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Flash 101, Pt. 3 - Organizing Tweened Objects

Flash 5 has provided web designers with an essential service - the ability to create movies within an object oriented environment using objects or symbols. In a Flash movie, every image, chunk of text, sound and so on can be worked with as an object. Flash offers a variety of ways to manipulate these objects to create an eye-catching savvy web movie. Advanced users can learn to use ActionScripts which work like JavaScripts within the animated creation. From basic work to expert masterpieces, objects are the central component of all Flash products. In basic movies, objects are the individual pieces of the movie. In the more advanced use of ActionScripts, an "Object" is a scripting concept that stands for a collection of data and the methods chosen to manipulate that data.



Object Tweening

Graphic objects can be drawn using Flash's pencil tool, then painted, flood-filled or texturized to add color and so on. Or, objects can be imported from other programs. Objects can then be moved or otherwise manipulated by adding actions to the timeline within the object's appropriate layer. Keyframes are selected to quantify where the motion or other action should begin and end - or continually loop. This is done using a function called [Tweening](#).

As one might guess, tweening simply means "in between". Three types of tweening are common when working with Flash objects: motion, tint and shape tweening. Motion tweening means to make a moving object travel from one part of a scene to another part. Tint tweening allows an object to change color in a graduated way, while shape tweening results in one object gradually changing into another object. All three of these actions are core behaviors of common Flash movies.

Motion Tweening

[Motion guides](#) can be created to guide an object along a chosen path. This is done by placing a motion guide layer between the origin keyframe and the destination keyframe. To do this, apply "Add Motion Guide" to the selected keyframes. Draw the path of motion with the pencil tool, and keep it as a guide, not an object. Make sure your drawn guide is open at the ends yet intact, like a meandering cohesive path for your object to travel along. Snap your object onto the path by clicking on the "Snap modifier"

button, then attaching the object's crosshair to the beginning of the motion guide. Do the same thing at the destination keyframe - snap the object to the end of the guide. This programs Flash to move the object along the guide from beginning to end. To ensure motion, assign "Tween" then "Motion" to the frames between the keyframe of origin and the destination keyframe. Then make your motion guide line "hidden" so that only your moving object is visible. It's like hiding the puppet strings!

Tint Tweening

[Tint tweening](#) is done in a similar way, only a change in hue and/or color is the action rather than following a drawn motion guide. Select an object or symbol and assign a specific keyframe of origin and another destination keyframe, say 30 frames down the timeline. Choose "Color Effect" and "Tint Amount" then select the color you wish your symbol to transform to. Once selected, assign tint tweening to the frames between the beginning and ending keyframes.

Shape Tweening

[Shape tweening](#) allows you to change the shape, size, color or location of editable objects in your movie. Shapes are tweened just like motion and tints, by designating a beginning and end keyframe, then assigning the action. The difference with shape tweening is that there is a multitude of actions to choose from. You can resize an object, morph it, change its' entire shape and so on. This can create some of the most interesting effects in Flash movies, and is a skill well worth practicing!

Once you've mastered the intricacies of working with tweened objects, you're well on your way to creating dynamic Flash movies that will both interest and appeal to your web audience. Practice with single objects at first - soon you will be combining objects of all kinds to create a well orchestrated product. The key is to learn the basics then apply them using your own sense of style - your own vision.

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