

Flash: Interface

Lesson 2: Interface

Flash Interface There are hundreds of different little areas in Flash that can be used to affect the look of your Flash presentation. We are going to take a look at the default screen layout and dissect some of the main parts to give you a better understanding on how to create, alter, and maintain a detailed Flash movie based on all these main options.

If you would like to take a look at the main layout without opening Flash (See website for example.).

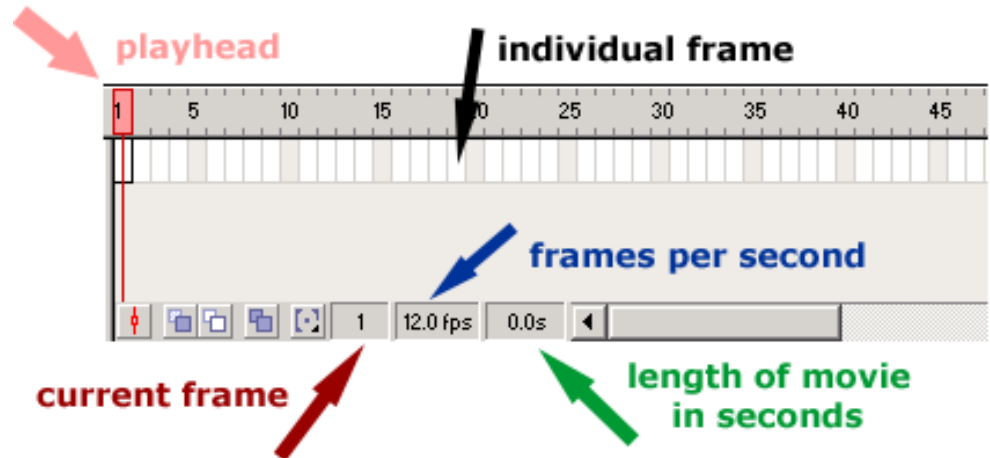
Some of the main areas we are going to talk about in the interface are: The timeline, stage, and the layer box. We are also going to be talking about the following panels: Info, Mixer, Character, and Instance.

On the next page we are going to overview how to use the drawing tools.

Lesson 3: Timeline

Timeline

The timeline is the area on the screen where you will be working with layers and frames to alter your movie's content and animation. A movie is a collection of frames and the timeline is the area in Flash where you will be configuring those frames (like the way a cartoon is made, with a collection of still pictures run together really fast to give the illusion of motion). Below you can see a visual description of the timeline:



Current Frame: The current frame indicates the frame number whose contents are directly visible on the stage (see stage below) and is the current position of the playhead. So, what you see on the stage, when there is no movie playing, is the current frame.

Frames per second: Frames per second (or Frame rate) is the actual frames per second setting for your movie, when the movie is not playing. When the movie is playing, it dynamically shows the actual playback speed. However, frames per second and actual playback speed can differ dramatically based on the processor of the computer being used. Frames per second will always stay the same, but with a slower processor a user will view slower actual playback.

Length of Movie: The term "length of movie in seconds" may be a little deceiving. The number is actually the elapsed time between the first frame of the movie and the current frame. Depending on where you place the playhead, the number will dynamically change as well.

Playhead: The playhead allows you to select the

frame to be altered. It also allows you to view the movie by scrubbing, or dragging the playhead across the timeline ruler.

Lesson 4: Individual Frame

The Individual Frame

In this section, we are going to take a look at what types of options can be implemented using the timeline and individual frames and keyframes. Take a look at the graphic after clicking on the link below to see what happens when you right click on an individual frame. We are also going to get into the realm of animation. For now, you are just going to get to see the basics on animation and how it is started, but later we will actually get into the process of creating motion tweening, shape tweening, and path animation.

(See website for example.) to see a step-by-step breakdown of the options described above.

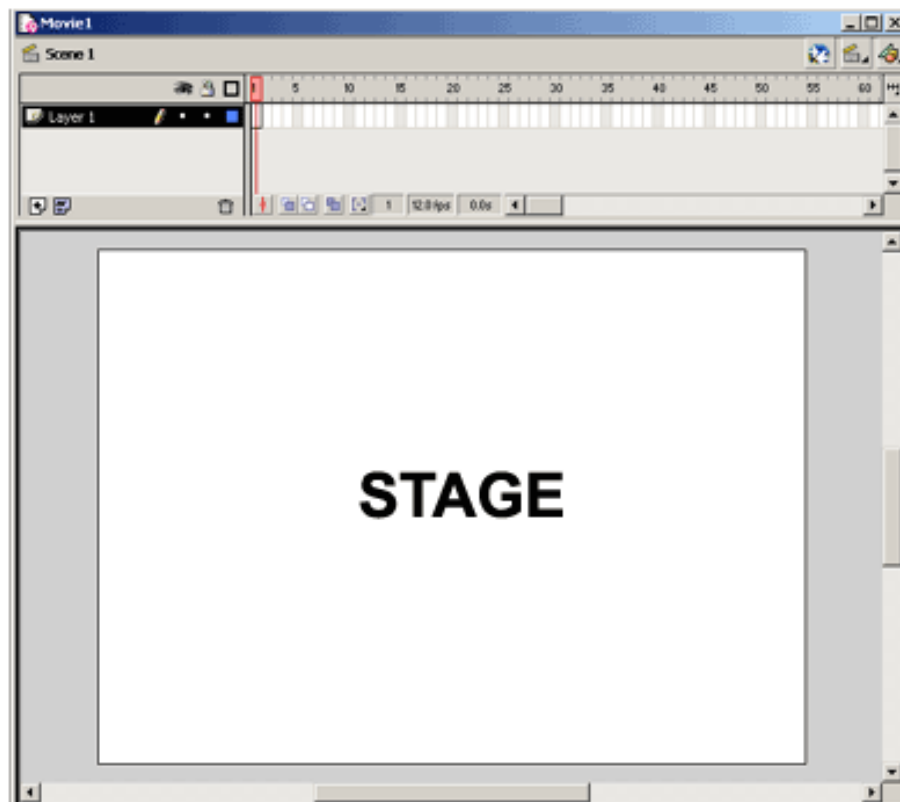
Lesson 5: Stage

Stage

The stage is the large white rectangle where you add every piece of content to be viewed in your movie. Another comparable phrase for the stage is that it is your movie screen. There are some important steps to remember about your stage:

- Any content outside of the stage will not be visible when viewing the movie.
- The default stage color of white is the initial background for your movie, unless changed.
- The stage color can be changed by going to **Modify < Movie < Background Color**

A view of the stage can be seen below:

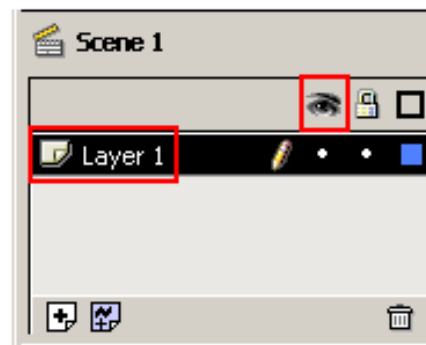


Lesson 6: Layers

Layers

Layers are described as the way to organize your movie. Layers are the way to make your movie look intricate, while still being easy to create. It is very easy to actually create new layers and configure them. We are going to take a look at the following layer properties: Layer name, how to show/hide a layer, locking a layer, adding layers, and deleting a layer.

Layer Name: In the graphic below, you can see the layer box that is located on the interface in Macromedia Flash. The red box surrounding Layer 1 is where the name of the layer is contained. By default, Flash will name the first layer, "Layer 1" and will add sequential numbers to each layer added. Example: Layer 2, then Layer 3, and so on. It is a great idea to name each layer in the layer box in order to properly identify them. To change the name of the layer simply double click on name (here it is Layer 1), type in the name, and hit enter.



Hiding/Showing a Layer: (Above) The purpose of this button (eye) is to hide or show a layer. This is helpful when compiling many layers to keep from getting distracted by background or foreground content. When the eye is highlighted, the layer will be hidden and vice versa.

Lock Layer: (for graphic at bottom) Locking a layer is another great way to practice good layer management. When dealing with numerous (could be dozens of) layers, a user may accidentally forget what layer he/she is on when editing a portion of the movie. This is counter acted by using the lock function. In the graphic to the right, the lock button is represented by a small padlock.

Adding New Layers: (for graphic at bottom) Using multiple layers is very important in making your movie look complicated without it actually being complicated to make. Putting a different animation on its own individual layer is critical when keeping with this standard. Adding a new layer is very easy. Simply click in the white box with the plus sign to add a layer. By default, a layer will be added above the current

layer. In this graphic, if a user were to click on the add layer button, then Layer 2 would be added above Layer 1. The small blue box with wave type sign is used for adding guided layers. Guide layers contain the lines or paths that animations on normal (linked) layers must follow.

Deleting a Layer: (for graphic at bottom) The trash can be a friend to all! Messing up is just a price of experience. Deleting a layer can be done in two ways: dragging the layer to the trash can or clicking the trash can when the unwanted layer is highlighted as the current layer.

