The Attribute Editor

Introduction
The Attribute Editor gives you control over many parameters (properties) of your objects. It’s also where you start to create animation, tweak the material associated with the object, and change any and all properties of the mesh.

You can move right or left along the line of tabs with the mouse scroll wheel or by using the left and right arrows to the right of the line of tabs.

The tabs

When you first create an object (in this case a sphere) you’ll see the tabs above. The leftmost tab, pSphere1, contains the general properties of the object like its location, rotation, scale, and shear values. The top box, next to the word transform, is where you can change the name of the object (you can also do this in the Outliner). Let’s call it Earth.

Now you can see that both the first and second tabs’ names have changed. The second tab is the object’s general characteristics; we won’t be dealing with any of these. However the third tab, polySphere1, is the creation properties of the object. These can be changed and
animated at any point, and are part of the history of the object. Maya’s history feature is what in other softwares is called **parametrics**, and is very powerful. What you do when you change the values in this third tab are the original properties of the object when it was created – you’re going back in time, as it were – and all the changes you made since are now applied to that revised original object. Every time you apply an operation to the object a new tab is created with the values of what you did, and over time you can end up with dozens of tabs that give you complete control over the object.

However, parametric histories can also become very complex, with dozens of tabs all dependent on one another to develop the final shape. You may find with a complex object that you might want to keep a copy of the object, with its initial history, on a hidden layer, then collapse the history on the original with the command **Edit – Delete by Type – History**. This removes the polySphere1 tab as well as any other editable changes made since the object was created.

The Initial Shading Group details the general appearance of an object in a rendered image; this will start with Lambert1, which is the default for any new object. If you change the attributes of Lambert1 for any object, all existing objects using it will be changed, as will any new objects created in future. So in general you want to right click on the object and choose **Assign New Material ...**, **Assign Favorite Material**, or **Assign Existing Material**. What you then choose will depend on the renderer being used.