is the 3ds Max default lighting available?

2. What does ambient light do?

3. What are shadows?

4. What two lighting subcategories are available in 3ds Max?

Answers

1. The default lighting is available in 3ds Max when the program starts or when no other lights are in the scene.

2. Ambient light controls the overall lighting for a whole scene.

3. Shadows are areas where light is obstructed by an object, causing an area to be darker than its surroundings.

4. 3ds Max provides standard and photometric lighting options.

Exercise

Getting used to photometric lights can take a little while, and the small number of creation options may seem limiting at first. However, their real-world parameters can make the application of these kinds of lights a better choice for more realistic or precise lighting simulations.

Open the file SAMS_Hour10_StreetLighting.max and light the scene using only photometric lights. Try creating a day scene and a night scene, which both have different challenges. This will give you a greater understanding of how lighting can dramatically affect the mood of a scene.
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**Index**

**Numbers**

2D, 31
- animation, 132
- texture maps (UVW), 117-128

3D
- animation, 132
- applications, 7
- cameras, 159-163. See also cameras
- modeling, 85
  - cartoon faces, creating, 85-93
  - futuristic city planets, creating, 100-103
  - spaceships, creating, 93-100
  - techniques, 104-105
- object manipulation in 3D space, 51-58
- ViewCubes, 33
- viewports, navigating, 31-32

A

accessing
- ambient light properties, 146
- FKs (forward kinematics), 206
- layers, 320
- MassFX tools, 255
- Merge option, 187
- modifiers, 65
- Object Properties dialog box, 289
- Particle View dialog box, 276-277
- primitives, 50-51
- quad menus, 27
- quick-access buttons, 66
- rendering modes, 177
- SteeringWheels, 34
- sub-objects, 73

**Active Shade method, 177-178**
adding
  cameras, 157
daylight
to scenes, 306
  systems (Mental Ray), 344
free direct lighting, 194
lighting, 151, 345
modifiers to objects, 64
text to futuristic city
  planets, 105
textures, 114-115
workspaces, 319
XRefs (external references), 327
Adobe Photoshop, creating
textures, 116
Advanced Parameters rollout, 220
advanced showcase techniques, 331
  animation/visual effects, 342-343
cameras/lensing, 341
  final changes, 345
formatting, 331-332, 335-337
  layouts, 337-341
lighting, 344-345
  preparation, 332
project management, 332-334
rendering/output, 346-347
scene layouts, 339-341
videos, 346
advice, 368
aiming lights, 150
ambient lighting, 113, 146-148
angles, selecting camera, 341
Angle Snap Toggle tool, 86
animation, 131
  advanced showcase
techniques, 342-343
  basic concepts, 131-133
cameras, 164-165
CAT (Character Animation
  Toolkit), 212-213
characters, skinning
techniques, 225-231
  formatting, 135-141
keyframes, formatting,
  258-261
keying controls, 27
  pivot points, 138-142
playback controls, 27
  principles of, 233-241
rendering, 178-181
  rigging, 201. See also rigging
objects
showcases, 193-194
teeny car animation
  video, 138
tools, 132-134
Application button, 19, 326
applications
  3D, 7
downloading, 7
applying
  Auto Smooth, 197
CAT (Character Animation
  Toolkit), 212-213
Character Studio (Biped),
  210-212
cloth, 287-288
Curve Editor, 138-141
Garment Maker modifier, 288
hair and fur, 288-297
MassFX tools, 255-258
  materials, 112
MAXScript, 351
skin, 221-222
Skin modifier, 219-222
sub-objects, 73
textures
  maps, 125
to objects, 114-116
three-point perspective, 166
two-point perspective, 166
Asset Tracking dialog box, 326
assigning
  material IDs to geometry, 191
  multiple materials, 116-122
  unique names, 46
Assign Material to Selection
  option, 112
Assign Renderer rollout, 305
Auto Key, 165
  disabling, 138
  enabling, 137
Automatic Update button, 338
Auto Smooth, 197
AVI videos, 181. See also videos
B
baking
  from MassFX modifiers, 261
  simulations to animation
  keyframes, 258
basic animation concepts,
  131-133
Bend modifier, 63
| best practices, UVW mapping, 128 | SET TANGENTS TO AUTO, 140 |
| Bevel tool, 93 | SHOW END RESULT (ON/OFF TOTGLE), 65 |
| binding space warps, 269-272 | SHRINK, 77-78 |
| Bind to Space Warp tool, 269 | SIMULATE LOCAL, 291 |
| Biped (Character Studio), 210-212 | STYLE LOCAL, 296 |
| Blizzard, 273 | cameras adding, 157 |
| blocking out spaceships, 96-98 | advanced techniques showcases, 341 |
| Bones: Add button, 222 | animation, 164-165 |
| Bone tools, 204-206 | formatting, 159 |
| borders, 74 | modifiers, 166 |
| Border sub-object mode, 74 | options, modifying, 162-163 |
| bouncing balls, creating, 242-252, 257 | overview of, 157 |
| boxes formatting, 47 | positioning, 159 |
| Material Editors, 114 | shortcuts, 163 |
| primitives, 48 | showcases, 192-193 |
| UVW maps, 124 | SteeringWheels, 34 |
| buttons Application, 326 | viewing, 159 |
| Automatic Update, 338 | views, modifying, 161 |
| Bones: Add, 222 | capsule primitives, 50 |
| Configure Modifier Sets, 65 | cartoon faces, formatting, 85-93 |
| Edit Envelopes, 220 | casting shadows, 146 |
| Grow, 77-78 | CAT (Character Animation Toolkit), 212-213 |
| Loop, 77-78 | categories of primitives, 51 |
| Make Unique, 65 | causing destruction from MassFX, 261-266 |
| under modifier stacks, 64-65 | central processing units, 170 |
| PF Source, 273 | c-ext primitives, 50 |
| Pin Stack, 65 | chamferbox primitives, 50 |
| quick-access, 66 | chamfercyl primitives, 50 |
| Remove Modifier, 65 | Chamfer tool, 87 |
| Ring, 77-78 | Character Animation Toolkit, 212-213 |
| Set Selected as Dynamic Rigid Body, 259 | characters. See also objects |
| | Bones tools, 204-206 |
| | concepts, 229 |
| | modeling, 229 |
| | rigging customizing, 210 |
| | objects, 229 |
| | skinning techniques, 217 |
| | animating, 225-231 |
| | envelopes, 218 |
| | influence areas, 218 |
| | manual skin weighting, 223-228 |
| | overview of, 217 |
| | Skin modifier, 219-222 |
| Character Studio (Biped), 210-212 | cloth, 287-288 |
| colors, objects, 46-47 | combining techniques, 185 |
| | animation, 193-194 |
| | cameras, 192-193 |
| | final changes, 196-197 |
| | lighting, 194-195 |
| | materials, 189-191 |
| | preparation, 186-189 |
| | rendering, 198 |
| | stages, 185-186 |
| command line (MAXScript), 352 | Command Panels, 23-26 |

How can we make this index more useful? Email us at indexes@samspublishing.com
commands
Move, 57
Rotate, 57
Scale, 57
Select, 57
Undo, 58
Common Parameters rollout, 305
Common tab, 175, 304-305
Compact Material Editor, 109
companion website, 7
comparing frames to time, 132-133
computer animation, 131.
See also animation
cone primitives, 48
Configure Modifier Sets button, 65
configuring
modifiers, 63
primitives, 41-45
resolution, 192
units, 53-54
viewports, 36-37, 38
Connect Edges tool, 96
connections, 202. See also linking
containers, 323
controls
animation
keying, 27
playback, 27
status bars, 27
viewports, 27, 35-36
conventions, naming, 323-324
converting standard primitives to editable poly objects, 73
coordinate systems, 51
maps, 117
spaces, 67
CPUs (central processing units), 170
crashes, creating walls, 266
Create menu, 42
Create tab, 273
creating. See formatting
Curve Editor, 134, 138-141
customizing
objects
Material Editors, 109-114
rigging, 210
units, 53-54
Viewport Layout tabs, 38
workspaces, 315
Cut tool, 87
cylinder primitives, 48
depth of field, 157
destruction from MassFX, causing, 261-266
details, spaceship models, 96-98
developing skills, 366-368
devices, demolition, 261-265
dialog boxes
AssetTracking, 326
Duplicate Name, 186
Object Properties, 289
Particle View, 274
Rendered Frame, 176
Render Setup, 173, 303
Select Bones, 222
Select Preset Categories, 303
Units Setup, 54
XRef Scenes, 338
diffuse textures, applying, 114
disabling Auto Key, 138
disciplines, selecting, 367
disclaimers, 8
disclosures, 8
display layers, 319
display rollout, 220
docking, Command Panels, 24
Dope Sheet, 134
Duplicate Name dialog box, 186
DVDs, 8
dynamic simulations, 255
bouncing balls, 257-259
destruction from MassFX, 261-266
keyframed animation,
creating, 258-261
MassFX tools, 255-258
Edged Faces, 72, 86
edges, 73
Edge sub-object mode, 74
editable animation
keyframes, 259-260
disposable poly objects, 73
disposable poly sub-object rollouts, 76
Edit Envelopes button, 220
Edit Geometry rollout, 80
editing
cameras, 157
envelopes, 221-222
gometry, 75
keyframes, 138-141
Material Editor, 109-114
objects, 47
parameters, objects, 44
spheres, 75
sub-objects, 73
views, 33
workspaces, 319
Edit UVWs window, 126
effects, 269
event-driven particles, 274-278
lenses, 195
non-event-driven particles, 273-274
ripples, 270-272
space warps, 269-270
texture maps, 125
VFX (visual effects), 342-343

How can we make this index more useful? Email us at indexes@samspublishing.com
daylight system (Mental Ray), 307-309
default lighting setups, 146
demolition devices, 261-265
FKs (forward kinematics), 208-209
flashlight beams, 151-154
futuristic city planets, 100-103
global ambient light settings, 147-148
hair, 293
IKs (inverse kinematics), 208-209
layers, 317-319
links, 202
materials, 111
MAXScript
    interfaces, 359-361
    objects, 358
Mental Ray rendering, 304-306
non-event-driven particles, 274-275
objects, 47
primitives, 41-45, 49
Render Setup tool, 173-176
rigs
    with CAT, 212
    with Character Studio, 212
ripples, 270-272
snowmen, 57
spaceships, 93-100
space warps, 269-270
spheres, 42, 47
stages, 185-186
UVW mapping, 125-127
Viewport Layout tab, 37-38
forward kinematics, 201, 206-210
FOV (field of view), 157
FPS (frames per second), 132-133
frames
    Show Safe Frames, 192
time, comparing, 132-133
frames per second, 132-133
free cameras, 159
free direct lighting, 149, 194
free lights, 150
free spot lighting, 147
fur, 287-297
futuristic city planets
    formatting, 100-103
text, adding, 105
geosphere primitives, 48
Gizmos rollout, 220
global ambient light settings, 147-148
Global Illumination tab, 306
Global Lighting options, 148
GPUs (graphics processing units), 170
Graph Editor, 134
graphics processing units, 170
Graphite Modeling tools, 21, 104
groups, 197, 323
Group window, 323
Grow button, 77-78

G

Garment Maker modifier, 288
garments, 287. See also cloth
gengon primitives, 50
gometry
    Edit Geometry rollout, 80
ing editing, 75
material IDs, assigning, 191
skinning techniques, 217
animating characters,
    225-231
envelopes, 218
influence areas, 218
manual skin weighting,
    223-228
overview of, 217
Skin modifier, 219-222

H

hair, 287
    presets, 298
    simulations, 288-297
HD (History-Dependent) solver, 210
hedra primitives, 50
Hello World, 355
help, 369-371
hierarchies
    Bone tools, 204
    rigging objects, 201-205
Hierarchy tab, 134
HI (History-Independent) solver, 210
Home icon, 23
hose primitives, 50
human skin. See skinning techniques
icons, Home, 23
IDs, materials, 117
IKs (inverse kinematics), 142, 201, 206-210
illuminating scenes, 145
adding, 151
overview of, 145-148
photometric lights, 150
standard lights, 147-150
images
animation, 131. See also animation
saving, 178
still, rendering, 178
influence areas, skinning techniques, 218
InfoCenter toolbar, 19
Inset tool, 93
installation, 7
interfaces
elements, 12-27
MAXScript, formatting, 359-361
navigating, 11
quad menus, 27
workspaces, 316
inverse kinematics, 142, 201, 206-210
Iterative Render mode, 177

J-K
keyframes, 131
animation, formatting, 258-261
editing, 138-141
keys
Auto Key, 165
disabling, 138
enabling, 137
controls, animation, 27
Languages, 351. See also programming
layers, 317-319
layouts
advanced showcase techniques, 337-341
scenes, 339-341
Viewport Layout tab, 37-38
lenses, 158. See also cameras
advanced techniques showcases, 341
effects, 195
l-ext primitives, 50
lighting, 145
adding, 151, 345
advanced showcase techniques, 344-345
ambient, 146-148
materials, 113
Limb solver (IK), 210
linking
Bone tools, 204
rigging objects, 201-205
Link tool, 202
Listener (MAXScript), 353
loading
hair presets, 298
Mental Ray rendering presets, 304
predefined rigs, 213
Loop button, 77-78
lower toolbars, 25-27

M
main menus, 19
main toolbar, 20-21
Make Unique button, 65
Manage Workspaces window, 317
managing projects, 315
advanced showcase techniques, 332-334
containers, 323
groups, 323
layers, 317-319
naming conventions, 323-324
in production, 326-327
overview of, 145-148
photometric lights, 150
shadows, 146
showcases, 194-195
standard lights, 147-150

How can we make this index more useful? Email us at indexes@samspublishing.com
managing projects

project setup, 325
Scene Explorer, 322
scene workflow, 315-323
Schematic view, 322
workspaces, 316-319
manual skin weighting, 223-228
maps
textures, 116
U (horizontal), V (vertical), and W (depth), 117-128
mass, transforming, 339
MassFX tools, 255-258
destruction, causing, 261-266
mCloth, 287
modifiers, baking from, 261
Material Editor, 109-114
Material Explorer tool, 172
materials, 109
applying, 112
combining techniques, 189-191
formatting, 111
IDs, 117
Material Editor, 109-114
multiple, assigning, 116-122
Multi/Sub-Object, 117, 190
naming, 113
math, 357
MAXScript
applying, 351
interfaces, formatting, 359-361
Listener, 353
math, 357
Mini-Listener, 26, 352, 355
objects, formatting, 358
programming/scripting, 351-352
running, 361-362
scripting, 355-359
spheres, 359-360
tools, 352-354
window, 354
mCloth, 287
measurements, 55
mental.ray.daylighting option, 303
Mental Ray rendering, 301, 344
daylight system, 306-307
Environment and Effects window, 311
overview of, 301-304
presets, 302
settings, 304-306
menus, 27
Create, 42
flyout, 21
main, 19
Merge option, 187
Mini-Listener (MAXScript), 352, 355
Mirror modifier, 96
Mirror Parameters rollout, 220
modeling
3D, 85
cartoon faces, 85-93
futuristic city planets, 100-103
spaceships, 93-100
techniques, 104-105
characters, 229
polygons, 75
Modeling ribbons, testing, 104
modifiers, 61
accessing, 65
Bend, 63
Camera Correction, 166
cameras, 166
Cloth, 288
Garment Maker, 288
MassFX tools, baking from, 261
Mirror, 96
Modify tab, 61-64
objects, adding, 64
Physique, 217
Skin, 217, 219-222
stacks, buttons under, 64-65
sub-objects, 73
Symmetry, 96
types of, 66-68
videos, 64
WSM (World-Space Modifiers), 288-297
modifying
camera options, 162-163
FKs (forward kinematics), 208-209
IKs (inverse kinematics), 208-209
materials, 111
objects in 3D space, 51-58
sub-objects, 74-76
units setup, 52
viewports, 161
Modify tab, 61-64
Motion tab, 134
Move tool, 137, 159
moving
  camera targets, 163
items, 51, 53
mr area omni lighting, 149
mr area spot lighting, 149
mr sky portal lighting, 150
multiple materials, assigning, 116-122
multiple objects, selecting, 56
multiple sub-objects, selecting, 76
multiple-team-member
production, 327
Multi/Sub-Object material, 117, 190

Name and Color rollout, 46, 62
naming
  conventions, 323-324
duplicate, 186
materials, 113
objects, 46-47
navigating
  interfaces, 11
elements, 12-27
quad menus, 27
MassFX tools, 255-257
Scene Explorer, 322
Slate Material Editor, 111
ViewCube, 23
viewports, 31
  3D space, 31-32
configuring, 36-37
controls, 35-36
object-space modifiers, 66
navigation controls, 27
SteeringWheels, 34-35
ViewCubes, 33
Viewport Layout tab, 37-38
workspaces, 316-319
non-event-driven particles, 273-274
normals, 81-82
notebooks, 368

Object Properties dialog box, 289
objects
  3D, manipulation in, 51-58
colors, 46-47
deforming, 270
editable poly, 73
editing, 47
formatting, 47
groups, 323
Material Editors, 109-114
MAXScript, 358
modifiers, 61
  adding, 64
  buttons under the stack, 64-65
  Modify tab, 61-64
moving, 51, 53
multiple materials, assigning, 116-122
naming, 46-47
parameters, editing, 44
pivot points, 138-142
positioning, 51, 53, 189
references, 337
renaming, 188
rigging, 201
Bone tools, 204-206
CAT (Character Animation
Toolkit), 212-213
Character Studio (Biped), 210-212
customizing, 210
FKs (forward kinematics), 206-210
hierarchies/linking, 201-205
IKs (inverse kinematics), 206-210
rotating, 51, 53
scaling, 51, 53, 188
selecting, 51, 53, 62
sub-objects, 71
  applying, 73
  editable poly sub-object
rollouts, 76
  modifying, 74-76
  normals, 81-82
  overview of, 71-73
rollouts, 80-81
shortcuts, 81
Soft Selection tool, 78-79
textures, applying, 114-116
ViewCube, 33
viewing, 22-23
XRefs (external references), 327, 339

How can we make this index more useful? Email us at indexes@samspublishing.com
oiltank primitives, 50
omni lighting, 149
options
  Assign Material to Selection, 112
cameras, modifying, 162-163
Global Lighting, 148
Material Editors, 109-114
mental.ray.daylighting, 303
Merge, 187
Orthographic Projection, 163
Ray Traced Shadows, 194
rendering, 302-304
Set Project Folder, 332
shadow-casting, 146
orientation of viewports, 33
Orthographic Projection option, 163
orthographic viewports, 33
output
  advanced showcase techniques, 346-347
  resolution, configuring, 192
  saving, rendering, 178
overlapping envelopes, 218
p
paint, 116
parameters
  materials, modifying, 111
  Modify tab, 62
  objects, editing, 44
Parameters rollout, 220
PAarray, 273
particles, 269
  event-driven, 274-299
  non-event-driven, 273-274
Particle View dialog box, 274, 276-277
PCloud, 273
personal notebooks, 368
perspective, applying, 166
Perspective viewport, 33, 163
PF Source, 273, 276
photometric lights, 146, 150, 157, 311. See also lighting
Photoshop (Adobe), creating textures in, 116
Physique modifier, 217
Pin Stack button, 65
pivot points, 138-142
plane primitives, 48
playback
  animation controls, 27
  controls, 134
point of view, 157
points, pivot, 138-142
Polygon: Material IDs rollout, 191
polygons, 74-75
Polygon sub-object mode, 74
positioning
  cameras, 159
  objects, 51, 53, 189
POV (point of view), 157
predefined rigs, loading, 213
preparation
  advanced showcase techniques, 332
  for showcases, 186-189
pre-rendering, 170
presets
  hair, 298
  Mental Ray rendering, 302
previewing rendering, 171
primitives, 41
  accessing, 50-51
  formatting, 41-45, 49
  prism, 50
  snowmen, 57
  types of, 47-49
principles of animation, 233-241
Processing tab, 306
production. See also project management
  multiple-team-member, 327
  rendering for, 169. See also rendering
  animation, 178-181
  overview of, 169-170
  quick, 170-171
  still image, 178
  tools, 172-178
Production Render mode, 177
programming. See also MAXScript
  MAXScript tools, 352-354
  overview of, 351-352
project management, 315
  advanced showcase techniques, 332-334
  containers, 323
  groups, 323
  layers, 317-319
  naming conventions, 323-324
  in production, 326-327
  project setup, 325
  Scene Explorer, 322
Scenes. See also project management
daylight, adding, 306
layers, formatting, 317-319
layouts, 339-341
lighting, 145
adding, 151
overview of, 145-148
photometric lights, 150
standard lights, 147-150
workflow, 315-323
XRefs (external references), 327, 339
Schematic view, 202, 322
screen resolution, configuring, 192
scripting, 351. See also MAXScript
MAXScript, 355-359
running, 361-362
tools, 352-354
overview of, 351-352
Scripts rollout, 305
scrubbing
timelines, 133
time sliders, 165
sections of interfaces, 13
Select Bones dialog box, 222
selecting
Assign Material to Selection option, 112
camera angles, 341
disciplines, 367
multiple objects, 56
multiple sub-objects, 76
objects, 51, 53, 62
viewports, 159
workspaces, 316
selection modifiers, 66
Select Preset Categories dialog box, 303
Set Key Filters window, 165
Set Project Folder option, 332
Set Selected as Dynamic Rigid Body button, 259
Set Tangents to Auto button, 140
settings. See also configuring
Mental Ray rendering, 304-306
Sky Portal, 345
setup
projects, 325
rendering, 303
Render Setup tool, 173-176, 192
shaders, materials, 113
shadows, 146, 194. See also lighting
shortcuts
cameras, 163
Material Editor, 111
Move, Rotate, Scale, Select commands, 57
sub-objects, 81
viewport navigation
keyboard, 36
showcases, 185
advanced techniques, 331
animation/visual effects, 342-343
cameras/lensing, 341
final changes, 345
formatting, 331-332, 335-337
layouts, 337-341
lighting, 344-345
preparation, 332
project management, 332-334
rendering/output, 346-347
scene layouts, 339-341
videos, 346
animation, 193-194
cameras, 192-193
final changes, 196-197
lighting, 194-195
materials, 189-191
preparation, 186-189
rendering, 198
stages, 185-186
Show End Result (On/Off toggle) button, 65
Show Safe Frames, 192
Shrink, Grow, Ring, and Loop, 86
Shrink button, 77-78
Simulate Local button, 291
simulations
cloth, 287-288
dynamic, 255
bouncing balls, 257-259
causing destruction from MassFX, 261-266
creating keyframed animation, 258-261
MassFX tools, 255-258
fur, 288-297
hair, 288-297
lighting, 311
skeletons, 204-206. See also skinning techniques
skill development, 366-368
Skin modifier, 217, 219-222
skinning techniques, 217
characters, animating, 225-231
envelopes, 218
influence areas, 218
manual skin weighting, 223-228
overview of, 217
Skin modifier, 219-222
Skin Weight table, 224
skylight, 149
Sky Portal setting, 345
Slate Material Editor, 109, 111
sliders, time, 25, 133, 165
smoothing
Auto Smooth, 197
groups, 197
Snow, 273
snowmen, formatting, 57
Soft Selection tool, 78-79, 87
solvers, IKs (inverse kinematics), 210
spaces, switching, 67
spaceships, formatting, 93-100
space warps, 269-270
sphere primitives, 48
spheres
bouncing balls, creating, 257-259
editing, 75
formatting, 42, 47
MAXScript, 359-360
spindle primitives, 50
Spline IK solver, 210
splines, 105
Spray, 273
stacks
modifiers, buttons under, 64-65
Pin Stack button, 65
stage files, referencing, 338
stages, 185-186
standard lights, 146-154, 311
See also lighting
standard primitives, 47, 49, 73.
See also primitives
starting advanced showcase techniques, 331-332
status bars, controls, 27
SteeringWheels, 34-35
still image rendering, 178
stock lenses, 158. See also cameras
Style Hair button, 296
styles, hair, 293. See also hair
subcategories of primitives, 51
sub-objects, 71
applying, 73
editable poly sub-object rollouts, 76
geometry, editing, 75
modifying, 74-76
multiple, selecting, 76
normals, 81-82
overview of, 71-73
rollouts, 80-81
shortcuts, 81
Soft Selection tool, 78-79
spheres, editing, 75
sun, positioning, 307. See also daylight system (Mental Ray)
Super Spray, 273
support, 369-371
switching
Mental Ray rendering, 344
rendering presets, 302-304
spaces, 67
workspaces, 317-318
Symmetry modifier, 96

T

tab, Common, 304-305
tables, Skin Weight, 224
tabs
Common, 175
Create, 42
Global Illumination, 306
Hierarchy, 134
Modify, 61-64
Motion, 134
Processing, 306
Render Elements, 306
Renderer, 175, 305
Viewport Layout, 37-38
targets
cameras, 159
direct lighting, 149
lights, 150
spot lighting, 147
teapot primitives, 48

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techniques

3D modeling, 104-105
techniques for advanced showcase. See advanced showcase techniques

teeny car animation video, 138
testing Modeling ribbons, 104
text, adding, 105
textures, 109
textures, maps, 116
textures, objects, 114-116
textures, UVW mapping, 117-128
textures, three-dimensional. See 3D
textures, three-point perspective, 166
textures, time

textures, time, frames, comparing, 132-133
textures, time, scrubbing, 165
textures, sliders, 25, 133
textures, timelines, scrubbing, 133
textures, title bars, 19
textures, toolbars

InfoCenter, 19
textures, lower, 25-27
textures, main, 20-21
textures, Quick Access, 19
textures, tools, 21

textures, Angle Snap Toggle, 86
textures, animation, 132-134
textures, Bevel, 93
textures, Bend to Space Warp, 269
textures, Bone, 204-206
textures, CAT (Character Animation Toolkit), 212-213
textures, Chamfer, 87
textures, Connect Edges, 96
textures, Cut, 87

textures, Edged Faces, 86
textures, Extrude, 87
textures, Graphite Modeling, 21, 104
textures, Inset, 93
textures, Link, 202
textures, MassFX, 255-258

textures, baking from modifiers, 261
textures, causing destruction from, 261-266
textures, mCloth, 287

textures, Material Explorer, 172
textures, MAXScript, 352-354
textures, Move, 137, 159

textures, rendering, 172-178
textures, Render Setup, 173-176, 192

textures, Rotate, 67, 137, 159

textures, Scale, 137

textures, Scene Explorer, 322

textures, Shrink, Grow, Ring, and Loop, 86

textures, Soft Selection, 78-79, 87

textures, Unlink Selection, 202

textures, Viewport Canvas, 116

textures, Weight, 223

textures, tooltips, 21

textures, torus primitives, 48, 50

textures, track bars, 25, 133

textures, track view, 134

textures, transforms, 41

textures, troubleshooting, 196-197, 369-371

textures, tube primitives, 48

textures, tutorial videos, 8

textures, two-dimensional. See 2D

textures, two-point perspective, 166

textures, types

textures, of Material Editors, 109
textures, of modifiers, 66-68
textures, of photometric lights, 150
textures, of primitives, 47-49
textures, of standard lights, 147

textures, U

U (horizontal), V (vertical), and W (depth) maps, 117-128

Uls (user interfaces), 11

textures, undocking Command Panels, 24

textures, Undo command, 58

textures, unique names, assigning, 46

textures, units, configuring, 53-54

textures, Units Setup dialog box, 54

textures, unlinking object hierarchies, 204-205

textures, Unlink Selection tool, 202

textures, updating Automatic Update button, 338

textures, user interfaces, 11

textures, V

Vertex sub-object mode, 74

vertices, 73

VFX (visual effects), 342-343

videos

advanced showcase techniques, 346

animation. See also animation cameras in 3D, 164

rendering, 178
WSM (World-Space Modifiers) 391

baking simulations to animation keyframes, 258
basic animation, 135
biped rigs, 212
camera basics, 159
CAT rigging, 212
causing destruction from MassFX, 261
cloth, 288
daylight settings (Mental Ray), 306
dynamic bouncing balls creation, 257
FKs (forward kinematics), 206
flashlight beams, 151
futuristic city planet modeling, 100
hair, 293
hierarchies, 203
IKs (inverse kinematics), 206
interfaces, navigating, 27
layers, 319
manual skin weighting, 224
Material Editors, 109
material IDs, 117
MAXScript, 361
modeling Franklin, 87
modifiers, 64
non-event-driven particles, 274
objects, creating/editing, 47
Particle Flow, 278
pivot points, 142
primitives
creating snowmen, 58
formatting, 49
quick rendering, 170
rendering, 170
showcase creation, 186
skinning, 220
spaceship modeling, 93
space warps, 269
sub-objects
overview of, 71-73
Soft Selection tool, 78
teeny car animation, 138
tutorial, 8
viewports, configuring, 38
workspaces, 316
ViewCubes, 23, 33
viewing
cameras, 159
hierarchies, 202
normals, 82
objects, 22-23
sub-objects, 72
Viewport Canvas, 116
Viewport Layout tab, 37-38
viewports, 22-23
3D space, 31-32
cameras, 159
configuring, 36-38
controls, 35-36
modifying, 161
navigating, 31
navigation controls, 27
Perspective, 163
selecting, 159
SteeringWheels, 34-35
ViewCubes, 33
views
cameras, modifying, 161
ingleting, 33
Schematic, 202, 322
track, 134
visual effects, 342-343
visual processing units, 170
VPUs (visual processing units), 170
W
waves, 269
websites
Autodesk, 7
comppanion, 7
weighting skin, 218, 223-228.
See also skinning techniques
Weight tool, 223
windows
Edit UVWs, 126
Environment and Effects, 146, 311
Group, 323
Manage Workspaces, 317
MAXScript, 354
Rendered Frame, 171, 176
Render Preview, 171
Set Key Filters, 165
workflow, scenes, 315-323
workspaces, 316-319
World-Space Modifiers, 288-297
wrecking balls, 266
WSM (World-Space Modifiers), 288-297

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X-Y-Z

X coordinates, 52, 56
XRefs (external references), 327
  objects, 339
  scenes, 339
  XRef Scenes dialog box, 338

Y coordinates, 52, 56

Z coordinates, 52, 56