

Xtranormal

www.xtranormal.com

Create cartoon animations

what is it?

Xtranormal's tagline is, "Create movies in real time on your computer." But the tagline fails to mention just how easy it is! Xtranormal is an easy-to-use, Web-based tool that has you point and click your way to rich cartoon animations. Type in a script, select characters, choose settings, camera angles, motions, and special effects. Click the "action" button and Xtranormal does the rest. Within minutes, you can create humorous animations ready to embed in your online courses and other webpages.

educational use?

Faculty have found making an Xtranormal movie can help break up the dull text of an online course. For instance, you can cut and paste a course announcement into Xtranormal, spend a few minutes customizing the movie, and then embed the result in a course. Now the "What's new this week?" becomes a humorous monologue delivered by a robot, superhero, or even a stuffed animal. Animate a course or section introduction, complete with dance steps and bows. Have students complete subject reports in the tool, adding a little fun to a serious assignment. Instructors using the tool report that students enjoy this break from the "normal" day-to-day of a course. See Chapter 14 for more on how one faculty uses Xtranormal.

pros & cons?

While the system is remarkably easy to use, it does take some time to tweak videos to get them ready for prime time. Also, while the system offers a wide variety of customizations, it is not sophisticated enough to actually model or otherwise act out instructional material. Also, be sure to preview your productions. The system's text-to-speech conversion can sometimes create amusing and unexpected moments in your movies.

what's it cost?

It's free to use, but you do need to sign up for an account to make movies.

alternatives?

While there are a variety of animation tools, nothing features the ease and quality of Xtranormal. Voki is one possible alternative (<http://www.voki.com>).

resources?

Tutorials

http://www.xtranormal.com/state_tutorials