



## Machinima Tutorial

### Introduction

Machinima (muh-sheen-eh-mah): the art of filmmaking within a virtual environment. It combines film production techniques, such as directing and cinematography, inside a virtual space (like a video game), where the filmmaker has real-time control over the characters, environments, and actions within an interactive virtual space.

Have you ever dreamt of making movies? Coming up with a brilliant story, getting it all set up, visualizing the look and feel, editing clips together, scoring it, and then showing it off to others?

The Sims™ 2 gives you the chance to explore your inner director, but there are a few tricks that you might want to know first that will help out along the way.

### Pre-Production

#### Setting the Stage

The first thing you might consider is creating a set vs. building an entire house. This has a few advantages. You can make sure that walls and other objects don't get in the way of your shot. It cuts down on your polygon count and you can get the best out of the default lighting in game.

If you choose a pre-created house there are some ways to make this work for you, even if there is already a family of Sims living there. First create the Sims for your movie and move them into an empty lot. Then cheat their money up (check out how in the Cheat section) and move them back into the Family Bin. Then re-enter the pre-created house and kill off the Sims in that house so that their possessions will remain (the fastest way to kill off Sims is to put them all in the pool and remove the ladder!). Save the lot and move the new Sims you created into that house. You might now consider modifying the house for your shot in any way necessary, including removing walls, retexturing walls, floors, etc.

The Neighborhood can also be your stage. Create houses, parks, terrain and effects that set the right tone for the landscape of your movie.

#### The Cast

When you are creating your Sims - think about colors and contrast. You want to be sure that your main characters stand out in the scenes. Picking out bright outfits and making striking features is a great place to start.



Try using Body Shop to create some really unique skins and clothes, or use the in game Create-A-Sim to make your actors.

The Sims 2 Body Shop is a tool that allows you to create new Sims for your game or try out new items that you make yourself! It is automatically installed on your computer when you install The Sims 2 game! You can find it on your START menu:

Click on START -> Programs -> EA Games -> The Sims 2 -> The Sims 2 Body Shop

## Cinematography

### Camera Positions

Don't rely on the default camera positioning; while this angle is great for game play, it's not so interesting for filmmaking within The Sims 2. Experiment with Cameraman mode by hitting the Tab key. You'll get more dramatic angles that help you tell your story and really pull in your audience.

Explore the Field of Vision, zoom, and pitch controls with these handy key commands:

(+) / (-) and z / x - these control the Field of Vision  
Mouse movement - controls the pitch (the tilt of the camera)  
The scroll button on the mouse - controls the level of zoom

And here are some other handy tricks:



Tracking - right click on the Sim's thumbnail in the UI to have the camera follow them. This gives a great follow-cam action.

Centering - right click on an object or Sim to center the camera on it. You can then rotate around the object or move towards it to get a very cool effect.

Explore the boundaries of Cameraman mode, go to the edges of the game and get inside objects; use your creativity to find new angles.



When you find a favorite camera angle for your shot, make sure you save it. You can save up to six different camera positions by using the control key and pressing numbers [4-9]. This can help you manipulate a scene as needed without losing that spectacular angle you found. You may also want to explore the motion between the different camera positions. This can help you achieve the right sense of motion for your shot.

### List of useful camera controls

**Tab key** - enable Cameraman mode

In Cameraman mode:

**(+) / (-) and z / x** - controls the Field of Vision

**Mouse movement** - controls the pitch (the tilt of the camera)

**Scroll button on the mouse** - controls the level of zoom

**A/S/D/W and the arrow keys** - move the camera forwards, backwards, right, and left

**E/Q** - move the camera vertically up and down

### **Other useful commands**

**V** - start/stop the video recording  
**Control [4-9]** - save camera angles  
**< >** - rotate the camera around a center point  
**P** - pauses the game

## **Setting the Scene**

Think of the feeling you want your movie to have. Is it funny, quirky, happy, or sad? Try and match the scenery and the objects to fit the story you want to tell.

Use colors that will not distract your viewer's eyes from your main characters and create compositions that are balanced in the camera angles you choose.

### **Lighting**

In movies, lighting can make a huge statement, so don't neglect this when you are setting up your scenes. Consider using dramatic lighting, and lighting from different angles (below, behind, from the sides) to draw attention, to set the mood, or to cast interesting shadows.



Don't be afraid to hide lots of different lights off camera. Play around with the different types of lights and the kind of light they can cast on your scenes. Experiment with ceiling vs. floor vs. table lamps, or combine all three.

If you are making your movie on a budget - this is not the place to conserve funds!

## **Quality, Size, and Speed**

### **Movie Settings**

Before you begin recording be sure you explore the camera options available in the Camera UI Options panel. Find the right combination of quality, file size, and effect on game speed when you are capturing.

You may want to run a few tests with different settings to find out what works best for you in your scene.

Remember - small movies, on a lower quality setting, with real-time compression and without audio will certainly be less taxing on your PC while you record.

### **Compression**

If you have plenty of hard drive space - go for high quality uncompressed movies. They will look awesome!

If you need to conserve space - choose low or medium quality, and/or small or medium size movies.

## **Lights, Camera, Action!!!**

## Recording

Record more footage than you think you need. You never know what might be captured on film that you hadn't planned on filming. Sometimes this makes the best footage and the most interesting shots.

If you are conserving disk space, try writing up or drawing out a story board beforehand. This will give you a good sense of the flow of your movie ahead of time, and will limit the amount of extra footage you have to capture.

Consider the length of your shots and plan accordingly. Set the "cutoff timer" in the UI to the minimum amount of time you think you will need. This will avoid mistakenly filming until you're dangerously low on disc space.



Practice, practice, practice! Try out your shots a few times before you film them. This will help prepare you for anything unexpected, and will help you plan out your camera angles more effectively.

Always be ready to press P. Sometimes great moments happen in the game. The pause key can be your best-friend. It will allow you to get everything set up and you will be ready to record that spectacular moment!

## A Little Cheating and a Little Imagination

Remember, interactions may mean one thing in the game, but they can be interpreted very differently in your film depending on your imagination.

Other cheats that might be helpful:

**moveobjects [on/off]** - allows you to move everything and overlap objects, you can even move around Sims!

**slowmotion [0-10]** - 0 is normal speed, and time will become slower and slower as you approach 10.

**motherlode** – grants you extra Simoleons!

## Editing

### Making the magic come alive

Free movie editors can be downloaded from the web and can work really well. There are also many great commercial editing products available, depending on your budget.

Most editing software offers effects like fades, dissolve and warps. Take advantage of any transitions and effects that come with your editing software to enhance your movie. And don't forget to add titles so you can get credit for your masterpiece!

Think about timing and speed when you make cuts. Use motion to your advantage, allow one scenes movement to lead into the next.

There are other tutorials online that offer the basics of film editing or you can take a class, so spend some time learning about film editing and your audience will enjoy the quality of your work even more.

## **Music/Audio**

### **The importance of sound**

Sometimes sounds make things look better! Sound can fill in many blanks in our minds and imaginations, and sometimes we think we see things simply because we are hearing them. So - don't underestimate the importance of adding a quality and well timed soundtrack to your movies. Just be sure any voice-overs, music, or other sound effects you use are your own, original creations.

Create a song, or use one of the songs in game. Browse the web for free sound effects to enhance your story. You can really set the mood of your movies through your music choices.

## **Share Your Art!**

### **Sharing is good.**

OK. Your video is polished and you're ready to share your creation with the world. Your next step will be encoding your video so that the file size, so it is small enough to upload to the web (standard size is under 100mb). To do this, export/save your video onto your hard drive either as an .avi, .mpg, .mov, or .wmv file. To achieve a 100mb size, you may need to adjust the video's "quality" setting until your export is just under 100mb.

### **How do I upload my video for the world to see?**

To upload your video to sites, there are many video hosting sites online which will accept your video upload(s). Often these sites will require you to register and create an account. Once registered, follow the instructions offered on the site to upload your video. Usually, these instructions will require you to click "upload" and then choose your video file from your hard drive, and give it a title, description, tag, and category. If the site requires it, you will also want to be sure to tag your video upload as "public" so that the entire world can share in your sweet gaming goodness.

EA's content is copyrighted. We reserve all rights. You may make videos using our game footage for your personal non-commercial enjoyment only. You may not combine our content with other works or use our assets for any commercial purpose. EA does not authorize you to use our licensors' or any third party content or trademarks to make videos. Don't take other people's content without permission. We also cannot give you permission to use any of our trademarks on your videos. Only EA publishes EA or EA SPORTS videos.