

Set Construction

Written by Marc Spess

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This set was built using materials found in hobby and home improvement centers.

Set building is just as basic as building a good wire armature. Tools used to make sets are basic. Most tools used to make sets consist of saws, hammers, hot glue guns, paint brushes, and drills. If you already have some basic tools you may already have all you need to make a set like the professional set makers. One of the more advanced tools to use for making sets are hot wire foam cutters.

Designing sets are simple as well. Sets are basically tables with a minimum of three legs. The table top part is where you place your puppets, set walls, mini props, outdoor scenery, and everything else in your created environment. There are important things that an animator needs when he or she is going to animate on a set. One of these needs is the height of the set. The set must be built at a height that is comfortable for the animator to animate puppets on. A bad design would have the top of the set too low for an animator causing the animator to hunch over for many hours on end.

Other considerations that a set designer must keep in mind is getting the camera to capture certain angles within the set. So if you were to build a kitchen set, you would need to create walls that are removable in order for the director to place the camera at either side of the room for separate shots. I like to use C-Clamps to attach walls to the frame of my sets, but you can also screw the set walls down to the set base that you built, and unscrew them when necessary.

Common materials used to create sets are construction foam, wood, Dow blue foam, and sheet styrene. All of which can be found in home improvement centers, office supply stores, and hobby shops. Each of these materials is easily painted and textured using Plaster of Paris, wall joint compounds, flock "also known as static grass, or dyed wood dust" and paints.

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