Maya interface features

Introduction
Maya has many tricks to its interface that can speed up work. Here are a few:

1 – Isolating the selection
It’s often useful to isolate a selection without going to the trouble of changing the visibility of layers. To isolate an object, find the Show menu at the top of the window, and then go to Isolate Select – View Selected or use Control_1 to toggle isolation mode. If you plan on creating new geometry (through duplication, extrusion, etc.) while using this, however, make sure you turn on the Auto Load New Objects option. Otherwise, new geometry will be invisible until you exit isolation mode.

2 – Dollying the view to the cursor position
Maya defaults to dollying around the center of view windows, which is often inconvenient. To dolly into the cursor: in the Viewport’s menu bar, go to View – Camera Tools – Dolly Tool in the viewport menu bar and open the Option Box. Uncheck the option "Towards Center" and close the box.

3 – Making the selection the center of the view
Select one or more objects or subobjects and hit the F key. The view will center around them and when you spin the view with the Alt_LeftMouse command it will stay in the center.

4 – Component level context sensitive menus
To rapidly access component (vertex, edge, and face) level tool menus, hold down Shift_RMB to access editing tools relevant to the particular component level one’s working on.

5 – To jump immediately from unselected Object mode to selected Component mode
If you look at the Marking Menu when you right click on a polygonal object, you’ll see that the various component levels are arranged in 45° increments. Edge mode is straight up. Face mode is straight down. Vertex mode is to the left. This feature takes advantage of that arrangement. To jump directly from unselected Object mode for an item directly into a Component mode, right click and then immediately and drag up to access Edge mode, down to access Face mode, or left to access Vertex mode. You have to do this before the Marking Menu has time to appear; it takes a little practice. But when you’ve got it (and memorized the various directions for different sub object elements for polygonal and NURBS objects) it’ll save you a lot of time when editing.

6 – To extrude several faces separately
Extruding a selection of multiple faces will extrude them along the normal of the first face selected as a solid block. When extruding fingers from a hand, however, you want the extruded faces to be separate. For this select them, hit Control_E, then go to the Channel box on the right side of the interfaces, scroll down, and using your left mouse button switch Keep Faces Together to off.
7 – Repeating the last command
This is most useful when doing repetitive operations such as merging a series of vertices down the seam of a mirrored mesh. Just use the G key.

8 – Rescaling widgets
Sometimes widgets get in the way or are simply too small to use in a particular situation. Use the Plus (in fact the Equals key, but it works as a plus in this situation) and Minus keys to the right of the number keys on the main part of the keyboard.

9 – Use the Mesh – Cleanup tool
This can help with tidying up a messy model.

10 – The Transform Constraint
This is found in the Modeling Toolkit tab on the right side. It allows you to constrain movement of a selected subobject to existing edges or faces.

11 – Snapping the pivot point to geometry
When you use the D key to move the pivot point of a selected object you can snap it to verts, edges, and faces with the V key.

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