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Autodesk® Maya® 2015

Basics Guide



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Chapter 1

Learning the Maya Interface

IN THIS CHAPTER

- 1.1 Work with menus.
- 1.2 Use the Status Line buttons.
- 1.3 Access the Shelf.
- 1.4 Explore the Channel Box and Layer Editor.
- 1.5 Identify the animation controls, the Command Line, and the Help Line.
- 1.6 Use the Toolbox and Quick Layout buttons.
- 1.7 Discover the Secret menus.

Maya is a program, created by Autodesk, used to model, animate, and render 3D scenes. 3D scenes created with Maya have appeared in movies, television, advertisements, games, product visualizations, and on the Web. With Maya, you can create and animate your own 3D scenes and render them as still images or as animation sequences.

Several versions of Maya exist and the difference between them lies in the features that are included in each. The commercial version of Maya includes everything you need to create and render 3D scenes and animations. An advanced version of Maya also includes the Fluid Effects, Cloth, and Hair and Fur features. A freely available version of Maya called the Personal Learning Edition is also available. The Personal Learning Edition is identical to Maya Complete, except that all renderings include a watermark making it a great place to start if you want to learn Maya.

At first glance, the Maya interface can be a little daunting, with buttons, controls, and parameters everywhere, but if you look closer you'll realize that all of the controls are grouped into logical sets. Becoming familiar with these various sets of controls makes the interface much easier to work with.

Along the top edge of the interface are the menus and a toolbar of buttons called the **Status Line**. The menus will change depending on the mode that you're working in. Below the Status Line is a tabbed row of buttons. This row of buttons is called the **Shelf**, and it offers a convenient way to group sets of commands together. To the right of the interface is a panel of parameters called the **Channel Box**. These parameters, known as attributes, will change as different objects are selected. Under the Channel Box is the **Layer Editor**.

Along the bottom of the interface are the Time Slider, the Range Slider, and the animation controls, which are used to specify and move between the different frames of an animation sequence; also at the bottom are the **Command Line**, for entering textual commands, and the **Help Line**. Finally, the horizontal column of buttons to the left of the interface is known as the **Toolbox** and the **Quick Layout buttons**. These buttons are used to select and transform scene objects and to change the interface layout.

A key concept that you need to understand as you begin to work with the interface is that there are several ways to access the same command. For example, you can create a sphere using the Create, Polygon Primitives, Sphere menu command or by using the Polygon Sphere button in the Polygons shelf. This design is intentional, allowing beginners an intuitive method for accessing a command and giving advanced users an access method that lets them work quicker as they learn the shortcuts.

One of the quickest ways to access advanced-user commands is with the Secret menus. These context-specific pop-up menus appear when you right-click in the interface. Another quick way to access commands is with keyboard shortcuts, known as **hotkeys**.

Maya gives users the option to customize the interface. Using the customization features, you can create a custom set of command icons, define keyboard shortcuts, and even alter menus. Many of the customization options are included in the Window, Settings/Preferences menu.

Lesson 1.1: Work with Menus

The main menu commands are the first place you should look for commands when you're new to Maya. The commands are listed as text, making them easier to find until you learn what the various buttons do. Each menu can include several submenus. Submenus are identified by a small, right-pointing arrow at the right end of the menu.

Changing Menu Sets

The menus are dynamic and change depending on the **menu set** that is selected. You can change between the menu sets using the drop-down list that is to the very left of the Status Line, as shown in Figure 1-1. The options include Animation, Polygons, Surfaces, Dynamics, Rendering, and nDynamics.

Tip

Each of the menu sets has an associated hotkey. These hotkeys are F2 for Animation, F3 for Polygons, F4 for Surfaces, F5 for Dynamics, and F6 for Rendering.

The first six menu commands, File, Edit, Modify, Create, Display, and Window, are available in all menu sets.



Figure 1-1
Menu set selection list

Viewing Keyboard Hotkeys

Several menu commands have a keyboard hotkey listed to the right of the menu, as shown in Figure 1-2. Pressing these hotkeys on the keyboard executes the command. Hotkeys provide a quick and easy way to execute a command, and learning to use them will make you much more efficient. You can customize hotkeys using the Hotkey Editor, which you open with the Window, Settings/Preferences, Hotkeys menu command.

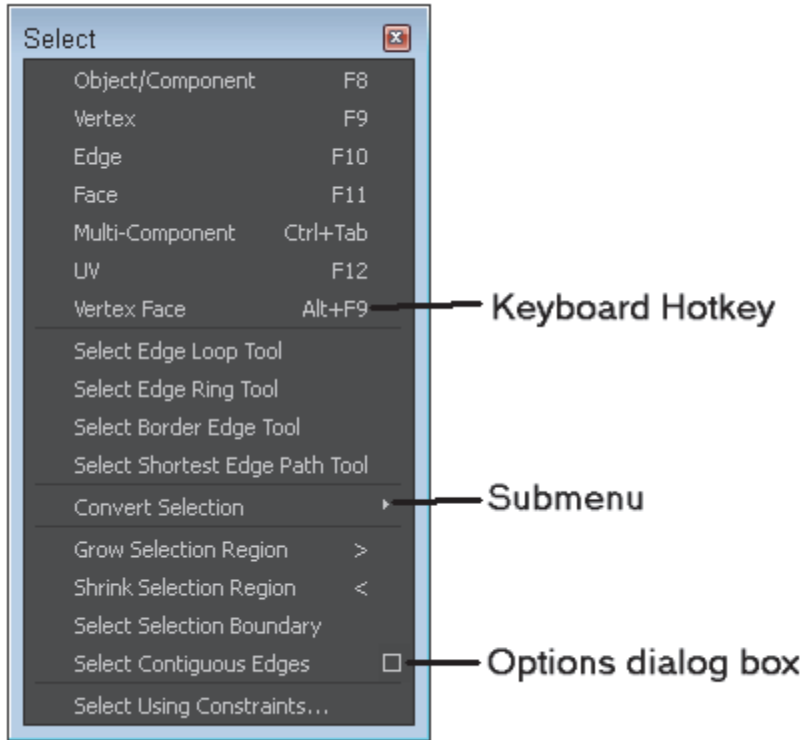


Figure 1-2
Hotkeys and option dialog boxes are displayed in the menus

Accessing Option Dialog Boxes

Several menus also include a small box icon to the right of the menu, also shown in Figure 1-2. These box icons will open an Options dialog box for the selected command. These Options dialog boxes, such as the Group Options dialog box shown in Figure 1-3, include parameters that you can change. They also include Apply buttons that let you apply the command with the given parameters without closing the dialog box. The **option dialog box** values are persistent. Any values that are changed will maintain their setting the next time the command is used. You can reset an options dialog box to its default values using the Edit, Reset Settings menu command in the dialog box menu.

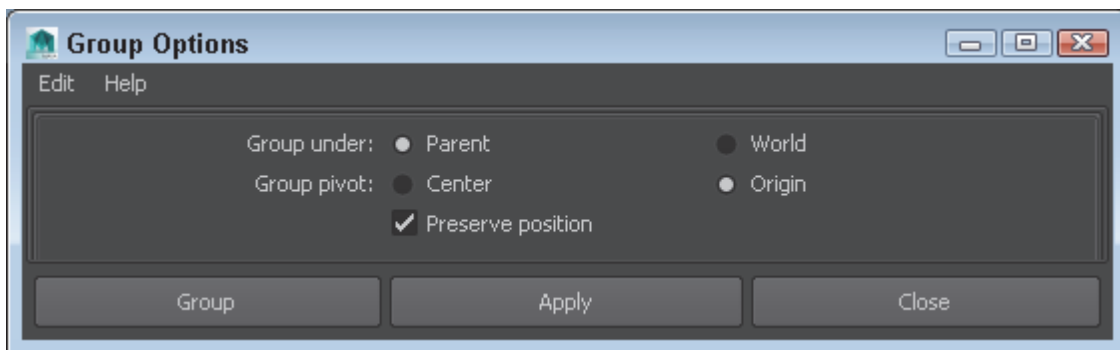


Figure 1-3
Settings dialog box for Create, Polygon Primitives, Sphere

Using Tear-Off Menus

At the very top of most menus is a double line called the **tear-off menu**. Clicking on this line makes the menu a

tear-off menu and displays it as a separate panel, like the one shown in Figure 1-4, that you can move about by dragging on its title bar. Tear-off menus are convenient because they make the menu commands accessible with one click, but you need the space to leave the tear-off menu open without covering something else.

Note

In an effort to make the tear-off menu smaller, the keyboard hotkeys aren't displayed on a tear-off menu.

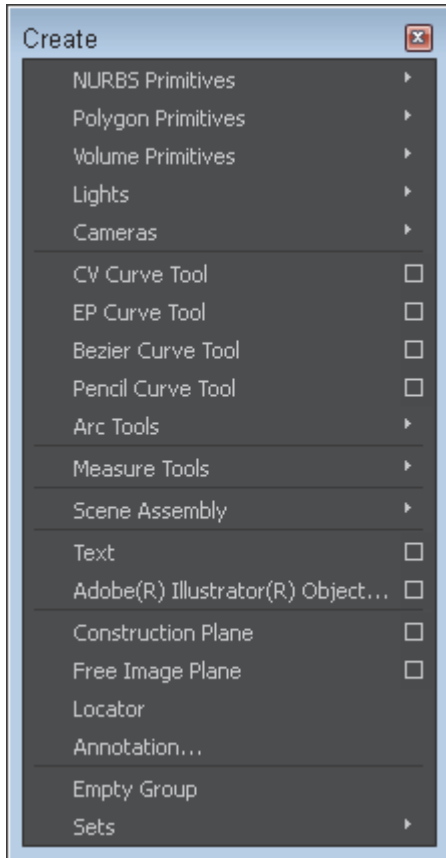


Figure 1-4
Tear-off menu

Understanding Tools versus Actions

If you peruse the menus, you'll see many commands that end in the word *Tool*. Tools, when selected, are active until another tool is selected, but actions are only executed once. The last tool used is displayed at the bottom of the **Toolbox** for easy re-selection. Double-clicking a tool's button will open the Tool Settings interface on the right side of the interface, as shown for the Move tool in Figure 1-5. You can also open the Tool Settings using the Show/Hide Tool Settings button at the right end of the Status Line. Tool settings are also persistent and can be reset using the Reset Tool button at the top of the Tool Settings interface.

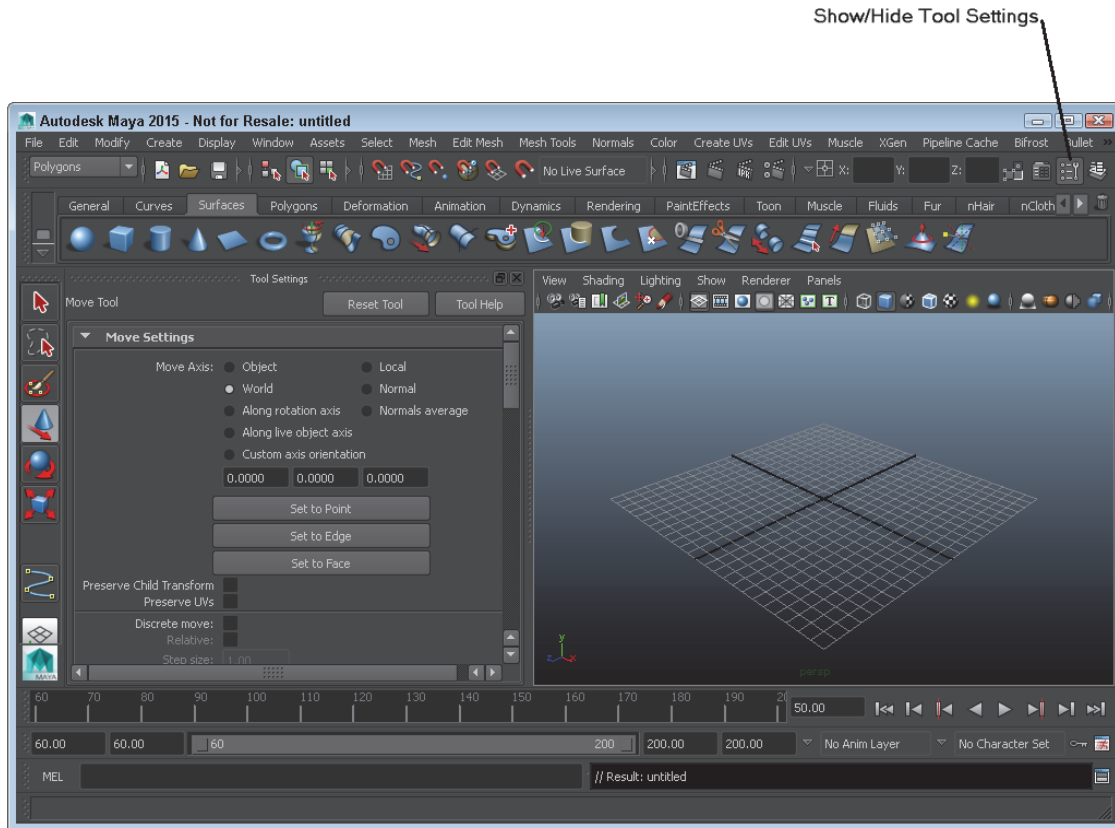


Figure 1-5
Tool Settings

Lesson 1.1-Tutorial 1: Use a Menu Command to Create a Polygon Sphere

1. Click on the Create menu, and then select the Polygon Primitives submenu and click on the Options icon to the right of the Sphere menu to open the options dialog box, as shown in Figure 1-3.
2. In the Polygon Sphere Options dialog box, click the Apply button.
A single sphere objects will appear at the origin in the Workspace.
3. Click the Close button to exit the dialog box.
4. Click on the Create menu, and then select the Polygon Primitives submenu and click on the Cone menu command. A cone object is added to the scene overlapping the sphere.
5. Press the 5 key to see the objects as shaded objects. The objects resemble a simple crystal ball, as shown in Figure 1-6.
6. Select File, Save Scene As and save the file as **Crystal ball.mb**.

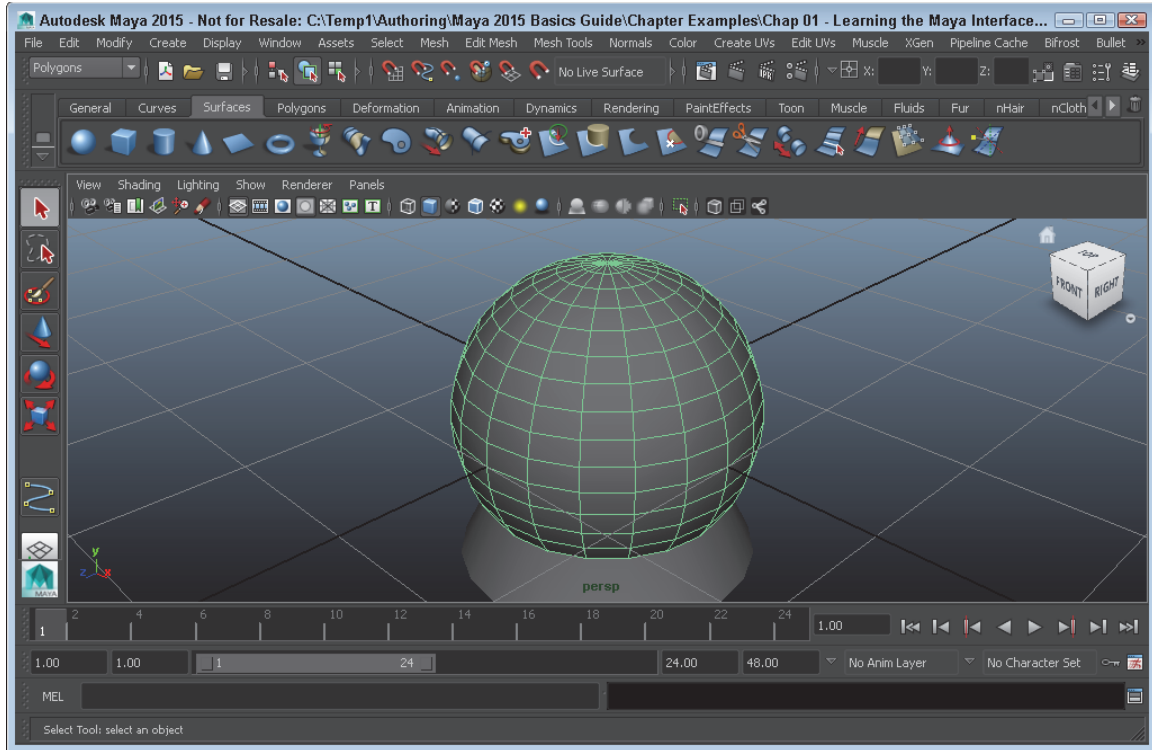


Figure 1-6
A simple crystal ball created with sphere and cone objects

Lesson 1.2: Use the Status Line Buttons

Directly below the menus are a long row of buttons that are collectively known as the Status Line. These buttons are constant and cannot be changed, but you can hide them. The buttons are divided into groups that are separated by a dividing bar. These button groups include, from left to right, the Menu Set menu, File buttons, the Selection Mode menu, Selection Mode buttons, Selection Mask buttons, Snapping buttons, History buttons, Rendering buttons, the Select field, and the Show/Hide Editors buttons, as shown in Figure 1-7. Most of these button groups are presented and discussed in the lesson that corresponds to their features.

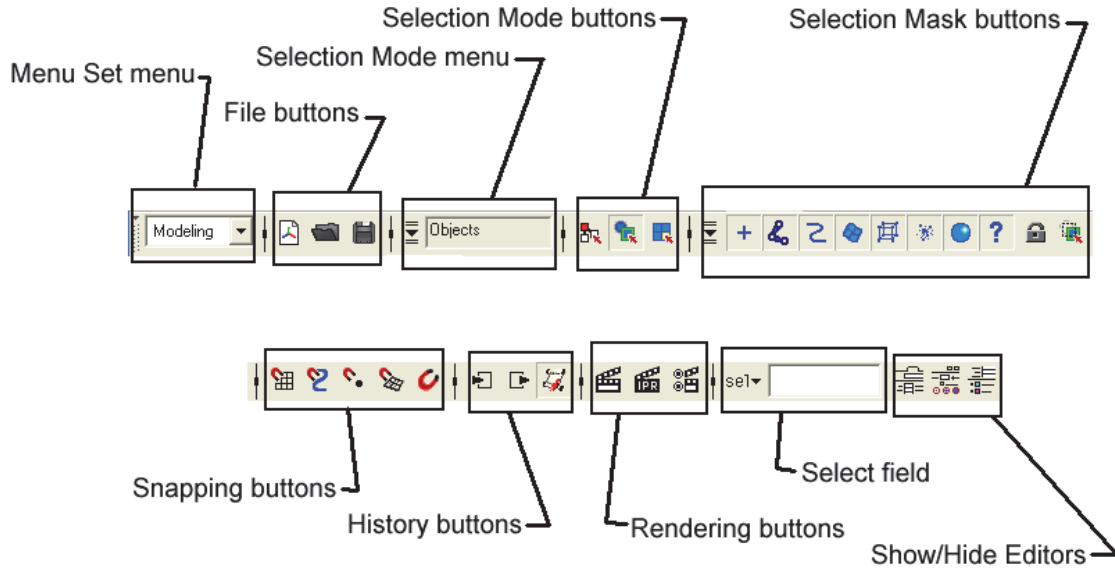


Figure 1-7
Status Line groups

Using Pop-up Help

When you first begin to use the Status Line buttons, it can be tricky to know which button does what, but you can view the button's title as a **Pop-up Help** by holding the mouse cursor over the top of the button, as shown in Figure 1-8. Pop-up Help is available for all buttons in the entire interface.

Note

If Pop-up Help starts to get annoying, you can disable it or set its Display Time using the Help panel in the Preferences dialog box opened with the Window, Settings/Preferences, Preferences menu command.

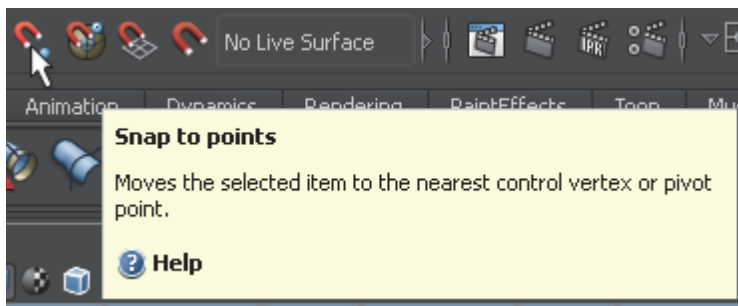


Figure 1-8
Pop-up Help

Watching for Cursor Clues

Another helpful visual clue is that the cursor changes when it is over any interface button that has an available right-click pop-up menu. This new cursor displays a small menu icon under the cursor arrow, like the one shown in Figure 1-9. When this icon appears, you can right-click to access an additional menu of options. The cursor also changes when certain tools are used.



Figure 1-9
Cursor indicating a right-click pop-up menu

Expanding and Collapsing Icon Button Groups

Each button group in the Status Line is divided by a vertical line with a small rectangle through its center. This divider is called the Show/Hide Bar, and if you click on it, and then all buttons included in that section will be hidden. Click again to make the buttons reappear. Figure 1-10 shows several collapsed and expanded button sets.

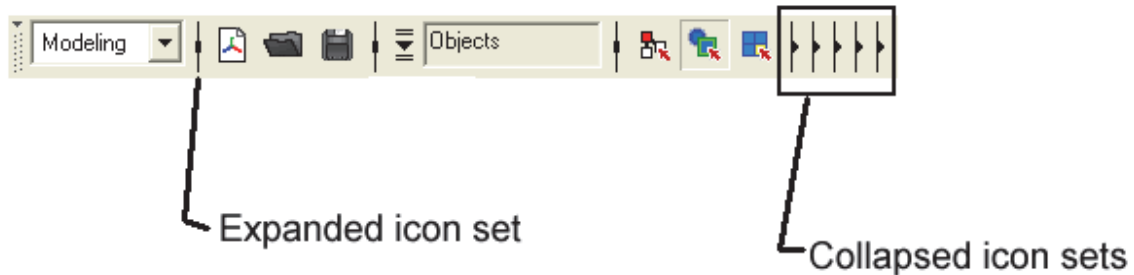


Figure 1-10
Expanded and collapsed button sets

Opening and Saving a Scene

To the right of the Menu Set selection list is a set of buttons that you can use to create a new scene, open an existing scene, or save the current scene. Both the Open and Save buttons will open a file dialog box, as shown in Figure 1-11, in which you can select the directory and file name. When saved, the file name will appear on the title bar.

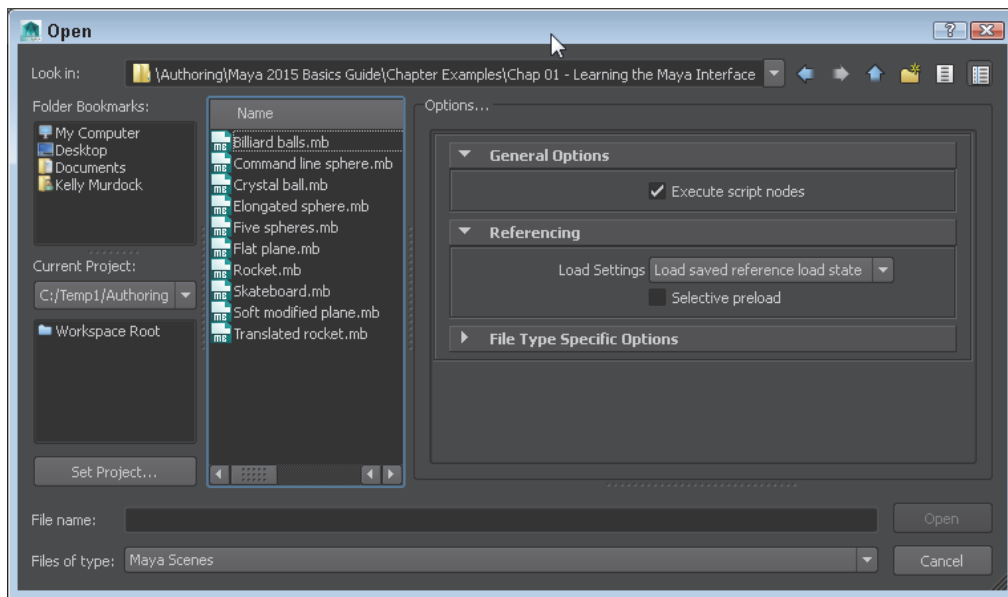


Figure 1-11
File dialog box for Windows

Opening Editors

At the right side of the Status Line are four Sidebar buttons, shown in Figure 1-12, that don't belong to a button group and that are always visible. These Sidebar buttons are used to show and hide one of the sidebar panels that appear to the right of the view panel including the Attribute Editor, Tool Settings, and Channel Box/Layer Editor. The Attribute Editor lists all the attributes for the selected object, the Tool Settings will list all the configurable settings for the selected tool and the Channel Box is a subset of attributes that can be animated, known as being *keyable* and the Layer Editor lets you divide the scene objects into layers.

Note

In the Interface panel of the Preferences dialog box, you can select to have each of the editors open as a separate window instead of the main window.

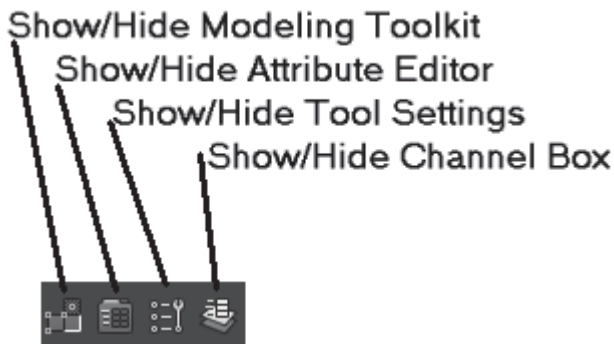


Figure 1-12
Sidebar buttons

Showing and Hiding Interface Elements

You can also hide any interface element by clicking on the dotted double line at the top (or to the left) of the interface element, as shown for the Status Line in Figure 1-13. Right-clicking and holding down the mouse button on the Show/Hide bar presents a pop-up menu of all interface elements. You can make hidden interface elements visible again using the Display, UI Elements menu. You can use the Display, UI Elements, Hide UI Elements menu command to hide all UI elements at once.

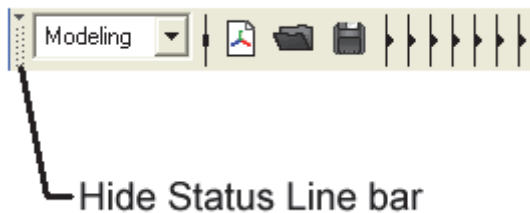


Figure 1-13
Hide interface element bar

Lesson 1.2-Tutorial 1: Open a File

1. Move the mouse over the Status Line buttons at the left end until the Pop-up Help reads *Open a scene*.
2. Click on this button.

A file dialog box appears, similar to the one shown in Figure 1-11.

3. Locate the directory where the Skateboard.mb file is located.
4. Click on the Skateboard.mb file name and click the Open button.

The saved file is then loaded into Maya, as shown in Figure 1-14.

Note

Before Maya opens a file, it gives you a chance to save the current file.

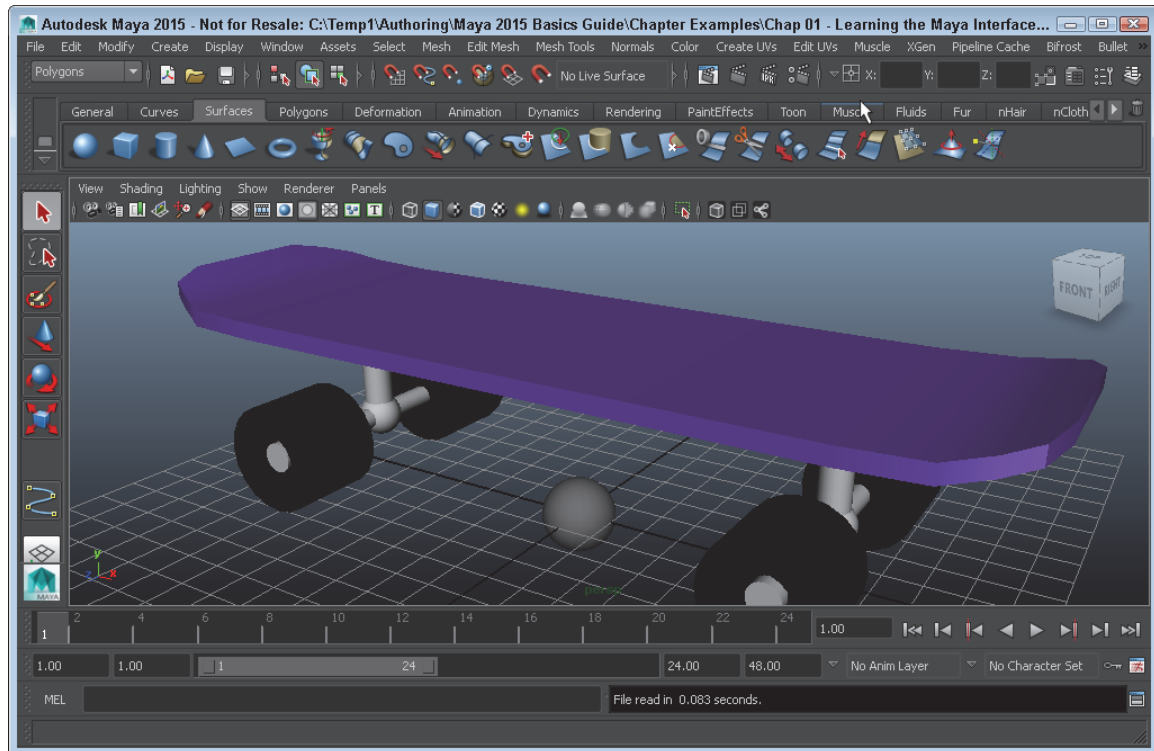


Figure 1-14
Opened skateboard file

Lesson 1.2-Tutorial 2: Save a File

1. Click on the Create menu, and then select the Polygon Primitives submenu and click on the Sphere menu to add a sphere to the skateboard scene.
2. Move the mouse over the Status Line buttons at the left end until the Pop-up Help reads *Save the current scene*.
3. Click on this button.

This file is automatically saved replacing the existing file. When saved, the file name appears in the title bar.

Note

You can save the scenes with a new file name using the File, Save As menu command.

Lesson 1.2-Tutorial 3: Maximize the Workspace Interface

1. Click on the dotted double line on the left end of the Status Line.

The Status Line becomes hidden.

2. Click on the other dashed double lines for the Shelf, the Channel Box, and the Toolbox.
3. Click on the dashed double lines for the controls at the bottom of the interface.

All interface elements will now be hidden, maximizing the Workspace, as shown in Figure 1-15.

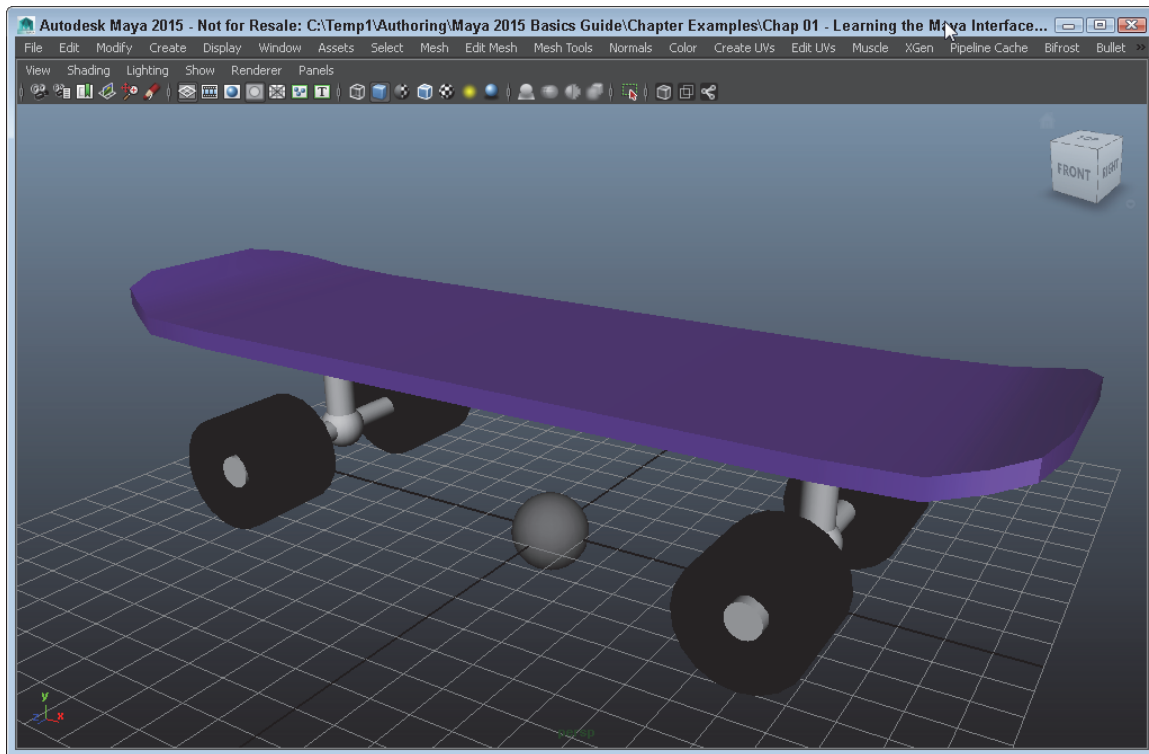


Figure 1-15

A maximized Workspace interface

4. Select the Display, UI Elements, Status Line menu command.

The Status Line interface element reappears.

5. Use the Display, UI Elements, Show UI Elements menu to make the rest of the interface elements reappear.

Lesson 1.3: Access the Shelf

The Shelf is like a toolbar on steroids. It includes several tabbed panels of buttons. To select a different set of buttons, just click on one of the tabs and the buttons in its set will appear. Figure 1-16 shows the buttons for the Polygons tab.

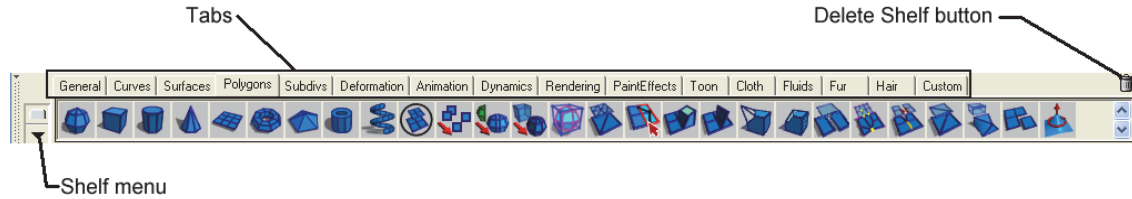


Figure 1-16
The Shelf

Using the Shelf Menu

At the left end of the Shelf are two menu icons. The top one looks like a mini-tab and you can use it to select a Shelf tab from a menu. The bottom menu icon is an arrow. You can use it to hide all of the Shelf tabs, open the Shelf Editor, create and delete shelves, Load a custom shelf, and save all shelves. You can save some interface space by hiding the Shelf tabs. To do this, select Shelf Tabs menu command from the Shelf menu to toggle the option off.

Creating and Deleting Shelves

The Shelf menu can also be used to create and delete shelves. The New Shelf menu command will open a simple dialog box, as shown in Figure 1-17, in which you can name the new shelf. The new empty shelf will then appear at the right end of the tabs. Selecting the Delete Shelf menu command will delete the currently selected shelf.

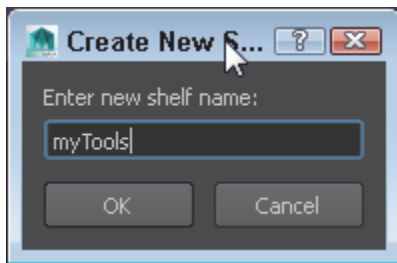


Figure 1-17
Create New Shelf dialog box

Adding Icons and Menu Commands to a Shelf

You can add buttons from any shelf to another shelf by selecting the button and dragging it with the middle mouse button onto the tab of the shelf that you wish to add it to. Menu commands can also be added to the current shelf by clicking on the menu command with the Ctrl/Command and Shift keys held down. You can delete shelf icons by dragging them with the middle mouse button to the Delete Shelf icon (which looks like a small trash can) on the right end of the tabs.

Note

Maya uses all three mouse buttons. If you are using a two-button mouse with a scroll wheel, the scroll wheel acts as the middle mouse button. If your two-button mouse doesn't have a scroll wheel, you can use the Ctrl/Command (command) key and the left mouse button as the middle mouse button. For a Macintosh one-button mouse, the command key and the mouse button act as the middle mouse button and the Option key and the mouse button act as the right mouse button.

Adding Layouts and Scripts to a Shelf

You can add custom layouts to a shelf. Just pick the shelf you want to hold the custom layout and then choose Panels, Panel Editor from the Panel menu. In the Layouts tab, shown in Figure 1-18, select the custom layout that you want to add to the current shelf and click the Add To Shelf button. You can drag scripts from the Script Editor with the middle mouse button and drop them into a shelf. Scripts appear on the Shelf as a button labeled 'MEL', which stands for Maya Expression Language, Maya's scripting language.

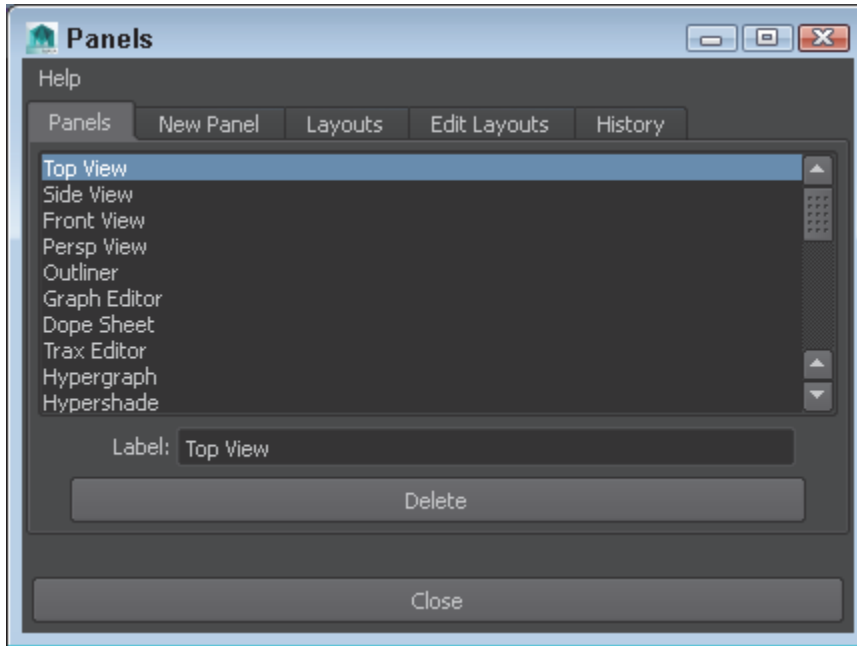


Figure 1-18
Panel Editor

Using the Shelf Editor

The Shelves menu includes an option that will open the Shelf Editor dialog box. Using this editor, shown in Figure 1-19, you can reorder and rename the tabs and shelves, edit the icons within each shelf, and change the settings for the shelves.

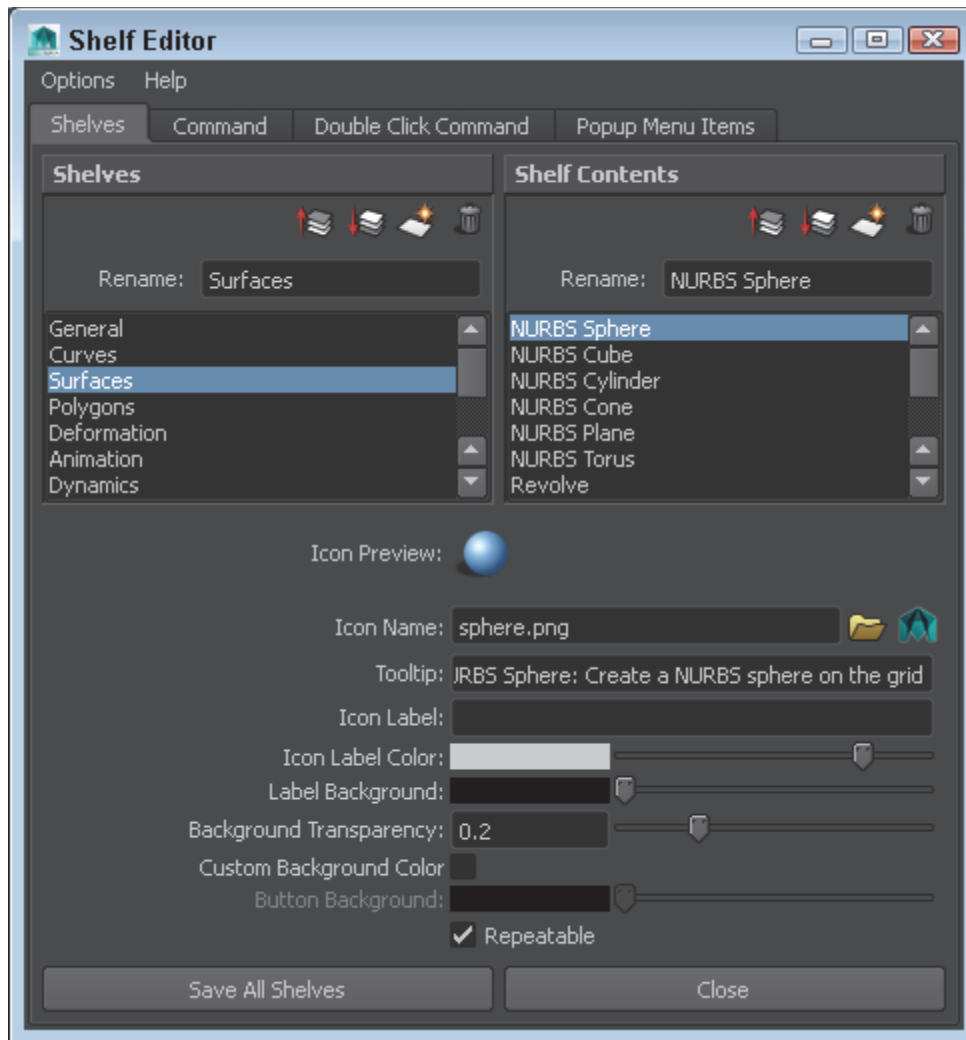


Figure 1-19
Shelf Editor

Lesson 1.3-Tutorial 1: Create a New Shelf

1. Click on the Shelf menu and select New Shelf.

The Create New Shelf dialog box appears.

2. Type the name **MyShelf** for the new shelf and click OK.

A new tab with the typed name appears at the right end of the Shelf.

Lesson 1.3-Tutorial 2: Populate a New Shelf

1. Select the MyShelf tab to make it active.
2. Hold down the Shift and Ctrl/Command keys and select Create, NURBS Primitives, Sphere.

A sphere icon is added to the new shelf.

3. Repeat Step 2 with other primitive objects found in the Create menu.

Each of the selected menu commands appears on the new shelf, as shown in Figure 1-20.

4. Select the Panel, Panel Editor panel menu command.

The Panel Editor dialog box appears.

5. Select the Layout tab and choose the Four View option. Then click the Add to Shelf button and then the Close button.

When the Four View option is selected, the view window changes to show four separate views. After clicking the Add to Shelf button, a new icon appears in the current shelf.

6. Locate the Move tool in the Toolbox and drag the icon with the middle mouse button to the new shelf.

Dragging an icon with the middle mouse button adds the icon to the current shelf. Figure 1-20 shows the new shelf.

7. Select Save All Shelves from the Shelf menu.

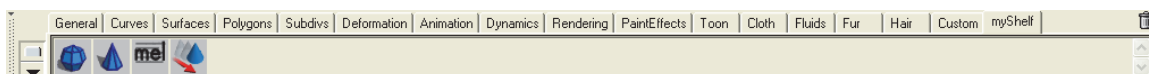


Figure 1-20

A custom shelf of menu commands

Lesson 1.4: Explore the Channel Box and Layer Editor

When an object is selected, its keyable attributes (or channels) appear within the Channel Box, shown in Figure 1-21, to the right of the interface. Each attribute has a value associated with it. These values are often numbers, but they can be a state like on or off, or a color. You can change these values by selecting the channel's value, entering a different value, and pressing the Enter key.

Tip

Use the two double-arrow buttons underneath the Layer Editor to widen or shrink the Channel Box and the Layer Editor.

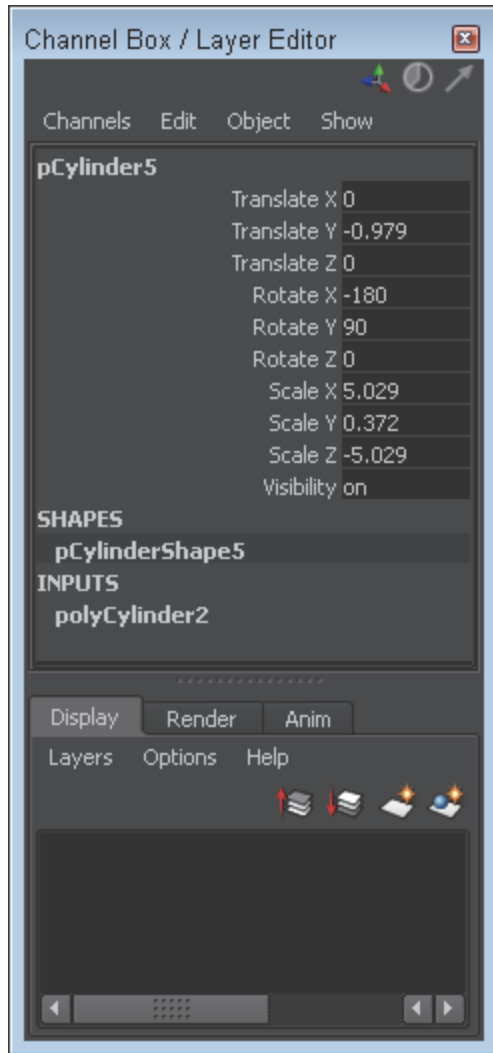


Figure 1-21
The Channel Box

Selecting Attributes

You can select a single attribute by clicking on its title. When selected, the attribute title will be highlighted. Holding down the Ctrl/Command key while clicking on several attributes will allow you to select multiple attributes at once; you can also drag the mouse over several attributes to select them.

Using Channel Sliders

You can interactively change attribute values by selecting an attribute in the Channel Box and then dragging with the middle mouse button in the view panel. Using the buttons at the top of the Channel Box, shown in Figure 1-22, you can change the channel slider settings to Slow, Medium, or Fast. The higher the setting, the faster the attribute will change as you drag. You can also select a linear or hyperbolic slider setting. The Linear setting will cause attribute values to change linearly as you drag with the mouse, but the Hyperbolic setting will cause the value to change more and more rapidly the longer you drag the mouse.

Tip

You can also enter += and a number to add that amount to the current value. For example, typing +=2 in an

attribute field for a Radius value of 5.0 changes it to 7.0. You can also use -=, *= and /= to subtract, multiply and divide relative values.

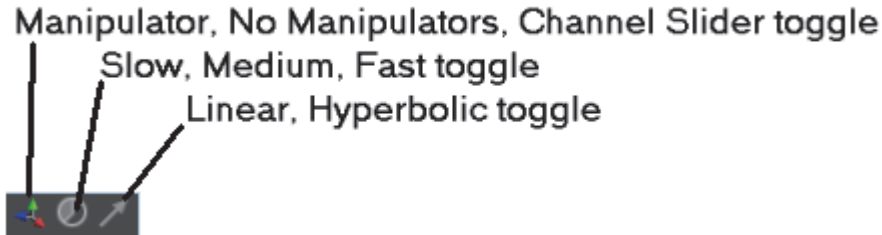


Figure 1-22
Channel Box settings

Locking Attributes

Locked attributes cannot be changed. You can lock an attribute by selecting it and choosing the Lock Selected menu command from the Channels menu. Locked attributes will appear “grayed out,” as shown in Figure 1-23. Unlock any locked attributes using the Channels, Unlock Selected menu command.

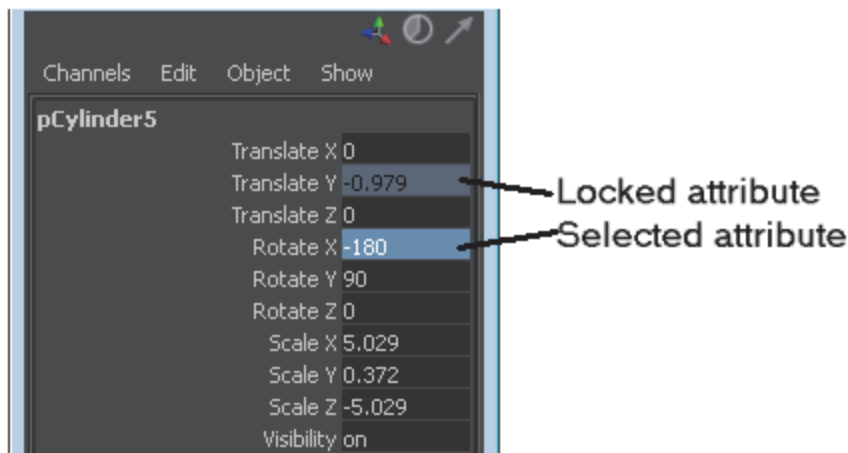


Figure 1-23
Locked attributes in the Channel Box

Adding and Deleting Layers

The Layer Editor, shown in Figure 1-24, divides the scene elements up into layers, making them easy to show and hide. Clicking the Create a New Layer button in the Layer Editor creates a new layer. You can give each layer a name, display type, and color. Delete layers using the Layers menu. Deleting a layer does not delete its objects. At the top of the Layer Editor are options for creating Display and Render layers. Render layers are discussed in Chapter 14.

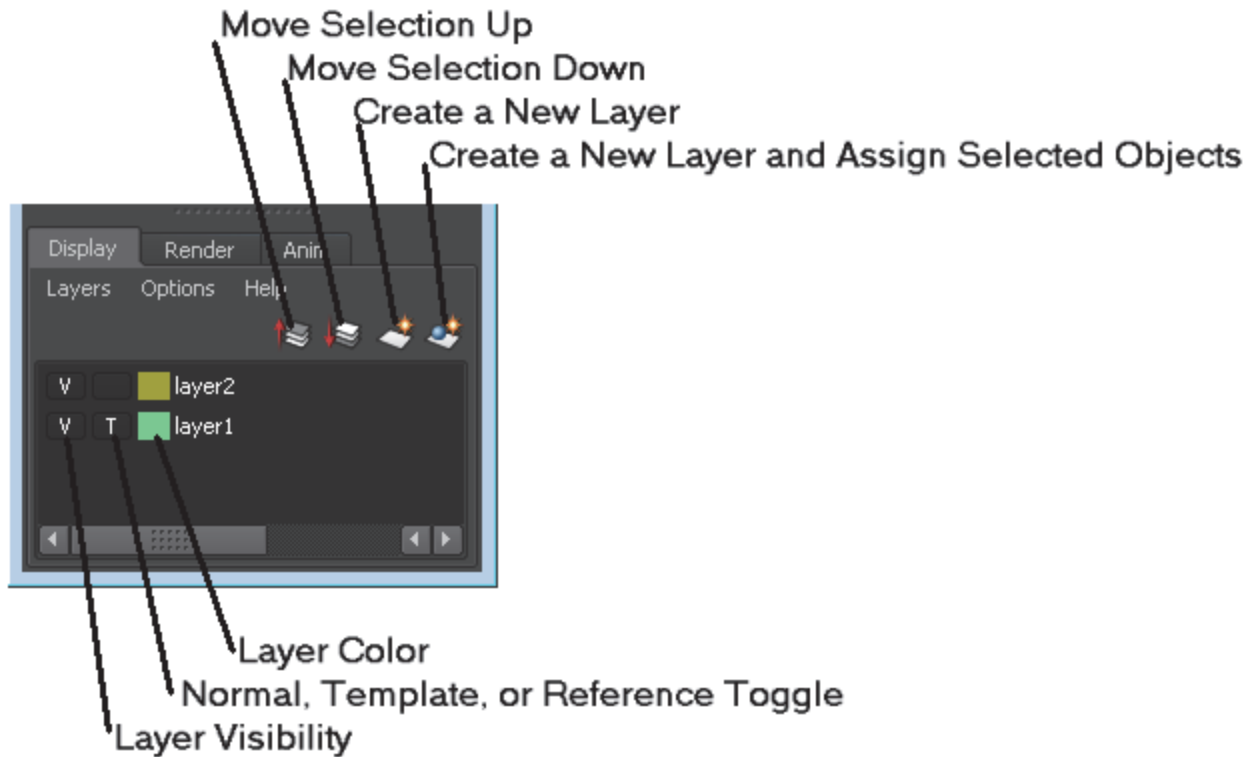


Figure 1-24
Layer Editor

Adding Objects to a Layer

You can add selected objects to a layer by right clicking on that layer and selecting Add Selected Objects from the pop-up menu. You can also use the Layers menu to select all objects in a layer and to remove objects from a layer. Objects assume the layer color when unselected.

Hiding All Layer Objects

You can hide Layer objects by clicking the first column in the Layer Editor. This column sets the visibility for the layer objects and is a simple toggle button that you can turn on or off. The letter *V* appears when the layer objects are visible and the column is empty when the layer objects are hidden.

Freezing All Layer Objects

The second column can be set to Normal, Template or Reference. The letter *T* appears in this column when the layer is a template. Template layers cannot be selected or moved while they are templates. References are proxy objects that stand in for complex objects. The third column is the layer color. Double-clicking on this column (or on the layer name) opens the Edit Layer dialog box, shown in Figure 1-25, where you can select a new color, change the layer's attributes, or change the layer's name.

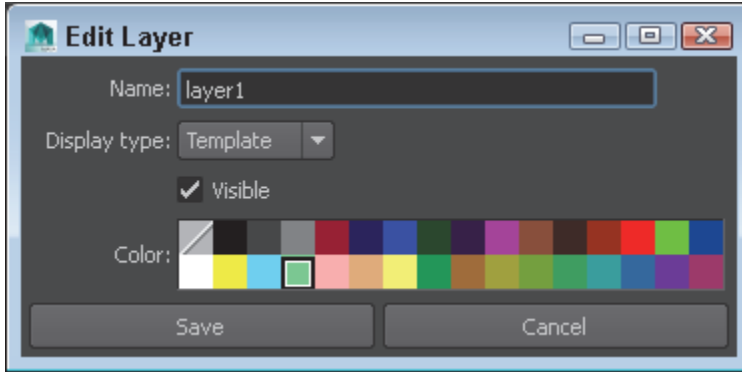


Figure 1-25
Edit Layer dialog box

Lesson 1.4-Tutorial 1: Change Channel Box Attributes

1. Select File, Open Scene. Locate and open the Rocket.mb file.

This file includes a simple rocket centered about the grid origin. All attributes for the rocket object are displayed in the Channel Box.
2. Enter a 5 in the Translate X attribute and press the Enter key.

The rocket object is moved five units along the X-axis.
3. Click on the Translate Y attribute in the Channel Box and drag upward in the Workspace with the middle mouse button.

The rocket object is moved along the Y-axis a distance equal to the amount that the mouse was dragged and the attribute value is changed, as shown in Figure 1-26.
4. Select File, Save Scene As and save the file as **Translated rocket.mb**.

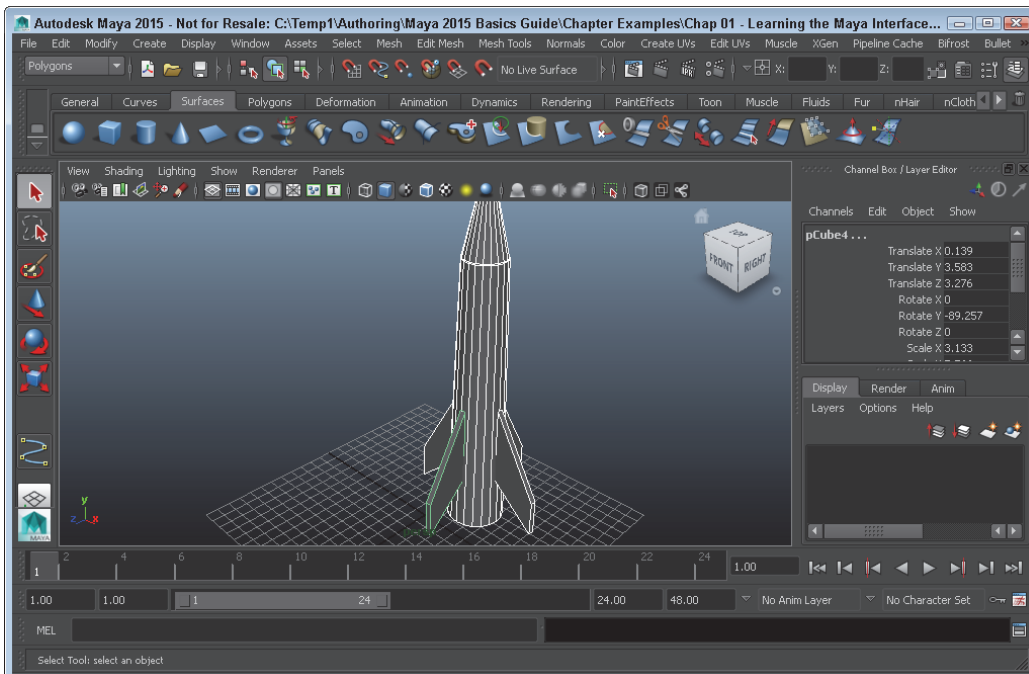


Figure 1-26
Translated rocket

Lesson 1.4-Tutorial 2: Create and Rename a New Layer

1. Click the Create a new layer button in the Layer Editor.

A new layer appears in the Layer Editor.

2. Double-click on the layer to open the Edit Layer dialog box.
3. Type in a name for the new layer and click the Save button.

Lesson 1.4-Tutorial 3: Add Objects to a New Layer

1. Select Create, Polygon Primitives, Sphere to create a sphere object.
2. Select the Edit, Select All menu command to select all of the objects.
3. In the Layer Editor, right click on the new layer and select Add Selected Objects from the pop-up menu.

All objects are added to the new layer.

4. In the Layer Editor, click on the first column in which the V is displayed.

All objects on the layer are hidden.

Lesson 1.5: Identify the Animation Controls, the Command Line, and the Help Line

At the bottom of the interface are several interface controls that are used to move through the various animation frames. Below these is a Command Line where you can type in commands to be executed. At the very bottom of the interface is a Help Line where context-specific information is displayed.

Selecting an Animation Frame

All current animation frames are displayed on the Time Slider at the bottom of the interface, as shown in Figure 1-27. You move between the different frames by dragging the black time marker or by entering the frame number in the field to the right of the Time Slider.

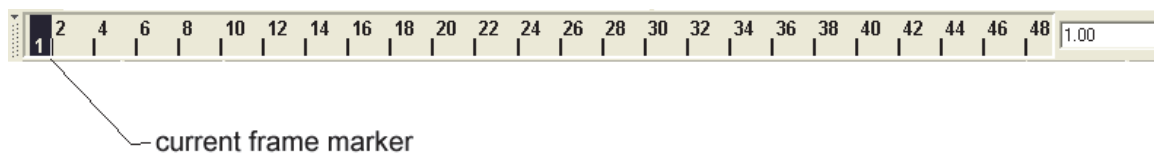


Figure 1-27
Time Slider

Setting an Animation Range

Below the Time Slider is the Range Slider, as shown in Figure 1-28. Using this slider, you can focus on a specific range of animation frames. The Time Slider changes as the Range Slider is moved.

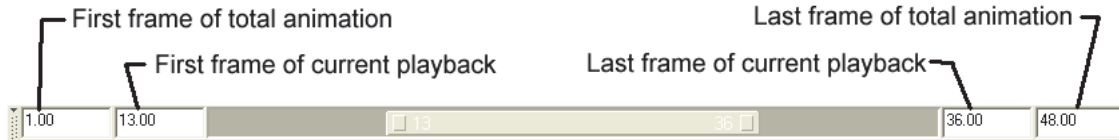


Figure 1-28
Range Slider

Playing an Animation

To the right of the animation frame value are several controls for playing, rewinding, and moving through the animation frames, as shown in Figure 1-29. Using these buttons, you can jump to the animation start (or end), step back (or forward) one frame, step back (or forward) one key, or play the animation forward (or backward).

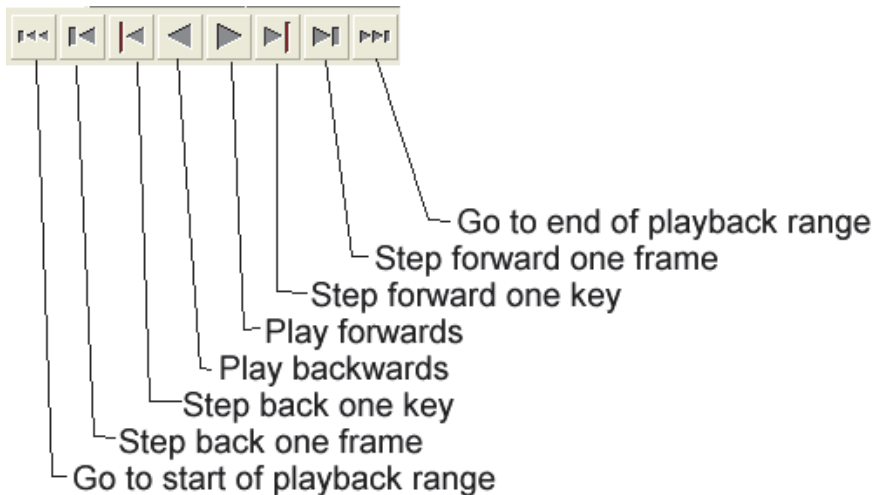


Figure 1-29
Animation controls

Accessing the Animation Preferences

Beneath the Go to End button is a button, shown in Figure 1-30, that will open the Preferences dialog box, as shown in Figure 1-31. This dialog box includes all of the preferences for Maya, but when it is opened using this button the Timeline category is selected, allowing you to change the animation preferences.



Figure 1-30
Animation Preferences button

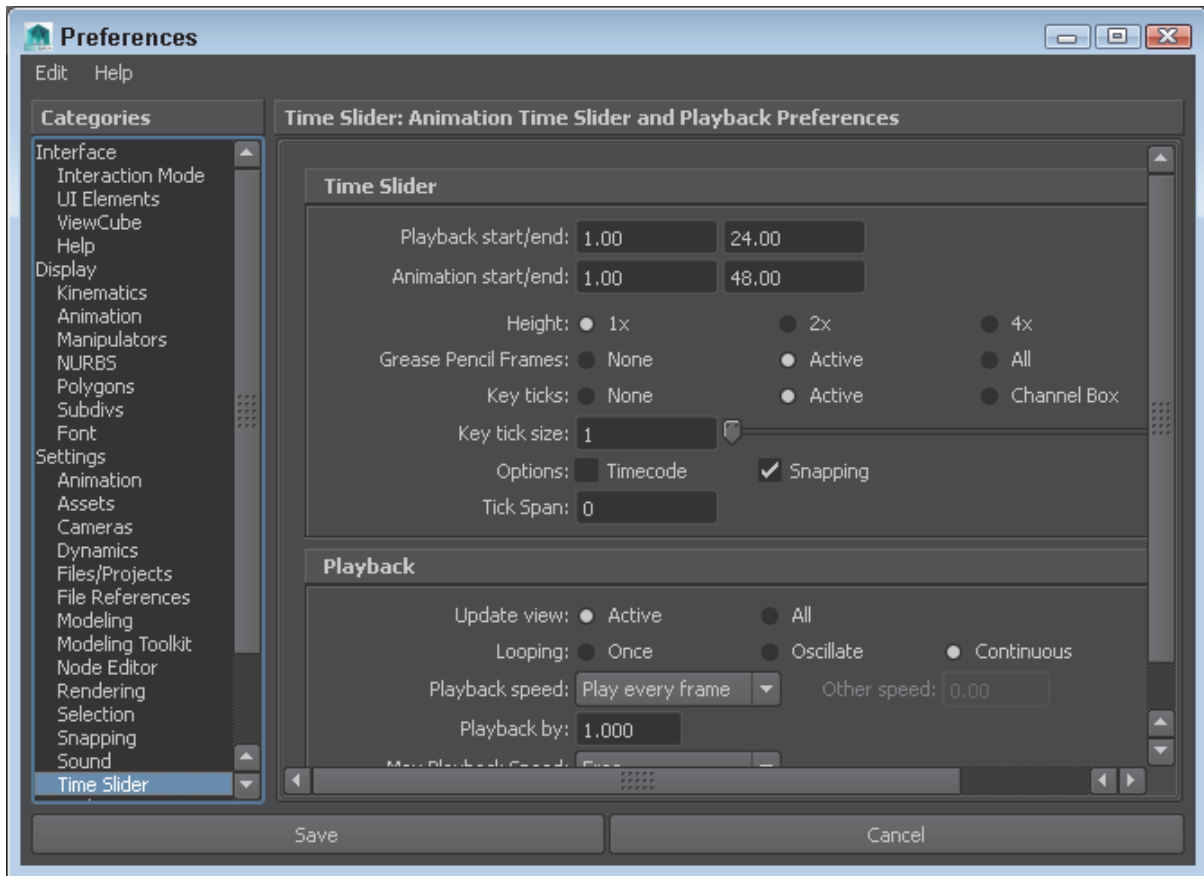


Figure 1-31
Preferences dialog box

Using the Command Line

In the Command Line, you can enter textual commands to be executed. All commands should end with a semicolon. The results of these commands are displayed in the dark-colored Results line to the right of the Command Line. To the right of the Results line is the Show Script Editor button, shown in Figure 1-32, that opens the Script Editor, where you can enter more detailed scripts. More on the Script Editor is covered in Chapter 15, “Using MEL Scripting.”

Tip

All commands that are entered into the Command Line are saved in a buffer. Using the Up and Down Arrow keys, you can scroll back and forth through the existing commands. Pressing the Enter key executes the listed command.



Figure 1-32
Script Editor button

Viewing the Help Line

At the very bottom of the interface is the Help Line, as shown in Figure 1-33. Within this line, Maya lists instructions that it expects to happen next based on the selected tool or mode. If you're stuck on what to do next, take a look at the Help Line.

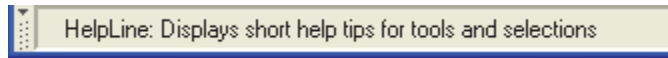


Figure 1-33
Help Line

Lesson 1.5-Tutorial 1: Play an Animation

1. Select File, Open Scene and open the Billiard balls.mb file.

This file includes a simple animated scene.

2. Click on the time marker in the Time Slider and drag it to the left.

The objects in the scene will move as the frames are increased. A frame of the animation sequence is shown in Figure 1-34.

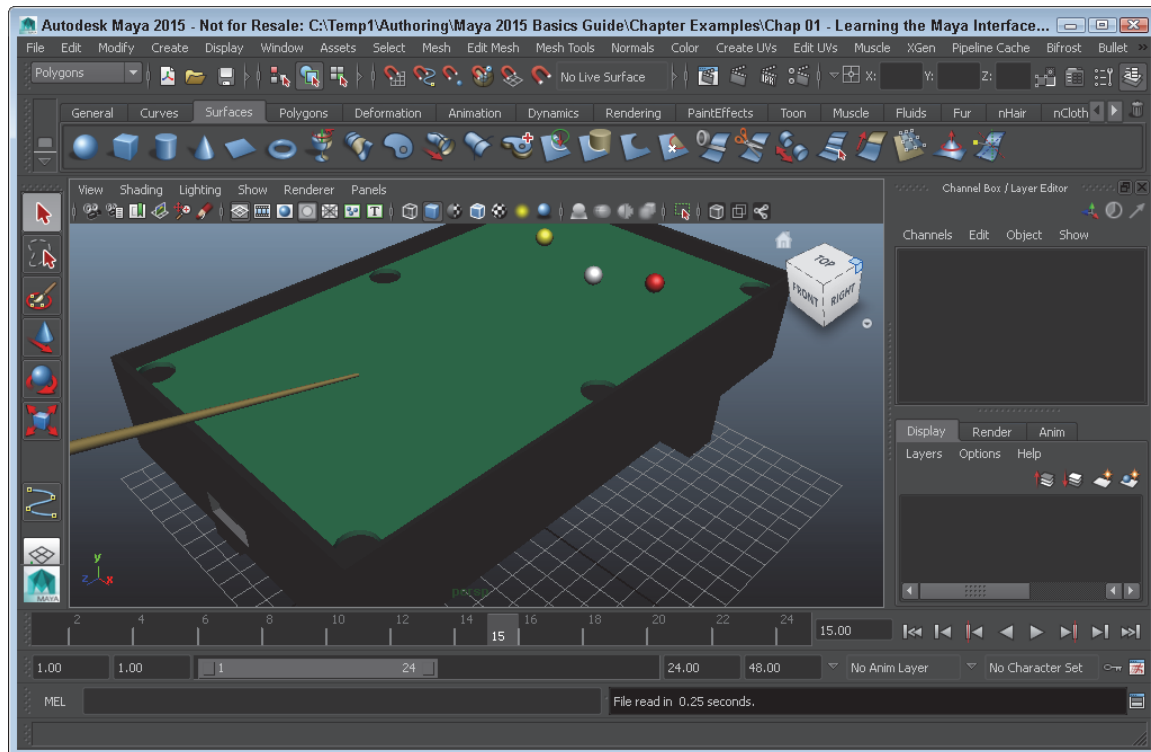


Figure 1-34
Animated billiard table

3. Click the Play Forwards button

The entire animation sequence will play over and over.

4. Click the Stop button to pause the animation.

Lesson 1.5-Tutorial 2: Enter a Command

1. Select Create, Polygon Primitives, Sphere to create a sphere object.

2. Click on the view panel away from the sphere to deselect it.
3. In the Command Line, type, **select pSphere1;** and press the Enter key.
The sphere object is selected.
4. In the Command Line, type, **move -z 10;**
The sphere is moved ten units along the z-axis.
5. Select File, Save Scene As and save the file as **Command line sphere.mb.**

Lesson 1.6: Use the Toolbox and Quick Layout Buttons

On the left side of the interface is a column of buttons collectively known as the Toolbox, as shown in Figure 1-35. Below the Toolbox are several layout buttons known collectively as the Quick Layout buttons.

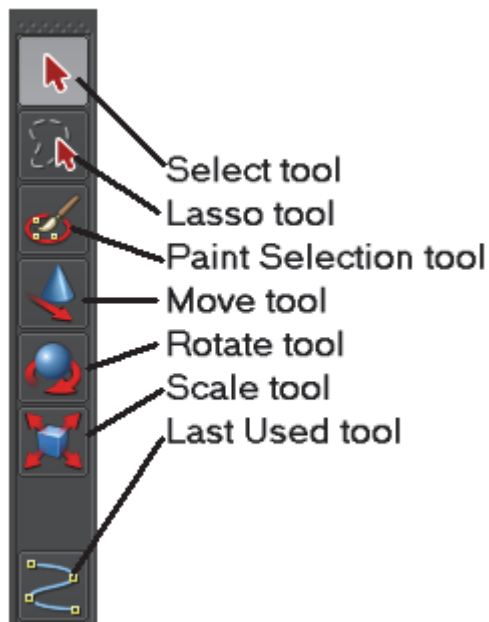


Figure 1-35
Toolbox

Selecting Objects

The first two buttons in the Toolbox are used to select objects in the scene. These are the Select Objects tool and the Lasso tool. The Select Object tool lets you select objects by clicking on objects or by dragging a rectangular border. The Lasso tool lets you drag a freehand outline over the object you want to select.

Holding down the Shift key while clicking on objects with the Select Objects tool will add objects to the selection set. All selected objects will appear white except for the last object selected, which will appear light green. This light green object is known as the *key object*.

Using the Transform Tools

The Toolbox also includes the Move, Rotate, and Scale tools. When any of these tools are selected, a manipulator will appear at the center (pivot point) of the selected object. With these tools, you can transform the selected object. Manipulator lets you transform the tool along a single axis or within a single plane, as shown

for the Move tool in Figure 1-36. You can also click on the transform values displayed near the manipulator and enter new values using the keyboard.

Tip

Once a transform handle on one of the transform tools is selected, it turns yellow. You can then drag the selected handle using the middle mouse button.

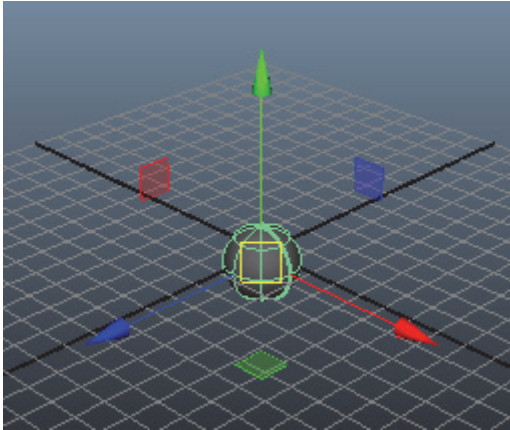


Figure 1-36
Universal Manipulator tool

Understanding Manipulators

Each of the transform manipulators has a color-coded components that will let you constrain a transform to a single axis—red is for the X-axis, green is for the Y-axis, and blue is for the Z-axis, as shown in Figure 1-37. The selected manipulator axis will turn yellow and dragging will transform the object along the selected axis.

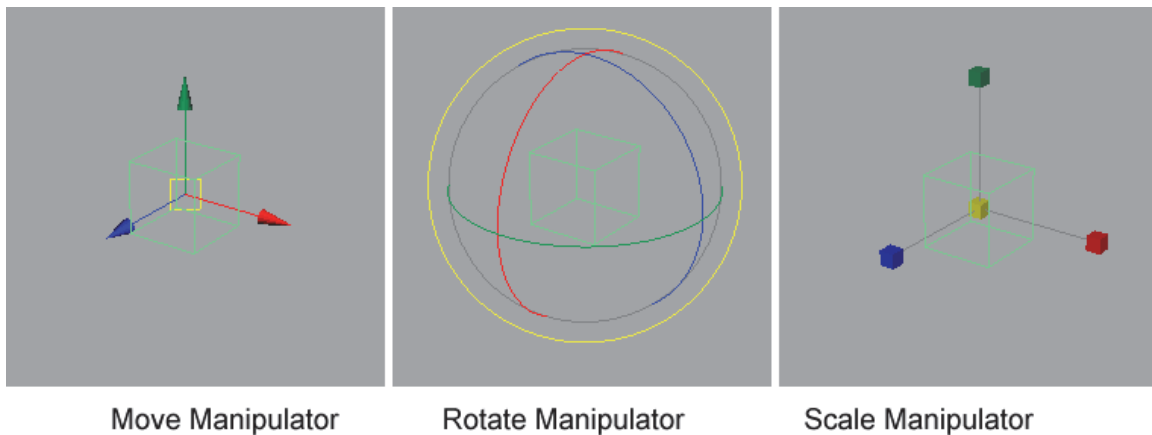


Figure 1-37
Transform Manipulators

There are many other manipulators besides the transform manipulators. For example, when a spot light object is selected, you can enable a manipulator that lets you alter its light properties such as its falloff cone, direction and intensity by dragging in the view. Object manipulators are made active by clicking on the Show Manipulator button in the Toolbox.

Beneath the Show Manipulator Tool button in the Toolbox is another button that holds the last tool that was used. Remember that any menu item or button that includes the word *Tool* in its name will remain active until another tool is selected and will appear at the bottom of the Toolbox.

Note

The last slot in the Toolbox is reserved for tools selected from the menus. The Toolbox tools will not occupy this slot.

Switching Layouts

Beneath the Toolbox are several buttons, as shown in Figure 1-38, that allow you to quickly change the layout of the Maya interface. The default layout options include Single Perspective View, Four View, Perspective/Outliner, Perspective/Graph Editor, Hypershade/Perspective, and Perspective/Hypergraph/Graph. The arrow button underneath these layout buttons presents a pop-up menu of additional layout options.

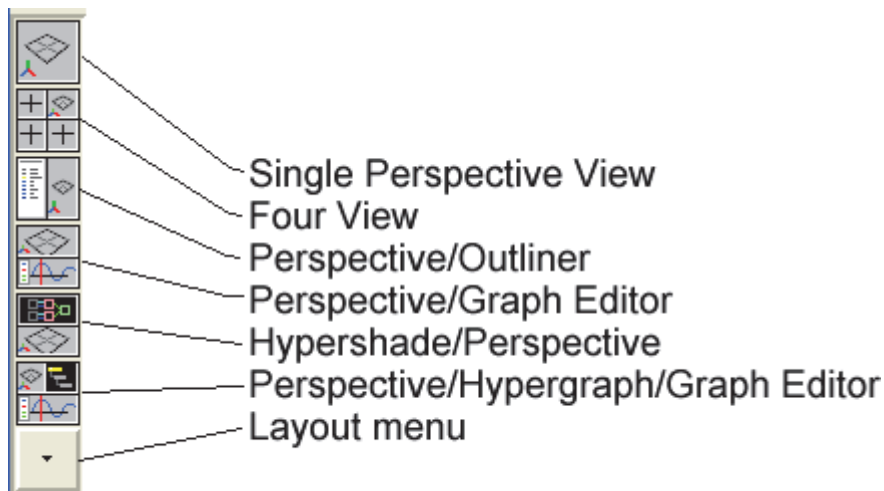


Figure 1-38
Quick Layout buttons

Customizing Layouts

You can change the layout that each button opens by right-clicking on the layout buttons and selecting the layout from the pop-up menu. If you right-click on the Model View button at the bottom of the Quick Layout buttons, you can select the number of panes that are displayed. If multiple panes are selected, the Model View button will be divided into the number of panes that you selected. Clicking on the Model View button will let you change the view that is displayed in the view that is clicked on.

Resizing and Editing View Panels

When multiple view panels are visible, you can resize the individual panels by dragging the dividers between the panels. Only one view panel can be active at a time.

Tip

Using the Spacebar, you can toggle between making the active view panel fill the entire Workspace and returning to the previous layout. For example, if the Four View layout is selected and the Top view panel is

the active view panel, pressing the Spacebar maximizes the Top view panel.

You can use the Panels menu command on the Panel menu to change the view for any panel. You can find the Panels menu at the top of each view panel. The Panels, Saved Layouts, Edit Layouts menu command to open the Panels dialog box, shown in Figure 1-39. With this dialog box you can create a new panel and edit custom layouts.

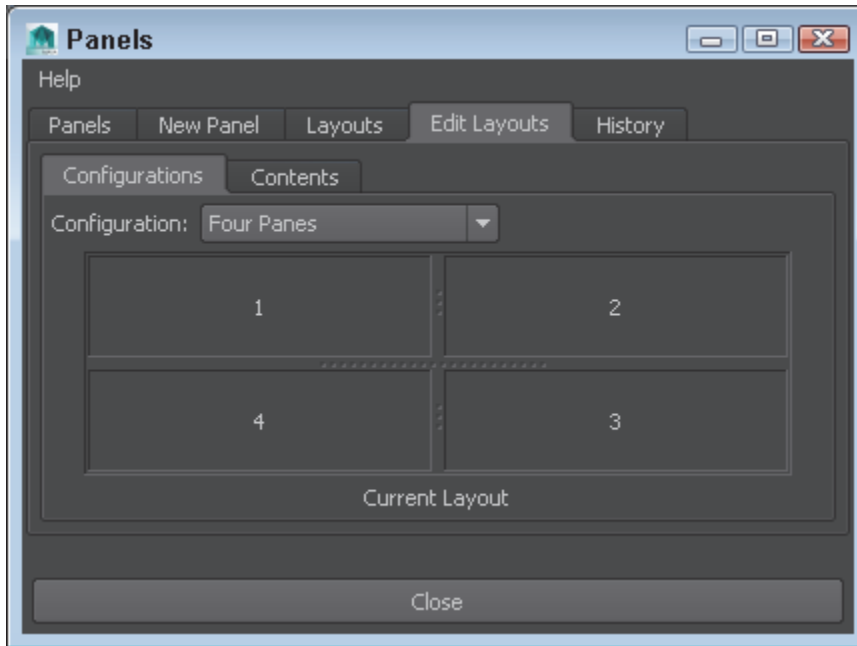


Figure 1-39
Panels dialog box

Lesson 1.6-Tutorial 1: Select an Object

1. Open the Five spheres.mb file.
This file includes five sphere objects.
2. Click on the Select tool and click on the center sphere.
The sphere in the scene turns light green and its attributes appear in the Channel Box.
3. Hold down the Shift key and click on the other spheres in the scene.
All spheres in the scene are selected and the last sphere clicked on will be light green, as shown in Figure 1-40.

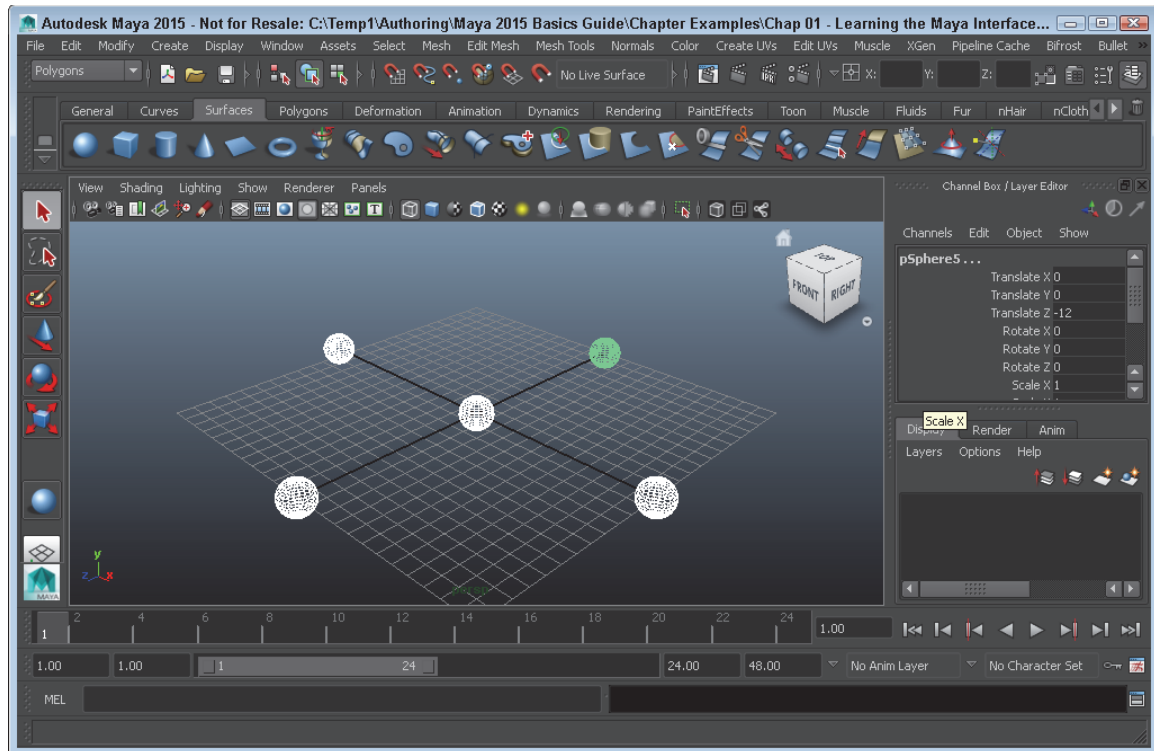


Figure 1-40
Selected objects

Lesson 1.6-Tutorial 2: Transform an Object

1. Open the Five spheres.mb file again.
2. Click on the Select tool and click on the center sphere.
3. Click the Move tool in the Toolbox and drag the green (Y-axis) upward.
4. The sphere moves upward in the scene.
5. Click the Scale tool in the Toolbox and drag the red (X-axis) to the right.
6. The sphere is elongated along the X-axis, as shown in Figure 1-41.
7. Select File, Save Scene As and save the file as **Elongated sphere.mb**.

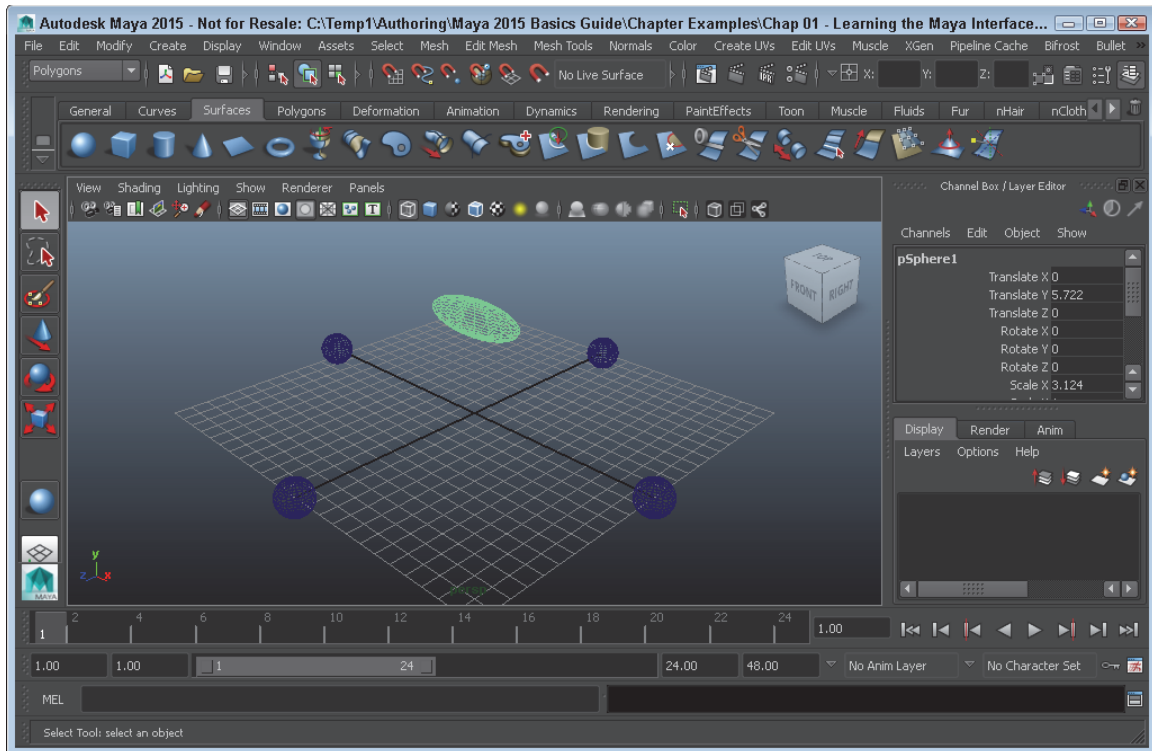


Figure 1-41
Transformed objects

Lesson 1.6-Tutorial 3: Change the Interface Layout

1. Click on the Show/Hide Channel Box button at the right end of the Status Line.
2. Click on the Four Views button in the Quick Layout buttons.

The layout is changed to show four views, as shown in Figure 1-42.

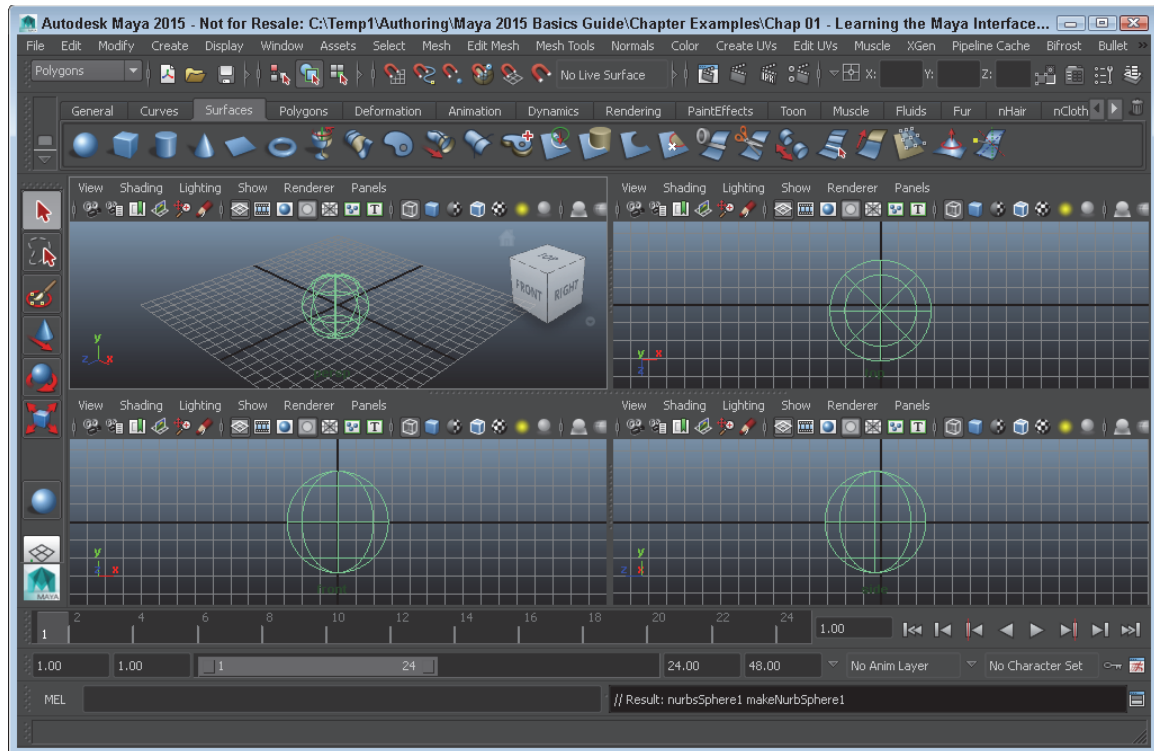


Figure 1-42
Four views

Lesson 1.7: Discover the Secret Menus

Once you get used to the menu commands, you can learn to work faster using the hidden menus. These menus will pop-up different commands when you right-click on objects in the scene.

Accessing the Marking Menus

For quick access to many common commands, you can open a **marking menu** by right-clicking in the view panel and holding the mouse button down until the menu appears. You can then move the cursor between the different menu options and release the mouse button to select the desired menu command. Figure 1-43 shows the marking menu for a polygon sphere object.

Tip

You can access a marking menu of selection options by holding down the **q** key while clicking in the view panel. You can access other custom marking menus in a similar manner such as Move Tool options (**w**), Rotate Tool options (**e**), Scale Tool options (**r**), Polygon Brush options (**o**), Select All menu (**a**), and Menu Sets (**h**).

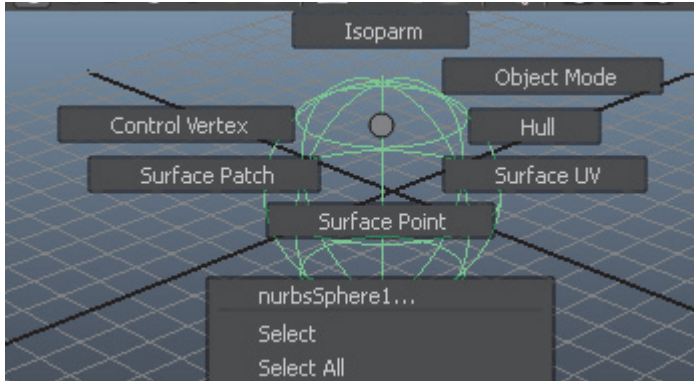


Figure 1-43
Marking menu

Customizing Marking Menus

You can alter the contents of a marking menu, assign a hotkey to a marking menu, or add a marking menu to the **Hotbox** using the Marking Menu Settings dialog box, shown in Figure 1-44. You access this dialog box using the Window, Settings/Preferences, Marking Menus menu command.

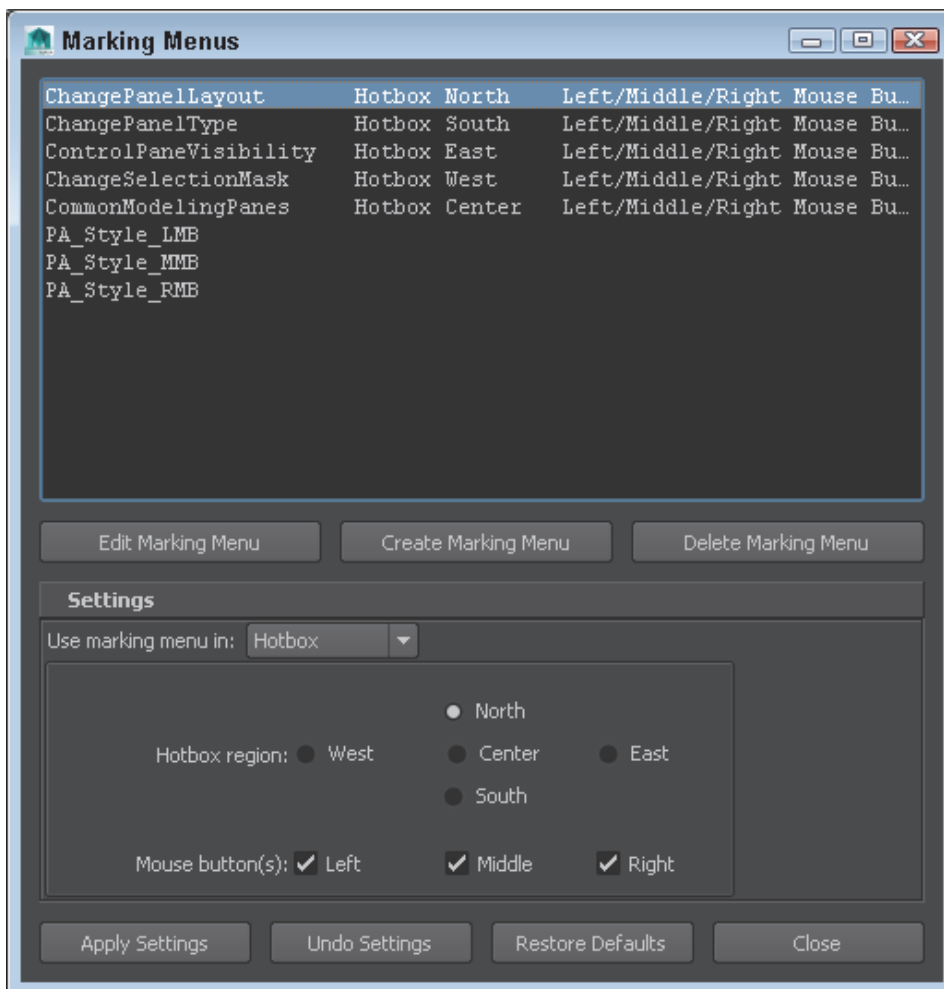


Figure 1-44
Marking Menus Settings dialog box

Using the Hotbox

The Hotbox, shown in Figure 1-45, is a complete set of customizable menus that you can access by pressing and holding the Spacebar. Using the Hotbox Controls option in the Hotbox, you can select which menu commands appear in the Hotbox.

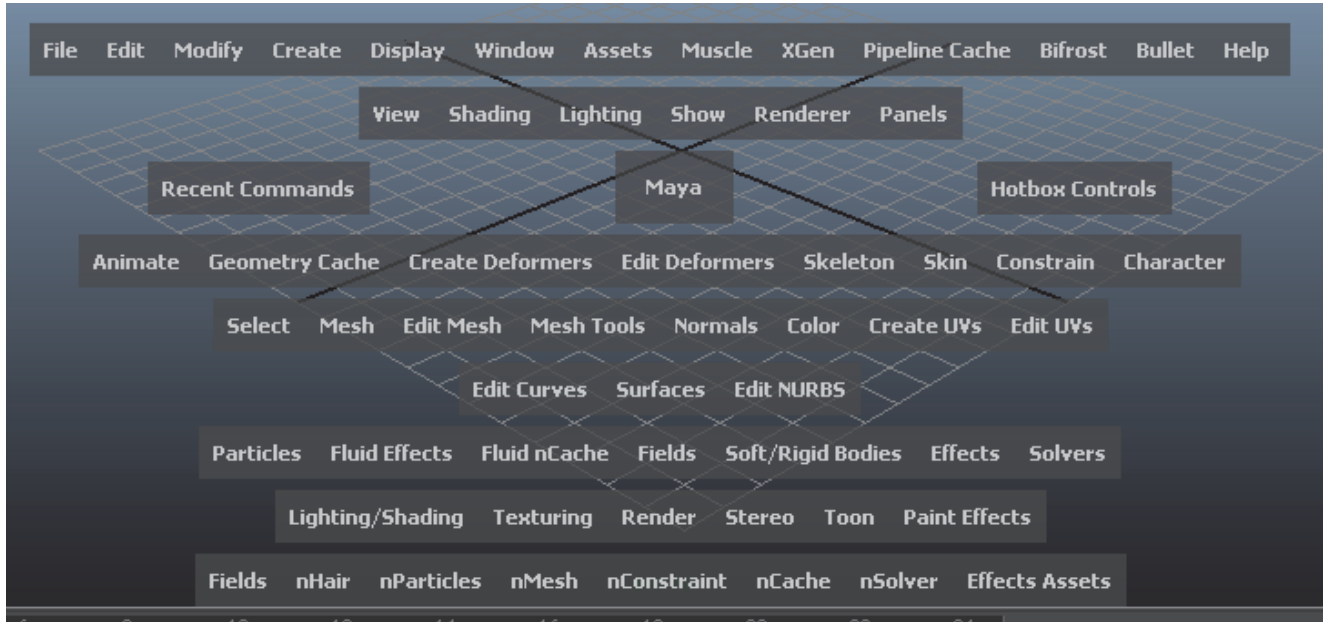


Figure 1-45
Hotbox

Customizing the Hotbox

If you select the Hotbox Controls option from the Hotbox, you can select which menu sets to include in the Hotbox. You can also select to Show or Hide all menus.

Lesson 1.7-Tutorial 1: Access a Marking Menu

1. Select Create, Polygon Primitives, Sphere to create a sphere object.
2. Click on the view panel away from the sphere to deselect it.
3. Right-click on the sphere and choose Select from the pop-up marking menu.

The sphere object is selected.

Lesson 1.7-Tutorial 2: Use the Hotbox

1. Move the cursor to the center of the view panel and press and hold the Spacebar.
The Hotbox appears centered around where the cursor is located, as shown in Figure 1-46.
2. Drag the cursor to the Create button and select the Polygon Primitives, Sphere command.
The sphere object appears in the view panel.
3. Release the Spacebar.

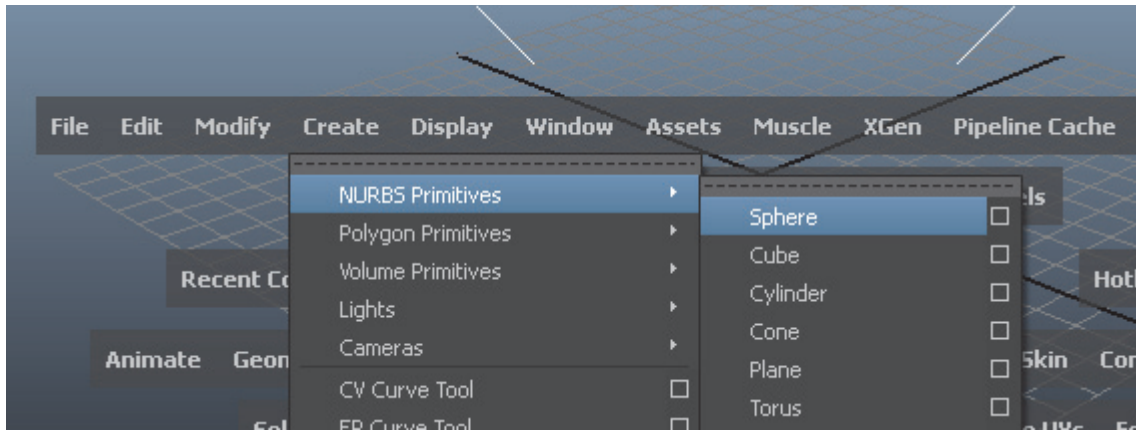


Figure 1-46
The Hotbox

Chapter Summary

This chapter takes you through a tour of the Maya interface, covering the basic interface elements, including the menus, the Status Line buttons, the Shelf, the Channel Box, the Layer Editor, the Animation Controls, the Command Line, the Help Line, the Toolbox, and the Quick Layout buttons. This chapter also explains how to work with these various interface elements and presents the marking menu and the Hotbox as other ways to work with the interface.

What You Have Learned

In this chapter, you learned

- * How to switch between the different menu sets.
- * How to use keyboard hotkeys.
- * How to access option dialog boxes from menus.
- * How to tear off menus.
- * The difference between tools and actions.
- * How to use pop-up help to identify buttons.
- * How to identify a change in the cursor denoting right-click menus.
- * How to expand and contract button sets.
- * How to open and save scene files.
- * How to show and hide the different interface elements.
- * How to use the Shelf.
- * How to add and delete items from a Shelf.
- * How to use parameters in the Channel Box.
- * How to use the Layer Editor.
- * How to work with the animation controls.
- * How to use the Command and Help Lines.
- * How to select and transform objects using the Toolbox tools.
- * How to add soft modifications to objects with the Soft Modification tool.

- * How to switch between the different layouts.
- * How to use and customize the marking menus and the Hotbox.

Key Terms From This Chapter

- * **Menu set.** A dynamic set of menu options selected from a drop-down list at the top left of the interface.
- * **Hotkey.** A keyboard shortcut that executes a command when pressed.
- * **Option dialog box.** A dialog box with additional options opened using the icon found to the right of specific menu options.
- * **Tear-off menu.** A panel of menu options that is removed to float freely from the interface.
- * **Status Line.** A set of toolbar icons located at the top of the interface.
- * **Pop-up help.** A small text title that appears when the cursor is held over the top of an icon.
- * **Shelf.** A customizable set of buttons organized into separate groups.
- * **Channel Box.** A panel of editable parameters that relate to the current selection.
- * **Layer.** A selection of objects grouped together into a set that can be easily selected.
- * **Animation controls.** A set of buttons used to control animation frames.
- * **Command Line.** A text field where you can enter text commands.
- * **Help Line.** A text field that presents the next action that is expected.
- * **Toolbox.** A set of selection and transformation icons located to the left of the interface.
- * **Quick Layout buttons.** A set of buttons for changing the interface layout.
- * **Universal Manipulator.** A manipulator that moves, rotates, and scale objects all at once.
- * **Soft Modification tool.** A tool used to edit local surface areas of the current object.
- * **Marking menu.** A dynamic set of menus accessible by right-clicking on an object.
- * **Hotbox.** A comprehensive set of menu options accessible by pressing the Spacebar.