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## ToonBoom ToonBoom Studio

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- **Additional pricing info:** \$349 Web download, \$99 with student discount
- **Product description:** 2D animation
- **Mac OS supported:** OS 10.0.1 update or later
- **PC OS supported:** Windows 98, Me, 2000
- **Editors' Rating (10 is best): 8.2**
- **Average user rating: 9**
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### Full Review

From [ZDNet Reviews](#) / September 5, 2001, By Rick Stevens

### Award



With ToonBoom Studio 1.0, ToonBoom Technologies introduces an impressively complete package for creating two-dimensional animation with sound for Internet distribution. Its tools and concepts will be most familiar to traditional cel animators, but the program's most attractive feature is its ability to simulate depth perspective and motion automatically. ToonBoom works fine on most versions of Windows, but its Mac support is limited to version 10.0.1 or later.

ToonBoom divides animation into two creative areas, drawing and scene planning. Since it outputs animations for the Web, the program's drawing features emphasize small file size. You can use its Bezier vector tools with a mouse or graphics tablet to create shapes that you can then stroke and fill. The software supports contoured brush strokes, but not pen shapes or angles. Its onion-skinning feature offers a time-tested and accurate way to alter stroke shapes over time.

### Pros and Cons

#### Pros

- ▶ Strong perspective/scaling features
- ▶ Familiar tools and interface
- ▶ Excellent and readable documentation
- ▶ Timesaving lip-syncing feature

#### Cons

- ▶ Limited OS support
- ▶ Limited draw format support

The program also does an impressive job of vectorizing scanned grayscale sketches. In our informal testing, it rendered fewer Bezier control nodes than [Flash 5.0](#) by a factor of more than 10. The resulting smaller file sizes make ToonBoom a superior choice. Another useful file-shrinking tool is the Extract Center Line option. It halves the number of control points on a contour by collapsing it into a line. The effect makes the image a little less stylish, but sometimes download considerations are more important.

Painting tools in ToonBoom draw from color palettes in which the artist creates and names custom colors. By cloning a palette and altering a color cast--for example, adding a red hue--you can assign a new hue to characters you've already painted during an explosion sequence without needing to repaint them. This is a real time-saver, and the feature supports both solid colors and gradients.

ToonBoom lets you import both drawn and bitmapped artwork, but it's very picky about formats. It only supports Adobe Illustrator version 8.0 format. If your files are in other formats, you're out of luck on vector imports. ToonBoom proves equally squirrely with bitmap imports. It squashes or stretches bitmapped images to fit the draw window, and we also found that gradient fills produced unacceptable banding. The program supports TIFFs and TGAs with alpha channels for transparency, but their large file sizes make them poor choices. In our opinion, you'll be better off using ToonBoom's own tools than importing files.

Scene planning is where ToonBoom really shines. Most 2D-animation packages control depth perception by layering and scaling images. ToonBoom takes this approach one step further, allowing the artist to position images from a top-down or side view, much like in a 3D app. For example, you can have the program automatically scale and reposition a bush at left-front of the stage merely by dragging its top-view contour to the right-rear. Imagine trying to do that in a traditional 2D program--scale, reposition, tweak ad nauseum. To sweeten the pot, you can automatically generate Bezier paths during dragging and later alter them into any shape. Picture our bush moving behind a tree then scooting in front of a lake in a curved path. From the top, this is a piece of cake. From the front,

however, it would be a challenge. ToonBoom does it all for you.

Another high-end feature simplifies lip-syncing. ToonBoom's Compute Lip-Synch tool analyzes a sound file and provides a frame-by-frame guideline to lip position. It uses just eight positions, one of which is silence, and so provides only a crude guide. But even this can save an animator hours of tedious tweaking. You'll find similar tools only in high-end programs, such as Adobe After Effects Production Bundle, that cost several times ToonBoom's price.

ToonBoom supports multiple cameras, and you can attach them to Bezier paths to create sophisticated panning and tracking effects. This version of the program only allows cuts between cameras, but ToonBoom Technologies promises transparency effects such as cross-fades in future releases.

ToonBoom Technologies has created a unique and superior tool in ToonBoom Studio 1.0. Its solid draw and paint tools lay a great foundation, and its scene-planning tools place it head and shoulders above the crowd. We recommend it to any skilled animator.

## ToonBoom ToonBoom Studio

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