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Official Press



Randi L. Derakhshani  
Dariush Derakhshani

Autodesk®  
**3ds Max®**  
ESSENTIALS



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# AUTODESK® 3DS MAX® 2015

*ESSENTIALS*

Randi L. Derakhshani  
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Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Webb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

CHRIS WEBB  
Associate Publisher, Sybex

*To Max Henry*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Education is an all-important* goal in life and should always be approached with eagerness and earnestness. We would like to show appreciation to the teachers who inspired us; you can always remember the teachers who touched your life, and to them we say thanks. We would also like to thank all of our students, who taught us a lot during the course of our many combined academic years.

Special thanks go to Mariann Barsolo, Kim Beaudet, Rebecca Anderson, and Pete Gaughan, our editors at Sybex who have been professional, courteous, and ever patient. Our appreciation also goes to technical editor Jon McFarland, who worked hard to make sure this book is of the utmost quality. We could not have done this revision without their help.

In addition, thanks to Dariush's mother and brother for their love and support, not to mention the life-saving babysitting services.

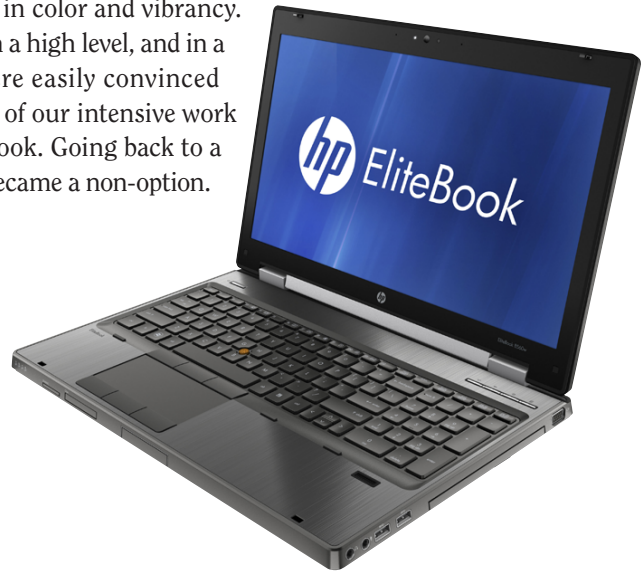
# WRITING ON THE HP ELITEBOOK

*Having a good computer* system is important with this type of work, so a special thank you goes to HP for keeping us on the cutting edge of workstation hardware by providing us with a fully decked-out EliteBook 8760w, which was our primary computer in writing this book. What struck us about the laptop was that it was not only portable, making it easy for a writing team to collaborate; it was also powerful enough to run truly demanding tasks. It takes a special machine to run graphics-intensive applications, such as the Autodesk® 3ds Max® software, and we were thrilled to write this book on the HP EliteBook.

Running an Intel i7 CPU with 16GB of RAM and an NVidia Quadro 5010M (with a whopping 6GB of memory) gave us the muscle we needed to run multiple applications alongside 3ds Max splendidly. Dual 320GB hard drives gave us plenty of space for Windows 7 Professional and its applications, and still left lots of room for renders. We opted out of the RAID option to mirror the drives (you can also stripe them for performance), but that doesn't mean we neglected our backup duties with this machine! The 8760w was easily integrated into a Gigabit network in the home office, and on fast Wi-Fi everywhere else, so we had constant access to the home network and the hundreds upon hundreds of files necessary to write this book (and all their backups!).

And since we are so very image-conscious (as in the screen!), we wondered if the images we created and captured for this book would be done justice on “just a laptop screen.” The EliteBook has a stunning 17-inch, 30-bit IPS display panel that put those questions to rest very quickly! The HP EliteBook screen is no less than professionally accurate and calibrated for optimum image clarity and correct color. Barely a handful of high-end mobile workstations could even come close to meeting the demands image professionals put on their gear. But this notebook HP DreamColor display is remarkable—there’s just no other way to put it—going as far as besting any of our desktop screens in color and vibrancy.

With performance at such a high level, and in a nice portable form, we were easily convinced that we should perform all of our intensive work for this book on the EliteBook. Going back to a desk-bound tower quickly became a non-option. Thanks, HP!



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Randi L. Derakhshani is* an Autodesk-Certified Instructor. She began working with computer graphics in 1992 and was hired by her instructor to work at Sony Pictures Imageworks, where she developed her skills with the Autodesk® 3ds Max® program and Shake, among many other programs. A teacher since 1999, Randi enjoys sharing her wisdom with young talent and watching them develop. Currently, she teaches a wide range of classes, from Autodesk 3ds Max, Autodesk® Maya®, and ZBrush to compositing with The Foundry's Nuke. Juggling her teaching activities with caring for a little boy makes Randi a pretty busy lady.

*Dariusz Derakhshani is an* Autodesk-Certified Instructor and Certified Evaluator, a visual-effects supervisor, a writer, and an educator in Los Angeles, California, as well as Randi's husband. Dariusz used Autodesk® AutoCAD® software in his architectural days and migrated to using 3D programs when his firm's principal architects needed to visualize architectural designs in 3D on the computer. Dariusz started using Alias PowerAnimator version 6 when he enrolled in USC Film School's animation program, and he has been using Alias/Autodesk animation software for the past 14 years. He received an MFA in film, video, and computer animation from the USC Film School in 1997. He also holds a BA in architecture and theater from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. He worked at a New Jersey architectural firm before moving to Los Angeles for film school. He has worked on feature films, music videos, and countless commercials as a 3D animator, as a CG/VFX supervisor, and sometimes as a compositor. Dariusz also serves as an editor, and is on the advisory board of *HDRI 3D*, a professional computer graphics magazine from DMG Publishing.



# CONTENTS AT A GLANCE

	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xix</i>
CHAPTER 1	The 3ds Max Interface	1
CHAPTER 2	Your First 3ds Max Project	19
CHAPTER 3	Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part I	55
CHAPTER 4	Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part II	75
CHAPTER 5	Introduction to Animation	105
CHAPTER 6	Animation Principles	125
CHAPTER 7	Character Modeling Part I	137
CHAPTER 8	Character Modeling Part II	165
CHAPTER 9	Introduction to Materials	195
CHAPTER 10	Textures and UV Workflow: The Alien	219
CHAPTER 11	Character Studio: Rigging	243
CHAPTER 12	Character Studio: Animation	265
CHAPTER 13	Introduction to Lighting: Interior Lighting	279
CHAPTER 14	3ds Max Rendering	303
CHAPTER 15	mental ray	329
APPENDIX A	Autodesk 3ds Max Certification	355
	<i>Index</i>	<i>359</i>



# CONTENTS

*Introduction*

*xix*

---

## **CHAPTER 1      The 3ds Max Interface      1**

---

Navigate the Workspace .....	1
User Interface Elements.....	2
Viewports .....	4
ViewCube .....	6
Mouse Buttons .....	7
Quad Menus .....	8
Display of Objects in a Viewport .....	9
Viewport Navigation.....	10
Transforming Objects Using Gizmos.....	11
Graphite Modeling Tools Set .....	13
Command Panel .....	14
Object Parameters and Values.....	15
Modifier Stack .....	15
Objects and Sub-objects .....	16
Time Slider and Track Bar .....	16
File Management .....	16
Setting a Project.....	17
Version Up! .....	18

---

## **CHAPTER 2      Your First 3ds Max Project      19**

---

Set Up a Project Workflow .....	19
Exercise 2.1: How to Set a Project.....	20
The Secret to Accurate Modeling: Reference Material! .....	20
Exercise 2.2: Setting Up the Modeling Reference.....	21
Building a Simple Model.....	24
Exercise 2.3: Start with a Primitive .....	24
Exercise 2.4: Modeling in Sub-Object Mode .....	25
Exercise 2.5: Bring on the Bevel .....	28
Exercise 2.6: Chamfer Time.....	31

Creating Details Using Splines . . . . .	36
Exercise 2.7: Building the Handle . . . . .	37
Lathing, Extruding, and Beveling to Create 3D from 2D . . . . .	43
Exercise 2.8: Lathe to Make a Whole . . . . .	43
Exercise 2.9: Creating the Clock Numbers and Hands . . . . .	46
Bringing It All Together . . . . .	51
Exercise 2.10: Using Merge . . . . .	51

---

### **CHAPTER 3      Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part I      55**

Setting Up the Scene . . . . .	56
Exercise 3.1: Setting Up Units . . . . .	56
Exercise 3.2: Importing a CAD Drawing . . . . .	57
Building the Room . . . . .	59
Exercise 3.3: Creating the Walls . . . . .	59
Exercise 3.4: Creating the Doors . . . . .	62
Exercise 3.5: Creating the Window . . . . .	65
Exercise 3.6: Adding a Floor and a Ceiling . . . . .	66
Adding Special Details to the Room . . . . .	68
Exercise 3.7: Creating Baseboard Moldings . . . . .	69

---

### **CHAPTER 4      Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part II      75**

Model the Couch . . . . .	75
Exercise 4.1: Blocking Out the Couch Model . . . . .	76
Exercise 4.2: Using NURMS to Add Softness . . . . .	78
Exercise 4.3: Building Detail on the Couch Model . . . . .	80
Exercise 4.4: Creating the Chaise Lounge . . . . .	83
Exercise 4.5: Modeling the Couch Feet . . . . .	85
Modeling the Lounge Chair . . . . .	87
Exercise 4.6: Creating Image Planes . . . . .	87
Exercise 4.7: Adding the Images . . . . .	88
Exercise 4.8: Building the Splines for the Chair Frame . . . . .	89
Exercise 4.9: Building the Chair Cushion . . . . .	94
Exercise 4.10: Creating the Chair's Base . . . . .	97
Bringing It All Together . . . . .	101

<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>Introduction to Animation</b>	<b>105</b>
	Animating the Ball . . . . .	106
	Exercise 5.1: Setting Keyframes . . . . .	106
	Exercise 5.2: Copying Keyframes . . . . .	107
	Exercise 5.3: Using the Track View - Curve Editor . . . . .	108
	Reading Animation Curves . . . . .	111
	Refining the Animation . . . . .	113
	Exercise 5.4: Editing Animation Curves . . . . .	114
	Exercise 5.5: Squash and Stretch . . . . .	116
	Exercise 5.6: Setting the Timing . . . . .	117
	Exercise 5.7: Moving the Ball Forward . . . . .	119
	Exercise 5.8: Using the XForm Modifier . . . . .	121
	Exercise 5.9: Animating the XForm Modifier . . . . .	122
	Exercise 5.10: Correcting Rotation . . . . .	123
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>Animation Principles</b>	<b>125</b>
	Anticipation and Momentum in Knife Throwing . . . . .	125
	Exercise 6.1: Blocking Out the Animation . . . . .	125
	Exercise 6.2: Trajectories . . . . .	128
	Exercise 6.3: Adding Rotation . . . . .	129
	Exercise 6.4: Adding Anticipation . . . . .	131
	Exercise 6.5: Following Through . . . . .	133
	Exercise 6.6: Transferring Momentum to the Target . . . . .	134
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>Character Modeling Part I</b>	<b>137</b>
	Setting Up the Scene . . . . .	137
	Exercise 7.1: Creating the Image Planes . . . . .	138
	Exercise 7.2: Adding the Images to the Planes . . . . .	139
	Blocking Out the Alien Model . . . . .	140
	Exercise 7.3: Forming the Torso . . . . .	140
	Exercise 7.4: Creating Symmetry . . . . .	144
	Exercise 7.5: Blocking Out the Arms . . . . .	145
	Exercise 7.6: Blocking Out the Leg . . . . .	149
	Exercise 7.7: Refining the Body . . . . .	153
	Exercise 7.8: Building the Neck . . . . .	160

<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>Character Modeling Part II</b>	<b>165</b>
	Creating the Alien Head . . . . .	165
	Exercise 8.1: Blocking Out the Head . . . . .	165
	Exercise 8.2: Building the Nose . . . . .	167
	Building the Alien Hand . . . . .	173
	Exercise 8.3: Building the Palm of the Hand . . . . .	173
	Exercise 8.4: Beveling the Fingers . . . . .	174
	Building the Foot . . . . .	179
	Exercise 8.5: Blocking Out the Foot . . . . .	179
	Exercise 8.6: Beveling the Toes . . . . .	181
	Completing the Alien . . . . .	183
	Exercise 8.7: Attaching to the Body . . . . .	183
	Exercise 8.8: Using Symmetry . . . . .	188
	Exercise 8.9: Finishing the Head . . . . .	188
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	<b>Introduction to Materials</b>	<b>195</b>
	Navigate the Slate Material Editor . . . . .	195
	Identify the Standard Material . . . . .	197
	Standard Materials . . . . .	197
	Identify the mental ray Material . . . . .	198
	Identifying Shaders . . . . .	198
	Build Materials for the Couch . . . . .	199
	Exercise 9.1: Creating a Standard Material . . . . .	199
	Exercise 9.2: Applying the Material to the Couch . . . . .	200
	Exercise 9.3: Adding a Bitmap . . . . .	202
	Exercise 9.4: Mapping Coordinates . . . . .	204
	Exercise 9.5: Adding Materials to the Feet . . . . .	206
	Exercise 9.6: Applying a Bump Map . . . . .	207
	Build Materials for the Lounge Chair . . . . .	208
	Exercise 9.7: Creating a Leather Material for the Chair Cushion . . . . .	209
	Exercise 9.8: Creating a Reflective Material . . . . .	210
	Build Materials for the Window . . . . .	213
	Exercise 9.9: Creating a Multi/Sub-Object Material . . . . .	213

<b>CHAPTER 10</b>	<b>Textures and UV Workflow: The Alien</b>	<b>219</b>
	Define UVs on the Alien's Body . . . . .	220
	Exercise 10.1: Seaming the Alien's Body . . . . .	220
	Unwrap UVs on the Alien's Body . . . . .	226
	Exercise 10.2: Unwrapping the Alien's Arm . . . . .	226
	Exercise 10.3: Unwrapping the Alien's Body . . . . .	230
	Exercise 10.4: Arranging the Alien's UVs . . . . .	231
	Build the Material and Apply It to the Alien . . . . .	235
	Exercise 10.5: Applying the Color Map . . . . .	236
	Exercise 10.6: Applying the Bump Map . . . . .	237
	Exercise 10.7: Applying the Specular Map . . . . .	239
<b>CHAPTER 11</b>	<b>Character Studio: Rigging</b>	<b>243</b>
	Character Studio Workflow . . . . .	243
	General Workflow . . . . .	244
	Associating a Biped with the Alien Model . . . . .	245
	Exercise 11.1: Creating and Modifying the Biped . . . . .	246
	Exercise 11.2: Adjusting the Torso and Arms . . . . .	252
	Exercise 11.3: Adjusting the Neck and Head . . . . .	254
	Skinning the Alien Model . . . . .	255
	Exercise 11.4: Applying the Skin Modifier . . . . .	255
	Exercise 11.5: Testing the Model . . . . .	256
	Exercise 11.6: Tweaking the Skin Modifier . . . . .	258
	Exercise 11.7: Testing the Alien Model Rig . . . . .	261
	Exercise 11.8: Controlling the View . . . . .	263
<b>CHAPTER 12</b>	<b>Character Studio: Animation</b>	<b>265</b>
	Animating the Alien . . . . .	265
	Exercise 12.1: Adding a Run-and-Jump Sequence . . . . .	266
	Freeform Animation . . . . .	267
	Exercise 12.2: Moving the Head . . . . .	268
	Exercise 12.3: Moving the Arms . . . . .	270
	Exercise 12.4: Completing the Motion Sequence . . . . .	272
	Modifying Animation in the Dope Sheet . . . . .	272
	Exercise 12.5: Adding Footsteps Manually . . . . .	273
	Exercise 10.6: Using the Dope Sheet . . . . .	274

<b>CHAPTER 13</b>	<b>Introduction to Lighting: Interior Lighting</b>	<b>279</b>
	Recognizing 3ds Max Lights . . . . .	279
	Standard Lights . . . . .	280
	Target Spotlight . . . . .	280
	Target Direct Light . . . . .	282
	Free Spot or Free Direct Light . . . . .	283
	Omni Light . . . . .	284
	Lighting a Still Life . . . . .	285
	Exercise 13.1: Basic Light Setup . . . . .	286
	Exercise 13.2: Adding Shadows . . . . .	289
	Exercise 13.3: Adding a Fill Light . . . . .	290
	Exercise 13.4: Attenuation of the Fill Light . . . . .	292
	Selecting a Shadow Type . . . . .	294
	Atmospherics and Effects . . . . .	296
	Exercise 13.5: Creating a Volumetric Light . . . . .	296
	Volume Light Parameters . . . . .	300
	The Light Lister . . . . .	301
<b>CHAPTER 14</b>	<b>3ds Max Rendering</b>	<b>303</b>
	Navigate the Render Setup Dialog . . . . .	303
	Common Tab . . . . .	304
	Choosing a Filename . . . . .	305
	Rendered Frame Window . . . . .	306
	Render Processing . . . . .	306
	Assign Renderer . . . . .	307
	Render a Scene . . . . .	308
	Exercise 14.1: Rendering the Bouncing Ball . . . . .	308
	Work with Cameras . . . . .	309
	Exercise 14.2: Creating a Camera . . . . .	311
	Exercise 14.3: Animating a Camera . . . . .	312
	Exercise 14.4: Safe Frames . . . . .	314
	Raytraced Reflections and Refractions . . . . .	315
	Exercise 14.5: Raytrace Material . . . . .	316
	Exercise 14.6: Raytrace Mapping . . . . .	318
	Exercise 14.7: Refractions Using the Raytrace Material . . . . .	319
	Exercise 14.8: Refractions Using Raytrace Mapping . . . . .	322

Render the Interior and Furniture . . . . .	324
Exercise 14.9: Adding Raytraced Reflections . . . . .	324
Exercise 14.10: Outputting the Render . . . . .	325

---

## **CHAPTER 15**      **mental ray** **329**

Navigate the mental ray Renderer . . . . .	329
Exercise 15.1: Enabling the mental ray Renderer . . . . .	329
mental ray Sampling Quality . . . . .	330
Navigate the Final Gather Parameters . . . . .	332
Basic Group . . . . .	333
Advanced Group . . . . .	335
The mental ray Rendered Frame Window . . . . .	335
Navigate mental ray Materials . . . . .	336
Exercise 15.2: Setting Up the Material Editor . . . . .	336
Exercise 15.3: Using Arch & Design Material Templates . . . . .	338
Exercise 15.4: Creating Arch & Design Materials . . . . .	341
Exercise 15.5: Using the Multi/Sub-Object Material and Arch & Design . . . . .	342
Use Photometric Lights with mental ray . . . . .	344
Exercise 15.6: Using Photometric Lights in mental ray Renderings . . . . .	344
Use the Daylight System . . . . .	350
Exercise 15.7: Using the Daylight System in mental ray Renderings . . . . .	350

---

## **APPENDIX A**      **Autodesk 3ds Max Certification** **355**

<i>Index</i> . . . . .	359
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# INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to Autodesk® 3ds Max® 2015 Essentials.* The world of computer-generated (CG) imagery is fun and ever changing. Whether you are new to CG in general or are a CG veteran new to 3ds Max designing, you'll find this book the perfect primer. It introduces you to the Autodesk 3ds Max software and shows how you can work with the program to create your art, whether it is animated or static in design.

This book exposes you to all facets of 3ds Max by introducing and plainly explaining its tools and functions to help you understand how the program operates—but it does not stop there. This book also explains the use of the tools and the ever-critical concepts behind the tools. You'll find hands-on examples and tutorials that give you firsthand experience with the toolsets. Working through them will develop your skills and the conceptual knowledge that will carry you to further study with confidence. These tutorials expose you to various ways to accomplish tasks with this intricate and comprehensive artistic tool. These chapters should give you the confidence you need to venture deeper into the feature set in 3ds Max, either on your own or by using any of the software's other learning tools and books as a guide.

Learning to use a powerful tool can be frustrating. You need to remember to pace yourself. The major complaints CG book readers have are that the pace is too fast and that the steps are too complicated or overwhelming. Addressing those complaints is a tough nut to crack, to be sure. No two readers are the same. However, this book offers the opportunity to run things at your own pace. The exercises and steps may seem confusing at times, but keep in mind that the more you try and the more you fail at some attempts, the more you will learn how to operate the 3ds Max engine. Experience is king when learning the workflow necessary for *any* software program, and with experience comes failure and aggravation. But try and try again. You will find that further attempts will always be easier and more fruitful.

Above all, however, this book aims to inspire you to use the 3ds Max program as a creative tool to achieve and explore your own artistic vision.

## Who Should Read This Book

Anyone who is interested in learning to use the 3ds Max tools should start with this book.

If you are an educator, you will find a solid foundation on which to build a new course. You can also treat the book as a source of raw materials that you can adapt to fit an existing curriculum. Written in an open-ended style, *Autodesk 3ds Max 2015 Essentials* contains several self-help tutorials for home study as well as plenty of material to fit into any class.

## What You Will Learn

You will learn how to work in CG with Autodesk 3ds Max 2015. The important thing to keep in mind, however, is that this book is merely the beginning of your CG education. With the confidence you will gain from the exercises in this book, and the peace of mind you can have by using this book as a reference, you can go on to create your own increasingly complex CG projects.

## What You Need

Hardware changes constantly and evolves faster than publications can keep up. Having a good solid machine is important to production, although simple home computers will be able to run the 3ds Max software quite well. Any laptop (with discrete graphics, not a netbook) or desktop PC running Windows XP Professional, Windows 7, or Windows 8 (32- or 64-bit) with at least 2GB of RAM and an Intel Pentium Core 2 Duo/Quad or AMD Phenom or higher processor will work. Of course, having a good video card will help; you can use any hardware-accelerated OpenGL or Direct3D video card. Your computer system should have at least a 2.4 GHz Core 2 or i5/i7 processor with 2GB of RAM, a few GBs of hard-drive space available, and a GeForce FX or ATI Radeon video card. Professionals may want to opt for workstation graphics cards, such as the ATI FirePro or the Quadro FX series of cards. The following systems would be good ones to use:

- ▶ Intel i7, 4GB RAM, Quadro FX 2000, 400GB 7200 RPM hard disk
- ▶ AMD Phenom II, 4GB RAM, ATI FirePro V5700, 400GB hard disk

You can check the list of system requirements at the following website: [www.autodesk.com/3dsmax](http://www.autodesk.com/3dsmax).

## FREE AUTODESK SOFTWARE FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

The Autodesk Education Community is an online resource with more than five million members that enables educators and students to download—for free (see website for terms and conditions)—the same software used by professionals worldwide. You can also access additional tools and materials to help you design, visualize, and simulate ideas. Connect with other learners to stay current with the latest industry trends and get the most out of your designs. Get started today at [www.autodesk.com/joinedu](http://www.autodesk.com/joinedu).

## What Is Covered in This Book

*Autodesk 3ds Max 2015 Essentials* is organized to provide you with a quick and essential experience with 3ds Max to allow you to begin a fruitful education in the world of computer graphics.

**Chapter 1, “The 3ds Max Interface,”** begins with an introduction to the interface for 3ds Max 2015 to get you up and running quickly.

**Chapter 2, “Your First 3ds Max Project,”** is an introduction to modeling concepts and workflows in general. It shows you how to model using 3ds Max tools with polygonal meshes and modifiers to create a retro alarm clock.

**Chapter 3, “Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part I,”** takes your modeling lesson from Chapter 2 a step further by showing you how to use some of the Architecture Engineering and Construction (AEC) tools to build an interior space using a room from an image.

**Chapter 4, “Modeling in 3ds Max: Architectural Model Part II,”** continues with the interior space from Chapter 3 by adding some furniture. The main focus of this chapter is the Graphite Modeling Tools tab and its many tools.

**Chapter 5, “Introduction to Animation,”** teaches you the basics of 3ds Max animation techniques and workflow by animating a bouncing ball. You will also learn how to use the Track View - Curve Editor to time, edit, and finesse your animation.

**Chapter 6, “Animation Principles,”** rounds out your animation experience by showing the animation concepts of weight, follow-through, and anticipation when you animate a knife thrown at a target.

**Chapter 7, “Character Poly Modeling Part I,”** introduces you to the creation of polygon mesh character model of an alien. In this chapter, you begin by blocking out the primary parts of the body.

**Chapter 8, “Character Poly Modeling: Part II,”** continues the alien model, focusing on using the Editable Poly toolset. You will finish the body details, head, hands, and feet.

**Chapter 9, “Introduction to Materials,”** shows you how to assign textures and materials to your models. You will learn to texture the couch, chair, and window from Chapter 4 as you learn the basics of working with 3ds Max materials and UVW mapping.

**Chapter 10, “Textures and UV Workflow: The Alien,”** furthers your understanding of materials and textures, and introduces UV workflows in preparing and texturing the alien.

**Chapter 11, “Character Studio: Rigging,”** covers the basics of Character Studio in creating a biped system and associating the biped rig to the alien model.

**Chapter 12, “Character Studio: Animation,”** expands on Chapter 11 to show you how to use Character Studio to create and edit a walk cycle using the alien model.

**Chapter 13, “Introduction to Lighting: Interior Lighting,”** begins by showing you how to light a 3D scene with the three-point lighting system. It then shows you how to use the tools to create and edit 3ds Max lights for illumination, shadows, and special lighting effects. You will light the furniture to which you added materials in Chapter 9.

**Chapter 14, “3ds Max Rendering,”** explains how to create image files from your 3ds Max scene and how to achieve the best look for your animation by using proper cameras and rendering settings when you render the interior scene.

**Chapter 15, “mental ray,”** shows you how to render with mental ray. Using Final Gather, you will learn how to use indirect lighting.

The companion web page to this book at [www.sybex.com/go/3dsmax2015essentials](http://www.sybex.com/go/3dsmax2015essentials) provides all the sample images, movies, and files that you will need to work through the projects in *Autodesk 3ds Max 2015 Essentials*.



**NOTE** This book is a great primer for Autodesk 3ds Max. If you're interested in taking the Autodesk Certification exams for 3ds Max, go to [www.autodesk.com/certification](http://www.autodesk.com/certification) for information and resources.

## The Essentials Series

The Essentials series from Sybex provides outstanding instruction for readers who are just beginning to develop their professional skills. Every Essentials book includes these features:

- ▶ Skill-based instruction with chapters organized around projects rather than abstract concepts or subjects
- ▶ Downloadable tutorial files showing the start and end state of each exercise
- ▶ Digital files (via download) so you can work through the project tutorials yourself. Please check the book's web page at [www.sybex.com/go/3dsmax2015essentials](http://www.sybex.com/go/3dsmax2015essentials) for these companion downloads.

You can contact the authors through Wiley or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/3dsMaxEssentials](http://www.facebook.com/3dsMaxEssentials).



# The 3ds Max Interface

*The Autodesk® 3ds Max®* software interface is where you view and work with your scene. This chapter explains its basic operations and tools. You can use this chapter as a reference as you work through the rest of this book, although the following chapters and their exercises will orient you to the 3ds Max user interface (UI) quickly. It's important to be in front of your computer when you read this chapter so you can try out techniques as we discuss them.

**In this chapter, you will learn to:**

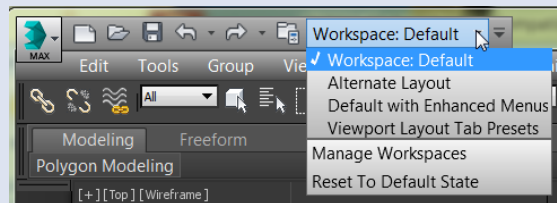
- ▶ Navigate the workspace
- ▶ Transform objects using gizmos
- ▶ Model with the Graphite Modeling Tools set
- ▶ Manage animation with the time slider and track bar

## Navigate the Workspace

Certification  
Objective

The following sections present a brief rundown of what you need to know about the 3ds Max user interface and how to navigate in the 3D workspace.

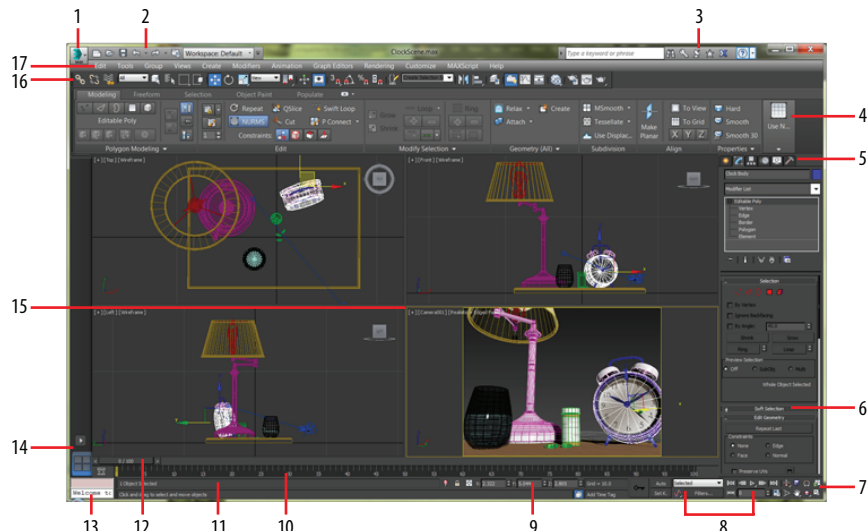
When you first open the program, you will see the Default workspace (Figure 1.1). The Workspace feature controls the interface, and with this menu you can define as many different workspaces as you want. You can then switch among them from the drop-down list on the Quick Access toolbar or the Current Workspaces list on the Manage Workspaces dialog.



**FIGURE 1.1** Workspace drop-down menu

## User Interface Elements

Figure 1.2 shows the 3ds Max UI. (See Table 1.1 for explanations of the UI elements.) At the top left of the application window is an icon called the Application button (🌐); clicking it opens the Application menu, which provides access to many file operations. Also running along the top is the Quick Access toolbar, which provides access to common commands, and the InfoCenter, which offers access to many product-related information sources. Some of the most important commands in the Quick Access toolbar are file management commands such as Save File and Open File. If you do something and then wish you hadn't, you can click the Undo Scene Operation button (↶) or press Ctrl+Z. To redo a command or action that you just undid, click the Redo Scene Operation button (↷) or press Ctrl+Y.



**FIGURE 1.2** The 3ds Max interface elements

**TABLE 1.1** The 3ds Max interface elements\*

Element	Function	
1	Application button	Opens the Application menu, which provides file management commands.
2	Quick Access toolbar	Provides some of the most commonly used file management commands as well as Undo Scene Operation and Redo Scene Operation.

(Continues)

TABLE 1.1 (Continued)


Element	Function	
3	InfoCenter	Provides access to 3ds Max product-related information.
4	The ribbon	Provides access to a wide range of tools to make building and editing models in 3ds Max fast and easy. In Figure 1.2, the ribbon is shown in a horizontal orientation but can be switched to vertical using the Workspace drop-down menu shown in Figure 1.1.
5	Command panel tabs	Where all the editing of parameters occurs; provides access to many functions and creation options; divided into tabs that access different panels, such as Create panel, Modify panel, etc.
6	Rollout	A section of the command panel that can expand to show a listing of parameters or collapse to just its heading name.
7	Viewport navigation controls	Icons that control the display and navigation of the viewports; icons may change depending on the active viewport.
8	Animation Time/Keying controls	Controls for animation keyframing and animation playback.
9	Coordinate display area	Allows you to enter transformation values.
10	Track bar	Provides a timeline showing the frame numbers; select an object to view its animation keys on the track bar.
11	Prompt line and status bar controls	Prompt and status information about your scene and the active command.
12	Time slider	Shows the current and total frames and allows for changing the current frame by moving (or scrubbing) the time bar.

(Continues)

**TABLE 1.1** (Continued)

Element	Function	
13	MAXScript Mini Listener	A command-prompt window for the MAXScript programming language. The window is useful for performing interactive work and developing small code fragments.
14	Viewport Layout tab bar	This is an easy-access tab for quickly changing viewport layouts. Preset layouts can be added to the menu on the tab bar.
15	Viewports	You can choose different views to display in these four viewports as well as different layouts from the viewport label menus.
16	Main toolbar	Provides quick access to tools and dialog boxes for many of the most common tasks.
17	Menu bar	Provides access to commands grouped by category.

\*The numerals in the first column refer to labels in Figure 1.2.

Just below the Quick Access toolbar is the menu bar, which runs across the top of the interface. The menus give you access to a ton of commands—from basic scene operations, such as Duplicate and Group under the Edit menu, to advanced tools such as those found under the Modifiers menu. Immediately below the menu bar is the main toolbar. It contains several icons for functions, such as the three transform tools: Select And Move, Select And Rotate, and Select And Uniform Scale (.

When you first open 3ds Max, the workspace has many UI elements. Each is designed to help you work with your models, access tools, and edit object parameters.

## Viewports

You'll be doing most of your work in the viewports. These windows represent 3D space using a system based on Cartesian coordinates. That is a fancy way of saying “space on X, Y, and Z axes.”