

# NESTING

by [Joel Brinkerhoff](#)

Everyone has a different approach to preparing a shot in stop motion and I thought I would share what I learned from watching master animator Tony Merrithew. I don't know if he called it 'nesting' or how I came to associate that name with it but it seems appropriate. Now this has nothing to do with performance, animation, character building, or any of the fun stuff, but it is something you may find very helpful.

At Will Vinton Studio we had stage crews who lit and set up cameras so many times we worked with them to get our sets the way we wanted or modified the sets after everything was in place. We used video lunchboxes, (frame-grabbers), along with monitors and boxes that would trigger 16 or 35mm cameras all loaded onto a rolling cart.

Most people worked standing up with everything left on the cart. Because the frame-grabber monitor was left on the cart animators would have to look over their shoulder while manipulating the puppet and walk back to the cart to toggle the grabber. Here is where Tony's method really made a difference.

Tony built a console around himself that allowed him to reach almost everything from a seated position. First thing he would do is placing the grabber monitor where he could see it without turning his head. This usually meant putting it near the puppet and behind or beside the set. It may require blocking any spill light from the monitor onto the set with a piece of foam core or a black flag. Next he would have the grabber, camera trigger and his tools close enough to reach from a sitting position.

This allowed him to reach into the set, animate and see the result all without craning his neck or walking back and forth all day. This method seems like a no brainier but it took Tony to make me see the light.