



# INDUSTRY REPORT

*What Future Animators are  
Looking for in an Animation School*



**ANIMATIONMENTOR.COM**

*The Online Animation School*®

# INDUSTRY SURVEY

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*What future animators say about what they are looking for in a school, and what professional animators say are the most important things to look for.*

Quotes throughout are from professional animators who responded to this survey. Other information from this survey was previously published as a [“Special Report: Behind the Characters”](#)

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**“ 3D is just right for me. My strength is art skills and innovative solutions. I get to use both my creative and technical skills. I love to work when the people around me are creative, talented and organized team players. ”**

## **I. HOW STUDENTS CHOOSE AN ANIMATION SCHOOL**

This report discusses the results of a recent survey of prospective animators, professional animators, and students who were interested in pursuing an education in animation. They were asked to share with us the criteria they used in choosing a school, and what things they thought were most important in choosing an animation college or training program.

## **II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

In Fall 2008, Animation Mentor commissioned third-party independent research firm, Knowledge Wave International, to conduct an industry survey to better understand the trends in animation careers, job satisfaction and salaries.

The survey used a list of 40,000 AnimationMentor.com subscribers and got a 12.4% response rate with an 8.4% completion rate. 18% of respondents were interested in animation as a career and seriously considering enrolling in an animation program.

These prospective students indicated the list of criteria they used to select an animation school, or animation education program, and told us what they thought was most important. It was interesting to see that students from different countries had different priorities when choosing an animation university or college.

**“ As an animator, I get to learn about a whole spectrum of subjects. Every project requires research of some form. ”**



### III. SURVEY FINDINGS

Of the 7,200 respondents who were considering enrolling in an animation program, 33% rated the ability to learn from professional animators as the most important criteria in selecting an animation school.

Next most important was the ability to learn remotely, which came in at 21%.

**Which of the following will be the primary criteria you use for selecting an animation education program?**

**33% Mentors and faculty are professional animators**

**21% Ability to learn remotely and/or online**

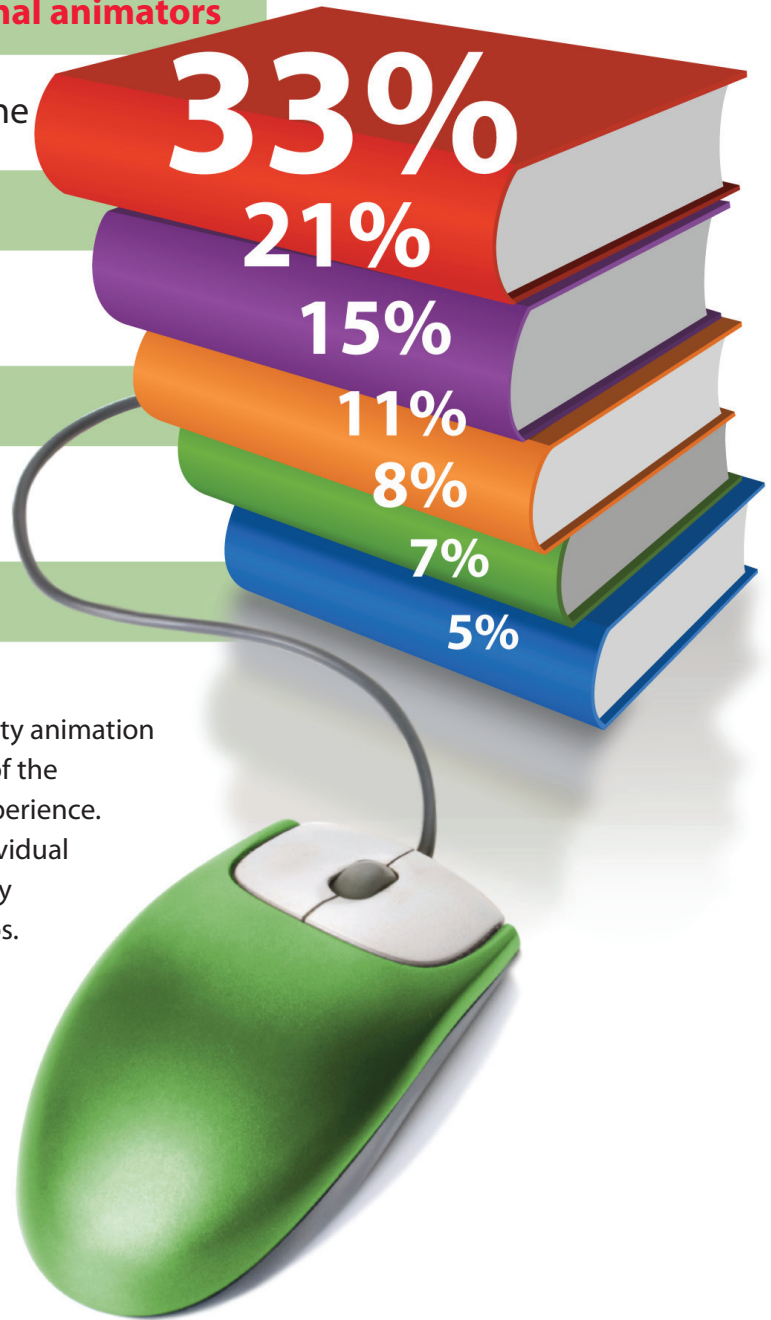
**15% Quality of student work**

**11% Lowest cost**

**8% Reputation of school**

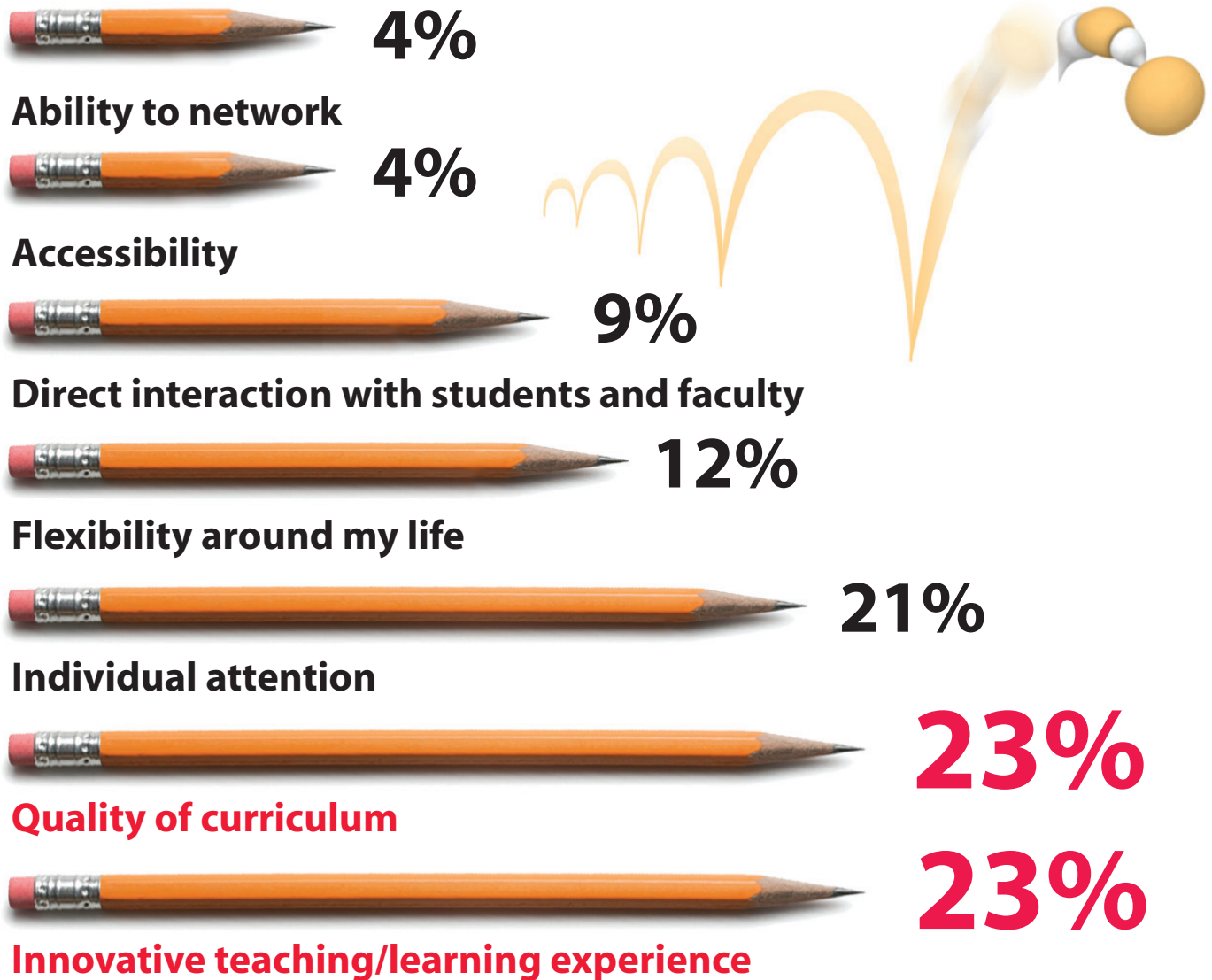
**7% Industry connections**

**5% Track record for placing students**



When we asked what was most important in getting a quality animation education, the two areas that tied at 23% were the quality of the curriculum, and having an innovative teaching/learning experience. These respondents also highly valued the ability to get individual attention. Interesting to note, only 5% of respondents highly valued a school's ability to place graduates in animation jobs. In this current economy, it may become a more important factor to consider when evaluating schools.

# What is **MOST** important to you?



57% of the respondents to this survey believed that they would get more individual attention from an online animation school than they would at a traditional brick and mortar school.

However, most of these respondents are familiar with AnimationMentor.com's teaching model, which includes individual attention from mentors, individual critiques on their projects, live question and answer sessions with mentors, and tons of interaction with peers. They may not realize that not all online schools offer the same level of individual attention that AnimationMentor.com does. Therefore, if you are shopping around, be sure to find out exactly what the teaching/learning model is before you commit to an online animation training program.



“ As an educator, I find watching students start from very little and then develop their understanding, ability and style most rewarding. Watching their imaginations expand is the real kicker. ”

Which type of **DEGREE / CERTIFICATION** program do you think is the best for each of the following elements of your studies in animation?



Ability to network	23%	18%	60%
Direct interaction with students and faculty	42%	26%	31%
Class size	29%	22%	49%
Individual attention	24%	18%	57%
Quality of curriculum	45%	15%	40%
Flexibility around my life	8%	7%	85%
Accessibility	11%	8%	81%
Innovative teaching / learning experience	23%	10%	67%

## IV. CRITERIA BY COUNTRY

The above charts are an aggregate of all respondents both male and female from all the countries that participated. When we analyzed the same questions and looked at responses by country, we found there were some interesting differences. Although these sample sizes may not be large enough to draw statistically valid conclusions, we saw definite trends that were of interest.

For example, Australian’s criteria for selecting an animation education program placed more emphasis on the ability to learn remotely at 38%, and the quality of student work at 31%, than learning from professional animators at 15%. Canadians also highly valued the quality of student work at 35%. Respondents from Germany, India, Mexico, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. all favored learning from professionals as their top criteria.

When we looked at what was most important to potential students about their education by country, Australia, Canada, Germany, the U.S. and the UK chose quality of curriculum as their top picks. Canada also highly valued individual attention, as did Italy at 50% and the United Kingdom at 41%. Brazil, India and Spain chose having an innovative teaching/learning experience as most important.

## V. WHAT PROFESSIONAL ANIMATORS SAY IS IMPORTANT ABOUT GETTING A GOOD ANIMATION EDUCATION

We asked professional animators about the type of education they got and what they thought was most important to getting started in their animation career.

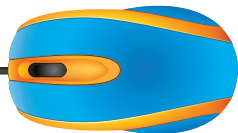
Although professional animators got their education in a variety of different ways, they all agreed that in order to really learn animation and improve their skills, it was really important to have a mentor. Even on the job, most of them continue to learn and advance from the input they get from mentors.

In fact, 95% of respondents said having a mentor is important to advancing your education as a professional animator. They also state the importance of creating and maintaining a professional network. One in five animators say they have a mentor at work, while having a mentor is in the top three recommendations for kick-starting a career, following industry experience and education.

### Type of **EDUCATION** Professional Animators Received



12% **Online animation school**



31%  
**Traditional art school**



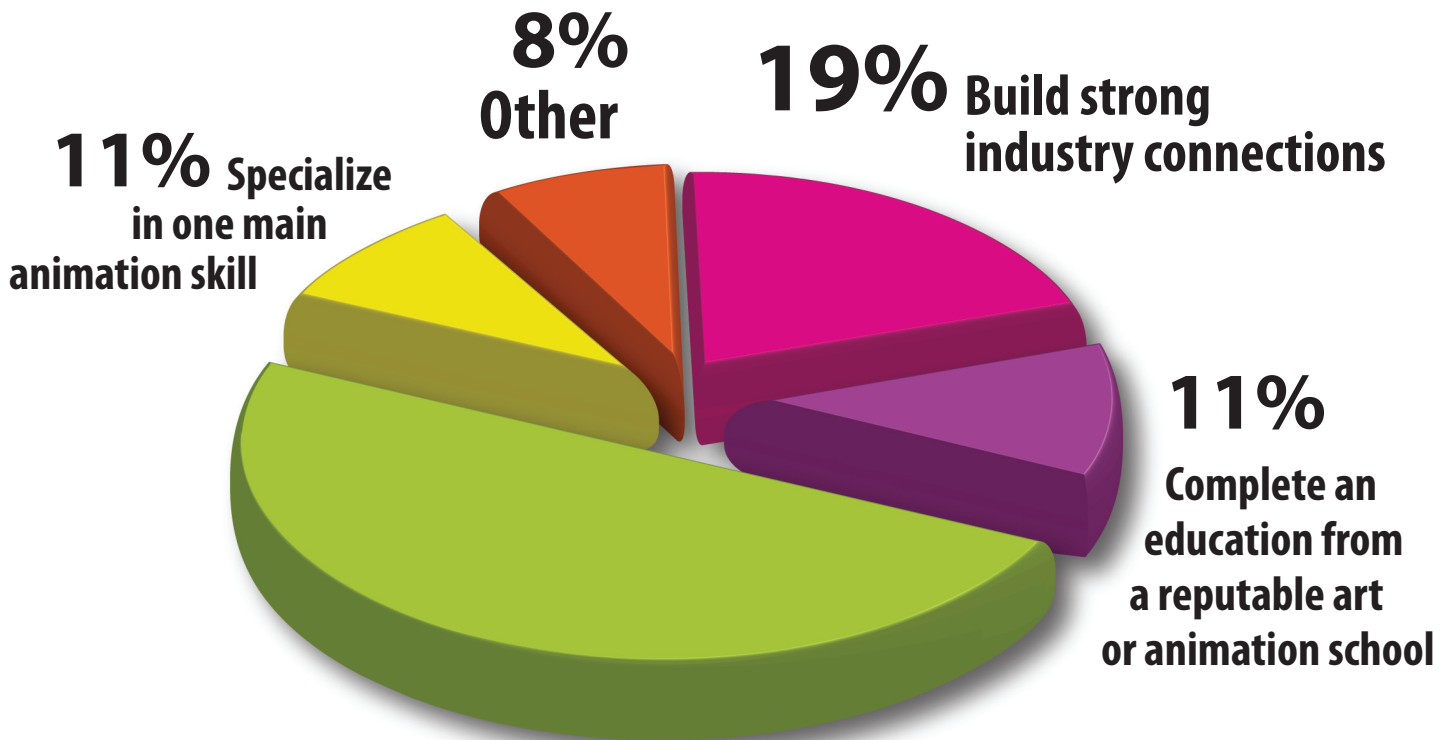
45%  
**Self-taught / Mentored  
(non-academic)**



47%  
**Animation-specific  
school**



## VI. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW ANIMATORS ABOUT HOW TO GET YOUR FIRST JOB?



**51%**  
**Create a high quality**  
***DEMO REEL***

“ What I love most is the magic of animation, and the ability to inspire emotions from an audience with images. ”

We asked professional animators what advice they would give to people who wanted to become animators. More than 50% said creating a high quality demo reel is the one thing they would suggest to new graduates of animation trying to land their first job. This is more important than anything else and goes to show that it's not who you know, but how good you are at what you do, that determines who gets the jobs in this industry.

Be sure that wherever you get your animation education, you will also have the opportunity to create a great demo reel. This is your calling card to use when you interview for jobs in the industry. It showcases your best work to prospective employers and shows them exactly what skills and disciplines you excel in. Whether you want to be a character animator, or work in lighting, rigging or modeling, your reel should reflect that and be a way for them to see what you can do.

One way to judge a school is to look at the quality of the student work. Most schools have a show reel of their best students' work that will give you a sense of what you can expect to learn. If the quality of the work is high, you know you will get a good education and come out with a good reel.

For more information about animation careers, salaries, job satisfaction and animation industry trends, see our other industry report that you can download for free:

<http://www.animationmentor.com/report>

## VII. SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

Because of the busy lifestyles of many of these potential students who have to juggle part-time or full-time jobs, families, and other responsibilities, the flexibility of being able to learn from home, not having to move to a school location, or commute were very important to them when choosing a school.

That said, there are many animation training options that offer online accessibility and flexibility. But not all of them offer the same quality of curriculum, and level of skill development. That's why what was most important to our respondents was the quality of the curriculum, having an innovative learning/teaching experience, and getting the individual attention and feedback they need to grow.





Another area of key importance to these prospective students was ensuring they were learning from professional animators.

## VIII. RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

If you are currently looking for an animation school and have clearly defined your personal and professional goals so you know what type of animation training you would like to have, the next step is to research and interview schools to make sure they offer the flexibility, quality of curriculum, individual attention, and mentoring from professional animators that you require.

## IX. OVERVIEW OF ANIMATION TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

There are a wide variety of animation universities, animation colleges, animation schools, books, DVDs, tutorials, and online resources that offer some sort of animation training. You can find courses ranging from special effects to lighting to character animation. Some traditional art schools that offer four-year degrees also have an animation curriculum. There are also online schools that specialize only in a certain type of animation, such as AnimationMentor.com which offers an 18-month program specifically in character animation.

Specialized programs like this are not for everyone. That's why the most important thing is to first figure out what type of animation you want to do, then find the school that best teaches those skills. If you are still exploring your options, you may want to download our free guide, *How to Become an Animator*, which provides information on types of animation jobs, free resources, and things to consider when choosing an animation school. You can find it at [www.animationmentor.com/landing/becomeanimator](http://www.animationmentor.com/landing/becomeanimator).



“ Doing what I love everyday is the most rewarding thing I can think of. That includes animating, drawing, and creating fun and enjoyable entertainment. ”



# ABOUT ANIMATIONMENTOR.COM

Animation Mentor is the only animation school built by professional animators specifically for people who want to become character animators. Animation Mentor teaches you the art behind animation under the guidance of professional animators who are currently working at leading studios. Our approach also prepares you with the skills needed to succeed as a professional character animator in a studio environment.

By graduation, every student has worked in a production-style environment where mentors, who are working studio animators, stand in for directors, and assignments stand in for film or game shots. Students learn how to accept guidance and criticism, to meet deadlines, and to budget and schedule their time to succeed in the working world. At the end of the 18-month program, students leave with a professional demo reel they can use as their résumé to land jobs. Upon graduation, Animation Mentor coaches graduates and helps them locate job opportunities with major recruiters, video game companies, and film studios. Animation Mentor has a 78% job placement rate worldwide.

To learn more about our online animation school, visit [www.AnimationMentor.com](http://www.AnimationMentor.com)



## X. ADDITIONAL FREE LEARNING RESOURCES FROM ANIMATIONMENTOR.COM



### ANIMATION TIPS AND TRICKS, VOLUME I

The first edition of our Animation Tips and Tricks eBook featuring how-to articles and information from Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) animator Shawn Kelly who is also a cofounder of [AnimationMentor.com](http://AnimationMentor.com)



### ANIMATION TIPS AND TRICKS, VOLUME II

More tips and tricks from Animation Mentor founders and mentors including Shawn Kelly, Carlos Baena, Keith Sintay, Aaron Gilman and Wayne Gilbert.



### WWW.ANIMATIONTIPSANDTRICKS.COM

Animation Mentor's animation tips and tricks blog featuring advice and mentoring from professional working animators.



### THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY SPECIAL REPORT

*Behind the Characters: Job Satisfaction, Career Outlook and Salary Survey* is an industry report chock-full of industry statistics, facts, figures and survey responses from more than 1,200 professional animators.





## ANIMATION INDUSTRY NEWS

The AnimationMentor.com newsletter features special features about the animation industry, animation careers, and advice and tips from our mentors. In addition, you can see what Animation Mentor students are working on and get the inside scoop on how they are creating animation.



## CARLOS BAENA'S BLOG

Animation Mentor cofounder and Pixar animator Carlos Baena shares his techniques for animating along with movies he likes, and artwork he gets inspiration and ideas.



## BOBBY BECK'S BLOG

Animation Mentor cofounder and CEO Bobby Beck talks about what it takes to be an animator and how to stay inspired, motivated and creative in life and on the job.