

Tools : any computer (VGA-compatible) and any paint program (even Paint !)

I don't claim to have mastered all of these techniques yet, maybe it will happen someday. Anyways, here's a summary of what I've read, seen and been told (those who know, know ;)), and what I've understood about creating sprites.

In the example I've chosen, I'm working on a 16 pixels-wide by 25 pixel-high character, but I won't talk about palettes as I'm lacking a few notions, so I'm keeping this for later.

First, I drew a doodle on a piece of paper to clear up my ideas about this character.

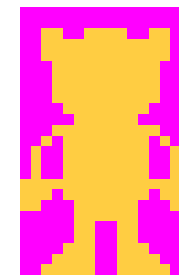
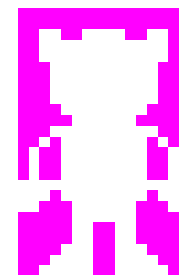
As you can see, there is no need to have drawing skills nor to darken the lines.



From here, I created a base picture with a clashing background to clearly identify what I'm adding, and then drew the outlines of my character-to-be.

You'll notice I deliberately left a clear pixel on the top. The explanation is simple : when I need to animate the character, this allows me to stress the illusion of movement.

Then, I filled the sprite with the main color whose variations (lighter and darker) will be used for details.



Working on shadows :

Light allows 3D shapes to be created and become apparent.

The only trick, if I can say so, is that I chose to use either blackish or reddish colors for the shadows. Same thing for the lighted areas, using whitish or yellowish colors.

In comparison to the last file, I added a few things to suggest the face's details.

Here's what I've got so far, but that's not enough.

As I wanted a tiger, I added those few stripes. Note that once more, the intensity is variable and enhances the 3D feeling.

The same thing can be done on an human character, for example by adding a belt.



The end, already ? The problem is that the sprite is lacking depth. I therefore had to enhance the differences between light and dark parts, and add a lighted area.

It is quick to explain, but quite a chore to perform. The first results take time to appear and as with everything, you have to be perseverant !



To sum it up, we now have a sprite which is markedly separated from the background, but aliasing will be prominent. If this sprite is only intended to be shown on similarly-colored backgrounds, some info from the background can be incorporated into the sprite.

On a mainly green background, the edges are too noticeable.

To fix this, I slightly «greenied» the outer pixels like this :



Another way of achieving this would have been to add semi-transparent pixels on the edges, but this implies using alpha-blending, which is not supported on all machines.

Although this brief document is not revolutionary, maybe it'll help you dive into sprites creation.