

Introduction to Flash CS3

Before getting started, it's important to know the difference between a **Flash authoring file (.fla)** and a **Shockwave Flash file (.swf)**. When you start working in Flash, you'll be working in a .fla document. However, in order to view your final work in the Flash Player, you'll need to "publish" your file as a .swf. (To do this, see step VI of this document.)

*If you don't have Flash Player installed on your computer, get the free download here: <http://www.adobe.com/>. Select "Get Adobe Flash Player".

I. GETTING STARTED:

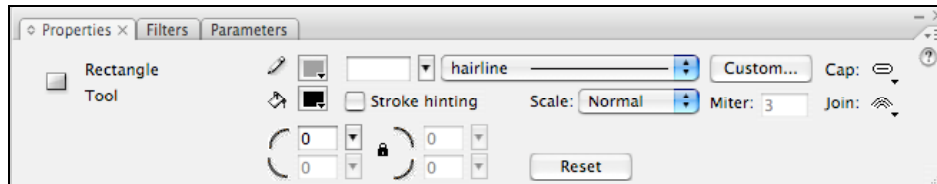
- To start a new Flash file, go to File > New (⌘ + N).
- Select the default option "FlashFile (ActionScript 3.0)" and click OK.
- You should now see the "stage", timeline and tools panel.

II. MODIFYING YOUR DOCUMENT:

- To create settings for your new Flash document, go to Modify > Document (⌘ + J).
- Enter a title and a description (i.e., "My Flash Movie").
- Choose a background color from the dropdown box.
- Next decide if you want to change the "Frame rate" from the default (12 fps). **Note that "fps" stands for "frames per second" so the higher the number, the faster the playback speed.*
- Click OK. You should now see your "stage", reflecting the background color you chose.

III. TOOLS & FEATURES:

- **The Rectangle Tool** – Click on the rectangle tool in the tool bar (usually positioned to the left side of your stage. Next, look for the "Properties" box at the bottom of your screen. It should look something like this:



If you don't see Properties, go to Window > Properties > Properties.

By resetting the tool (click on any other tool then click back on the rectangle), you will see the features that allow you to change the shape of the rectangle. Now adjust the “0” in the “Rectangle corner radius” box under Properties. If you scale this number up to **50** and then drag the rectangle tool over your stage, you will get a circle shape. Conversely, if you scale it down to **-50**, you will get a completely different shape.

- **The Selection Tool** – Once you’ve drawn shapes or created text boxes on your stage, use the selection tool to move them around in any order you like.
- **The Line Tool** – The line tool is another great way to make curves. Select the line tool from the tool bar and drag it across the stage. Next, select the selection tool and hover it over your line until you see a “floating curve”. Once you do, hit shift while dragging the line to make it curve.
- **The Timeline** – The timeline can get somewhat confusing unless you know the essentials. Make sure you first know what key frames are and how they function:
 - **Blank Key Frame:** creates a blank space or makes the image disappear. So, to create empty space on your stage, drag your cursor across the timeline, then go to Insert > Timeline > Blank Keyframe. Whenever there is a blank key frame on your timeline, nothing will appear on your stage.
 - **Key Frame:** makes an image appear. To make your animation appear on the stage, drag your cursor along the timeline and go to Insert > Timeline > Keyframe.

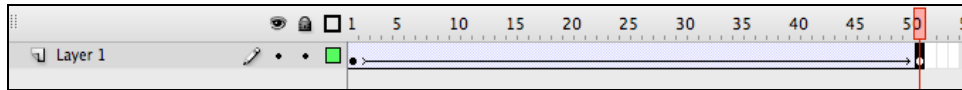
IV. CREATING A MOTION TWEEN (a.k.a.: ANIMATION):

First, don’t let the term “motion tween” scare you away. It’s the easiest way to create a quick animation and will hopefully give you a better understanding of how Flash works.

Below are instructions on how to create a simple “setting sun” animation:

- Once you’ve set your background color (Modify > Document, or shortcut: **⌘ + J**), click the rectangular tool and scale the “Rectangle corner radius” (under the Properties menu) to 50.
- Adjust the fill color on the tool bar (or in the Shape Properties menu) to yellow and draw a circle at the top of your stage.
- Next, click on the first frame in your timeline while holding down the Control key and select “Create Motion Tween”. You should now see a blue box appear around your sun.

- Now click on the 2nd frame in your timeline and drag it to 50. The timeline should be shaded blue, not white (if it's white, you've just created a blank keyframe).
- Go back to Frame 1 and click on it while holding down the Control key again. This time, select Copy Frames.
- Now go to Frame 50, hold down Control and choose "Paste Frames". Your timeline should look something like this:



- Now use the selection tool to drag the sun in Frame 50 off the bottom of the stage into the gray area.
- Go to Control > Test Movie to see your setting sun!
- To make the setting sun look a *little* more realistic, here's another trick:
 - Click on the sun in your stage while holding down the Control key.
 - Go to Timeline Effects > Transform/Transition > Transform
 - In the Transform box, change the scale from 100% to 20% and click OK.
 - Now go to Control > Test Movie to see your sun shrink as it sets!

V. CONVERTING AN IMAGE TO A SYMBOL/PATTERN-MAKING:

- To save your "sun" (or any other image that you draw) for later, highlight it with the Free Transform Tool and go to: Modify > Convert to Symbol and store it as a graphic. You should now see it appear in your Library to the right of your stage.
- To make an image into a pattern, click on the image while holding down the Control key and go to: Timeline Effects > Assistants > Copy to Grid. Adjust the grid size and grid spacing and click OK. You should now see the pattern appear on your stage.

VI. EXPORTING AN IMAGE OR MOVIE:

- To "publish" your image or movie (so that it can be viewed in a Flash Player) go to File > Export. Make sure you save it with the extension ".swf".

*The above information was compiled by the Instructional Developer and is meant to serve as an introduction to Flash CS3 for students in the Journalism Department at the University of Connecticut only. Please contact maeve.ryan@uconn.edu with questions and/or comments.