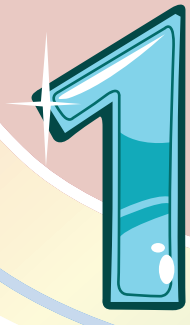
CHAPTER

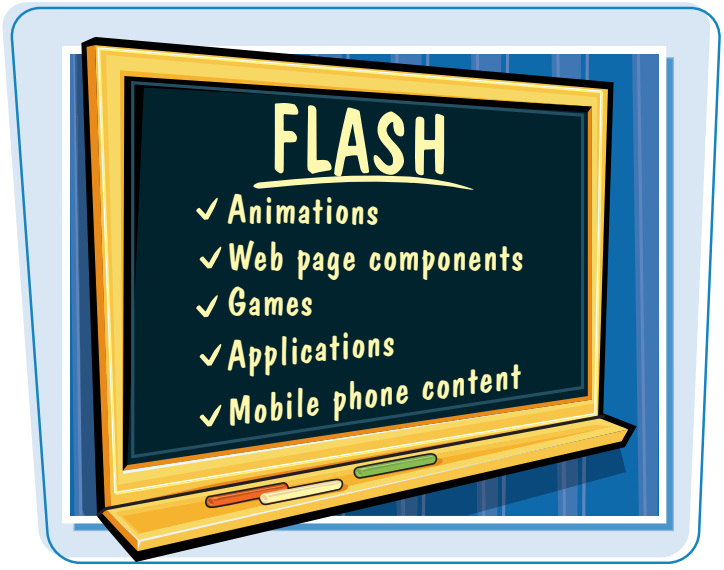


Flash Fundamentals

The Flash authoring program is the perfect tool for both new and experienced Web page designers who want to create expressive, dynamic Web page elements. In this chapter, you learn all the basics for starting Flash files and finding your way around the program window.

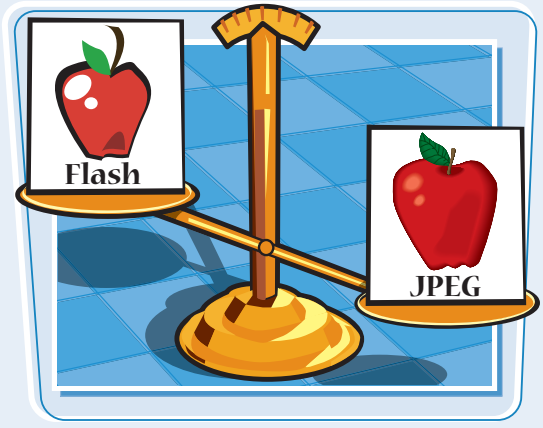
Introduction to Flash

Adobe Flash is the program of choice for multimedia authoring projects. You can use Flash to create animations, Web page components, games, applications, and mobile phone content. Using the Flash Player plug-in, just about every Web browser available today supports Flash-based content. In the strictest sense, Flash is an integrated development environment, while the Flash Player is a virtual machine for running Flash files.



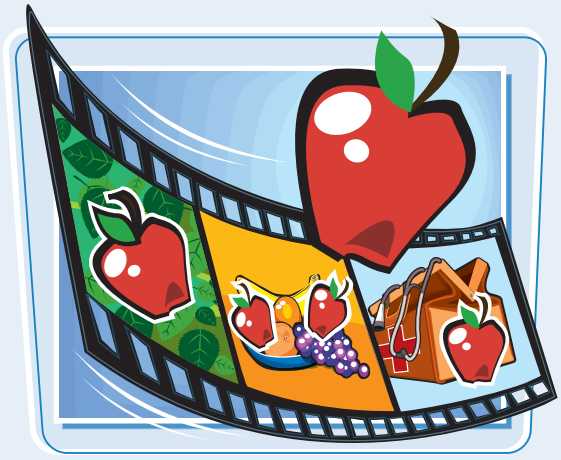
Create Animation Content

Flash includes a variety of tools you can use to draw your own graphic objects to use in your projects. Flash-created vector graphics are much smaller in file size than raster graphics, such as JPEGs and GIFs. Vector graphics display much faster on a downloading Web page and are a more efficient method of delivering images over the Internet. To learn more about creating objects, see Chapters 2 and 3. To learn how to import artwork, see Chapter 4. See Chapter 5 to learn about adding text.



Work with Symbols

After creating new objects or importing artwork from other sources, you can turn objects into symbols to reuse in your Flash movie. Every time you use a symbol, you use an instance of the original object. If you make changes to the original, the instance changes as well. Flash keeps track of your symbols in the file's Library. To learn more about using symbols and instances, see Chapter 7.

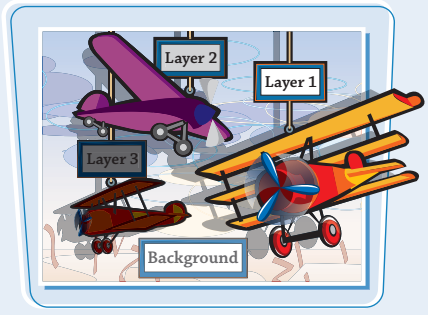


Build Animation Sequences

You can use the Flash animation tools to create all kinds of animation effects, from making an object move across the screen to complex animations that follow paths and action commands. You can create animations using frames. A frame stores content, and the total number of frames determines the length of your movie. For more on creating animations, see Chapters 8 and 9. To learn how to add sound to your animations, see Chapter 13.

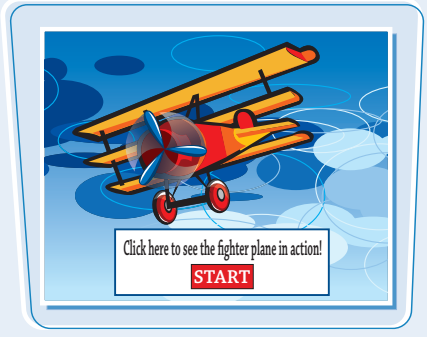
Organize with Layers

You can use layers in your Flash movies to organize content and add depth to your animations. Each layer acts like a transparent sheet, allowing you to view underlying layers. You can manage layers in the Flash Timeline window. To learn more about working with layers and the Flash Timeline, see Chapter 6



Add Interactive Elements

You can also use the Flash tools to create interactive elements in your movie and assign actions. For example, you can add a button that, when clicked, activates another movie. A programming language called *ActionScript* controls interactivity in Flash. You do not need to know how to write ActionScript to add interactivity; Flash includes numerous prewritten scripts that you can apply. To learn more about adding buttons, see Chapter 11. To learn about adding actions, see Chapter 12.

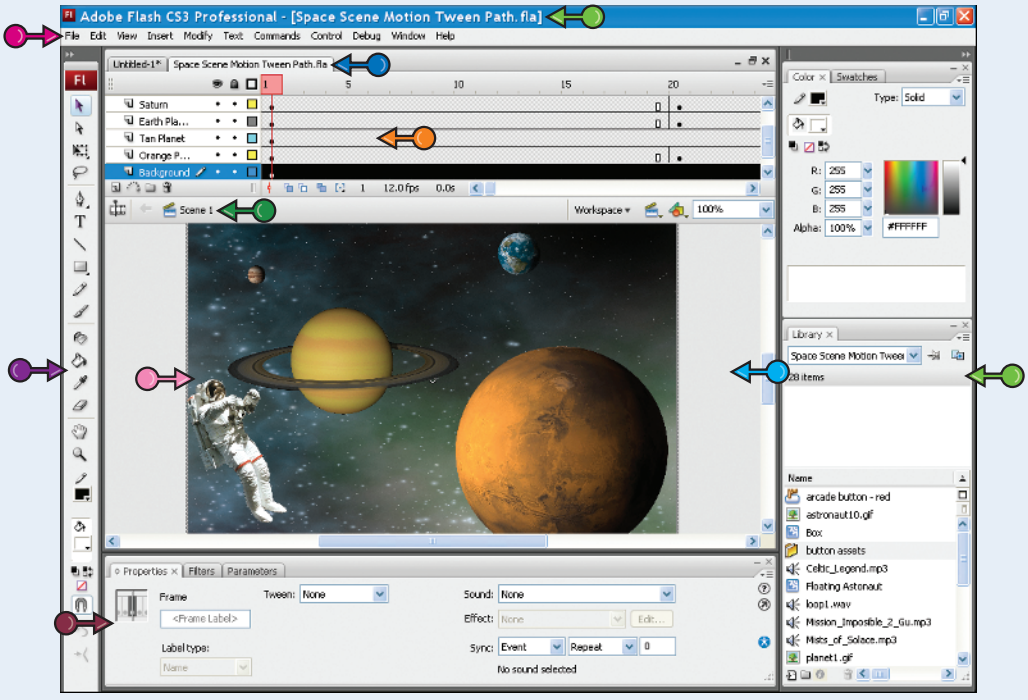


Publish Your Movies

There are a variety of ways you can share your animations with others. Flash includes options for publishing movies to Web pages, as Flash movie files, or as self-extracting animations. The program also includes features to help you preview a movie before publishing, test download performance, and more. To learn more about publishing your Flash projects, see Chapter 15.

Navigate the Flash Window

The Flash program window has several components for working with graphics and movies. Take time to familiarize yourself with the on-screen elements. If you use Flash on a Macintosh computer, the program elements may look a bit different than those displayed in the following Windows example.



TITLE BAR
Displays the name of the open file.

MENU BAR
Displays Flash menus which, when clicked, reveal commands.

FILE TAB
The tab at the top of the work area represents the current file. If two or more files are open, you can switch from file to file by clicking a tab.

TIMELINE
Contains all the frames, layers, and scenes that make up a movie.

TOOLS PANEL
Contains the basic tools needed to create and work with vector graphics.

CURRENT SCENE
Displays the name of the scene on which you are currently working.

STAGE OR MOVIE AREA
The area where a movie or graphic displays, where you can view a frame's contents and draw graphic objects. This area is also called the Flash Editor.

WORK AREA
The area surrounding the Stage. Anything placed on the work area does not appear in the movie.

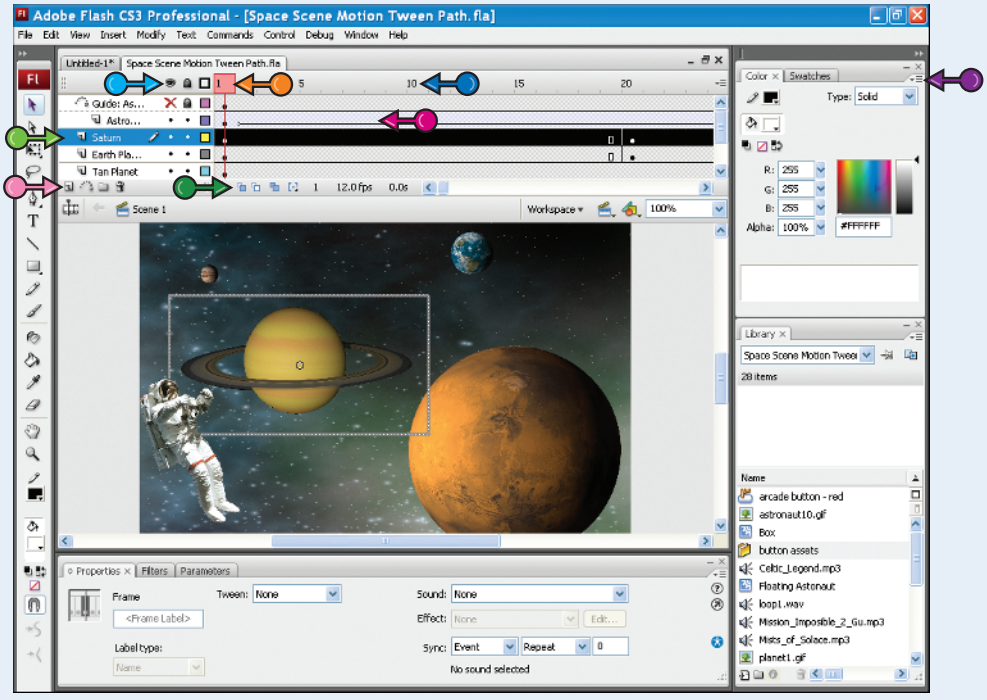
PROPERTY INSPECTOR
Use this panel to view and edit properties of the current object.

PANELS
Allow quick access to options for controlling and editing Flash movies.

Understanding the Flash Timeline

The Flash Timeline contains the frames, layers, and scenes that make up a movie. You can use the Timeline to organize and control your movies. By default, the Timeline appears docked near the top of the program window. If you are new to Flash, take a moment and familiarize yourself with the Timeline elements.

See Chapters 8, 9, and 10 for more on working with the Flash Timeline.



LAYERS

Use layers to organize artwork, animation, sound, and interactive elements. Layers enable you to keep pieces of artwork separate and combine them to form a cohesive image, such as a company logo that includes a layer of text and another layer with a graphic shape.

FRAMES

Lengths of time in a Flash movie are divided into frames. They enable you to control what appears in animation sequences and which sounds play.

FRAME NUMBERS

Frames appear in chronological order in the Timeline, and each frame has a number.

PLAYHEAD

Also called the Current Frame Indicator, the playhead marks the current frame displayed on the Stage.

PANEL MENU

Displays a drop-down menu of customizing options for controlling how frames are displayed in the Timeline.

TIMELINE BUTTONS

Scattered around the Timeline are buttons for controlling frames, layers, and movies.

LAYER BUTTONS

Click to add and delete layers.

LAYER CONTROLS

Display the status of a layer, such as hidden, locked, or outlined.

Open a Flash File

Flash files are called *documents* or *movies*. When you save a file, you can open it and work on it again. You can make Flash files as simple as a drawing you create using the Flash drawing tools, or as complex as an animation sequence consisting of scenes and interactive elements.

You can also start a new Flash file at any time, even if you are currently working on another file. Every new file you start uses a default Stage size. If the file windows are maximized, each open file appears as a tab at the top of the Timeline.

Open a Flash File

OPEN A FLASH FILE

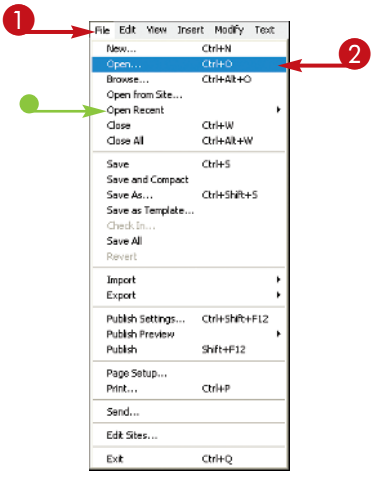
1. Click **File**.
2. Click **Open**.

   If the Main toolbar is displayed, you can click the **Open** button ( ) to display the Open dialog box.

   You can also press Ctrl + O (⌘ + O) to open the Open dialog box.

- You can open a recent file by clicking here and clicking the file name.

Note: *When you first open Flash, you can use the Welcome screen to open existing files or create new files. Click* ***Open*** *to display the Open dialog box.*



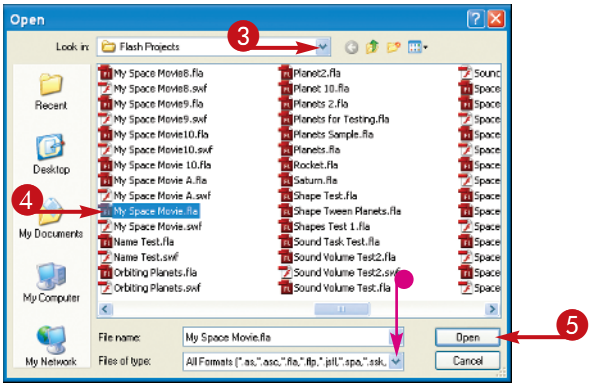
   The Open dialog box appears.

3. Click to navigate to the folder or drive containing the file you want to open.
4. Click the file name.

- You can change the file types listed by clicking here and choosing a file type.

5. Click **Open**.

   The file opens in the Flash window.



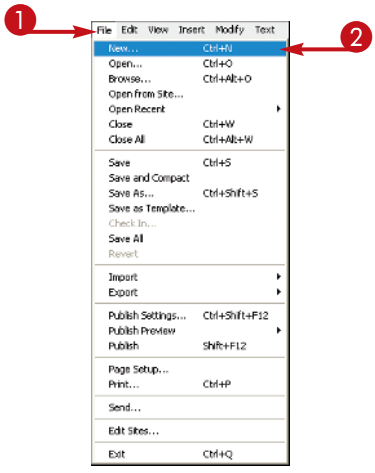
OPEN A NEW FLASH FILE

1. Click **File**.
2. Click **New**.

   If the Main toolbar is displayed, you can click the **New** button ( ) to display the New Document dialog box.

   You can also press Ctrl+N (⌘+N) to open the New Document dialog box.

Note: *When you first open Flash, you can use the Welcome screen to open existing files or create new files. From the Create New column, click the type of file you want to create.*

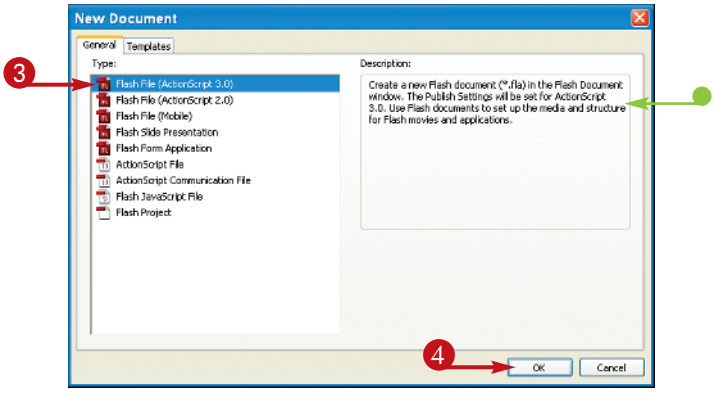


The New Document dialog box appears.

3. Click the type of document you want to create.

- A description of each type appears here.

4. Click **OK**.



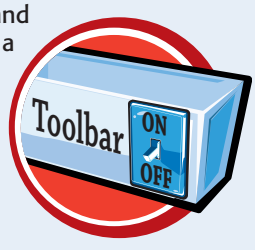
A blank document appears in the Flash window.

You can have several Flash files open and switch between them using the tabs at the top of the Timeline.

Note: *You can also use the Window menu to switch between open files.*

Why does Flash not show a Main toolbar by default?

The Main toolbar includes access to common commands, such as Open and Save. For example, to open a file, click the **Open** button ( ). By default, Flash does not display the Main toolbar, but you can turn it on if you want. Click **Windows**, **Toolbars**, and then **Main**.



Is there a limit to how many Flash files I can have open?

No. However, the more files you open, the slower your computer runs. Graphics files, such as those that you author in Flash, can take up more processing power than other programs. Unless you are sharing data between the files, it is a good idea to close Flash files you are no longer using.

Save and Close a Flash File

As you create movies in Flash, you need to save them to work on them again. By default, Flash saves all files in the FLA format. Because Flash does not offer an automatic save feature, it is a good practice to save your work frequently.

You can close Flash files no longer in use to free up computer memory. Be sure to save your changes before closing a file.

Saving graphics to the Flash Library works a bit differently than saving a file. See Chapter 7 for more information about saving symbols.

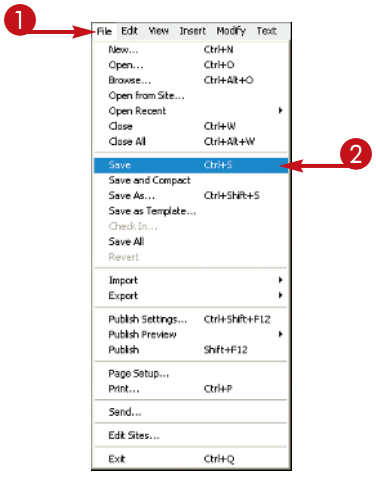
Save and Close a Flash File

SAVE A FILE

1. Click **File**.
2. Click **Save**.

   If the Main toolbar is displayed, you can click the **Save** button ( ) to display the Save As dialog box.

   You can also press Ctrl + S (⌘ + S) to open the Save As dialog box.

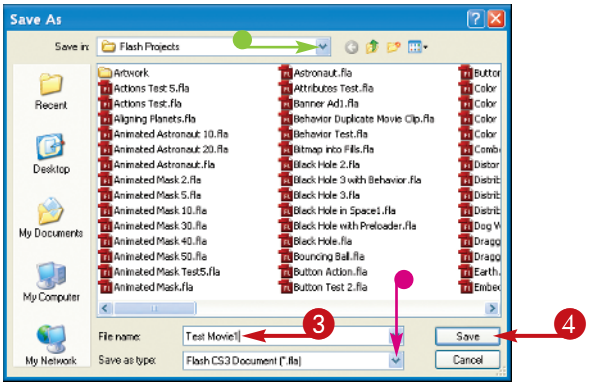


   The Save As dialog box appears.

***Note:** If you have previously saved a file, Flash saves the changes without displaying the Save As dialog box.*

3. Type a unique name for the file.
   - To save to another folder or drive, click and select another location.
   - To save the file as another file type, click and click a file type.
4. Click **Save**.

   Flash saves your file.



CLOSE A FLASH FILE

1. Save your file.

Note: *See the previous steps to learn how to save a Flash file.*

2. Click **File**.
3. Click **Close**.

   Flash closes the file you are working on, but the program window remains open.

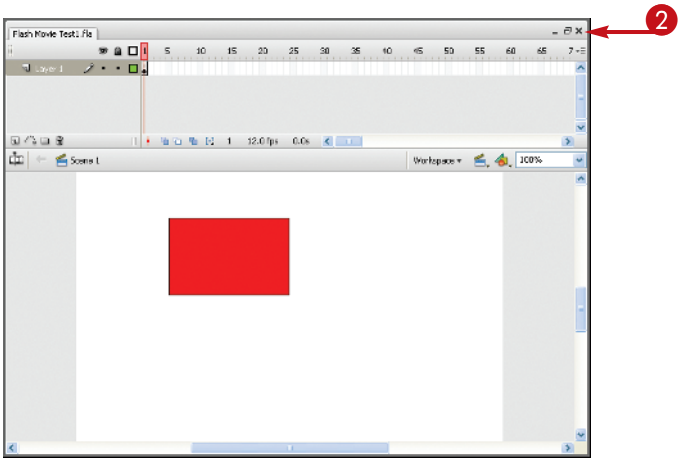
Note: *If you have not saved your changes, Flash prompts you to do so before closing a file.*

USE THE CLOSE BUTTON

1. Save your file.
2. Click the **Close** button ( ).

Note: *Clicking the program window's button closes the Flash application entirely and might result in lost data.*

Note: *If you have not saved your changes, Flash prompts you to do so before closing a file.*



TIPS

How do I save a previously saved file under a new name?

You can copy a previously saved file and save it under a new file name. You can then make changes to the file copy without worrying about changing the original file. To do so, click **File**, then click **Save As**. In the Save As dialog box that appears, type a new name for the file and click Save.

Can I save a Flash file in another format?

Yes; however, you cannot use the Save command unless you want to save the file in an older Flash program version. Instead, you must export the movie to another file format. See Chapter 13 to learn how.

Change the Document Size

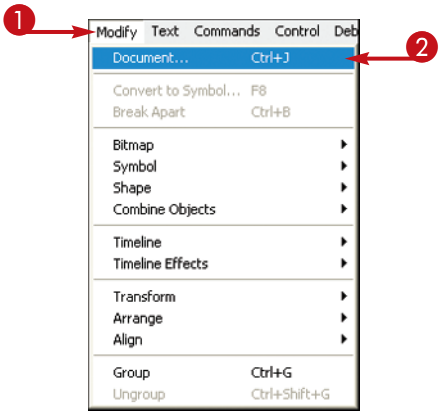
The document you create in Flash appears on the Stage, which is the on-screen area where you can view the contents of a frame and draw graphic objects. You can control the size and appearance of the document you create on the Stage. The size of the document determines the size of your Flash movie screen.

It is a good idea to set your movie size before adding any content to your frames. If you set a size after creating your movie, you may end up needing to reposition objects to fit the new size.

Change the Document Size

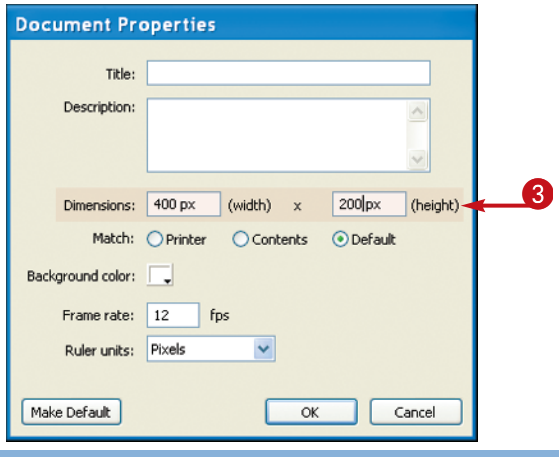
1. Click **Modify**.
2. Click **Document**.

   You can also click on the **Size** button in the Property inspector to display the Document Properties dialog box.



   The Document Properties dialog box appears.

3. To change the stage's dimensions in pixels, type new dimensions in the width and height boxes.

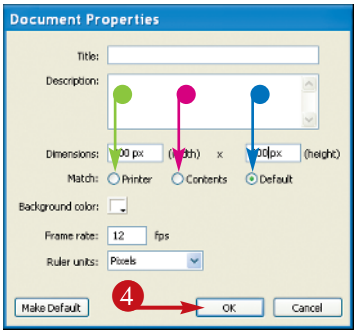


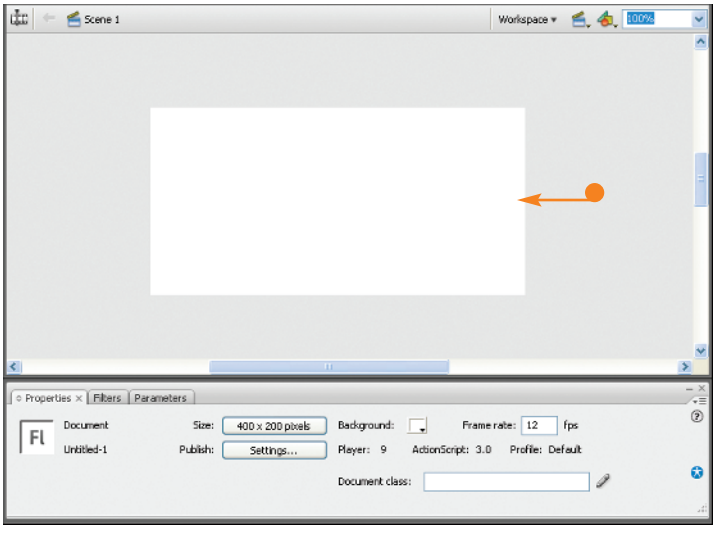
Note: *You can also use the Document Properties dialog box to set a frame rate for your movie. See Chapter 8 to learn more about frame rates.*

- You can select **Printer** (◯ changes to ◉) if you want to match the Stage dimensions to the maximum available print area size for your printer.
- You can select **Contents** (◯ changes to ◉) to change the Stage dimensions to match the contents of your movie, with equal spacing all around.
- You can select **Default** (◯ changes to ◉) to return the Stage size to the default size.

4. Click **OK**.

- Flash resizes the Stage area according to your new settings.

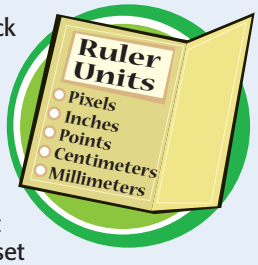




TIPS

How do I specify different units of measurement for the Stage?

From the Document Properties dialog box, click the **Ruler units** ▼ and then click the unit of measurement you want to apply. The unit of measurement immediately changes in the width and height text boxes and you can now set the appropriate measurements.



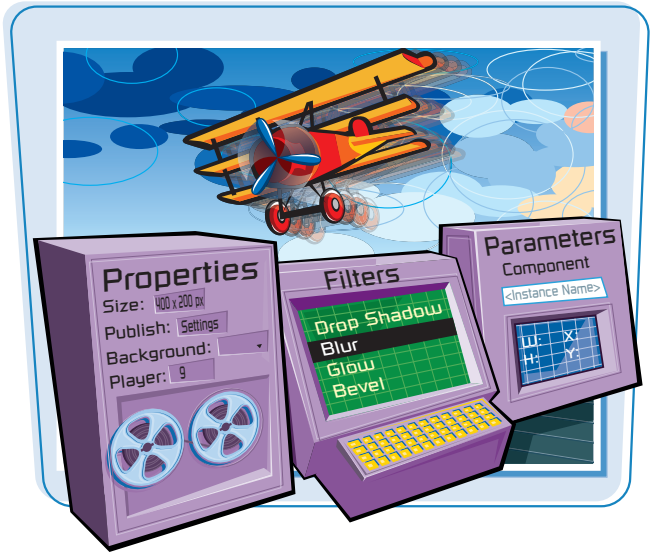
How do I set a new background color?

By default, Flash sets the Stage background color to white. To set another background color, click the **Background Color** button (■) in the Document Properties dialog box. A palette of color choices appears. Click the color you want to apply and the color becomes the new background color throughout your movie.

Using the Property Inspector

You can use the Property inspector to see and edit the properties of the object with which you are currently working. The Property inspector changes to reflect the properties associated with the object you select on the Stage. By default, the Property inspector appears open when you first open a Flash file.

The Property inspector acts as a panel that you can collapse, hide from view, or move. By default, Flash docks the Property inspector at the bottom of the program window. You can collapse or close the Property inspector when you do not need it to free up workspace.



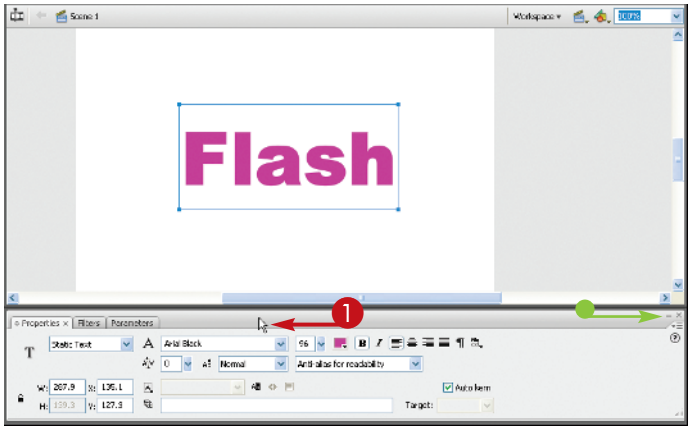
Using the Property Inspector

COLLAPSE AND EXPAND THE PROPERTY INSPECTOR

1. Click the panel's title bar or name to collapse or minimize the panel.

- You can also click the **Minimize** button ( ) to collapse the panel (becomes).

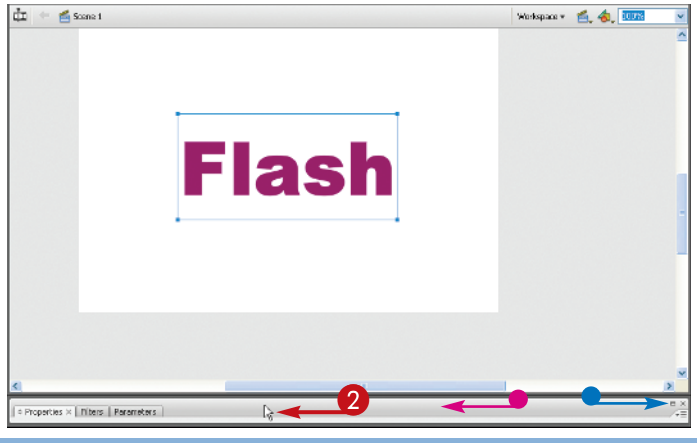
Note: *This example shows the text properties listed in the Property inspector panel.*



- The Property inspector panel collapses.

2. To expand the panel again, click the panel's title bar.

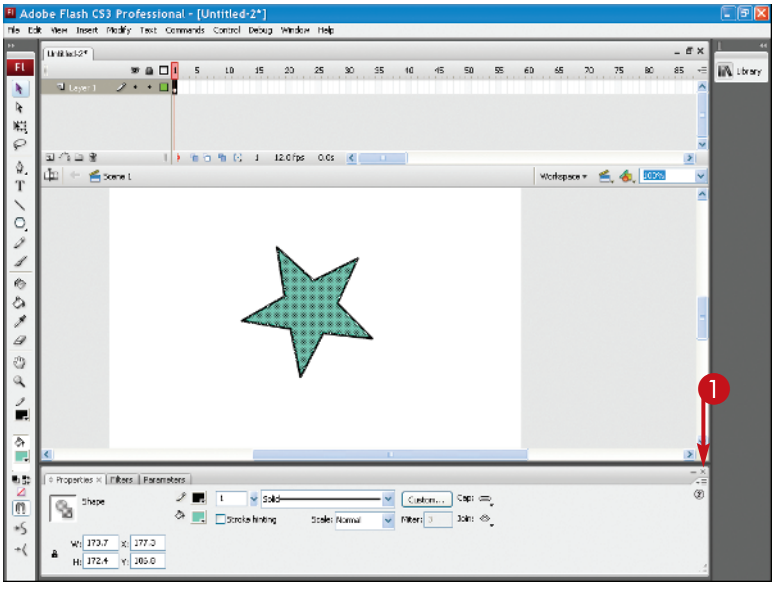
- You can also click the **Maximize** button ( ).



CLOSE THE PANEL

1. To close the panel, click the **Close** button ( ).

   Flash closes the Property inspector.

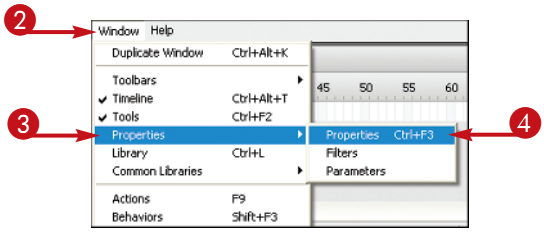


OPEN THE PANEL

2. To display the panel, click **Window**.
3. Click **Properties**.
4. Click **Properties**.

   You can also press Ctrl+F3 (⌘+F3) to quickly open the panel.

   Flash opens the Property inspector.



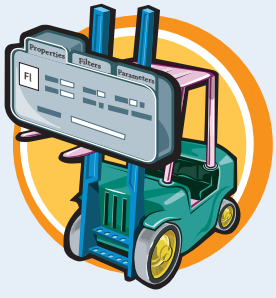
TIPS

What do the other tabs in the Property inspector do?

In addition to the Properties tab and depending on what version of Flash CS3 you are using, the Property inspector panel displays two other tabs: Parameters and Filters. The Parameters tab displays information about components. See Chapter 12 to learn how to use components in Flash. If you are using Flash CS3 Professional, the Filters tab appears. You can use the Filters tab to apply filters to your movie objects. To learn more about filters, see Chapter 10.

Can I move the Property inspector panel?

Yes. Like all panels in Flash, you can move the Property inspector to create a floating panel or you can dock the panel on another side of the screen. To move the panel, click and drag the drag area, the upper-left corner of the panel. To collapse a floating panel, simply click the panel's title bar. To expand it again, click the bar again.



Work with Panels

You can use the Flash panels to access additional controls. Flash offers over a dozen different panels, each displaying options related to a specific task. Panels can appear docked to the side of the program window or they can appear as floating panels. When you no longer need them, you can close panels to free up on-screen workspace.

You can open a default set of commonly used panels in Flash that include the Color, Swatches, and Library panels. Flash considers the Property inspector, Library, Actions, and Movie Explorer panels as main authoring panels. You can find all the Flash panels listed on the Window menu.

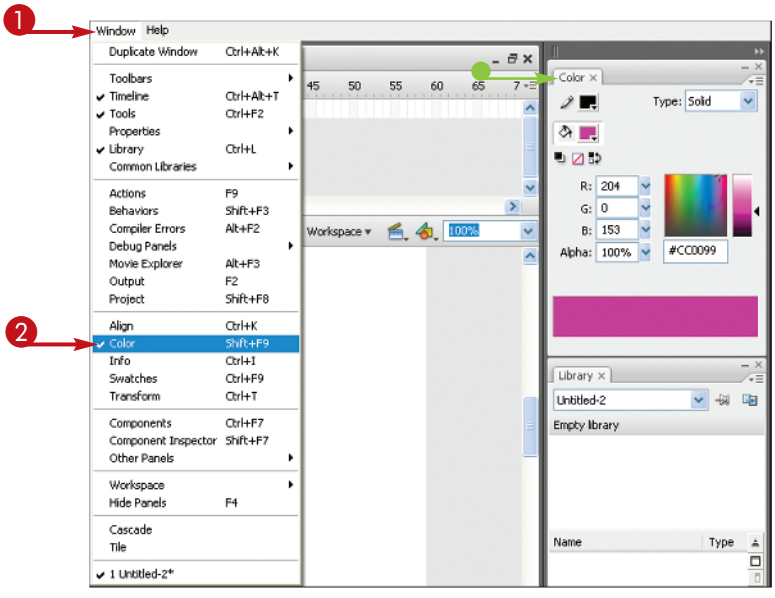
Work With Panels

OPEN PANELS

1. Click **Window**.
2. Click the panel you want to open.

***Note:** A check mark next to the panel name indicates the panel is open; no check mark means the panel is closed.*

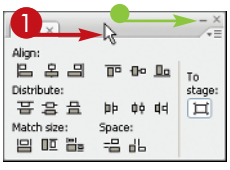
- The panel appears on-screen.



COLLAPSE AND EXPAND PANELS

1. Click the panel's title bar or name to collapse or minimize the panel.

- You can also click the **Minimize** button ( ) to collapse the panel (becomes) and click the **Maximize** button ( ) to expand the panel again.

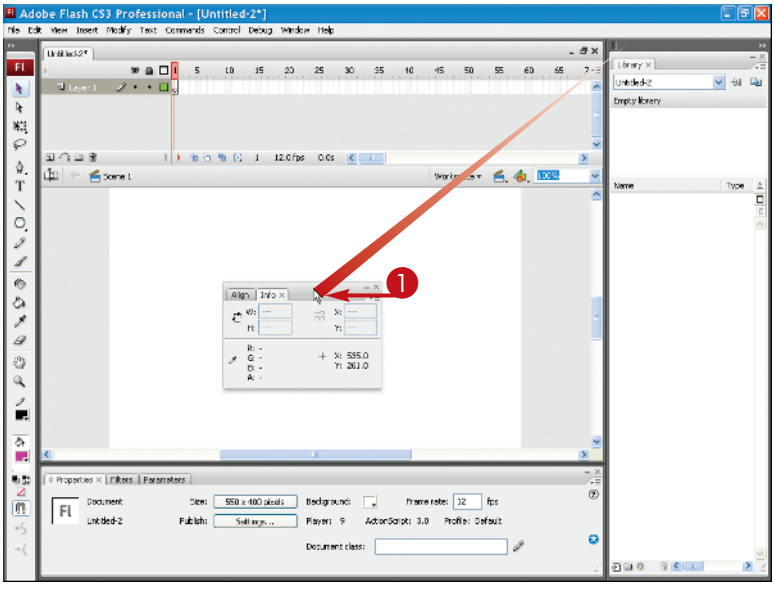


MOVE A PANEL

1. Click and drag the panel's title bar to undock and move a panel.

   When you undock a docked panel, it becomes a floating panel that you can move freely about the program window.

   To resize a panel, move the ↖ over the border of a panel (↖ changes to ⇕), then click and drag to resize the panel.

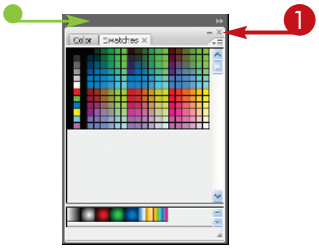


CLOSE PANELS

1. Click the panel's **Close** button (⊠).

   The panel closes.

- To hide a panel instead of close it, click the panel's title bar.



TIPS

Can I hide all the panels at once?

Yes. Click the **Window** menu and click **Hide Panels** or simply press F4. Flash closes all the panels, including the Tools panel of drawing tools. Only the Timeline and the Stage area are left on-screen. This frees up workspace to see the Stage and any animations you want to view. You can use the Window menu to reopen any individual panels you want to view and use again, or you can press F4 again to toggle the panel display back again.

Can I create a custom workspace with only the panels I want to use?

Yes. To create a custom workspace, open all the panels you want to save as your custom workspace and arrange them how you want them to appear in the program window. Next, click the **Window** menu and click **Workspace**, **Save Current**. The Save Workspace Layout dialog box appears. Type a name for the layout and click **OK**. Flash saves the layout. To restore it at any time, click **Window**, **Workspace**, and the name of the layout, or click the **Workspace** button at the top of the Stage and click a layout.

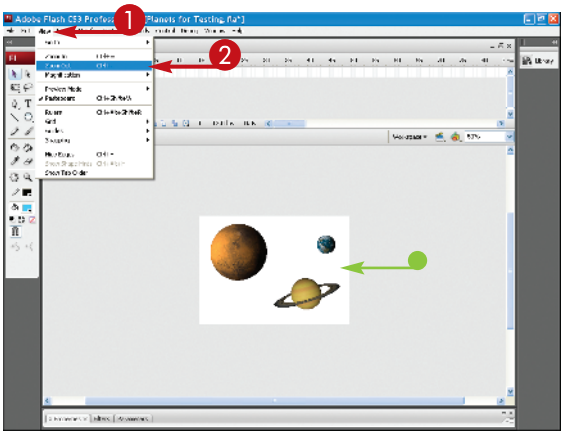
Zoom Out or In

When working with various elements on the Stage, you can zoom in or out for a better view. For example, you may need to zoom in to see the details of an object you are editing, or you might need to zoom out to see the entire Stage area.

Zooming your view merely changes the magnification of the Stage area and does not change the size of the objects you are viewing.

Zoom Out or In

ZOOM OUT

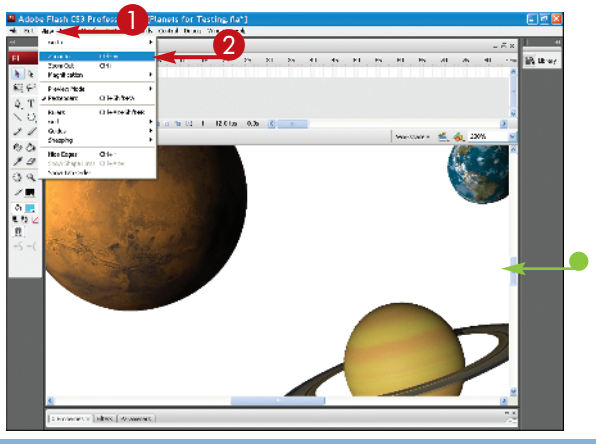


1. Click **View**.
2. Click **Zoom Out**.

- Flash zooms your view of the Stage.

  You can select the command again to zoom out another magnification level.

ZOOM IN



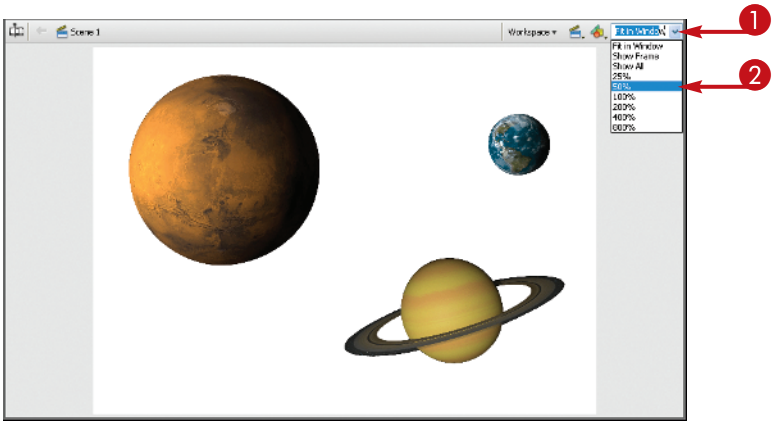
1. Click **View**.
2. Click **Zoom In**.

- Flash zooms your view of the Stage.

  You can select the command again to zoom in another magnification level.

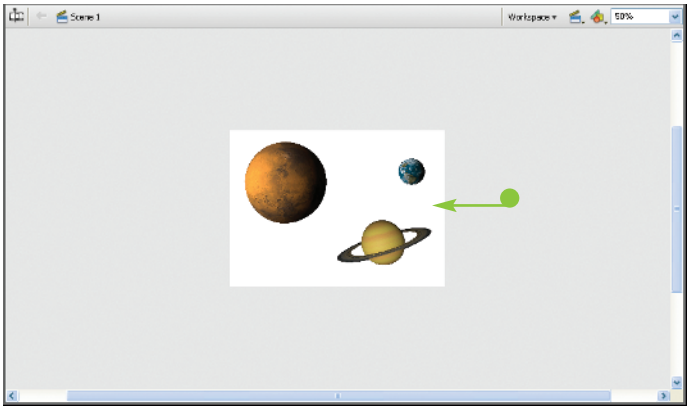
SELECT A ZOOM PERCENTAGE

1. Click .
2. Click a magnification percentage.



Flash immediately adjusts the view.

- In this example, the window zooms to 50%.



TIPS

How do I use the Zoom tool button?

You can also use the Zoom button on the Tools panel to change the Stage magnification. Click the **Zoom** button ( ) and click either the **Enlarge** modifier ( ) or the **Reduce** modifier ( ) at the bottom of the Tools panel. Next, click the area of the Stage you want to view. Flash immediately enlarges or reduces the view.

Is there a quicker way to zoom in Flash?

You can temporarily zoom from Enlarge to Reduce and vice versa by pressing and holding the Alt key (Option) as long as the Zoom tool is active on the Tools panel. You can also temporarily zoom your view while using another tool on the Tools panel simply by pressing Ctrl+Shift+Spacebar (Spacebar). You can also press Ctrl+1 (⌘+1) to zoom to 100%, or press Ctrl+- and Ctrl++ to zoom out and in.

Using Rulers and Grids

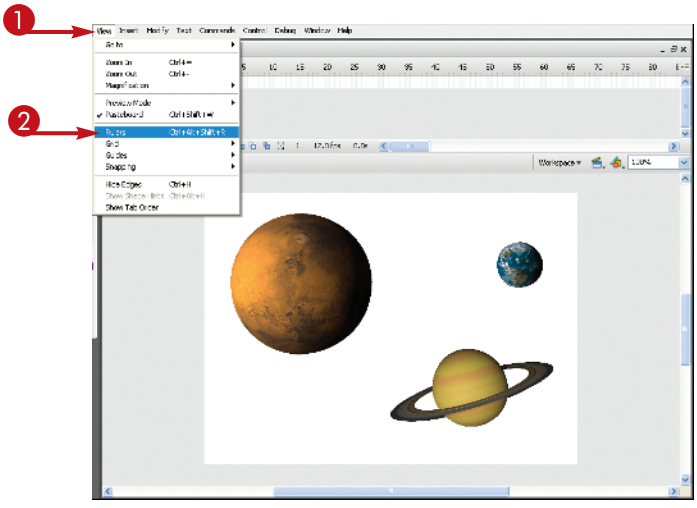
To help you draw with more precision, turn on the Flash Rulers and grid lines. Both tools can help you position objects on the Stage. The rulers and grids do not appear in the final movie.

You can use rulers to measure the various elements on the Stage. You can use gridlines to help you quickly position elements on the Stage.

Using Rulers and Grids

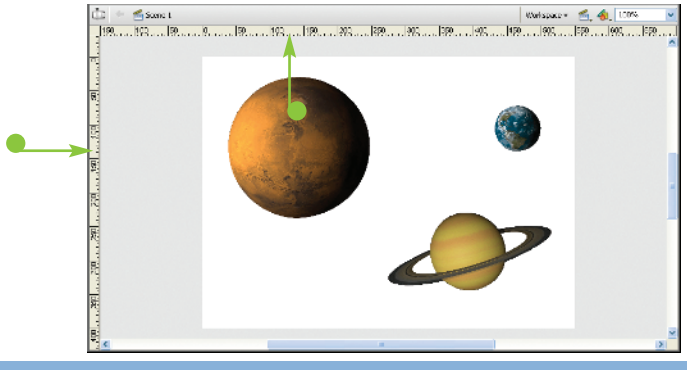
ACTIVATE THE FLASH RULERS

1. Click **View**.
2. Click **Rulers**.



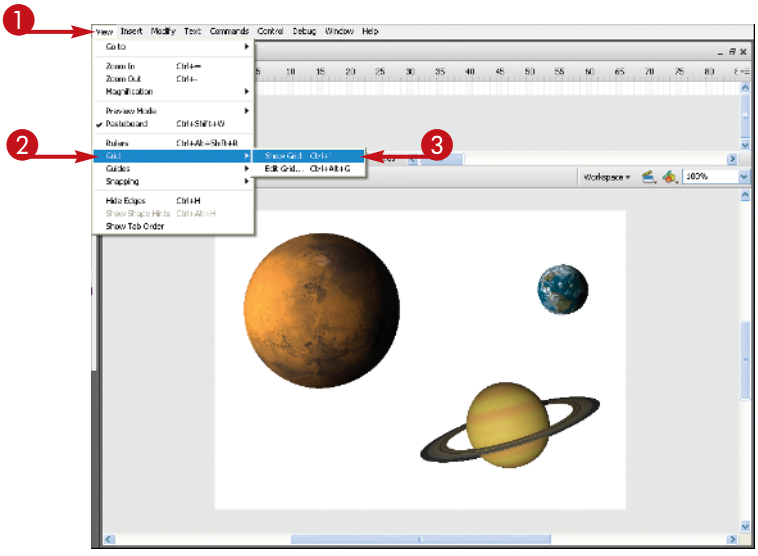
- Flash opens horizontal and vertical rulers in the Stage area.

  You can repeat steps **1** and **2** to turn off the rulers.



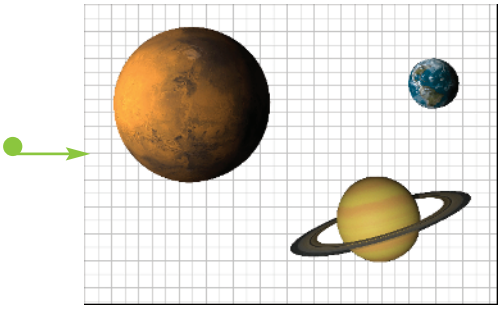
TURN ON GRID LINES

1. Click **View**.
2. Click **Grid.**
3. Click **Show Grid**.



- Grid lines appear on the Stage.

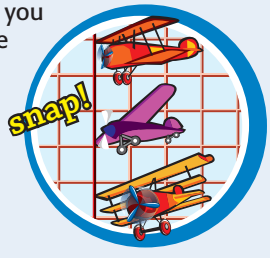
  You can repeat steps **1** to **3** to turn off the grid lines.



TIPS

How can I precisely align objects with the grid?

Use the Snap tool to help you quickly align objects to the grid lines. To activate the tool, click **View**, click **Snapping**, and click a snapping command. You can also click **View**, **Snapping**, and then click **Snap To Grid**.



What are guides?

Guides are lines you can drag onto the Stage to help you as you move items and control positioning. You can turn on the Flash guides as another tool to help you position objects on the Stage. To display the guides, click the **View** menu and then click **Guides**, **Show Guides**. You must also turn on the Flash rulers in order to use guides. To add a guide to the Stage, drag a guideline off of the ruler and onto the Stage. To remove a guide, drag it back to the ruler.

Find Help with Flash

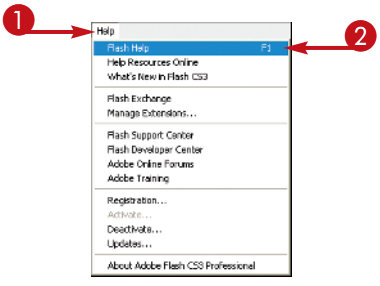
When you run across a program feature or technique that you do not understand, consult the Flash Help system. The Flash Help files offer a wide variety of topics ranging from basic Flash features, such as how to use on-screen buttons and drawing tools, to advanced features, such as how to write scripts using ActionScript.

You display the Flash Help information in the Help panel. Like the other panels available in Flash, you can move, resize, collapse, and expand the Help panel. See the section "Work with Panels" to learn more.

Find Help with Flash

OPEN THE HELP PANEL

1. Click **Help**.
2. Click **Flash Help**.

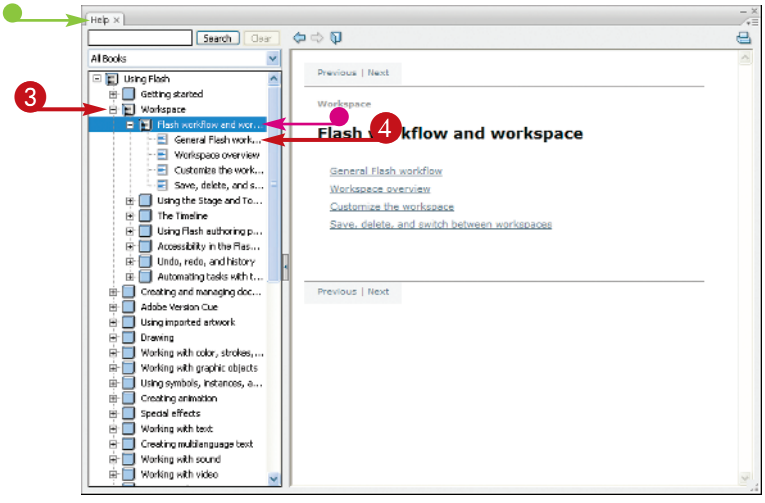


- The Help panel opens.

3. Double-click a topic category you want to know more about.

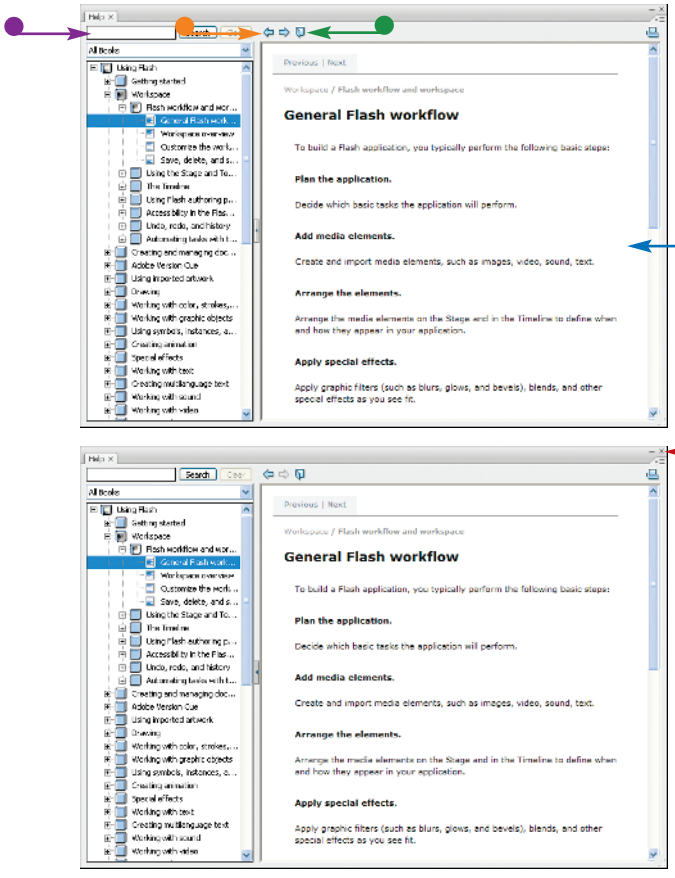
- You can click a subtopic to reveal a list of Help topics to choose from.

4. Click a topic.



- The Help information appears and you can read more about the topic.
- You can click the navigation buttons, **History Back** (⇦) and **History Forward** (⇨) to move back and forth between topics.

  Some topics include additional links in the help text you can click to view more information or related topics.
- You can look up a topic by typing a keyword or phrase here and pressing Enter (Return) or clicking the **Search** button.
- Click here to return to the main list of Help topics.



CLOSE THE HELP PANEL

5 Click the **Close** button (⊠).

Flash closes the Help panel.

TIPS

Where else can I find Flash help?

Adobe's Web site (www.adobe.com/support/flash/) is a good place to start if you are looking for additional information about the Flash program. To access the site from Flash, click the **Help** menu and select **Help Resources Online** or **Flash Support Center**. This opens your default Web browser. You may need to log on to your Internet connection first. You can also find numerous sites on the Internet dedicated to Flash users by performing a simple search for the keyword *Flash* using your favorite search engine.

Is there an easy way to find out what new features appear in Flash CS3?

You can open the Help panel directly to a link to learn about new program features. To do so, click **Help, What's New in Flash CS3**. The Help panel opens to the information and you can read all about the new program features and improvements.

Open a Flash Template

Flash includes a variety of templates you can use to create new Flash files. Templates are a great way to build a document and create specialized content. After you open a template, you can add content to the file and save it to reuse again.

Flash installs with a variety of templates you can use to create content for mobile devices, slide shows, advertising presentations, quizzes, and more.

Open a Flash Template

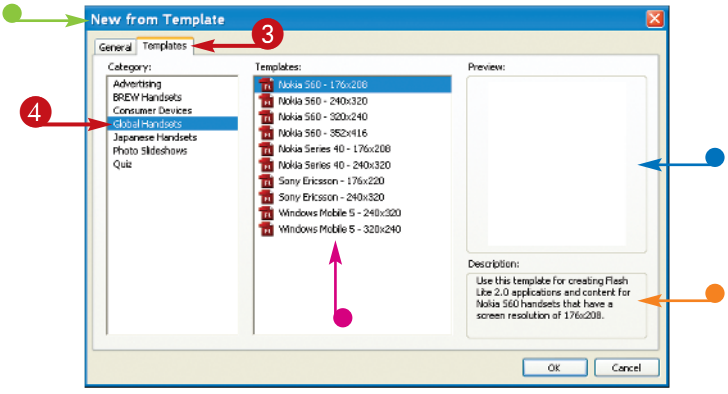
1. Click **File**.
2. Click **New**.

The New Document dialog box appears.

3. Click the Templates tab.
   - New from Template appears as the dialog box title.
4. Click a category.
   - A list of related templates appears.
   - Click a template and view a preview here.

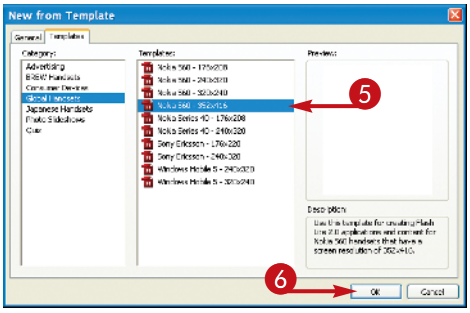
***Note:** Not all templates include a preview.*

   - A description of the template appears here.



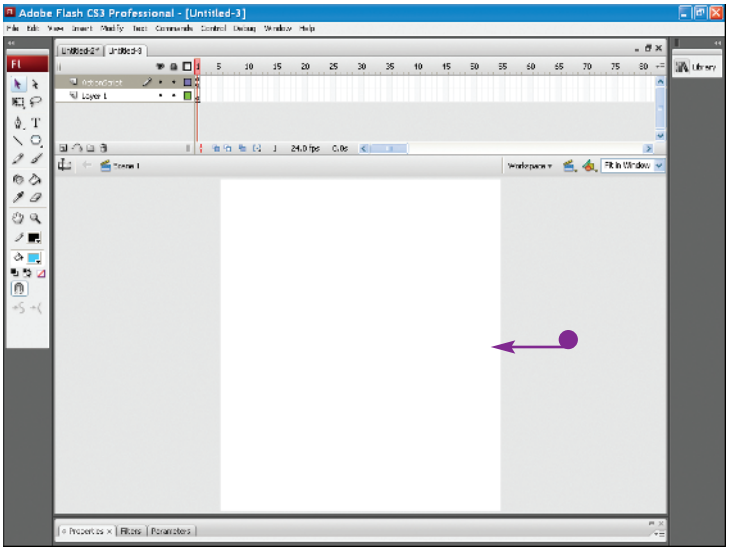
5 Click the template for the type of document that you want to create.

6 Click **OK**.



- A blank template appears in the Flash window.

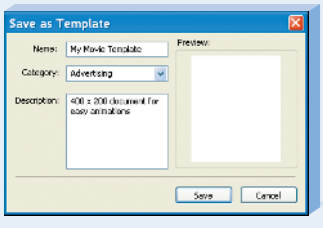
  You can add content to create the new file.



TIPS

Can I make my own templates in Flash?

Yes. To turn any Flash file into a template file, click **File**, **Save As Template** to open the Save As Template dialog box. Type a unique name for the template, select a category to save the template to, and type a brief description. Click **Save** and Flash saves the file and adds it to the templates list.



How do I save a file I create with a template?

After you finish working on the template, you can save it as a regular Flash file. Click **File**, **Save**, and assign a unique name for the file in the Save As dialog box. To learn more about saving files, see the section "Save and Close a Flash File" earlier in this chapter.