How Cartoons Are Made

Have you ever wondered how cartoons are made? These days, cartoons can use one of several different types of animation.

Traditional animation is the oldest type; it is also known as 2-D animation. To make this earliest kind of cartoon, an artist draws a picture of a character. Then, he or she draws another one and another one, making each picture the tiniest bit different. Next, the artist takes photographs of each picture with a movie camera. When the pictures are played back, they look like they are moving. Originally, traditional animation was drawn by hand, for both short cartoons and longer movies. It’s easier and faster today, because many artists use a computer.

A newer and fancier type is 3-D animation, which is also done on a computer. An artist creates a three-dimensional model of a character, and then uses the computer program to make the character act out a story. This is usually the quickest method.

A third type is stop-motion animation, which uses real objects, like dolls or clay models. First, the artist takes a picture of the object. Then, he or she moves the object the smallest possible distance and takes another picture. The artist does this again and again until the object has moved to where he or she wants it. Then, the artist plays the pictures back in order, and the object seems to move on-screen.

Even with computers, it takes a long time to make a cartoon. First, artists design the characters and backgrounds. Then a writer creates a story and an artist draws it on a storyboard. Actors record the voices for each character in a recording booth. Finally, animators use the storyboard, the drawings of characters and backgrounds, and the voices of the actors to make the whole cartoon. The whole process can take a very long time.