

Flash Basics

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Introduction

What is Flash?

Flash is a program designed to deliver vector images, animating, and movies via many multimedia platforms including CD-ROM and web formats. Flash has streaming capabilities. It uses the Shockwave player, which comes bundled with 4+ versions of Netscape Composer and Internet Explorer, to play its movies. Flash describes all finished content as a movie.

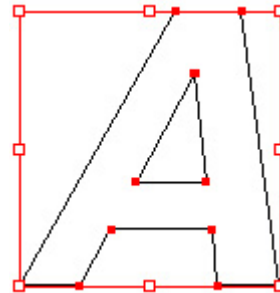
Vector Images

What are vector images?

They are scalable images that are smaller in file size than bitmaps. Vector images are drawn through mathematics and when resized, the math is just re-written. Bitmaps and jpegs are a series of pixels which are static. When these are resized larger, the pixels get larger. This is what makes the image smaller in file size.



bitmap/jpeg



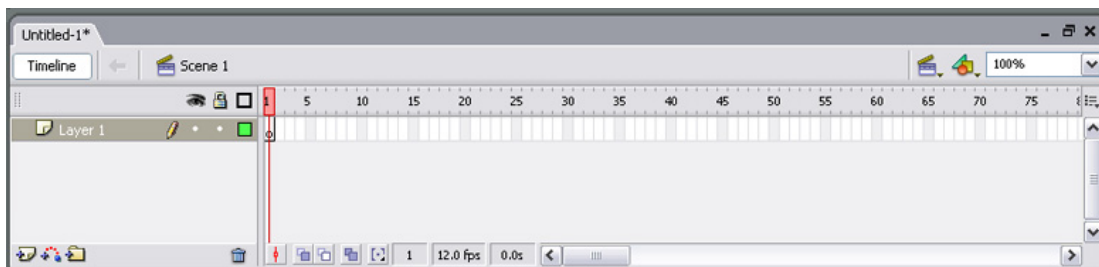
vector

Stage

The Stage -- where all the animation occurs. It's like an artist's canvas or a writer's blank sheet of paper. Any movement outside the stage will be cropped out. Think of this like an actual dramatic stage. You can have symbols entering or exiting the stage.

Timeline

The Timeline -- the order in which the animated action will take place. This is the most difficult concept to get used to, and it's also the most powerful.



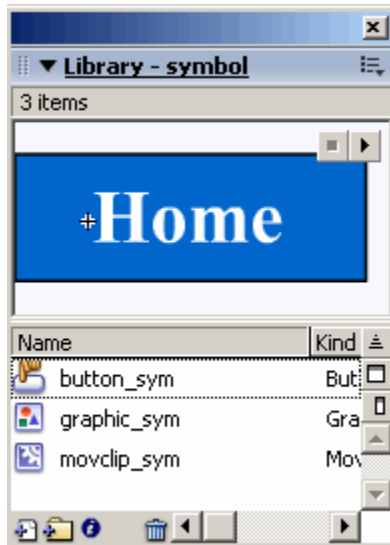
Timing is everything. Bad art with good timing can still captivate a viewer and sell a story, but good art with bad timing is just bad. The Flash timeline works with layers. Like Photoshop layer order, the top layer is the artwork you see. So, if you want a person behind a table, the person's layer must be below the table layer.

Key Frames – all frames after a key frame are exactly like the frame before (unless if a tween is applied). To get a frame that is fresh you must designate a new Key frame. You can add a blank key frame and start from scratch, or you can add a regular key frame that copies the previous frame and then alter some or most of it.



Symbols & the Library

Symbols are reusable objects used/created in Flash. A symbol can be reused throughout your movie or imported and used in other movies. The “master” symbol resides in the **Library** and each time you drag it onto the stage, you are working with an **instance** of the symbol. There are three types of symbols: Movieclips, Buttons and Graphics.



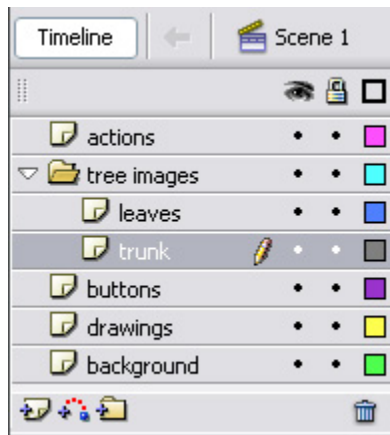
The Library -- stores any artwork you build and turn into a symbol for later use. Also, you can import and store sounds, videos, jpeg images, gif images, bitmap images, and so on.

If you are reusing an image over and over again, you can convert it into a symbol and store it in the library to allow for reuse. The more you use symbols. the more you save in file size. This allows viewers to download complicated imagery with ease and speed.

In order to apply a **motion tween** (discussed later) to an object, you must first declare it as a symbol.

Layers

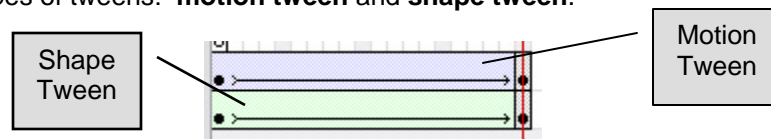
Layers – Similar to Photoshop. Whatever layer is on the top, will show on top of other objects placed in layers below it. Folders can be used to group layers for greater organization.



Tweens

Tweens are basically animation in Flash terms. By adding a tween to a symbol, you are able to transform it from one state to another. You can alter size, color, visibility, brightness, location on screen.

Flash has two types of tweens: **motion tween** and **shape tween**.



Motion tween – if you are moving a symbol from one area to another, enlarging it, skewing it and you want to make it animate this, you apply a motion tween. First place the symbol in its beginning position on a key frame. Designate a new key frame down the timeline and move the symbol. Right click on any of the frames between the 2 keyframes and select Add Tween.

Shape tween – a shape tween is similar to a motion tween, however it mutates one shape into another. It is done similar to the motion tween, however you do not need to set the shapes as symbols prior to adding the tween. Create a key frame with your shape on it. A bit down the timeline designate a new keyframe and alter or add a different shape. Set the cursor on any of the frames between the key frames. In the property box at the bottom select the tween drop-down and select shape.