Layers

Introduction
Layers are another way to organize scenes. Note that layers in a 3D application are not like layers in, for example, Photoshop. Objects on a higher layer do not appear on top of objects in lower layers: they’re all on the same level. Note that in other softwares everything has to be in a layer; this is not the case in Maya, which starts and can continue working with no layers at all. But layers do give you the option to freeze (temporarily remove from editability) different sets of objects, as well as to hide them, display them in different ways, or freeze them from accidentally being changed.

Layers in Maya
These are controlled from the Channel Box, accessible through the tab on the right hand side of the interface. At the foot of the box is a section with two upper tabs, Display and Anim(ation); below the Display tab are Layers, Options, and Help. There is a list and option section below.

To create a layer select an object then click on the Layers lower tab; a drop-down menu will appear that includes Create Empty Layer and Create Layer from Selected at the top. Whichever you choose, a layer will be created. Double click on the layer name – which will be something like layer1 – to open a dialog box in which you can rename the layer as well as specify whether the layer is visible, hidden in a rendering, and the color of the icon. Note that you can’t create a layer name that is the same as any item in the scene. Hit Save to keep these changes.

There are a few buttons to the left of the layer name. The V button toggles visibility and the P button whether objects on the layer are visible during playback (if V is off they will be hidden when the Play button is active, but return to view on Stop). The third button, which is blank by default, cycles through three states. When you click it once, the letter T appears (standing for Template) which shows everything in the layer in gray wireframe. It can’t be selected or manipulated in any way. Clicking the button again changes the letter to R – for Reference – which shows it in the same way as the rest of the scene but it can’t be selected. Clicking again cycles the button back to blank.

Note that right clicking on any part of a layer row enables a list of useful options.

Chris Yonge  20190104