

Type in Motion
April 1st, 2002
Handout 01

To open Flash, click on the Finder in the upper left corner of the screen, drag down to applications and find Flash 5.

Flash should open a new document window for you to work in. The timeline should be visible in its default position above the blank stage area. The gray area surrounding the stage is only a work area. The stage is where you put your content to be viewed in the final published movie.

While you work on a Flash file you will save it as a .fla file, by choosing “save” or “save as” from the File menu. When you are finally ready to publish the movie, you will choose “publish” under the File menu. Usually, you will save the movie out as a .swf (swif) file to be viewed in the Flash Player. Flash will also export a movie out in other formats such as, a Windows .avi movie, an animated .gif, or a Quicktime .mov.

It is a good idea to set your movie properties and your preferences before you begin working. To set the movie properties, go under the “Modify” menu and choose “Movie.” You will see the movie’s properties window open up. The default frame rate is 12 fps (frames per second), which is a good speed for viewing over the web or onscreen. However, if you are creating a movie title that will be viewed in a theatre on 35 mm film, the frame rate for those movies is 24 fps. We’ll leave the rate at 12 fps for now. The default movie size is 550 pixels wide by 400 pixels high. If you know the size of screen the movie will be viewed on, you can set it, or a lower multiple of its aspect ration. A movie theatre screen has an aspect ration of 2.35 units wide to 1 unit high. You can also set your stage’s background color and the units you would like to use for your rulers, which you can display to the sides of the stage to help position objects. We can leave everything at their defaults for the first exercise.

Your preferences are located under the “Edit” menu, under “Preferences.” You will most likely want to set your number of undos to something you are comfortable with. I like to set the number of undos to 100. Under selection options I have checked off “shift select” and “show tooltips.” I also prefer to check off “flash 4 frame drawing.” This will put a hollow bullet in every frame that is a blank key frame in your movie. If left unchecked, blank key frames will not have any indication other than a black line to the left of them in the timeline. The rest of the settings we can leave at default for now.

Topics:

Using the text tool

Formatting text

Text that scales and rotates

Text that follows a motion guide

Breaking apart text to reshape it with the pen tool

To create editable text, click the type tool, the big A in the tool palette. Click anywhere on the stage and begin typing. The text box will have a circle on its upper right corner, which means it will expand to accommodate the text. If you click the circle and drag the text box to a certain size, it will remain that size and the text will wrap. To make the box become expandable again, just double click the square handle in the upper right corner. It will change back to a circle.

Once you've typed in the text you want, select it by clicking on it with the solid black arrow from the tool palette, i.e. your selection tool. Make sure your character palette is open by selecting it under the text menu or the windows—palette menu. In fact, you can make all of the default panels open by going under the Windows menu and selecting "panel sets", hold and drag to "default layout." You'll see four combination palettes to your right. The one that contains the "character," "paragraph," and "text options" tabs is the one you'll use to format text.

If you want to change the shape of letters, you must first convert the text to outlines. This is done by selecting it, going under the "Modify" menu, and selecting "break apart." Once you do this, you will no longer be able to edit the text with the character and paragraph palette. However, you will be able to change the outline or path around the shape of the letter using the pen tool and sub-selection tool (the open arrow in the tool palette).

To create text that scales, you need not break it apart. When you open Flash, it will automatically create a new document window. It will create a layer one with a blank keyframe in frame one. You can add text content to this frame, by clicking with the type tool on the stage and typing out a word. The blank keyframe will change to a keyframe with content and you should get a solid black bullet in frame one. Pick a small size for the font. Click in frame 36 of the layer one. The stage will be blank, but go under "Insert" "keyframe." A solid black bullet will appear in frame 36 and the content from the previous keyframe will appear in the new key frame. You will be able to change the content in this new keyframe on frame 36 without affecting the content on the previous keyframe, frame 1. Select your text box. Go under "Modify", "transform", "scale." Scale the text box to a larger size and reposition it on the stage. To get Flash to create a gradual scaling of the text from frame 1 to 36, you'll create a motion tween. Select or click in frame one. Find your "Frames" tab in one of the palettes to the right (default is the bottom palette). Beside the tweening box, choose motion. Flash will put an arrow from frame 1 to frame 36 showing the tweening. If you go under "Control" "Play" the movie will play out the animation for you. The text should scale. You can also control rotation, and speed at the start and end of the animation, called easing, from this palette. Experiment.

To create type that follows a simple path you'll first need to create a motion tween, and then create a guide layer above the layer with your text. Open a new document window in Flash. We'll create a word "roll" that follows a wave like path. Select the type tool from the tool palette. Click in the upper left corner of the stage and type out "roll." Go to frame 36 and "Insert" "keyframe." In frame 36, select the word with your selection tool (solid black arrow) and reposition it to the right and a little lower than its position in frame one. Create your motion tween between frame 1 and 36. If you

turn on “onion skinning” in the timeline, it will show you dimmed versions of all the in-between frames. You can only select and edit the solid form on the current frame, however. Select frame one and then click on the icon for adding a motion guide layer in the timeline. It is the rectangle with the wavy line and plus symbol found below the layers. A motion guide layer will be added above the layer 1. Make sure the motion guide layer is active and your in frame 1. With the pencil tool, or pen tool, draw a path for the word to follow, somewhat wave-like. Now, you will need to click on “snap” in the “frame” palette that defines your motion tween. Go to frame one layer 1 and select your text box. You should have a registration mark, or cross hair in the center of the word. Drag it onto the very end of the motion path. The center of the word, or registration point should snap onto the end of the path. You’ll see an open circle when this happens. Go to frame 36, and drag the text box onto the end of the path until it snaps into place. Use the magnification tool to help you see the open circle and to make sure the word snaps into place. Click and drag the area you want to enlarge with the magnification tool. You can now double click the hand tool, and the movie will return back to 100% view. Go under the “Control” menu, and to “Play” to see your animation. You can also rotate the word, and affect the easing in and easing out motion from within the “Frames” palette.