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Flash Tutorial

Learn to Design an Adobe Flash web page header

I've been getting questions about Adobe® Flash®, so I thought I'd create this basic tutorial. I'm not a programmer, so there will be very little action scripting. The purpose of this lesson will be to cover timeline animation and the skills necessary to create a basic .swf file and embed it on a web page. Since the animation in the header of my web site was very simple and easy to create, I'll use it as the example. The basic timeline principles are the same in most versions of Flash.

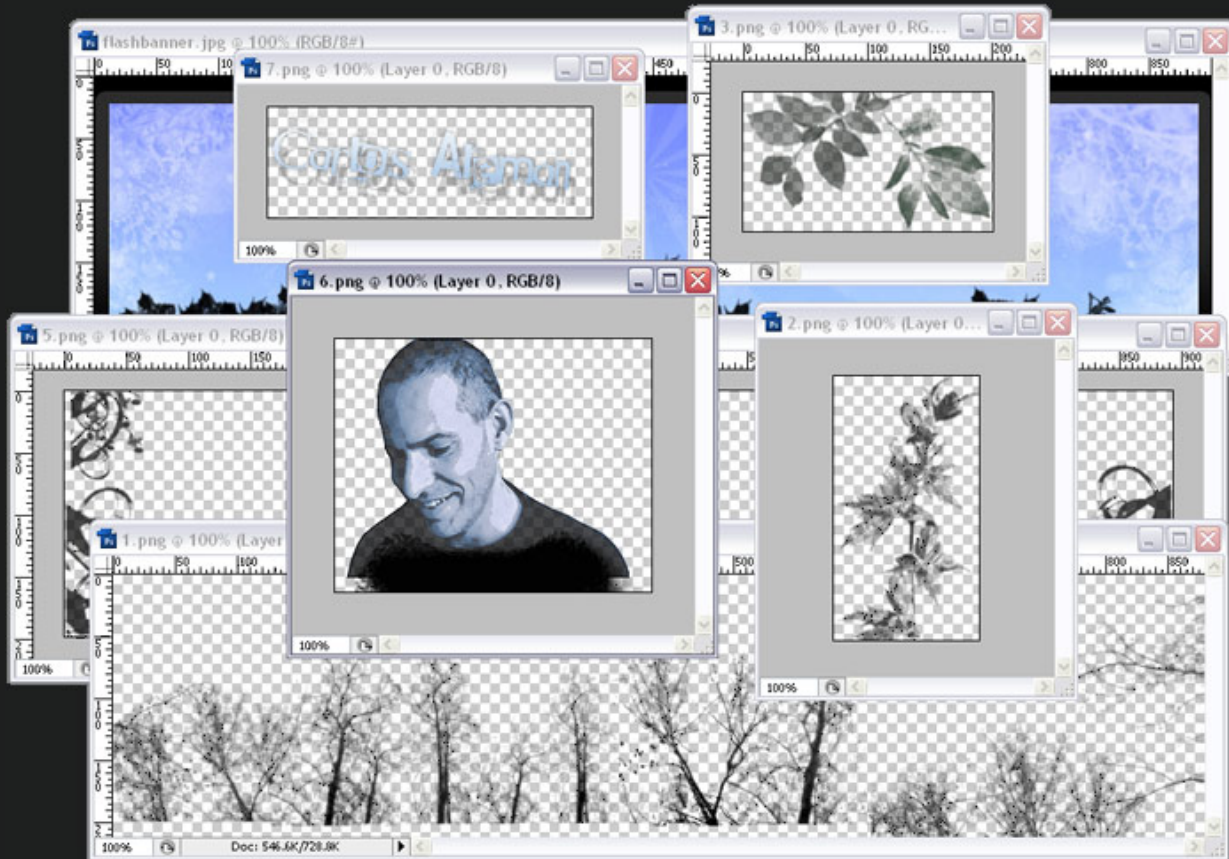
[This Tutorial as of April, 2008]

ADOBE FLASH

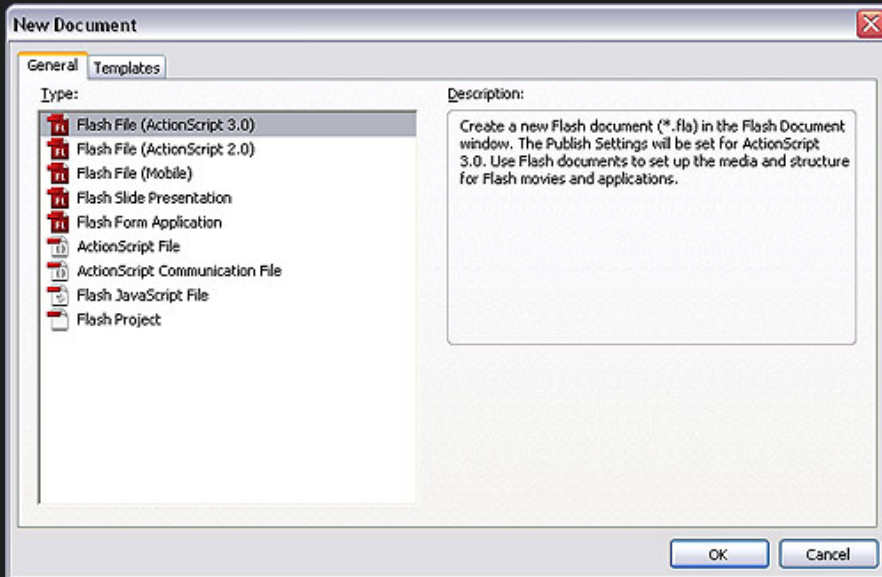


Adobe® Flash® is the most popular way to add animation and interactivity to web pages. When you work on a flash project, the source file that you save is a .fla. When you want to see how your project will look on a web page, you will 'publish' the file as an .swf file which is embedded into a .html file. An 'object' tag which contains the parameters for the flash 'movie' can be embedded into an html file with Dreamweaver® or using the Flash application itself. This lesson will be for the Windows operating system (Sorry Mac Users). So let us go through the process, step by step...

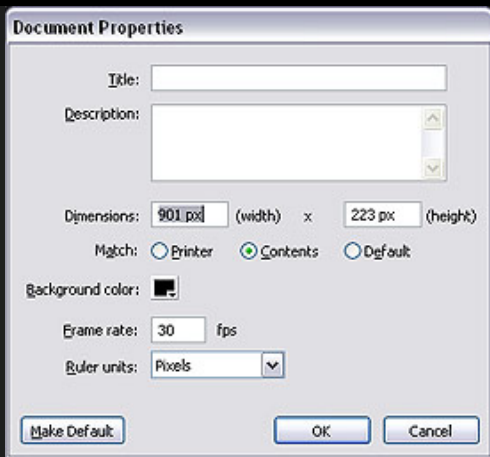
Here are the images that I will work with. They've been created in Photoshop ([see my web design tutorial](#)). Note that most of them have transparent edges. To create this effect (In Photoshop), select and copy each element from a layer of the design and paste into a new canvas. Make sure that the background layer is turned off. Save as a .png file and select **Interlace:None** from the PNG Options.



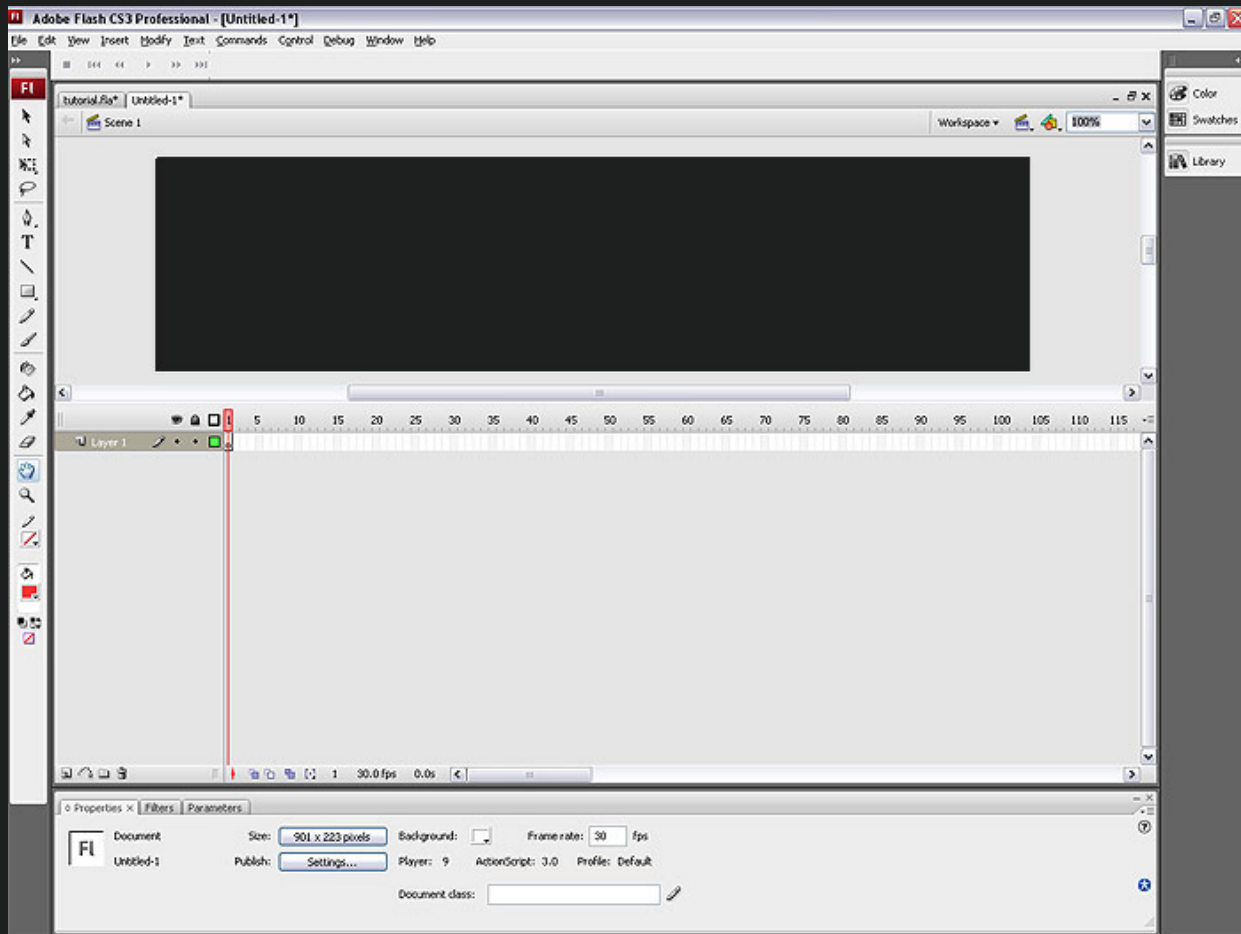
First create a new document (Hold>Ctr>New) in Flash. Select the latest Flash File type. I'll be using ActionScript 3.0, but I will not be using much scripting...



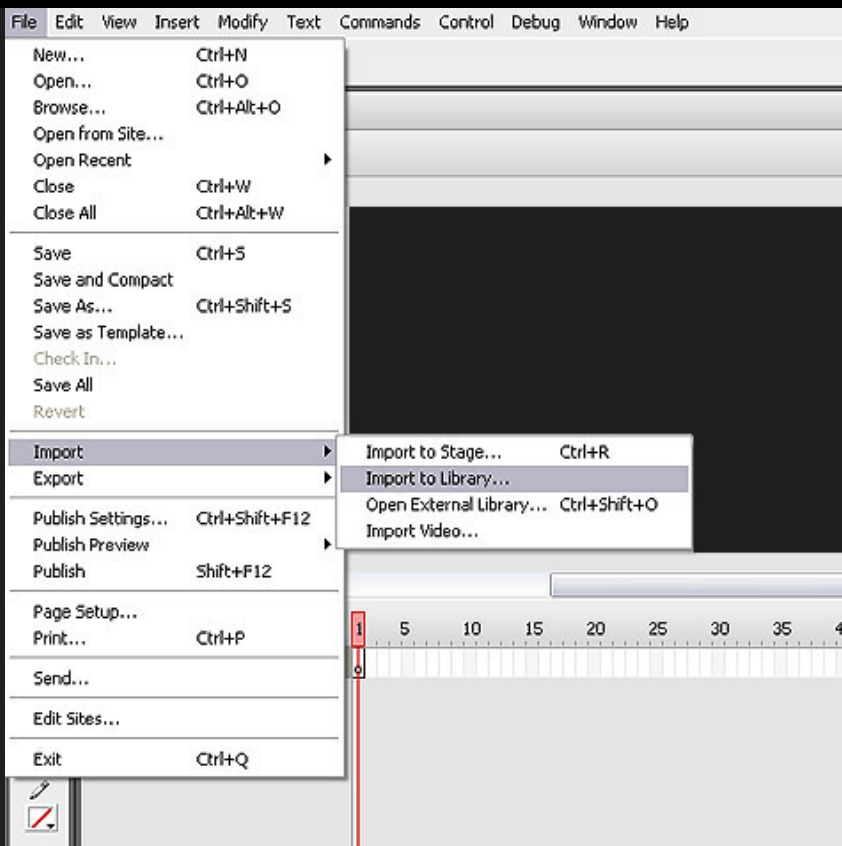
Save the new document. Open the Document Properties box (Hold>Ctr>J). Choose the dimensions for the animation and a background color. I like to keep the frame rate at **30 fps** so that the animation runs smoothly.



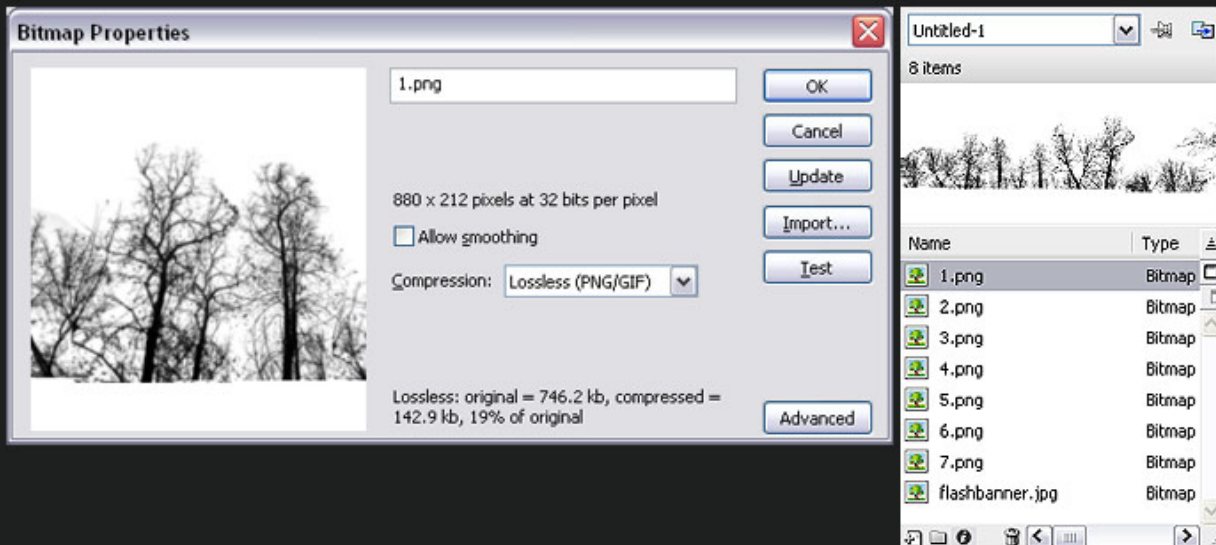
With the interface you can drag different palettes and position them to your liking. Here, I've chosen to place my 'stage' above the timeline and properties palette.



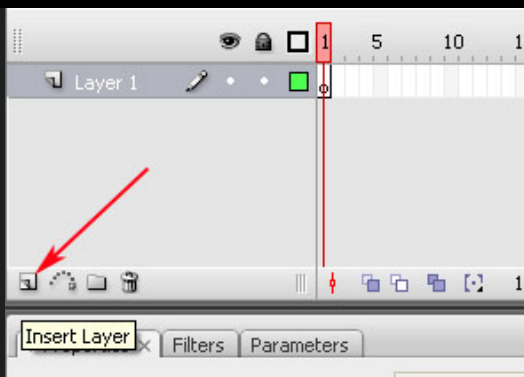
First, I will import all of my images (see my [web design tutorial](#)) into my library. My large background image will be a web optimized **jpg** to reduce file size. The rest of the images (.png files) will be introduced in layers like a painting.



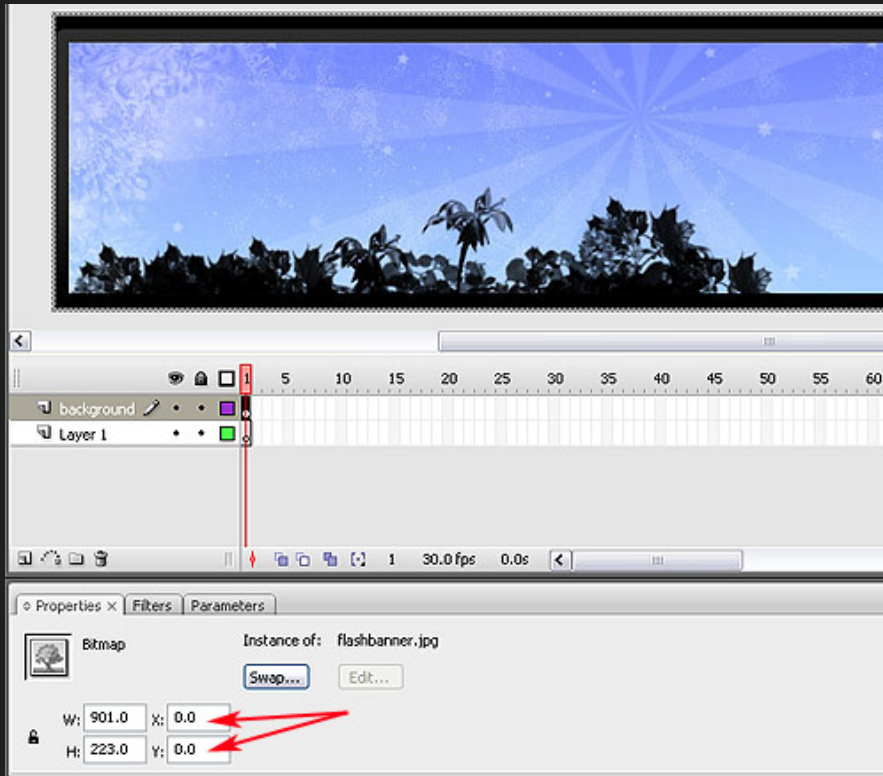
In the **Library** (Hold>Ctrl>L), right click on the **.png** files, select **'Properties'** and set the Compression to **'Lossless (PNG/GIF)'**. Do this for all of the **.png** files in the library.



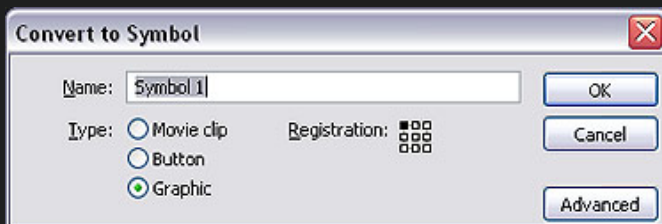
Make sure your Timeline palette is open (Hold>Alt>Ctrl>T). Since I have an odd compulsion to always leave the first layer empty, I will create a new layer by clicking the **Insert Layer** icon.



Rename Layer 2 to 'background layer' by double clicking on the layer and typing. From the library (Hold>Ctr>L), I drag out my jpg background image and place it on the stage. In my **Properties** palette, I change the **x and y coordinates** to 0 in order to center the image. This works because I made the stage the same size as the background image.

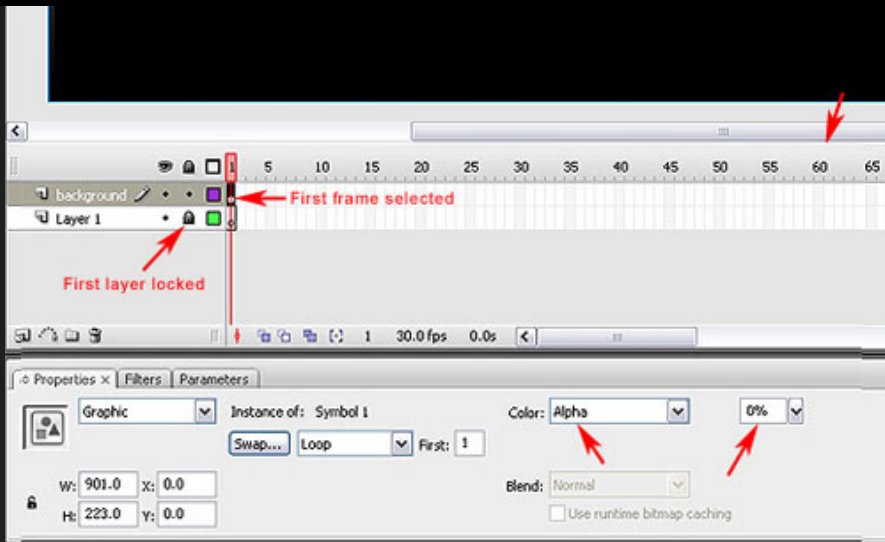


Right click on the image and select **Convert to Symbol**. Give it a name and select the '**Graphic**' radio button. Click OK.

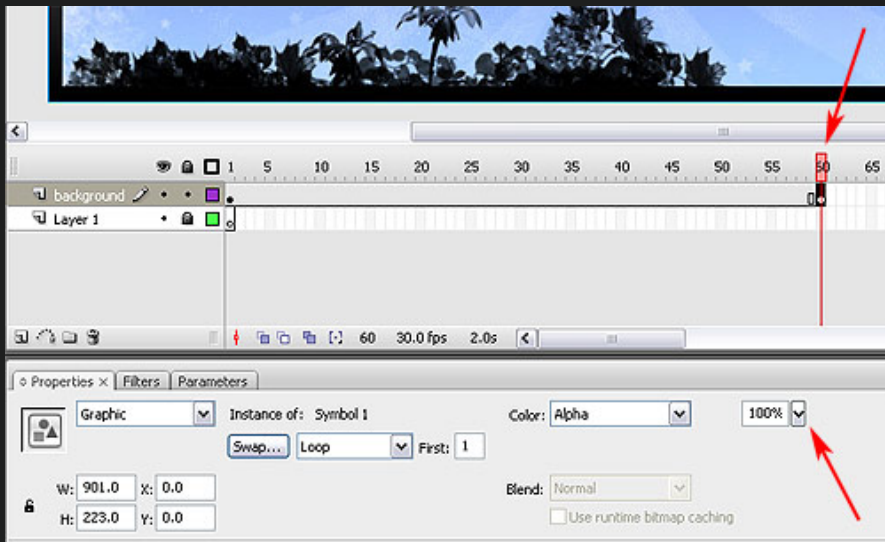


Notice below that the layer that I'm not working on is locked. This makes it easier to select objects that you want to work with. The first frame which is already a **Key Frame** (key frames have a small circle) by default is selected.

My objective is to have this background graphic **fade in** from black. We'll start at black (0% opacity) on key 1 and increase to 100% opacity at key 60. 60 frames will give us a nice slow transition. Click once on the image and you should see the Instance properties for the image in the **Properties** palette (Hold>Ctr>F3). The color should be '**Alpha**' and we'll reduce the opacity to 0%.



Click frame 60 on the timeline and convert it into a **Keyframe** (F6). Click once on the graphic again and change the opacity to 100%.

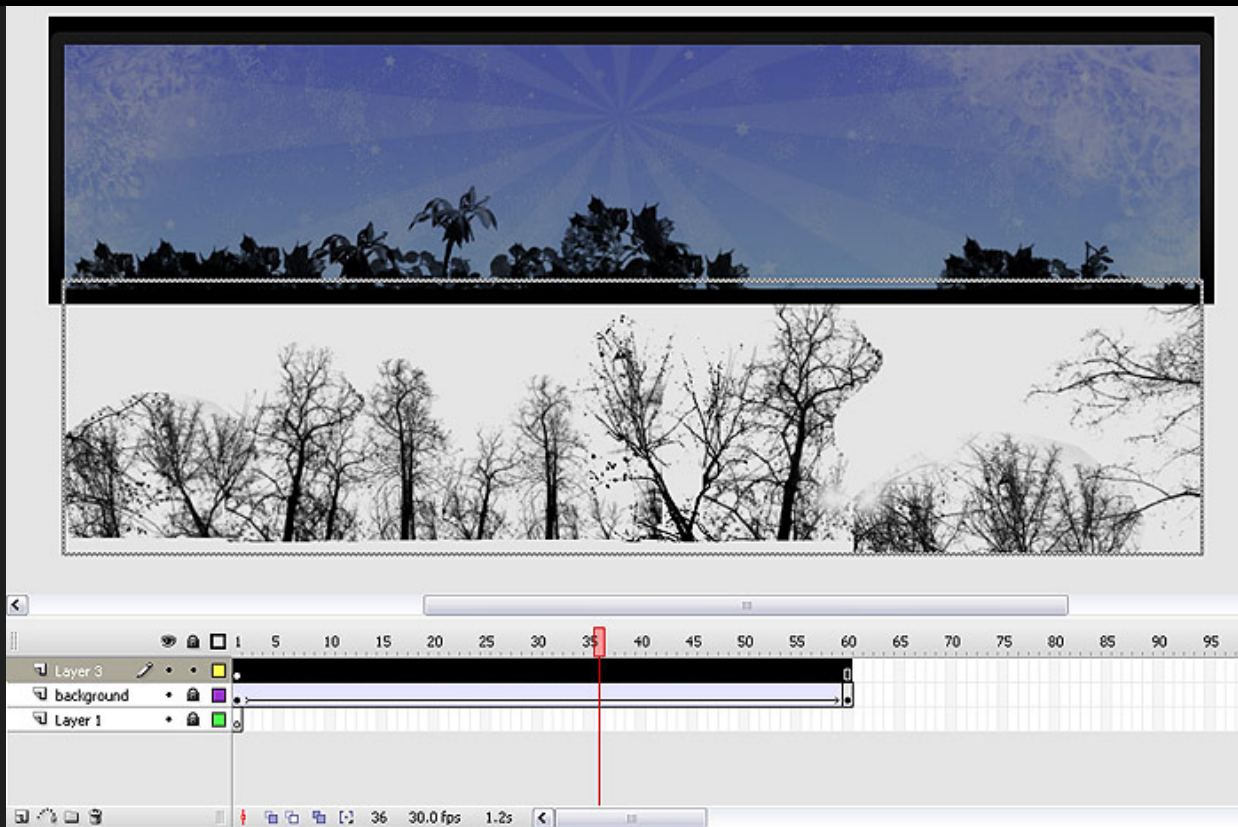


Now, to get this animation to actually work, right click on any frame in between the two keyframes and select '**Create Motion Tween**'. To test this in your browser press the **F12** key. You should now see an arrow between the keyframes:

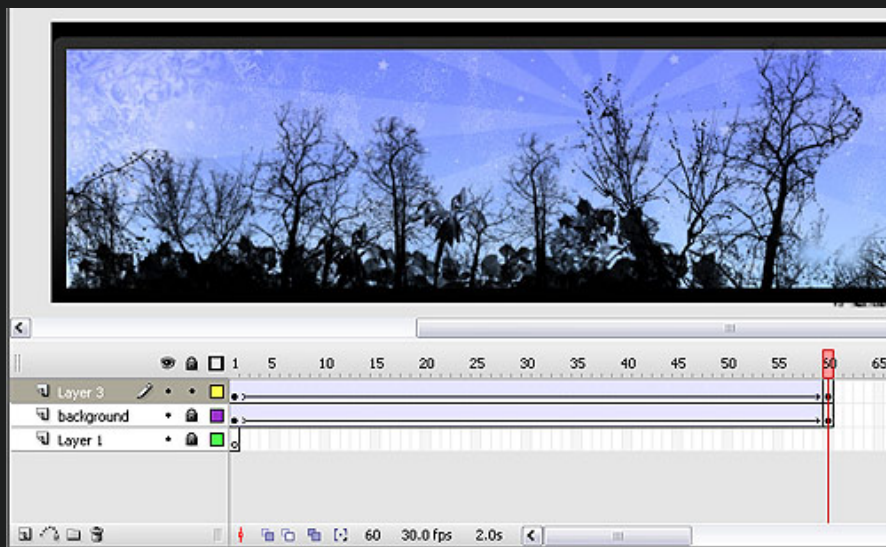


Lock the background layer. Create a new layer (layer 3) and drag out the next image from the library. This time instead of a 'fade in' animation, we will create some motion. I position the .png file of the trees under the stage, so that it will be moving in an upward direction.

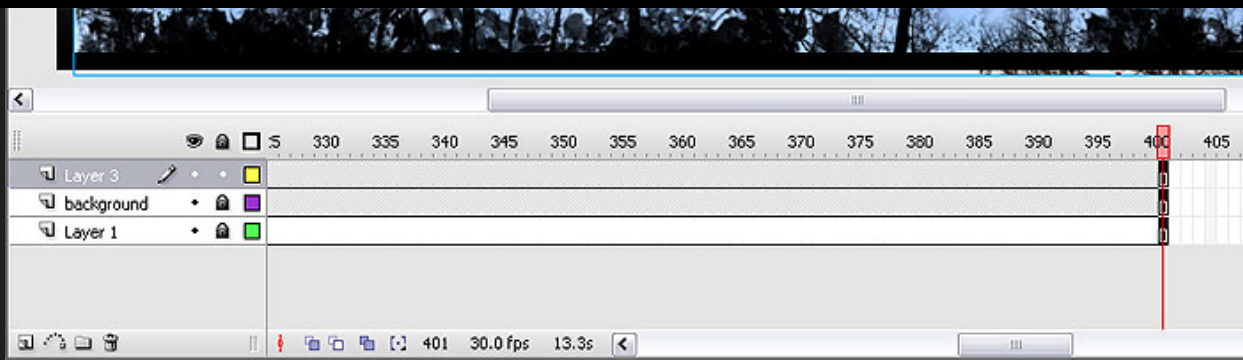
Again, right click and select 'Convert to Symbol'. Select the last frame on the timeline and create a keyframe.



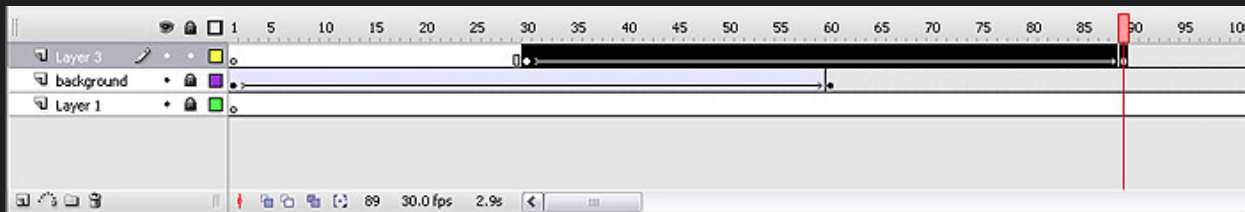
With the last keyframe on layer 3 selected, move the .png file up over the background graphic. Then create another motion tween (right click on any frame in between the two keyframes and select '**Create Motion Tween**').



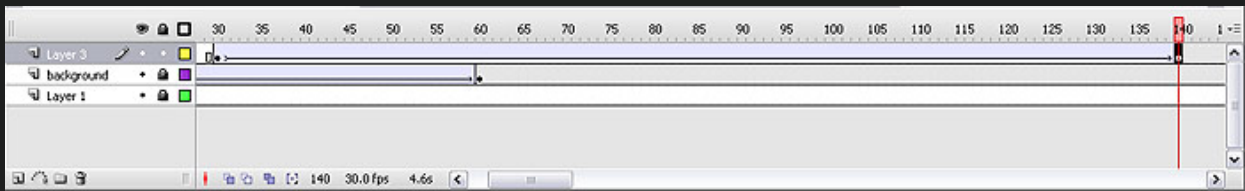
Now a little timeline management. We know that this animation will consist of more than 60 frames. So I'll take a guess that I'll need at least 400 frames in total. I move the timeline scroll bar to the right until I get to frame 400. Then I click and drag my mouse over frame 400 in all three layers. With these three frames selected, I right click and select '**Insert Frame**'.



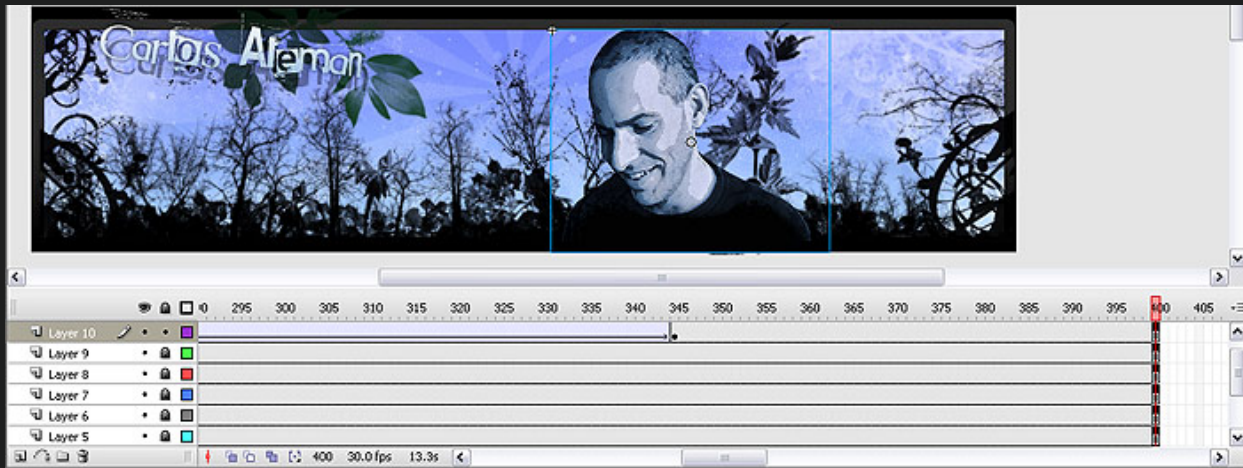
I scroll back left to the beginning of the time line. I don't want the two animations that I have created so far to run at the same time. So I will spread them out a little. While holding the **Shift** key, click on the first and last frames of the motion tween in layer 3. The frames should turn black. I click once on one of the middle black frames and drag the entire tween to the right until the first keyframe is on frame 30. This will give the first graphic time to fade in while the second graphic begins to move into the picture.



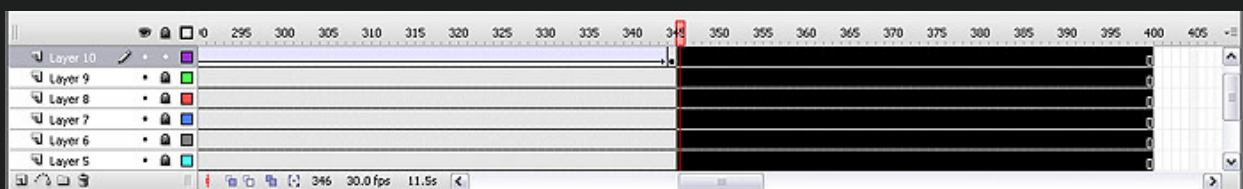
Now click and drag the last keyframe on layer three to frame 140 in order to slow down the trees.



We continue adding layers of motion tweens. By the time I'm done, I have 345 frames worth of animation on 10 layers.

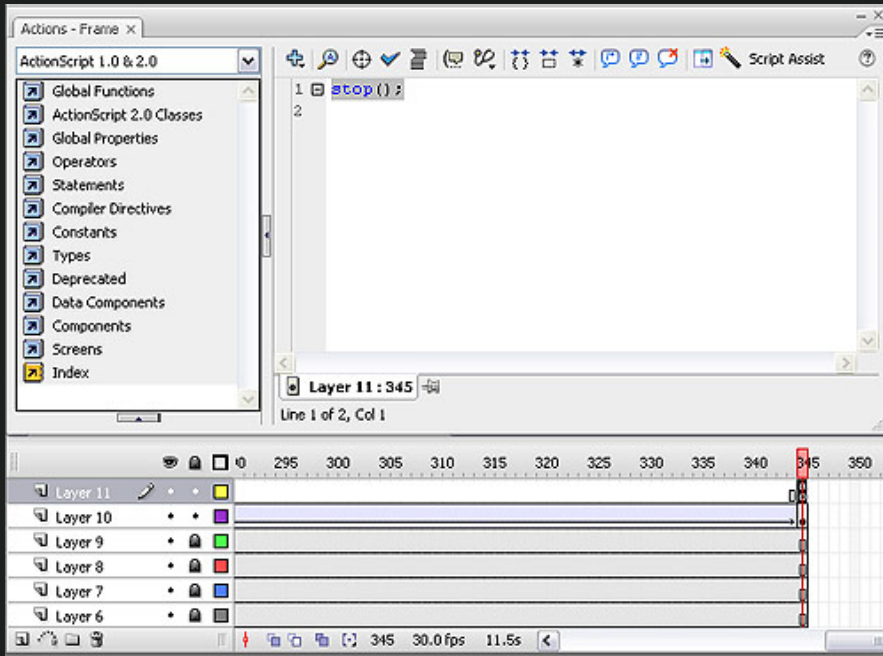


I want to remove the excess frames, so I click and drag my mouse through the empty frames until they turn black. Then I right click and select '**Remove Frames**'.



The animation is complete, but I don't want it to loop endlessly, so I will have to create a **Stop Action**. Create a new layer and click on the last frame. Insert a keyframe and open your **Actions Palette** (F9). On line 1, type: `stop();`

This will add a small letter 'a' in the keyframe. This is just to show you how action scripting works. You can also stop the looping in the Publish settings.

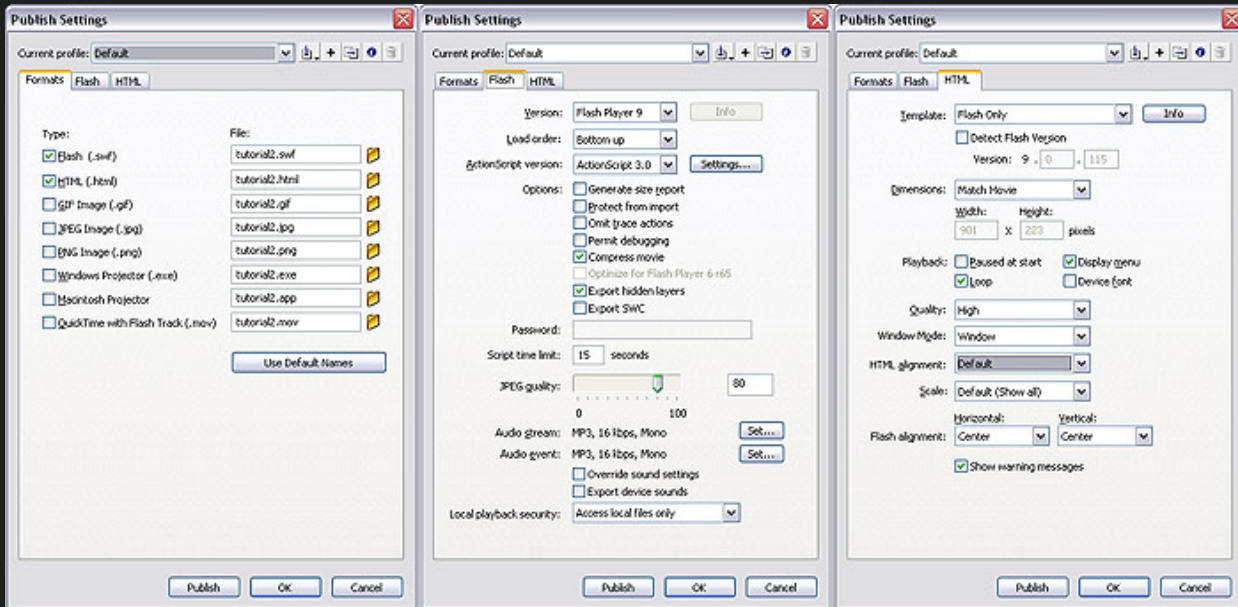


Open your **Publish Settings** (File>Publish Settings).

In the **'Formats'** tab, make sure that Flash is selected. If you're not going to embed the flash using Dreamweaver® or another editing application, select HTML and the Flash file will be automatically embedded for you.

In the **'Flash'** tab, make sure that the **JPEG quality** is about 80. This is where you would also set sound preferences.

In the **'HTML'** tab, you can determine how you would like the flash file to appear on the HTML page. If you don't want to use the 'Stop' action on the timeline, you can uncheck **'Loop'** here.



Click **Publish** and the .swf and .html files will be created in the same directory that you saved the .fla file. If you choose to generate an HTML file in the Formats tab. The **'Object Tag'** will look something like this:

```
<object classid="clsid:d27c6b6e-ae6d-11cf-96b8-444553540000"
codebase="http://fpdownload.macromedia.com/pub/shockwave/cabs/flash/swflash.cab#version=8,0,0,0"
width="901" height="223" id="alemanbanner" align="middle">
<param name="allowScriptAccess" value="sameDomain" />
<param name="movie" value="alemanbanner.swf" /><param name="quality" value="high" /><param
name="bgcolor" value="#000000" /><embed src="alemanbanner.swf" quality="high" bgcolor="#000000"
width="901" height="223" name="alemanbanner" align="middle" allowScriptAccess="sameDomain"
type="application/x-shockwave-flash" pluginspage="http://www.macromedia.com/go/getflashplayer" />
</object>
```

To test the flash movie on the web page, upload the .swf and .html to a **web server** and place them in the same directory together. Check the web address (including the name of the folder and the .html file) in your browser, and you should see the web page containing the flash movie (.swf)

You may be able to test on your computer or local network, but your browser may think that it is not safe and try to prevent it.

Hope this tutorial was fun. If you have any questions, [please email me](#).