
Pelican Briefs

Manual #002: Adding Avatars To Your World

What is an 'avatar'?

An avatar is a digital representation of an internet user. It can be a photo, a drawing or a complex rendering. For the purpose of this paper, we will look at an avatar as a 3d model of a human or animal.

The avatar list and it's components

In order for us to add or update our list of avatars, we need a few things. We need an avatar model, the avatar textures and the avatar data file.

The avatar model

The avatar model is a file that ends with the 3-letter extension 'rwx'. It is a collection of data in text format which controls the shape and lighting of the avatar itself.

The avatar file, which we will refer to as "avatar.rwx", should be zipped and placed into the 'avatars' folder on your object path.

The avatar textures

Also included with your avatar file may be several 'jpg' texture files and zipped 'bmp' mask images. These should go into the 'textures' folder on your object path. If your avatar doesn't have any of these files, it may be because the avatar is the type that doesn't require any.

The avatar list

The avatar list, or what appears under the 'Avatars' menu selection in your Activeworlds browser, is a text file that contains the information for each avatar on your list.

If you open this file with notepad or wordpad, you will see one or more "collections" of avatar information. Each collection starts with the line "avatar" and ends with the line "endavatar". (See Figure 1. - Blue highlighted text)

The first line AFTER the line that says "avatar" begins with "name=". This is what will appear in your avatar list in your aw browser (See Figure 1. - Red highlighted text)

The line that follows starts with "geometry=". This is the rwx filename of the avatar. (See Figure 1. - Green highlighted text)

The next line starts a section called "beginimp/endimp". These r the actions or "sequences" your avatar will use when performing standard activities such as walking, swimming, flying in activeworlds. (See Figure 1 - Purple highlighted text) You can usually get away with leaving these alone. Of course, a good avatarist will provide you with sequences and a text file depicting the entries to use. If you find a sequence that you like, simply replace the filename to the right of the action. For example, let's say you found a new "walk" sequence called "limpwalk.seq". Go to the "walk=" line and change the name to the right to "limpwalk" (the filename of the new sequence.) (See Figure 1. - Pink highlighted text)

The section that follows is the "beginexp/endexp" section. These are the buttons that appear at the top of your screen. Most avatars have a "wave" or "turn" button. You can add action buttons (custom sequences) in the same manner as standard sequences. To add more, just add another line using similar syntax. The word to the left of the "=" will be the word that appears on the button while the word to the right is the filename of the custom sequence.

```
avatar
  name=MrTourist
  geometry=male.rwx
  beginimp
    walk=limpwalk
    wait=gray02
    endwait=gray07
    endwave=gray06
    run=qrun2
    fly=qfly2
    hover=qhover1
    swim=qswim
    float=qfloat
    jump=qjump1
    fall=qfall1s
  endimp
  beginexp
    turn=qturn
    wave=swave
  endexp
endavatar
```

Figure 1. The Avatar.dat file