Making Avatars
Fruit Loop from Sci-Fi Avatars
Note: This was a demonstration in voice with text chat. The text presentation follows,
but without the visual portion.

Presentation:

Hello happy peoples! How y'all doing? Doing an avatar is a pretty involved process, so you
really need to concentrate on you're doing. I'm FruitLoop, the owner and operator of Sci-Fi
Avatars, and I'm going to help y'all do your first avatar. So let's get cooking. Now, does
everyone have a graphics program such as Paintshop Pro or Photoshop?

1: Choose a Picture.

We are going to use this picture of Mila Kunis, one that is not on the site. Let us begin
by finding a good picture. As you can see, I have several pictures that say no, and only
one that says yes. For one, the reason is that the earring is too large, and would be
hard to work with. Another two have hair that is not good to work with. One has hair
that is fashionably disheveled, and the other has hair that would not be easy to cut out
from the background. One, the lighting is too harsh for the uniform. Another, the
lighting is too dim and would not be good for a beginner. The one that says yes is the
best type for a beginner to use.

2:      Convert the picture to a Raster Layer. A Raster Layer is an editable level of a picture.
This will let us change the picture with fewer problems. In Paintshop Pro, click Layers >
Promote Background Layer. This will enable a transparent background when cutting out
the head. In Photoshop Elements, Click Layer > New > Layer From Background.

3:      Using the Freehand Selection Tool, Cut out the background around the head. To select
the Freehand Selection Tool in Paintshop Pro, find the Selection Tool on the left of your
screen, click on the small arrow next to it, and click on the Lasso. At the top, there is a
setting that says, Replace. Change it to Add. If you are using Photoshop Elements,
click on the Lasso and click on the interconnecting squares at the bottom. This is the
Add move for Photoshop Elements' Lasso Tool. It is easiest to select the background
when zoomed in at about 600-1000%. I use Paintshop Pro and it is much cheaper and
easier to use than Photoshop, so that is what I will be using to teach you. I would
recommend not using Anti-Alias for this, as it can be confusing for beginners. Also,
don't try to select the entire background at one time. Going very slowly and carefully,
use the Trail of the Cursor to draw a line between the head/neck/hair and the
background, including the necklace and her shoulders. Select all the BACKGROUND,
not the head. Draw a little along the hair, and circle back around the background to
select the background. Do this a little at a time over all the edges of the head/neck.

4:      When the background around the head is selected, Click Edit > Clear. This will Delete the Selected Area. You will need to Right-Click to De-Select the area after it is deleted.

5:      Using the Smudge Tool, smooth the Edges. Again, it is much easier to do when zoomed in, this time around 1000-1500%. The Hardness should be at 50, Step at 10, Density, Thickness and Opacity at 100. Brush Size should be relatively small compared to the size of the head. For this picture, Brush Size 9 would be good. Smudge just a little towards the head a bit, just enough to erase the sharp edges in that exact area, then gently tug It along the head/hair/neck. Just make sure you don't smudge too much, or it will be too soft on the edges.

6:      Find the Right Uniform and open it in the editor as well. Take particular note of which way the shoulders and neck are positioned in the "source" image of Mila Kunis. Her shoulders were facing towards the side, yes, but slightly towards the front. Her neck is in line with her shoulders, meaning her head is facing the same direction as her shoulders. Her hair flows over one shoulder, but it is gathered in one bunch on the shoulder furthest from view, so her rank will be visible. This means that it is very important to match the size of her neck, too.

7:      Sometimes the head is tilted at an odd angle or at an angle different to the officers that wore the uniforms. They may be looking up, or down, and the head needs to be tilted just a touch. This one of Mila Kunis is a good example. We need to tilt her head a few degrees to the left. Go to Image > Free Rotate and a box will come up. Remember, less is more. Try 2-3 degrees at first. You can always Undo it and make it more tilted.

        I tilted her head 5 degrees to the left.

8:      Now, the head is too big for the size of the uniform. We need to shrink her head. Go to the top of your program and click Image > Resize. A box will pop up. It should say 100 in both Width and Height. We want to find the correct "percentage" to shrink her head to. This will take several tries. Don't try to do it at a rounded figure like 80 or 85. Be willing to use numbers like 81 or 83. Or even 99. Every individual number could be important. It is helpful figuring out the correct size by Copying and Pasting the head onto the uniform several times.

        I resized her head to 84 percent.

9:      Copy and Paste the Head onto the Uniform. This is relatively easy thing to do. Go to Edit > Copy. Click Copy. Click on the tab at the top that is the one with the uniform. Click Edit > Paste As New Layer. This will place the head as a new Raster Layer on top of the Raster Layer of the uniform.

10:    The head is in the exact middle of the image because that is where all new layers go: in the middle of the image. It is up to the user to put the new layer where they want it to go. We want to use the Move Tool and use it to Move the head over to the uniform.

11:    Now we want to make the head just a bit transparent. Under Layers, Select the Properties for the head and turn the head opacity to around 78 percent. Select Layers > Properties at the top. A box comes up. There should be an option that says Opacity. Set that to 78.

12:    Make sure the head is on top of the uniform. If it is not, go to the Layers Palette at the right and select the head layer and pull it up above the uniform using the Move Tool. This will make the entirety of the head, neck, and hair be visible above the uniform.

13:    Using the Move Tool, move the head to be in the correct position for the neck to be covered by the uniform. Remember: The uniform can be altered A BIT, but not too much. I will give you a picture of what position it should be in.

14:    Using the Freehand Selection Tool, Select the part of the neck that overlaps the uniform. This is easiest to do when zoomed in about 600-1000%. There should still be a bit of neck above the uniform and just below where the neck meets the uniform. You will use this to soften the line later.

15:    Delete the Selected area, just as before. Go to Edit > and Select Clear. You will need to right-click to De-select the area.

16:    Using the Smudge tool, soften the edges, just like before. Again, this is easier when zoomed in. On Picard uniforms, you want the hair to be moved around the back of the collar as shown. It would be moved around the back of the neck, so it needs to be moved around the back of the uniform collar.

17:    On the left, select the Warp Brush Tool. Hardness should be 0, Strength 100, and the size relative to the size of the area we want to move. This is the trail of hair on Mila's shoulder. I would use 29 size for the Warp Brush. The Brush Mode should be side to side, not inward or outward.

18:    Using the Warp Brush, push the hair to rest on top of her shoulder. You could also make the trailing hair a little shorter and make it look a little better.

19:    Now we want her head to be "opaque" again, as in not transparent. Go to Layers > Properties and a box should come up. Set the Opacity to 100 and click Okay.

20:    Choose a background. Make sure the lighting is okay. You want the lighting of the background to be as close as possible to the lighting on the person. It also has to be big enough to cover the transparent background on the image with the person. I would

choose something a little darker, maybe Quark's, or the picture of Quarters on Angel One.

21: Open the background in your program. Right click on the image, Open With, and select your graphics editor.

22: Copy the background, the entire thing. Go to Edit > Copy. Click on the image with the person. Click Edit > Paste As New Layer. The background should appear in its entirety on the image, covering the entire image.

23: There should be a "palette" at the right. Let me know if it is not there. Click on the background, then pull it down to be the bottom-most layer.

24: To adjust the rank, Select the Uniform on the "palette" at the right and select the Smudge Tool at the left, and use 100 Opacity to erase the number of pips desired.

25: Decrease the Opacity of the Smudge brush to around 71 and blend it so it looks more natural.

26: Save as a PSD file. This will allow you to make changes later, such as a different rank.

27: Click on the tab for the Person you are making. Save it as a PNG. Name it whatever you want to.

CONGRATS! You made your first avatar!

Chat Comments:

==^==-0-==^== Making Avatars (Fruit Loop - Sci-Fi Avatars) Both voice and chat ==^==-0-==^==

beeman:
        I do!

Harrington:
        can you hear me?

beeman:
        Yup, PSP

beeman:
        That's why I have it lol

Harrington:
    yes, I do

Harrington:
    I only have gimp atm

Harrington:
    but looking into others

Fruit Loop:
    https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OlR76GzA5z1nMIkhTlmWuGXeh8zjOnUC/view?usp=sharing

        Google Docs
        backgrounds.zip

Fruit Loop:
    https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xacihh1jquxpb4KCx4qIKtLX-DZcuIaw/view?usp=sharing

        Google Docs
        uniforms.zip

Harrington:
    I have a pic, but no idea if it is a good one to use

beeman:
    Yes!

beeman:
    Yup yup

beeman:
    Yup

Harrington:
    yes

beeman:
    You draw such straight lines

Harrington:
	present

beeman:
	Yup

Harrington:
	you make that look so easy .. I"ve already cussed at my computer

Harrington:
	totally looks like mine.. (HAHA)

beeman:
	Yeah, not exactly, but please continue. You are really good at this

Harrington:
	looking into PSP now

beeman:
	Harrington, I have PSP and also am not as good as Fruit Loop

Harrington:
	doing good.. this is very helpful so far

Uso:
	I'm good, feel free to continue

Harrington:
	so hopefully not off topic, but for removing background, have you ever used something like this: https://www.remove.bg/upload

	remove.bg
	Upload Image – remove.bg
	Select an image & remove the background – 100% automatically – in 5 seconds – without a single click – for free.

beeman:
	Yes, I ususally use what Harrington posted

Harrington:
	yes

Willvoy:
    You could say that

Harrington:
    I think mine looks ok, so far

Harrington:
    my program is definately different then yours but atm, it seems to have the feature you are using "so far"

Harrington:
    yep

Harrington:
    I think I'm done, time will tell

beeman:
    I'm just following along with my eyes, learning from you

beeman:
    So you smooth the entire photo, not just where you cut?

Fruit Loop:
    Where you drew the line around her head? That's where you smooth it with the smudge tool.

Willvoy:
    ENGINEERING!

Harrington:
    yep

beeman:
    Nice. Definitely learning new tips and tricks from ya

Harrington:
    I'm taking notes. and no I don't

Harrington:
    nope

beeman:
    Nope. Running my own panel in #topic_chat_2 Thx though

beeman:
> I'm listening to you still to pick up some of your awesome tips

Harrington:
> janeway ready room

Harrington:
> yes

Harrington:
> Admiral

Rich:
> Bigger than Picard's

Harrington:
> just got called into work, so you will be waiting for a bit before I can share

Harrington:
> LtCmdr

Harrington:
> you make that look SOOOO easy

Rich:
> Nice

Harrington:
> thanks so much .. this was very helpful

macFuz:
> I never know what to think of Photo manipulations

Fruit Loop:
> Avatar_Presentation.rtf
> 69.36 KB

beeman:
> Thx Fruit Loop!

Fruit Loop:

yw