BLENDER ACADEMY

Watch This Before
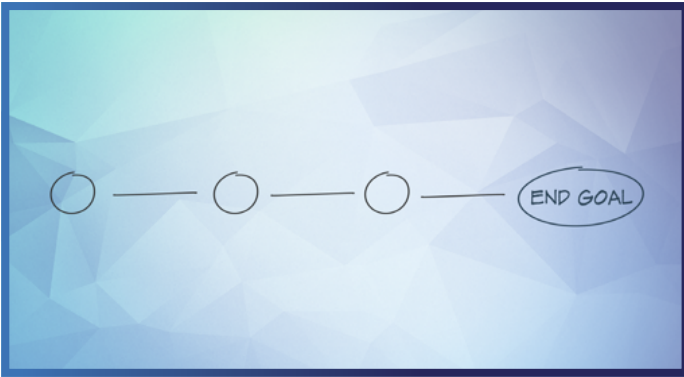# GETTING STARTED
WITH BLENDER

▶ YouTube

Thank you for watching our YouTube video:

Watch This Before Getting Started with Blender (7 Critical Tips)

As we covered in the video, these are the
7 Critical Tips You Need to Know
## Before Getting Started with Blender

#1 Start with a Map

As we covered in our **Welcome to Blender Academy video**, just like in the real world, it's best to have a map! When you have a map, it helps you stay focused on only the skills you need to learn to reach your goal, and avoid unnecessary tutorials, or pieces of tutorials, that won't help you achieve that goal.

But don't just take my word for it. Scott Young, author of *Ultralearning* says "Drawing a Map" - significantly reduces wasted time during the learning process AND leverages how our brains work to store new information by creating a framework to more easily grasp new concepts as they arise.
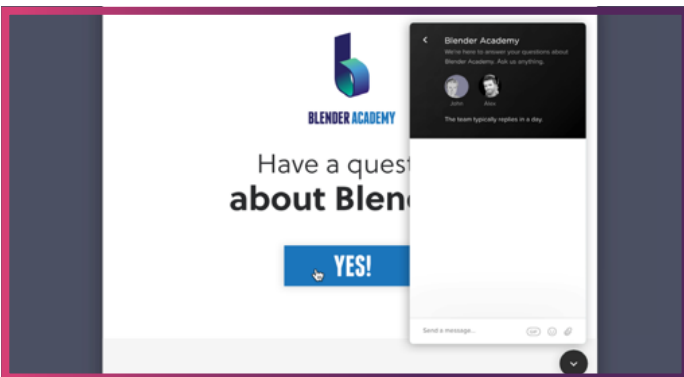
Of course, being new to Blender -- at this point you may feel like you couldn't possibly know what the steps are you even need to take. And that's okay! In *Ultralearning*, Young provides a guide for writing down Why you're learning, and how to identify What Concepts, Facts and Procedures to focus on – before you know everything about the new skill you're trying to learn. I definitely recommend you check out his book, or if you don't have time -- **send me a message, and I'd be happy to help you create a customized map for your particular situation.**

#2 Simplify the User Interface
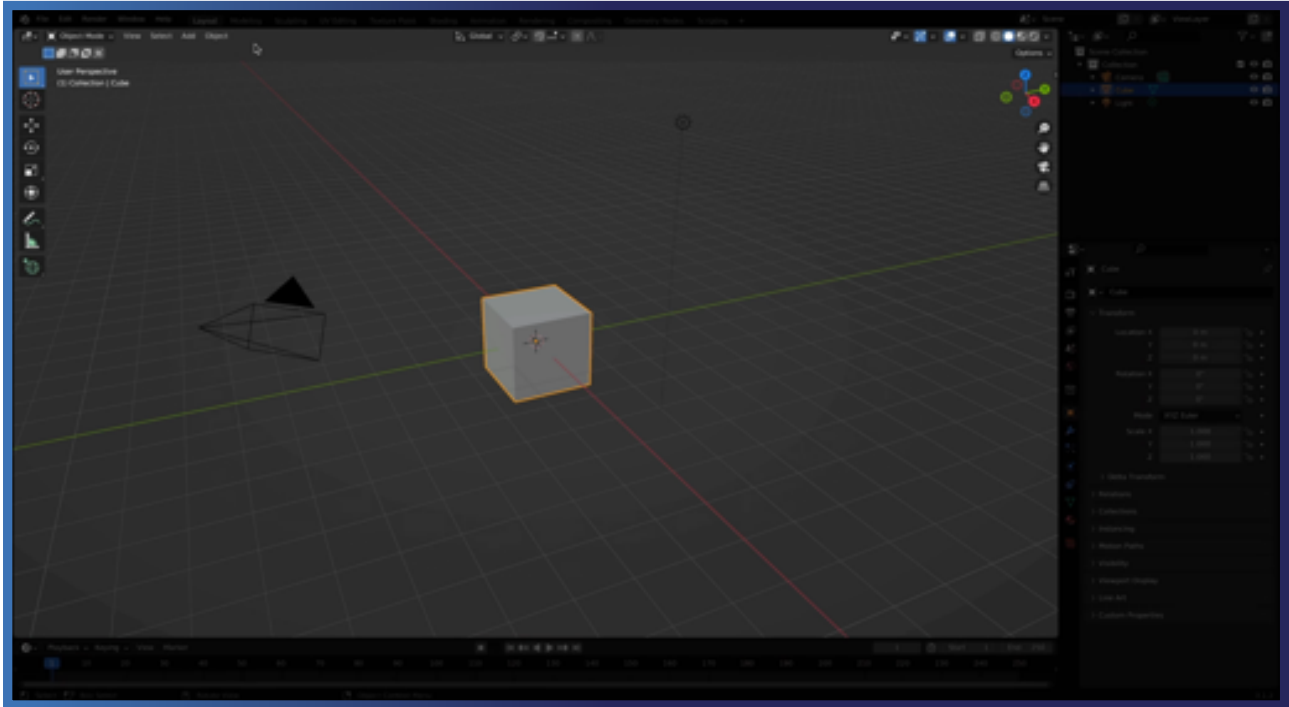
To simplify Blender, you can ignore the top menu, panels on the right and bottom and most of the tools and icons in the 3D Viewport - when you're new, it's best to focus on just the basics first!

The key to getting started with Blender is to NOT get distracted by all of the menus, tools and panels in the User Interface.

When you open Blender for the first time, the sea of windows, panels, tools, and menus that make up the User Interface is downright overwhelming. And as you set off to learn the fundamentals, all these panels and tools are not only distracting, but they can also slow you down.

That's why I recommend simplifying the User Interface so that you can be laser-focused on getting comfortable with the basics first.

When you're new to Blender, no matter what you'll be using it for down the road, I recommend you start with the Layout Workspace tab. And then all you need to care about right now is the 3-dimensional space in the 3D Viewport and the default cube in it. You can ignore anything across the top including the main menu, workspace tabs and everything else to the right. We also don't need to worry about the Outliner and Properties Editor panels on the right, or the Timeline editor at the bottom.

#3 Use the Right Mouse

Blender works best with a 3-button scroll wheel mouse. That means a mouse that has both left and right buttons, plus a center scroll wheel that can be rolled AND clicked on.

With Blender, there are a few critical things that will save you a ton of time and frustration when you use the right kind of mouse.

When you're new to Blender, you might be tempted to see if you can get away with using only the trackpad on your laptop.

Here's the problem: Just like in the real world, there are tools that you can use to get the job done — but also tools that can get the job done MUCH faster. And with Blender, there are a few critical things that will save you a ton of time and frustration when you use the right kind of mouse.

What kind of mouse? Well, Blender works best with a 3-button scroll wheel mouse. That means a mouse that has both left and right buttons, plus a center scroll wheel that can be rolled AND clicked on. And it doesn't have to be fancy - often the simplest 3-button scroll wheel mouse works the best.

#4 Practice Navigating the Right Way

Practice navigating in small increments to get where you want to go. Before you know it, you'll be just like the experts who make hundreds of tiny Zooms, tiny Orbits and tiny Pans to zero-in on what they need to see better.

Being able to get where you need to go in the model makes using Blender so much easier.

Most of your time in Blender is actually spent navigating to a better view to accomplish the next thing you are trying to do. So being able to navigate well is one of the most important things you can invest time into learning and practicing. By "navigate", I mean use Blender's Navigation tools to Zoom, Pan and Orbit around in 3D space. By rolling your mouse wheel forward and backward, you can zoom in and out of your model.

If you press down on your center mouse wheel like a button and move your mouse around, you will see that you are now Orbiting your view around your model And if you need to pan over to get a better view, while pressing the Shift key on your keyboard, also press and hold down the center mouse wheel, then move your mouse to pan your view. When you're done, let go of the shift key and center mouse wheel to stop panning.

#5 Use Keyboard Shortcuts
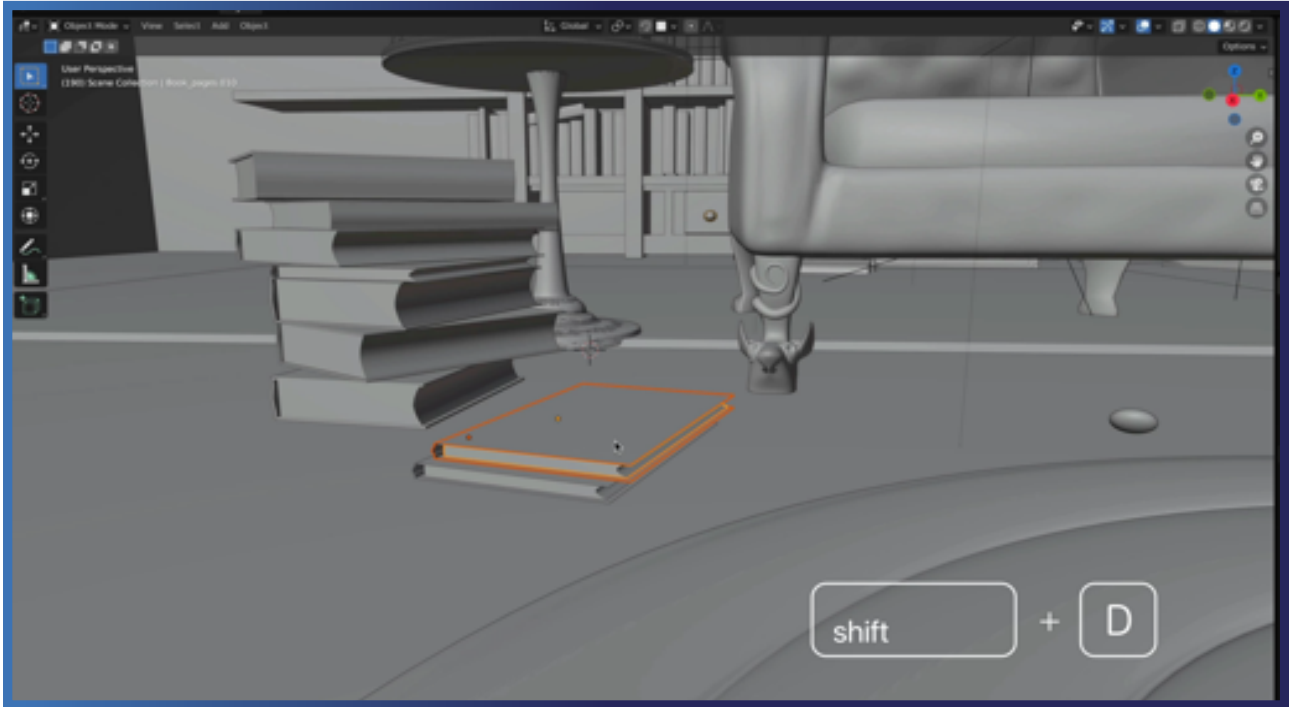
Nearly every tool, action and menu option in Blender has a corresponding keyboard shortcut. All told, there are over 200 — with some of them being made up of multiple keys that have to be pressed together!

It's tempting to think it might be simpler to skip learning the shortcuts while you're first trying to learn the basics.

Trying to memorize each keyboard shortcut as you practice using the corresponding tool or function can slow you down a bit in the short-term.

Buuuut — taking the extra time now to try and practice the keyboard shortcuts from the get-go, means that every time you use a tool or function you'll be reinforcing the shortcut and before you know it, the two will be wired together in your brain. And as anyone that has used Blender for even just a couple of months can tell you, this will save you a ton of time versus having to click your way through the various user interface panels and menus to get to the tools and commands you need.

So take the time to practice using keyboard shortcuts from the start, your future self will definitely thank you!

Click here for a cheatsheet of all of Blender's keyboard shortcuts.

# #6 Experiment with Creating and Editing Geometry
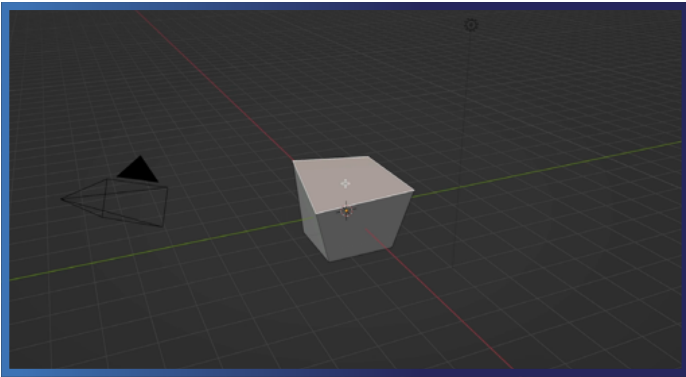
Before you try to create something specific, the best thing you can do is actually give yourself a chance to experiment with the key tools and concepts first. That way, you'll be teaching yourself how the tools actually work
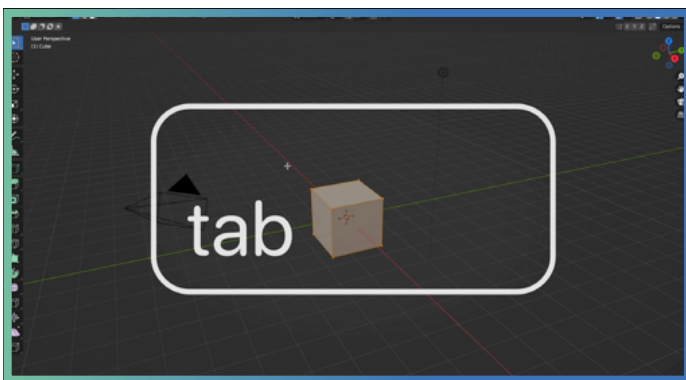

Press the Tab key on your keyboard to toggle from Object Mode to Edit Mode.

In Edit Mode, you have the ability to Move, Rotate and Scale Vertices, Edges or Faces independently.
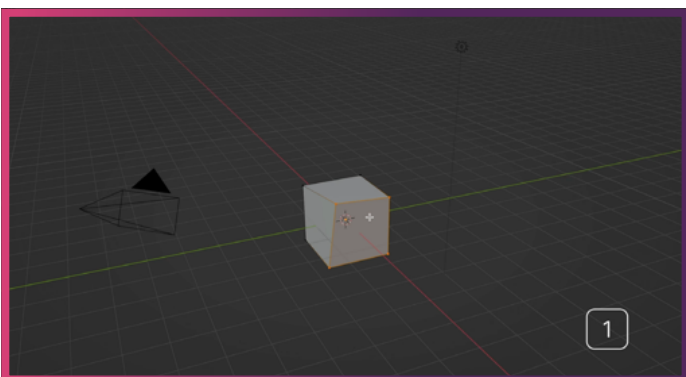
In order to Move, Rotate or Scale an Edge or a Face, you'll have to select that Edge or Face. But when you switch to Edit Mode, the Select tool will default to what is called Vertex Selection Mode. To switch to Edge selection mode, press 2 on your keyboard. Then click on an edge and it will select. To switch to Face selection mode, press 3 on your keyboard. Then click on a Face to select it. And you can switch back to Vertex selection mode by pressing 1 on your keyboard.

#7 Create (Bad) 3D Models Without Help
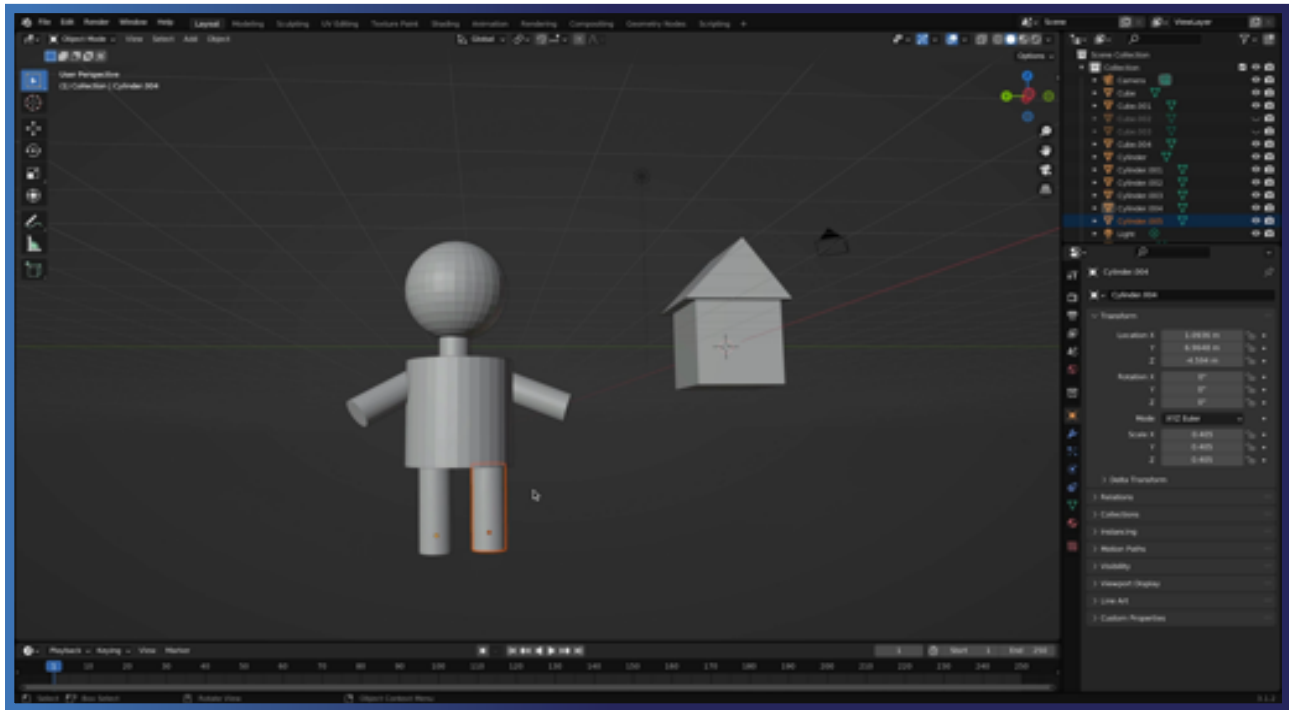
Even though you're only creating rudimentary shapes at this point, know that you're actually much further along the road to mastering Blender than if you had just followed a tutorial passively.

It's time to do the hard work of actually learning and practicing the core principles and foundational skills you've learned.

At this point, you know the basics — and now it's time to practice navigating well, using Keyboard shortcuts, and experimenting with editing basic geometry. And the best way to do that is to just start building! But before you can do that you'll want to be familiar with adding new Mesh Objects. Press "Shift" and "A" - this is the keyboard shortcut to bring up the Add Menu. At this point, we're only going to worry about the Mesh dropdown. Under Mesh, pick a mesh type to place it at the 3D

Cursor which defaults to the origin of the Red and Green axes. You can then follow the previous steps we've gone over to Move, rotate, or scale the entire object — or switch to Edit Mode to edit its underlying geometry. Now you're ready to use these basic tools and concepts to try and create 3D models of more recognizable shapes on your own! At this point in your Blender learning journey, they'll be bad. And that's OK!

![Blender Academy logo] **BLENDER ACADEMY**

Your Next Steps:

Have questions about Blender or want help creating a personalized study map for your particular situation? **Reach out to us** **and we'd be happy to help!**

Also, let us know what Blender topics you want us to cover in our upcoming videos.

From here, it's definitely possible to learn Blender on your own. But if you're serious about learning Blender and can't afford to waste time or pick up bad habits, we're building a comprehensive video course that incorporates all the lessons we've learned from teaching in-person over the years. **Head over to our website now to learn more!**

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