

Chapter 1

Understanding the Softimage Interface

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- *Work with the Autodesk Softimage 2014 interface*
- *Create projects and manage files*
- *Use navigation tools in different viewports*

INTRODUCTION

Autodesk Softimage 2014 is a high performance 3D character animation and visual effects application that is used to create stunning artwork for films and television. To work with this software efficiently, you should be familiar with its interface as well as various tools and panels in it. In this chapter, you will learn how to start Softimage and then how to interact with its interface.

STARTING Autodesk Softimage 2014

After installing Autodesk Softimage 2014, a shortcut icon is automatically created on the desktop. Double-click on this icon to start Autodesk Softimage 2014 or choose **Start > All Programs > Autodesk > Autodesk Softimage 2014 > Softimage 2014** from the taskbar, as shown in Figure 1-1.

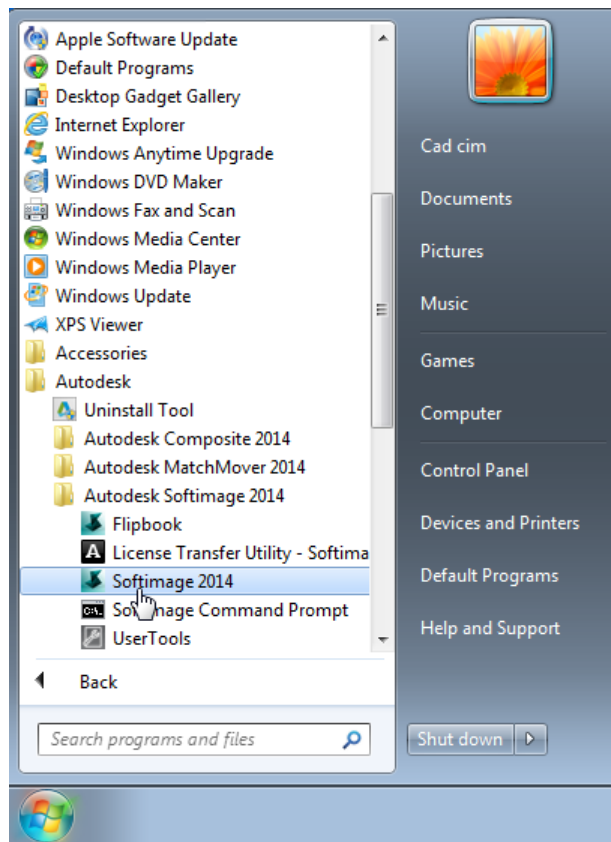


Figure 1-1 Starting Autodesk Softimage 2014 from the taskbar

On starting Autodesk Softimage 2014, the Softimage interface screen along with **Netview - Netview** window will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-2. If you do not want the **Netview - Netview** window to be displayed again with the startup screen, then clear the **Launch Netview On Startup** check box. To re-display this window, you can choose **View > General > Netview** from the menu bar or press ALT+5.

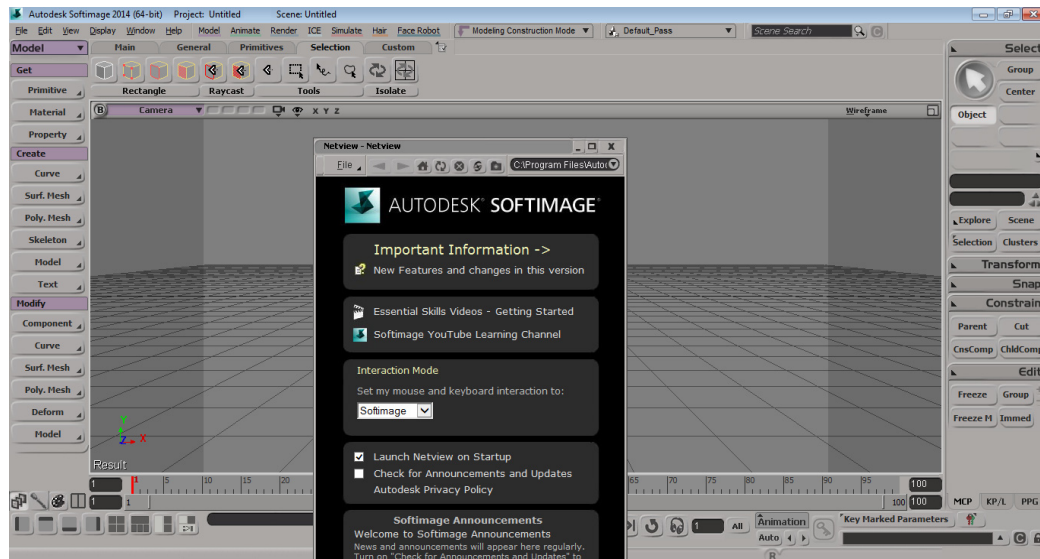


Figure 1-2 The *Netview - Netview* window

The **Netview - Netview** window is used to browse web resources both on internet and intranet. It also allows you to choose the mouse and keyboard interaction mode. In the **Netview - Netview** window, you can set the interaction mode for working with Autodesk Softimage. The interaction mode determines how the mouse and keystrokes will be interpreted. To set the interaction mode, you can select the **Softimage**, **Maya**, or **3ds Max** option from the drop-down list available in the **Interaction Mode** area of the **Netview - Netview** window.

Alternatively, you can choose **File > Interaction Mode** from the menu bar to set the interaction mode. On doing so, the **Interaction Mode** dialog box will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-3. Next, you can select **Softimage**, **Maya**, or **3ds Max** from the drop-down list in the **Interaction Mode** dialog box. In the **Netview - Netview** window, you can use the **New Features and changes in this version** link to access the **Softimage Wiki** webpage. You can use this page to access documentation, release notes, tutorials, new features added in the current release, and the community portal, refer to Figure 1-4.

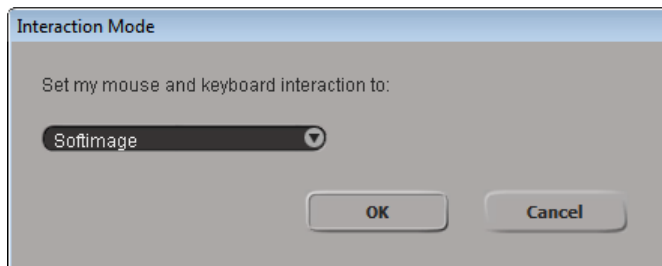


Figure 1-3 The *Interaction Mode* dialog box



Tip: It is recommended that you choose the **Softimage** interaction mode to optimize the functioning of all Softimage tools. In the **Maya** and **3ds Max** interaction modes, you need to use the **ALT** key for navigating in the viewport, whereas in **Softimage**, you need to use the **S** key to do the same.

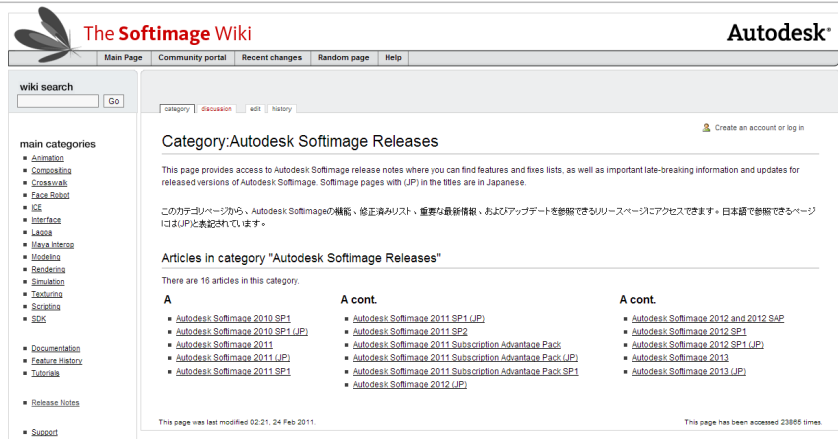


Figure 1-4 The Softimage Wiki webpage

UNDERSTANDING THE Autodesk Softimage 2014 INTERFACE

The interface of Autodesk Softimage 2014 consists of menu bar, toolbars, command panel, viewports, and other optional panels. All toolbars and panels in this interface are organized in a systematic way, thus making it a user-friendly interface, refer to Figure 1-5.

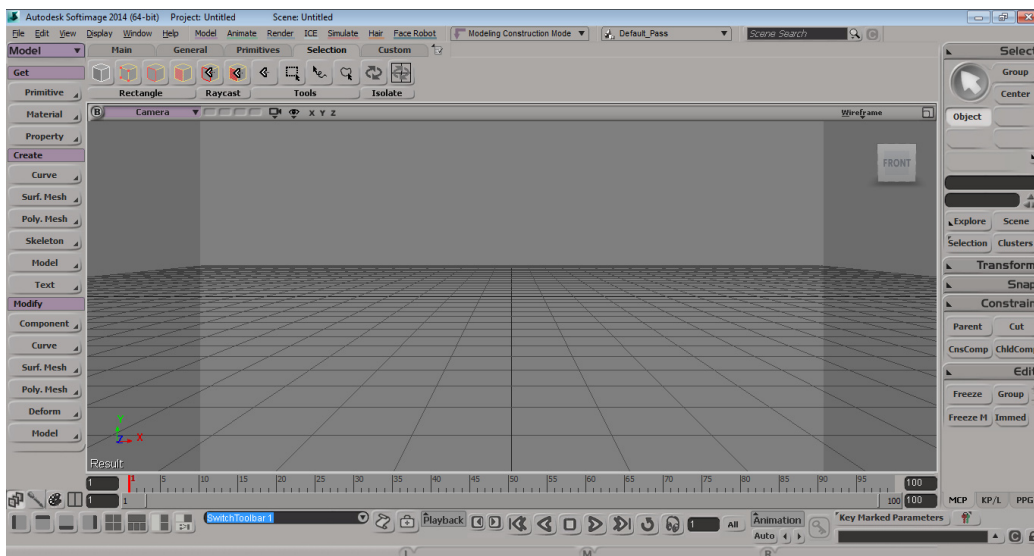


Figure 1-5 The default interface of Autodesk Softimage 2014

To view all panels and toolbars, choose **View > Optional Panels** from the menu bar; a cascading menu will be displayed. Choose **Show All** from the cascading menu; all panels will be displayed in an arranged manner in the interface. You can hide panels or restore the default panels by using the options in this cascading menu. The components of the interface are discussed next.

Title Bar

The title bar is located at the top in the interface. It displays the name, version, and license type of the software as well as the name of the opened file.

Menu Bar

The menu bar is located just below the title bar. It is used to access commands for performing various file operations such as opening, saving, editing a file, setting preferences, and so on. The menu bar is divided into different sections based on the operations that can be performed by using them, refer to Figure 1-6. These sections are discussed next.

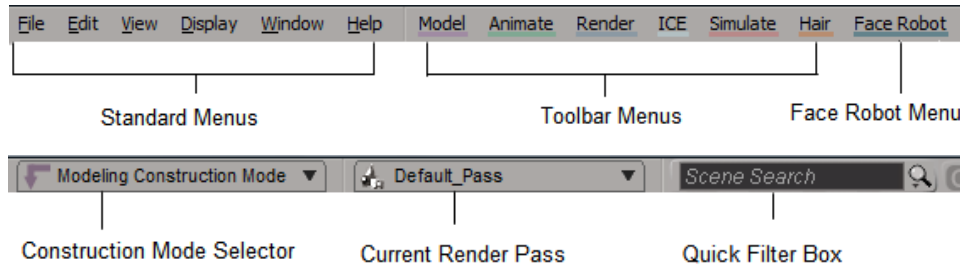


Figure 1-6 The menu bar and its sections

Standard Menus

The options in these menus are used for managing and editing files, setting preferences, displaying elements, and accessing the documentation. In Softimage, there are six standard menus namely **File**, **Edit**, **View**, **Display**, **Window**, and **Help**, refer to Figure 1-6.

Toolbar Menus

The menus in this section are **Model**, **Animate**, **Render**, **ICE**, **Simulate**, and **Hair**, refer to Figure 1-6. The options in these menus are used for modeling, animating, texturing, and rendering the elements as well as for simulating physical interaction between the geometry, particles, and hair. The options in these menus are same as those available in the toolbars.

Face Robot Menu

The options in the **Face Robot** menu are used to rig and animate faces, refer to Figure 1-6.

Construction Mode Selector

The Construction Mode Selector drop-down list is used to specify the mode for adding operators to the geometry stack, refer to Figure 1-6. The construction mode is classified into four different modes, namely **Secondary Shape Mode**, **Animation Construction Mode**, **Shape Modeling Mode**, and **Modeling Construction Mode**.

Current Render Pass

The Current Render Pass drop-down list is used to select the current render pass for the scene, refer to Figure 1-6.

Quick Filter Box

The Quick Filter Box is used to find and select specific elements in the scene, refer to Figure 1-6.

Main Toolbar

The main toolbar is displayed on the left side of the interface screen. It consists of a group of toolbars. By default, the **Model** toolbar is displayed in the main toolbar. You can view other toolbars as well. To do so, click on the down arrow on the right of the **Model** toolbar; a flyout with the toolbar options **Model**, **Animate**, **Render**, **ICE**, **Simulate**, and **Hair** will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-7. Click on the desired option to display the toolbar. Each of these toolbars contains menus and submenus. The submenu of a toolbar can be detached from the toolbar and kept in a handy floating window by clicking on the dotted line on the top of the submenu, refer to Figure 1-8. These toolbars in the main toolbar are discussed next.

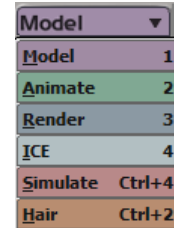


Figure 1-7 Flyout showing different toolbar options

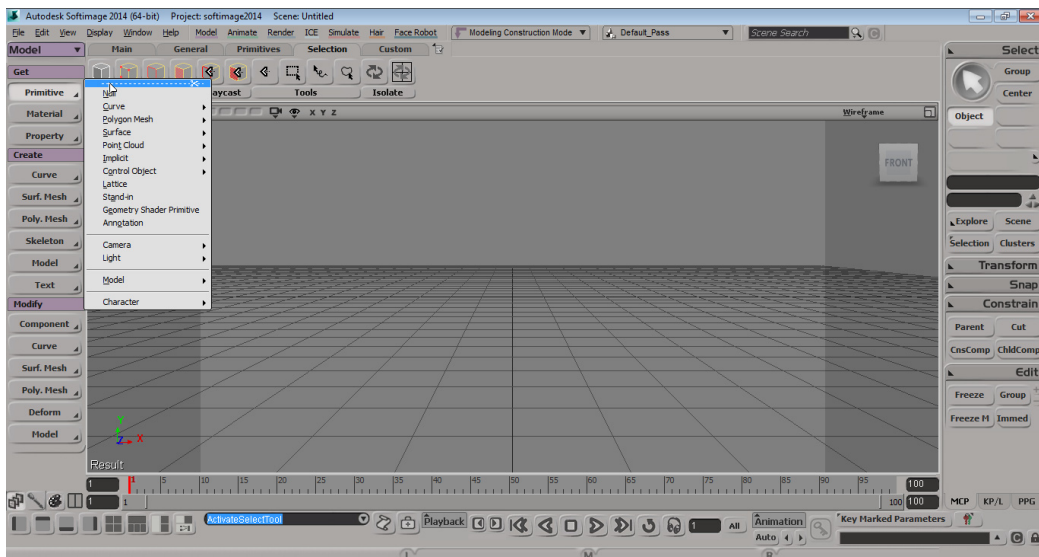


Figure 1-8 Clicking on the dotted line

Model

The **Model** toolbar consists of options that are used for creating, modifying, and texturing an object. If this toolbar is not displayed, then click on the current toolbar; a flyout will be displayed. Next, choose the **Model** option from the flyout. Alternatively, press 1 to invoke this toolbar. The **Model** toolbar is divided into various sections, namely **Get**, **Create**, and **Modify**, refer to Figure 1-9.



Figure 1-9 Different types of toolbars

Animate

The **Animate** toolbar consists of the options that are used for creating animations. To invoke this toolbar, click on the current toolbar; a flyout will be displayed. Next, choose the **Animate** option from this flyout. Alternatively, press 2 to invoke this toolbar. The **Animate** toolbar is divided into different sections, namely **Get**, **Create**, **Deform**, **Actions**, and **Tools**, as shown in Figure 1-9.

Render

The **Render** toolbar consists of the options that are used to apply render settings and display and modify the output. To invoke this toolbar, click on the current toolbar and then choose the **Render** option from the flyout displayed. Alternatively, press 3 to invoke this toolbar. The **Render** toolbar is divided into four sections, namely **Get**, **Modify**, **Render**, and **Pass**, refer to Figure 1-9.

ICE (Interactive Creative Environment)

The **ICE** toolbar consists of the tools and options that can be used for creating advanced effects and character rigs. You can use these tools to create custom deformers, animate particles, and simulate fluids. You can also create crowd simulation and produce complex effects using these tools. To invoke this toolbar, click on the toolbar currently displayed; a flyout will be displayed. Next, choose the **ICE** option from this flyout. Alternatively, press 4 to invoke this toolbar. The **ICE** toolbar is divided into the sections, namely **Get**, **Particles**, **Deform**, **Kinematics**, and **CrowdFX**, refer to Figure 1-9.

Simulate

The **Simulate** toolbar contains options that are used for controlling the simulation in the environment. To invoke this toolbar, click on the toolbar currently displayed; a flyout will be displayed. Next, choose the **Simulate** option from this flyout. Alternatively, press CTRL+4 to invoke this toolbar. The **Simulate** toolbar is divided into three sections, namely **Get**, **Create**, and **Modify**, refer to Figure 1-9.

Hair

The **Hair** toolbar contains different options that are used for creating, modifying, and displaying hair in viewports. To invoke this toolbar, click on the toolbar currently displayed; a flyout will be displayed. Next, choose the **Hair** option from this flyout. Alternatively, press CTRL+2 to invoke this toolbar. The **Hair** toolbar is divided into the different sections, namely **Create**, **Modify**, and **Display**, refer to Figure 1-9.

Buttons

In Autodesk Softimage, there are several buttons placed on the bottom left corner of the interface, refer to Figure 1-10. These buttons and their functions are discussed next.



Figure 1-10 The buttons on the bottom left corner of the interface

toolbar_panel



The **toolbar_panel** button is chosen by default. It is used to switch to the main toolbar, if some other panel is displayed. You can also switch to the main toolbar by pressing CTRL+1.

Weight Paint Panel



The **Weight Paint Panel** button is used to switch to the **Weight Paint** panel. This panel is used for painting weights or setting weight maps. The weight maps are properties of point clusters on geometric objects. Tools in this panel are used for painting the weight map on the selection. You can change the radius and opacity of the brush being used by changing the values in this panel. This panel consists of different sections, namely **Paint Tools**, **Edit Tools**, and **Deformers**. You can also press CTRL+3 to switch to this panel.

Palette and Script Toolbar



On choosing the **Palette and Script Toolbar** button, a panel consisting of two sections, namely **Wire Colors** and **Display Types** will be displayed on the left of the interface. When you select the desired color from the **Wire Colors** section, the wire color of the object will be changed depending on the type specified in the **Display Types** section.

PresetManagerFS



On choosing the **PresetManagerFS** button, a panel consisting of the **Materials** and **Shaders** option will be displayed on the left of the interface. It also consists of the embedded **Scene_Root** window which displays all the objects in the scene in a hierarchical manner.

Toggle Module Menu



This button is used to display or hide the main toolbar located on the left side of the interface.

Toggle Main Shelf



This button is used to display or hide the **Main Shelf** located below the menu bar.

Toggle TimeRange



This button is used to display or hide the time range located at the bottom of the interface.

Toggle Main Control Panel



This button is used to display or hide the Main Command Panel located on the right side of the interface.

Reset View Manager



This button is used to display all four viewpoints.

1UP3DOWN View Manager



This button is used to display all four viewports. On choosing this button, the Top viewport will be displayed on the upper area and the other three viewports will be displayed at the bottom.

Explorer, ViewB and User



This button is used to display the **Explorer**, **Camera**, and **User** views in the viewports.

ICE Tree, Render Tree, Animation Editor



The **ICE Tree**, **Render Tree**, **Animation Editor** button is used to display the **Explorer**, **Camera**, and **Render Tree** windows in a hierarchical manner. This button allows the user to work in these windows simultaneously.

Viewports

The viewports are the main viewing areas in the interface. The Camera viewport is the default viewport in the interface. When you press F12 in the Camera viewport, four viewports will be displayed in the Softimage interface. These viewports cover maximum area in the interface and display different views of the elements within a scene. The four default views in the viewports are Top, Front, Right, and Camera, refer to Figure 1-11. Out of these views, only the Camera view is non-orthographic and rest are orthographic views.

ViewCube

The ViewCube is an on screen navigation tool, which is used to switch between different views. When you hover the mouse pointer in the viewport, the ViewCube is displayed on the upper right corner of the viewport, refer to Figure 1-11. Note that the ViewCube is displayed only in active viewport.

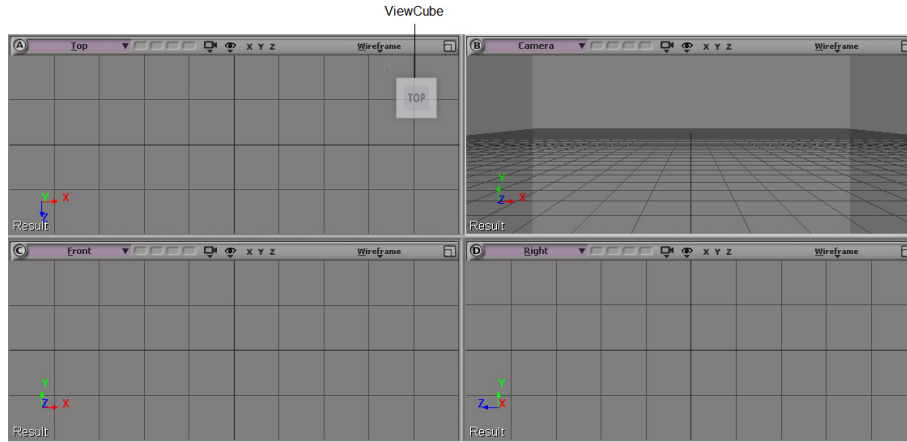


Figure 1-11 The ViewCube displayed in the active (Top) viewport

Coordinate System

Softimage uses the Euclidean/Cartesian coordinate system. A coordinate system is a mathematical representation of the space. This system is based on three perpendicular axes, X, Y, and Z intersecting at one reference point and that point is called origin. The coordinates are located at the bottom left corner of the viewport, refer to Figure 1-11.

Grid

Grid is used to evaluate the accurate placement of objects in the viewports. It is visible in all viewports. To toggle the visibility of the grid, place the cursor on the viewport and then press G.

Viewport Menu Bar

The Viewport menu bar is located on the top of every viewport. A Viewport menu bar consists of various options, namely Viewport Letter Identifier button, Views menu, Memo cams, Camera Icon button, Eye Icon button, X, Y, and Z buttons, Display Mode button, and the Resize button, as shown in Figure 1-12. These options allow you to perform various functions such as changing views and displaying types, setting scene visibility, and resizing the viewport. These options are discussed next.

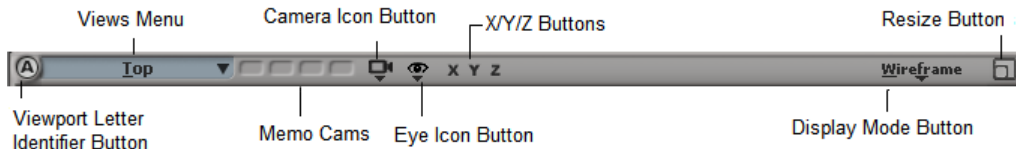


Figure 1-12 Various options in the Viewport menu bar

Viewport Letter Identifier

The Viewport Letter Identifier button is placed on the extreme left corner of the Viewport menu bar, which is represented by buttons A, B, C, and D for different viewports. These buttons are used to make the viewport mute or solo. When you click on the Viewport Letter Identifier button in a viewport, all other viewports will be muted. Alternatively, you can

right-click on the Viewport Letter Identifier button; a flyout with the options **Mute** and **Solo** will be displayed. You can mute the viewport by choosing the **Mute** option from the flyout. Refresh rate of a particular viewport can be increased by muting its neighboring viewports. A muted viewport does not update itself until it is unmuted. Alternatively, click on the Viewport Letter Identifier button using the middle mouse button to mute the viewport. It is a toggle button, therefore left clicking the letter again will make the viewport solo. The Viewport Letter Identifier button of a solo viewport is displayed in green.

Views Menu

There are different ways to set the angles from which you can view your scene in the 3D viewports. Options in the Views menu are used to control the views to be displayed, refer to Figure 1-13. A Views menu contains various options such as Cameras, User, Top, Right, Front, Spot lights, and so on.

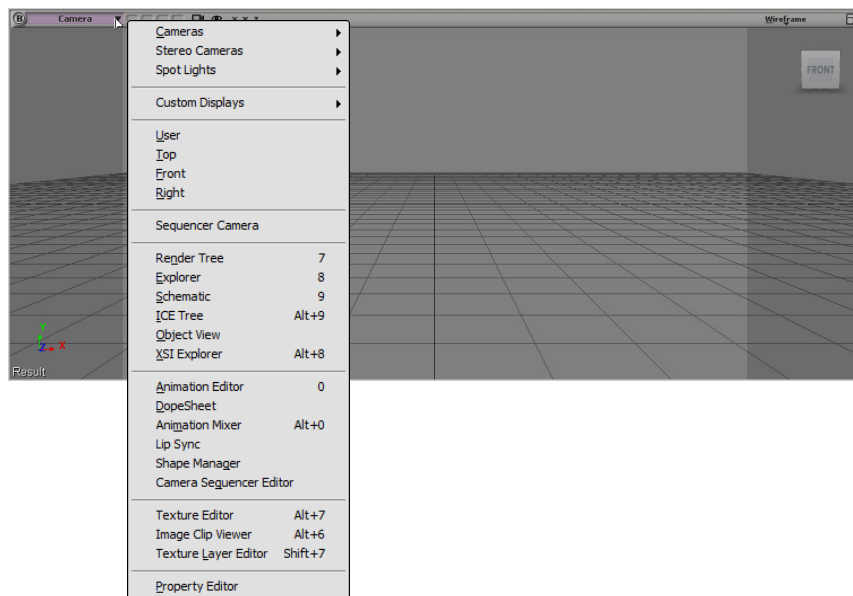


Figure 1-13 Various options in the Views menu

Memo Cams

The Memo Cams buttons store up to four views that can be quickly recalled later, when required. You can use left-click to recall, middle-click to save, CTRL+middle-click to overwrite, and right-click to clear the view.

Camera Icon Button

When you choose the Camera Icon button from the Viewport menu bar, a Camera Icon menu will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-14. The options in this menu are used to manipulate the view such as orbit, track, and dolly the scene with the help of navigation controls and shortcut keys. You can also change the background color of the viewport and scene using the options in this menu.

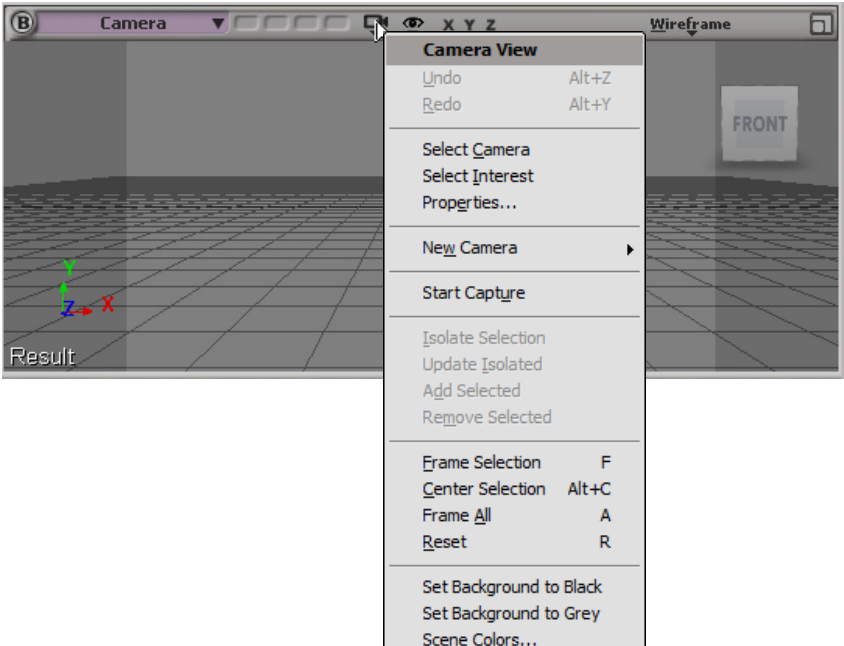


Figure 1-14 Partial view of Camera Icon menu

Eye Icon Button

When you choose the Eye Icon button from the Viewport menubar, the Eye Icon menu will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-15. The options in the Eye Icon menu are used to control the visibility of object types, components, and attributes in the viewports.

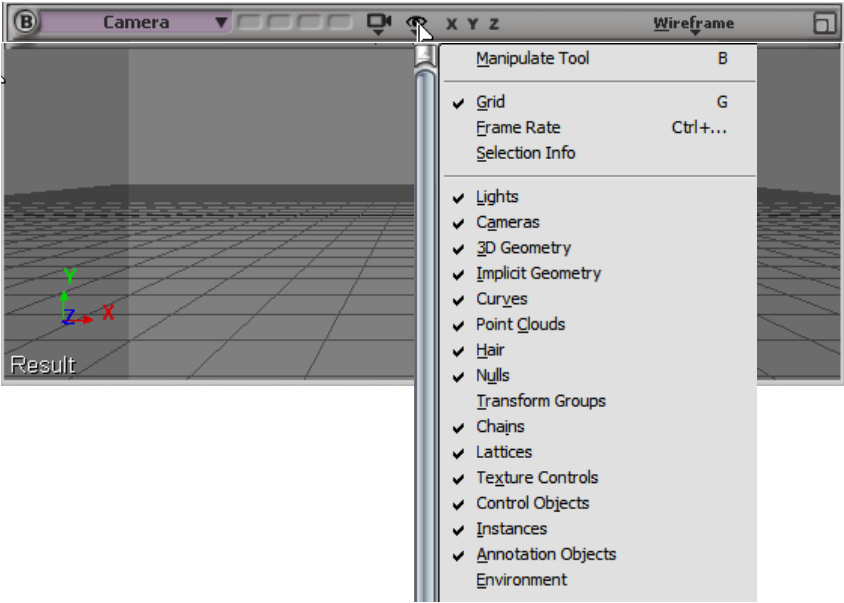


Figure 1-15 The Eye Icon menu

X, Y, and Z Buttons

The **X**, **Y**, and **Z** buttons are used to change the view in the viewport. The **X** button is used to view the right side, **Y** to view the top side, and **Z** to view the front side of the active viewport, respectively. You can also click on **X** using the middle mouse button to view the left side, **Y** to view the bottom side, and **Z** to view the back side of the active viewport, respectively.

Display Mode Button

When you choose the Display Mode button from the Viewport menu bar, the Display Mode menu is displayed, as shown in Figure 1-16. The options in this menu are used to change the display mode of the scene. By default, **Wireframe** is selected as the display mode. In Autodesk Softimage, the **High Quality** display mode gives a close view of the final rendered image in the viewport.

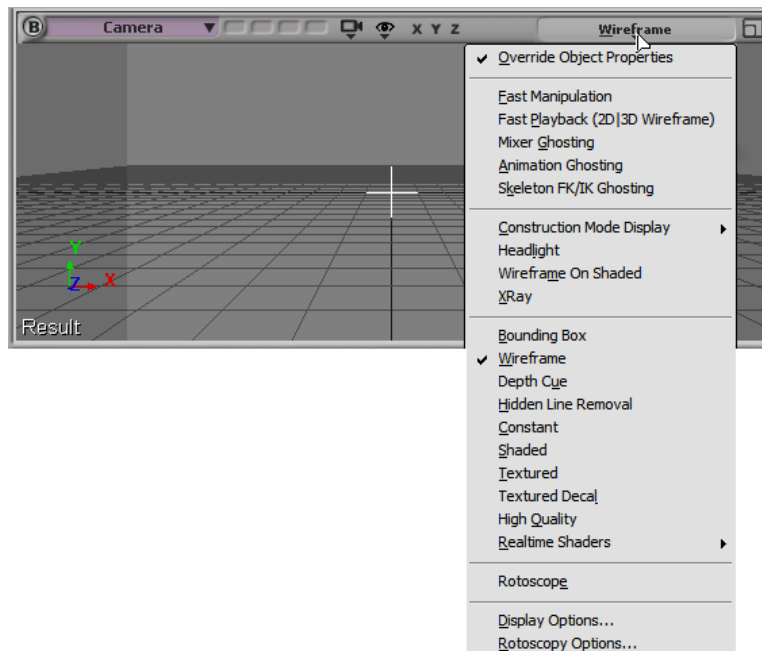


Figure 1-16 The Display Mode menu

Resize Button

The Resize button is used to modify the size of the viewport. Choose the Resize button to maximize and restore the viewport, middle-click to maximize and restore horizontally, CTRL+middle click to maximize and restore vertically, and right-click to display a shortcut menu, refer to Figure 1-17.

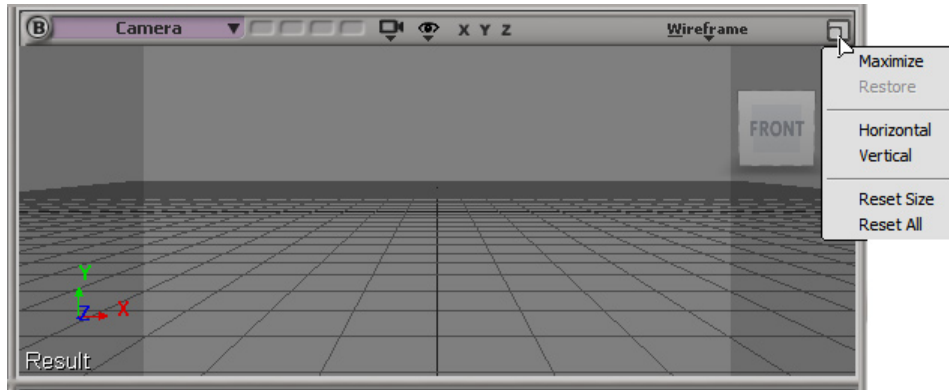


Figure 1-17 The shortcut menu displayed on right-clicking on the Resize button

Changing the Background Color of the Viewports

To change the background color of the viewport, choose the Camera Icon button from the Viewport menu bar; the Camera Icon menu will be displayed. Choose **Set Background to Black** from the menu to change the background color of the viewport to black. You can also change the color of an object, grid, and background by choosing the **Scene Colors** option from the menu.

Navigation Tools

These tools allow you to change the ways in which you can view a scene in the viewports. The navigation controls help you to work efficiently with 3D views. To work with navigation tools, choose the Camera Icon button; the Camera Icon menu will be displayed. In this menu, all the navigational tools such as **Pan & Zoom Tool**, **Dolly Tool**, **Orbit Tool**, and so on will be displayed, refer to Figure 1-14. The most commonly used tools are discussed next.

Frame Selection

The **Frame Selection** option is used to frame the selected objects in the active viewport, refer to Figure 1-14. To frame selected objects in a viewport, select the **Frame Selection** option from the Camera Icon menu or press F.

Frame All

The **Frame All** option is used to frame all objects in a viewport. To frame all objects in a viewport, select **Frame All** option from the Camera Icon menu or press A.

Center Selection

The **Center Selection** option is used to set the object at the center of the viewport. To set the object at the center of the viewport, select the **Center Selection** option from the Camera Icon menu or press ALT+C.

Track Tool

The **Track Tool** is used to track the camera at varying speeds in 3D viewports. You can track the camera at a normal speed, slowly, or quickly. To track the camera at a normal speed, press

and hold the left mouse button and drag the cursor. To track the camera slowly, press and hold the middle mouse button and drag the cursor. To track the camera quickly, press and hold the right mouse button and drag the cursor.

Orbit Tool

The **Orbit Tool** is used to rotate a camera, spotlight, or user viewpoint around its point of interest such that you can maneuver around the 3D objects to obtain different views. Choose the **Orbit Tool** from the Camera Icon menu or press O. Next, press the left mouse button to allow free rotation. You can also press the middle mouse button to allow vertical rotation and the right mouse button to allow horizontal rotation.



Note

*The **Orbit Tool** is used only in non-orthographic views (Camera, User, and so on).*

Pivot Tool

The **Pivot Tool** is used to rotate the point of interest around the camera, spotlight, or user viewpoint in the view. It only works in the perspective view. The left mouse button allows free rotation, the middle mouse button allows vertical rotation, and the right mouse button allows horizontal rotation in the viewport.

Dolly Tool

The **Dolly Tool** is used to move the view forward or backward without changing the field of view in the viewport. To move the view, choose **Dolly Tool** from the Camera Icon menu or press P to activate it. Next, press the left mouse button and drag the cursor to move the view normally, press the middle mouse button and drag the cursor to move the view slowly, or press the right mouse button and drag to move the view quickly.

Roll Tool

The **Roll Tool** is used to rotate the camera along the viewing axis (Z). It only works in the Camera view and User view. To rotate the camera, choose **Roll Tool** from the Camera Icon menu or press L. Next, press the left mouse button and drag the cursor to roll the camera with normal speed, press the middle mouse button and drag the cursor to roll the camera slowly and press the right mouse button and drag the cursor to roll the view quickly.

Walk Tool

The **Walk Tool** is a walkthrough camera tool that is used to combine the mouse movement with a custom key map to help you navigate precisely in the Camera view. To do so, choose the **Walk Tool** from the Camera Icon menu to activate it. Next, press and hold the left mouse button and drag the cursor for normal walk, press and hold the middle mouse button and drag the cursor for slow walk, and press the right mouse button and drag the cursor for quick walk.

Shortcut Keys to Navigate in the Viewports

In Autodesk Softimage, you can invoke various commands using shortcut keys. Once you press a shortcut key, the shape of the cursor will change to identify the active tool. Any further key input will execute the related tool. For example, pressing V activates **Transform Tool**. Note that only

one tool can be activated at a time. Tools can be activated in one of the two modes: Sticky and Supra. The Supra mode is also referred to as temporary mode. In Sticky mode, you can activate a tool by quickly pressing and releasing its shortcut key, while in Supra mode, you must keep the key held down to let the tool remain active. For example, press V to activate **Transform Tool** in the Sticky mode. Next, press and hold S; the navigation tool will be activated in the Supra mode. Now, you can press the left mouse button to pan, the middle mouse button to dolly, and the right mouse button to orbit around in the viewport. Release S; **Transform Tool** will be activated again.

Main Command Panel

The Main Command Panel contains most frequently used commands and tools for selecting, transforming, snapping, constraining, and editing objects, refer to Figure 1-18. It is located on the right side of the viewport screen. In this panel, tools and commands of similar use are grouped under different headings as subpanels. To access the tools and commands in a subpanel, left-click on the name of the panel; the tools and options in that subpanel will be displayed. To expand and collapse the subpanel right-click on the respective subpanel. The subpanels in the Main Command Panel are discussed next.

Select Subpanel

The **Select** subpanel is used to select the objects to manipulate them.

Transform Subpanel

The **Transform** subpanel contains different transform tools, commands, and edit boxes that are used to scale, rotate, and translate the objects.

Snap Subpanel

The **Snap** subpanel is used to align the objects while moving or creating them. The **Snap** subpanel contains different buttons that are used to enable different types of snapping such as snap to points, snap to segments, and snap to reference plane.

Constrain Subpanel

The **Constrain** subpanel contains different buttons that are used to create, cut, and split the hierarchical link between the objects.

Edit Subpanel

The **Edit** subpanel is used to edit, group, and freeze the objects. This panel can also be used to delete the history of actions performed on an object.

KP/L

The **KP/L** button is used to switch to the Keying panel, if this panel is not the current panel. The **KP/L** panel is divided into three sections, refer to Figure 1-19. These sections are discussed next.

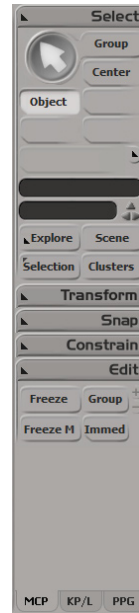


Figure 1-18 The Main Command Panel

Mini Transform Panel

The Mini Transform panel is used to set the transformation values of the objects. This is the same as using the **Transform** panel on the Main Command Panel.

Keying Panel

The **Keying Panel** is used to set the keys for an object and then animate the object based on the set value. This panel is displayed only when an object is created. You can set the transform values of the object and set the values of animation parameters in their respective fields under the **Local Transform** property set available in the **Keying Panel**, refer to Figure 1-20.

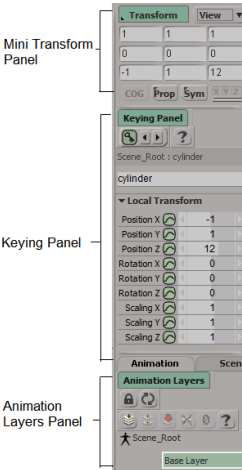


Figure 1-19 The KP/L panel

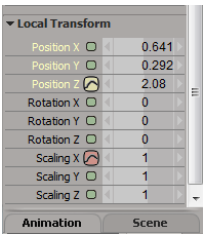


Figure 1-20 The Local Transform property set

Animation Layers Panel

The options in the **Animation Layers** panel are used to create animation layers, add keys in a separate layer of an object, control the animation, and manage different elements in the scene.

PPG Button

The **PPG** button is used to switch to the Property Page panel available in the main toolbar. In this panel, you can work with properties of elements such as height, width, angles, and subdivisions of the geometry.

Lower Interface Controls

The lower interface controls are used to control animations, set animation parameters, and edit the animation information. These controls are located at the bottom edge of the interface screen, as shown in Figure 1-21. These controls are discussed next.

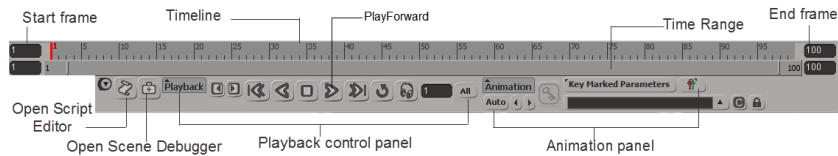


Figure 1-21 The lower interface controls

Timeline and Time Range

The **Timeline** displays the duration of the current animation. The **Time Range** displays the range of frames for the current animation.

Open Script Editor

The **Open Script Editor** button is used to display an editor in which you can create, save, and modify scripts.

Open Scene Debugger

The **Open Scene Debugger** button is used to display the **Scene Debugger** window which is used to analyze the performance of a scene by displaying the processing time of the scene and the memory consumed.

Playback Control Panel

You can control an animated scene using various controls in the **Playback control panel**. The different controls available in this panel are **Previous Frame (Left)**, **Next Frame (Right)**, **First Frame (Home)**, **Play Backwards from the End Frame**, **Play Forward**, **Last Frame (End)**, **Loop**, **Audio Mute**, **Current Frame**, **Play All Frames VS. Real-Time Playback**, and so on.

Animation Panel

The **Animation panel** contains a number of animation controls that allow you to mark parameters, set keyframes, retime animation, and so on. These controls are discussed next.

Autokey Button



The **Autokey** button is used to automatically create the animation key after editing each parameter.

Animation Button



The **Animation** button is used to control the animation. It contains commands for many animation operations such as setting and removing keys, moving between keyframes, copying and removing an animation, scaling and offsetting animation, setting expressions and scripted operators, linking parameters, unmarking parameters, and opening the expression and animation editors.

Previous Key and Next Key Buttons



The **Previous Key** and **Next Key** buttons are used to switch to the previous and next keyframes in the **Timeline**, respectively. Alternatively, you can press the left arrow or right arrow key.



Tip: Press **CTRL+left arrow** and **CTRL+right arrow** to switch to the previous and next keys in the Timeline, respectively.

Set Key on Marked Parameter Button



The **Set Key on Marked Parameter** button is used to add a key at the current frame.

Save Key Preference

When you start setting the animation keys, you need to set a preference that determines which parameters are keyed, when you press K. Choose the **Key Marked Parameters** button; a flyout will be displayed with various options, as shown in Figure 1-22. These options are discussed next.

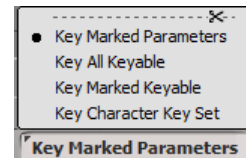


Figure 1-22 A flyout with various options

Key Marked Parameters: This option is selected by default. As a result, the keys are set only on marked parameters.

Key All Keyable: This option is used to set the keys on all parameters (keyable) for the selected object that is displayed in the keying panel.

Key Marked Keyable: This option is used to set the keys only on keyable parameters that are marked in the keying panel.

Key Character Key Set: This option is used to set the keys only on parameters in the current character (or sub character) key set.

Marked Parameter: The options in the **Marked Parameter** drop-down list are used to open the marked parameters during animation operations. The current parameter of the selected object is displayed in the edit box below the drop-down list. You can also lock and clear the marked parameters by using the **Lock** and **Clear Marking** buttons next to the **Marked Parameter** drop-down list. Figure 1-23 shows the **Marked Parameter** with **Lock** and **Clear Marking** buttons.



Clear Marking button

Figure 1-23 The **Marked Parameter** drop-down list and the **Lock** and **Clear Marking** buttons

Character Key Sets Button



The **Character Key Sets** button provides commands for creating and working with character key sets.

Main Shelf

The **Main Shelf** contains the most commonly used tools and buttons. It is located below the menu bar. By default, there are some predefined shelves in the **Main Shelf** such as **Polygons**, **Primitives**, **Navigation**, **Transform**, **Selection**, **Display**, and **Visibility**, as shown in Figure 1-24.

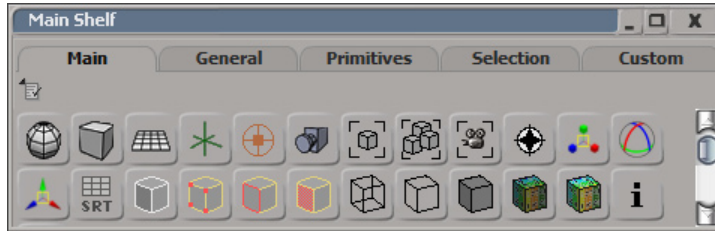


Figure 1-24 The Main Shelf

MANAGING FILES IN Autodesk Softimage

Softimage has many features for managing files within projects. Using these features, you can create, open, save, import, and export your files. Softimage also allows you to organize various files associated with the scene files into projects. A project may contain unlimited number of scenes. By default, the scene files are stored in the *Scenes* folder with *.scn* extension. In the next section, you will learn to manage files in Softimage.

Setting a Project Folder

Before you start a project, you need to create a project folder to keep your files in an organized manner. To set the project, choose **File > New Project** from the menu bar; the **New Project** dialog box will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-25.

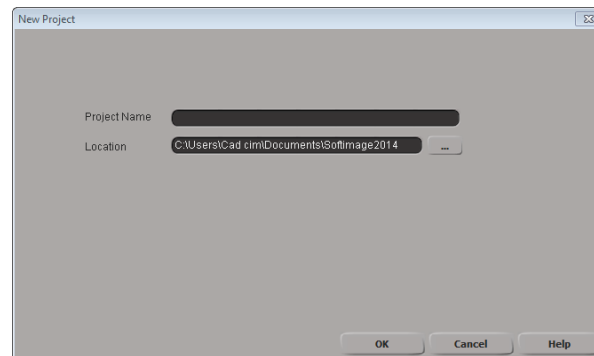


Figure 1-25 The New Project dialog box

In the **Project Name** edit box of this dialog box, enter the name of the project. In the **Location** edit box, specify the location where you want to save the project. Next, choose the **OK** button; a new project folder will be created at the specified location. You can also set your project by choosing **File > Project Manager** from the menu bar. On doing so, the **Project Manager** dialog box will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-26. In this dialog box, a list of created projects will be displayed in the **Select a Project** list. You can create a new project, add a project, remove a project, delete a project by using various buttons in this dialog box. In the **Select Scene** list, all files in the selected project folder are displayed. You can also create a new scene in the selected project folder using the **New Scene** button.

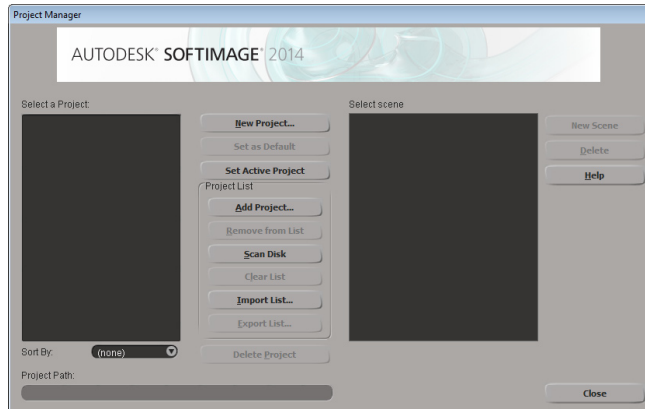


Figure 1-26 The Project Manager dialog box

Creating a Scene

When you start Autodesk Softimage, a new scene is opened automatically. You can set the output format of the newly opened scene in the **Preferences** dialog box. To do so, choose **File > Preferences** from the menu bar; the **Preferences** dialog box will be displayed. In this dialog box, choose **Output Format** from the list located at the left side of the dialog box; the **Output Format** properties are displayed on the right side of the pane in this dialog box. Next, set the required frame format in the **Preset** drop-down list and then choose the **Save Custom Preset** button; the frame format will be saved. Next, close the dialog box. Now, choose **File > New Scene** from the menu bar or press CTRL+N; a message box with the message “Do you want to save it now” will be displayed. Choose the **No** button from this message box; the **Untitled** scene will be displayed.



Note

The NTSC D1 4/3 720x486 frame format is used in all tutorials of this textbook.

Opening Files

To open an existing file, choose **File > Open** from the menu bar; the **Load Scene** dialog box will be displayed. Alternatively, press CTRL+O. In this dialog box, choose the **Paths** button to browse to the desired path. If the project is already set, then you need to select the project folder in the dialog box and then select the required file from the *Scenes* sub folder.

Saving a Scene

To save a scene file, Choose **File > Save** from the menu bar; the **Save Scene** dialog box will be displayed, as shown in Figure 1-27. Specify the file name in the **File Name** edit box, and then choose the **OK** button to save the scene and close the dialog box.

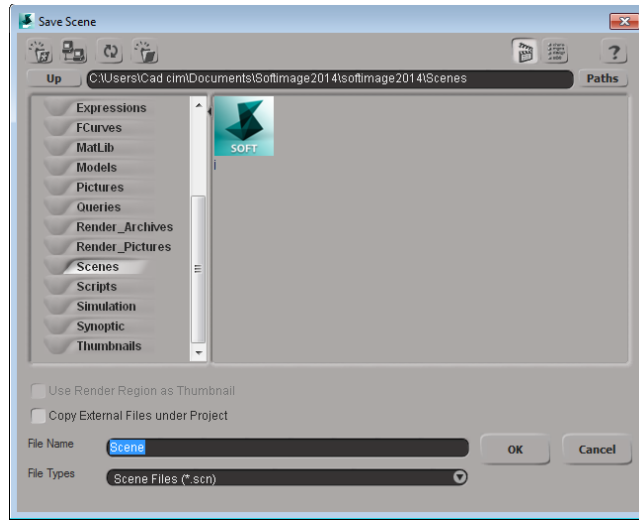


Figure 1-27 The Save Scene dialog box

Exporting and Importing Files

You can import and export files by using the options available in the **Import** and **Export** cascading menus from the **File** menu. The file formats that can be imported and exported are FBX, OBJ, XSI, EMDL, MOV, AVI, and so on.

SHORTCUT KEYS USED IN SOFTIMAGE

Softimage provides a list of shortcut keys for performing the actions quickly. A list of shortcut keys and their functions has been given in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 A list of commands and shortcut keys

Key	Function
CTRL + N	Open a new scene
CTRL + O	Open a scene
CTRL + S	Save a scene
CTRL + ENTER	Display information of a scene
SHIFT + ENTER	Display information of selection
CTRL + Q	Exit (quit) the application
ESC	Terminate mode / Deactivate tool
1	Switch to the Model toolbar
2	Switch to the Animate toolbar
3	Switch to the Render toolbar
4	Switch to the Simulate toolbar

CTRL + 1	Switch to the main toolbar
CTRL + 2	Switch to the Hair toolbar
CTRL + 3	Switch to the Weight Paint panel
DELETE	Delete the selected object
ALT + 5	Open the Netview window
CTRL + G	Create a group
CTRL+ SHIFT+ G	Remove a group
Z	Zoom and Pan
SPACEBAR	Activate the Object mode
T	Activate the Point mode
Y	Activate the Polygon mode
C	Activate Rotation Tool
X	Activate Scaling Tool
V	Activate Translate Tool
F12	Resize the viewport

Self-Evaluation Test

Answer the following questions:

- Which of the following tools is used to frame selected objects in viewports?
 - Frame Selection**
 - Frame All**
 - Center Selection**
 - Reset**
- In which of the following views, Softimage allows you to orbit the camera?
 - Front view
 - Top view
 - Side view
 - Camera
- Which of the following toolbars is used for crowd simulation?
 - Animate**
 - Model**
 - ICE**
 - Simulate**
- The _____ key is used to activate the **Pan & Zoom** tool.
- The _____ option from the Camera Icon menu is used to set the selected object at the center of the viewport.
- The options in the _____ menu is used to lip-sync, rig, and animate the faces.

7. You can navigate in a viewport using the _____ key.
8. You can create and modify elements using the _____ toolbar from the main toolbar.
9. The _____ button is used to resize a viewport.
10. The **MCP** panel is the main panel where you set the animation keys. (T/F)
11. The V key is used to activate **Transform Tool**. (T/F)

Review Questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Which of the following toolbars is used to create particles?

(a) Animate	(b) Model
(c) ICE	(d) Simulate
2. Which of the following keys is used to resize the viewport?

(a) F12	(b) F4
(c) F8	(d) F2
3. You can choose the _____ tool to select the objects in the viewports.
4. The _____ key is used to dolly in the viewport.
5. The _____ option in the Camera Icon menu, which is displayed on choosing the Camera Icon button, is used to change the background color of the viewport.
6. Autodesk Softimage uses the _____ coordinate system.
7. Autodesk Softimage uses the _____ extension while saving the scene files.
8. In the **Animation** panel, the _____ button is used to set a key automatically after each parameter is edited.
9. The ViewCube is used to change the way you view objects in the viewport. (T/F)
10. The options in the Eye Icon menu are used to make the viewports mute and solo. (T/F)

Answers to Self-Evaluation Test

1. a, 2. d, 3. c, 4. Z, 5. **Center Selection**, 6. **Face Robot**, 7. S, 8. **Model**, 9. **Resize**, 10. F, 11. T