



Adobe Flash CS4 Introduction

Creating a simple document in Flash CS4 Professional

Creating a FLA file and adding graphics

To build an application in Flash CS4 Professional, you create vector graphics and design elements with the drawing tools, and import additional media elements like audio, video, and images into your document. Next, you define how and when you want to use each of the elements to create the application you have in mind.

When you author content in Flash Professional, you work in a document called a FLA file. FLA files have the file extension .fla (FLA). While viewing a FLA file, you'll notice the Flash CS4 Professional user interface (see Figure 1) is divided into five main parts:

- The **Stage** is where your graphics, videos, buttons, and so on appear during playback.
- The **Timeline** controls the timing of when elements in the movie appear on the Stage. You also use the Timeline to specify the layering order of graphics on the Stage. Graphics in higher layers appear on top of graphics in lower layers.
- The **Tools panel** holds the general set of tools used for selecting objects on the stage and drawing vector graphics.
- The **Property inspector** displays editable information about any selected object.
- The **Library panel** is where media elements and symbols are stored and organized.

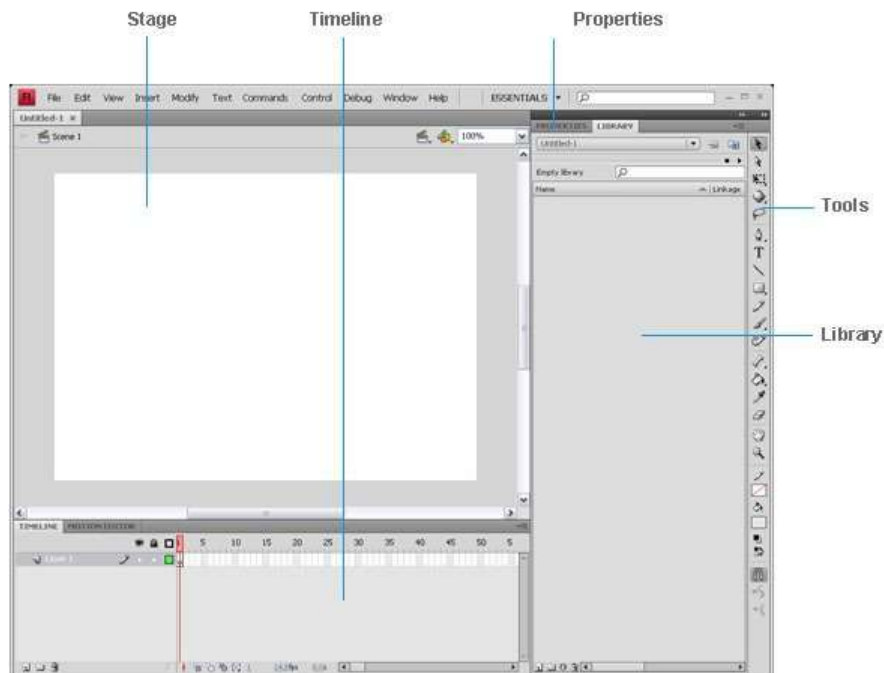


Figure 1. Flash CS4 Professional user interface is divided into five main parts

ActionScript code allows you to add interactivity to the media elements in your document. For example, you can add code that causes a button to display a new image when the user clicks it. You can also use ActionScript to add logic to your applications. Logic enables your application to behave in different ways depending on the user's actions or other conditions. Flash CS4 Professional uses ActionScript 3.0 when an ActionScript 3.0 or Adobe AIR file is created, or ActionScript 1.0 and 2.0 when an ActionScript 2.0 file is created.

Flash includes many features that make it powerful but easy to use, such as prebuilt drag-and-drop user interface components, built-in motion effects which you can use to animate elements on the Timeline, and special effects that you can add to media objects.

When you have finished authoring your FLA file, you publish it using the File > Publish command (Shift+F12). This creates a compressed version of your file with the extension .swf (SWF). You can then use Flash Player to play the SWF file in a web browser or as a stand-alone application.

Creating a simple FLA file

To illustrate the basic steps of creating any FLA document, this tutorial guides you through the process in a simple tutorial. This short tutorial is just a sample of the workflow you'll use while authoring in Flash Professional. The first step is to create a new document:

1. Choose File > New.
2. In the New Document dialog box, Flash File (ActionScript 3.0) is selected by default. Click OK.
3. Click the workspace drop-down menu on the upper right of the screen and select the Essentials workspace layout option (see Figure 2).

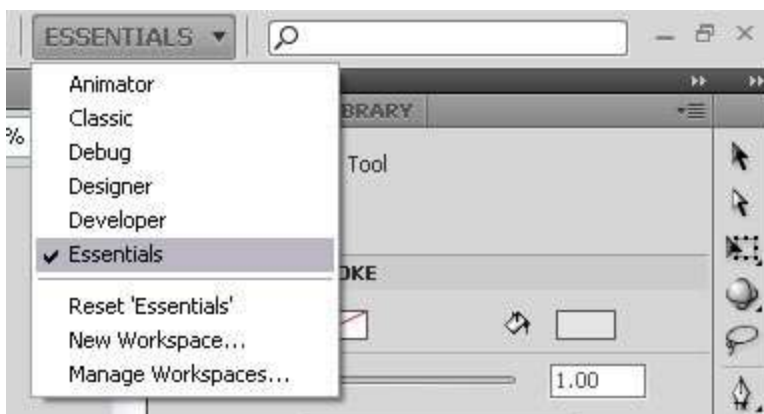


Figure 2. Choosing the Essentials option to see the workspace layout used by the tutorial

4. Click the Properties tab in the upper right side of the user interface to view the Stage properties for the file.
5. In the Property inspector, located by default vertically along the right side of the workspace, the Size button displays the current Stage size setting as 550 × 400 pixels (see Figure 3). The Background color swatch is set to white. You can change the color of the Stage by clicking the swatch and selecting a different color.

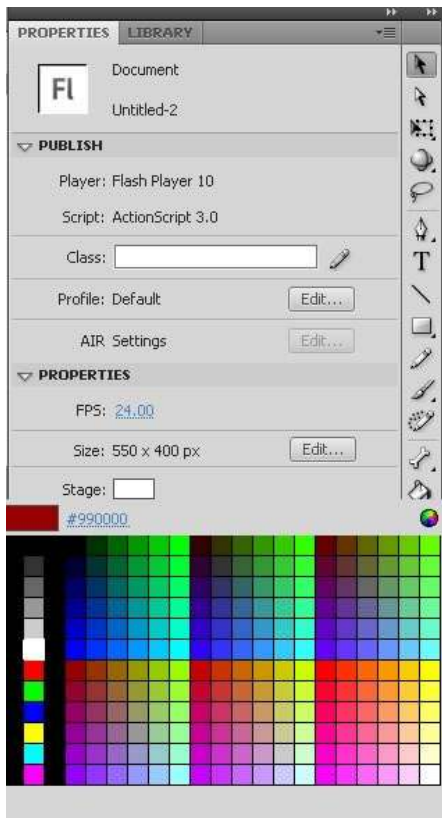


Figure 3. Property inspector showing the Stage size and background color

6. Choose File > Save.
7. Choose a location for the file on your hard disk, name the file **SimpleFlash.fla**, and then click Save. Remember this location, because you'll need to find this directory at the end of this tutorial.

Drawing a circle on the Stage

After you've created your document, you are ready to add some artwork for the document:

1. Select the Oval tool from the Tools panel (see Figure 4).

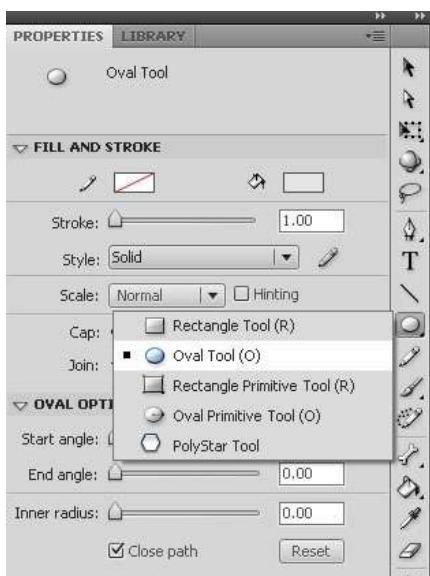


Figure 4. Oval tool in the Tools panel

2. Click the stroke color swatch in the Property inspector and select the No Color option from the Stroke Color Picker (see Figure 5).

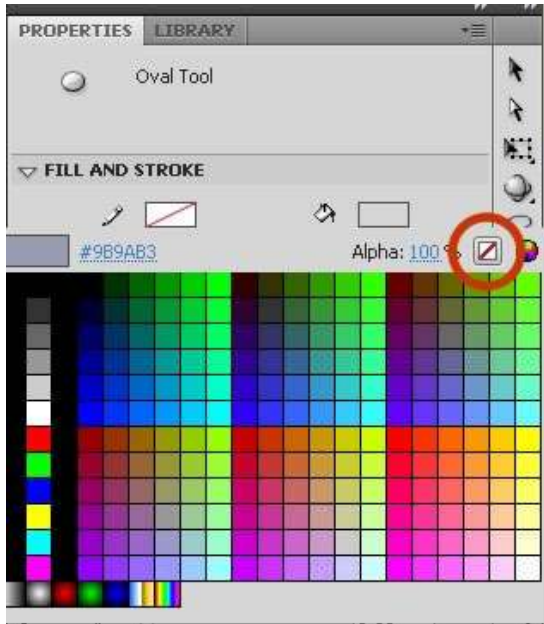


Figure 5. Selecting the No Color option in the Stroke Color Picker

3. Select a color of your choice from the Fill Color Picker, located directly below the Stroke Color Picker. Make sure the fill color contrasts well with the Stage color. In this example, we chose a blue fill color with a red Stage color.
4. With the Oval tool still selected, draw a circle on the Stage by Shift-dragging on the Stage (see Figure 6). Holding the Shift key constrains the Oval tool to a circle.

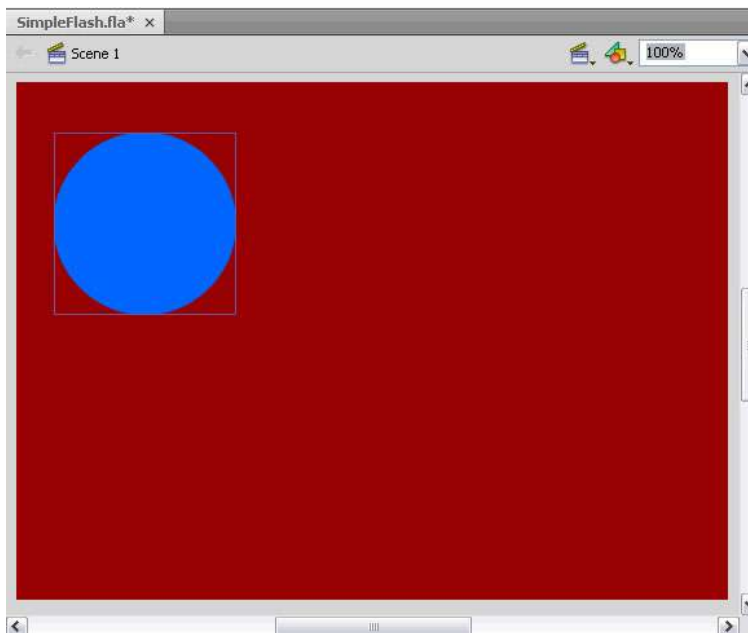


Figure 6. Circle drawn on the Stage

Creating a symbol and adding animation

You can turn your new artwork into a reusable asset by converting it to a symbol. A symbol is a media asset that can be reused anywhere in your document without the need to re-create it. Symbols can contain images and animations along with other types of content.

1. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel (see Figure 7).

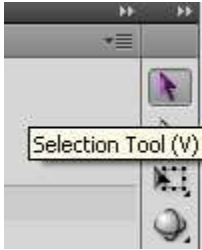


Figure 7. Tools panel with the Selection tool selected

2. Click the circle on the Stage to select it. A bounding box selection appears around the circle.
3. With the circle still selected, choose **Modify > Convert to Symbol** (or press F8) to bring up the Convert to Symbol dialog box (see Figure 8).

Note: You can also convert a graphic into a symbol by selecting it and dragging it into the Library panel.



Figure 8. Convert to Symbol dialog box

4. Click OK. A square bounding box appears around the circle. You have now created a reusable asset, called a *symbol*, in your document. In this case, you created a movie clip symbol. (For more information about symbols, read the [online documentation](#) about them.)

If the Library panel is not open, choose **Window > Library**. The new symbol appears in the Library panel.

Animating the circle

Now that you have some artwork in your document, you can make it more interesting by animating it to move across the Stage:

1. Drag the circle to just left of the Stage area (see Figure 9).

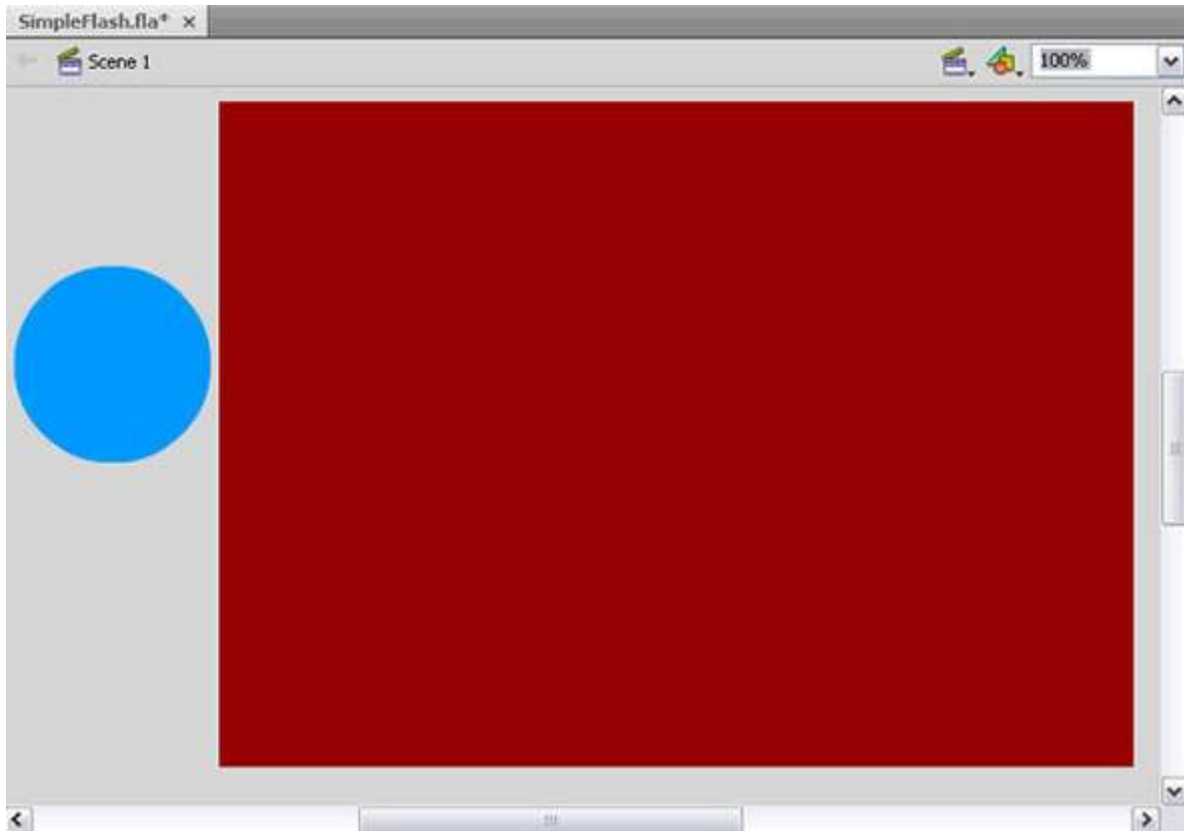


Figure 9. Circle moved to the left of the Stage area

2. Right-click the dot (also called the *keyframe*) on frame 1 of the Timeline and choose the Create Motion Tween option from the menu. Notice that the Timeline is automatically extended to frame 24 and the red marker (current frame indicator or *playhead*) is located at frame 24 (see Figure 10). This indicates that the timeline is ready for editing at 1 second—that is, at frame 24 when the frame rate is 24 fps. (For more information about the Timeline, read the [online documentation about it](#).)

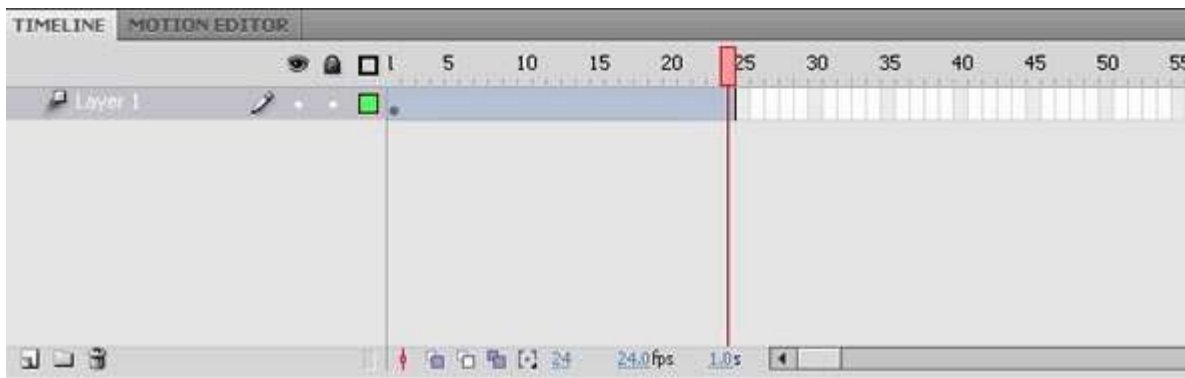


Figure 10. Extended Timeline ready for editing on frame 24

3. Select the circle on the Stage and drag it to the right of the Stage area. This step just created the tweened animation. Notice the dot (keyframe) which appears at frame 24. Also notice the motion guide line showing the path of motion between frame 1 and frame 24 (see Figure 11).

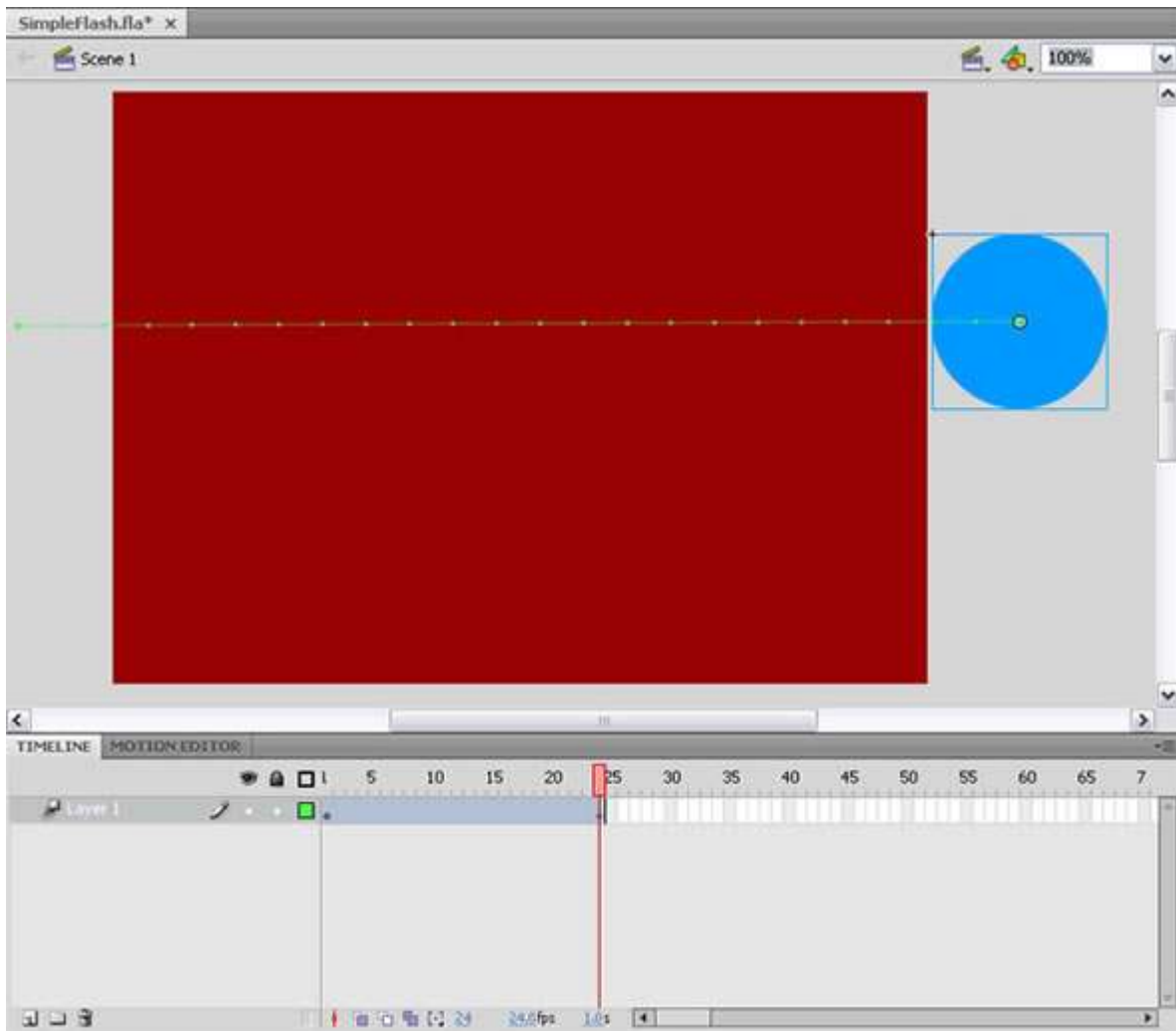


Figure 11. A 24-frame animation showing the circle at the end of the animation on frame 24

4. In the Timeline, drag the red playhead back and forth from frame 1 to frame 24 to preview the animation by scrubbing the Timeline.
5. Add a change in direction in the middle of the animation by dragging the playhead to frame 12 and then moving the circle to another location on the screen. Notice the change in the motion guide line and the new dot on the Timeline at frame 10 (see Figure 12). The dots on the Timeline are keyframes which mark where (at what frame) objects change on the screen.

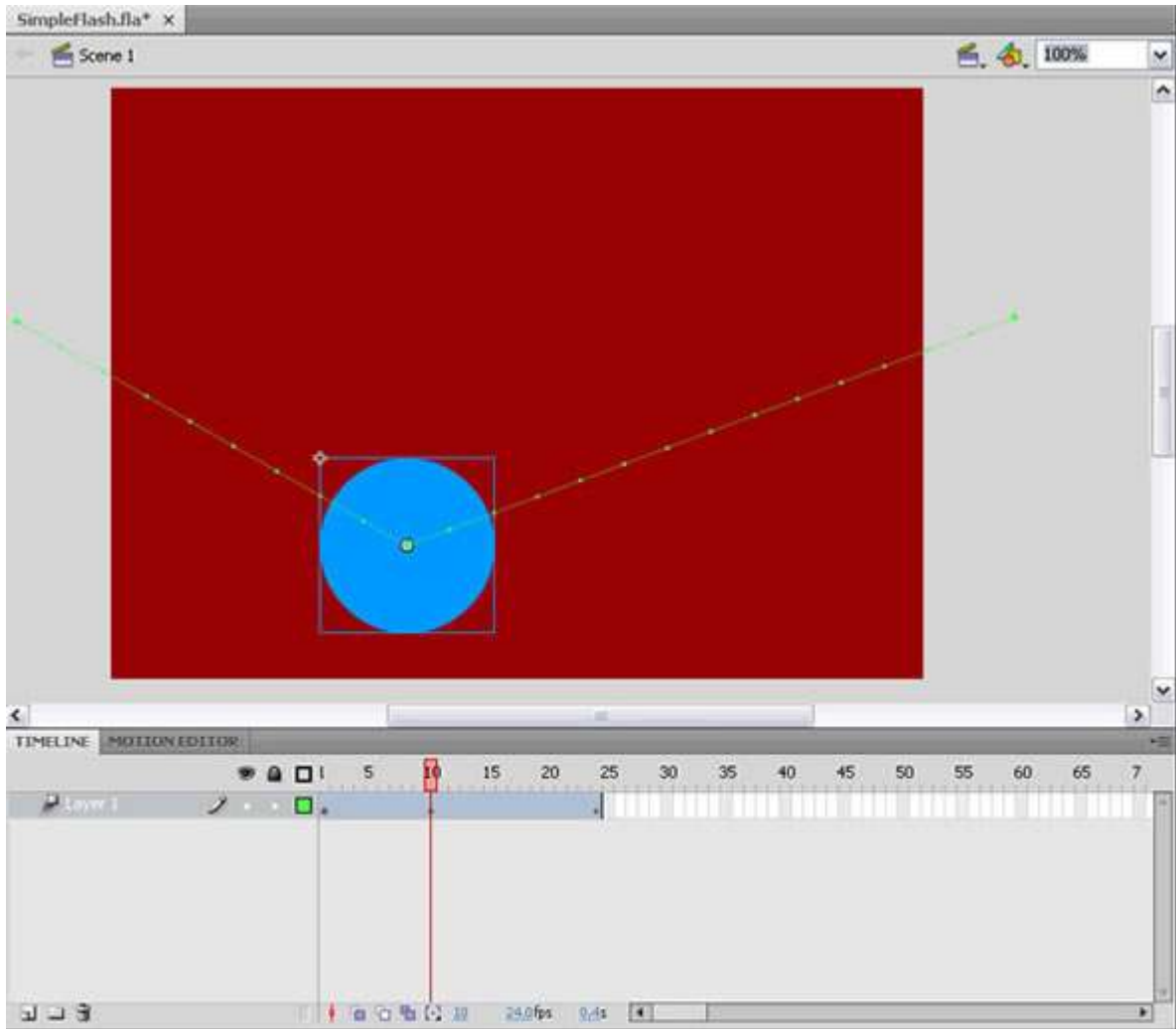


Figure 12. The tweened animation showing a change in direction at frame 12

6. Experiment with changing the shape of the motion guide path. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel and then click a section of the motion guide line and drag it to bend the line shape (see Figure 13).

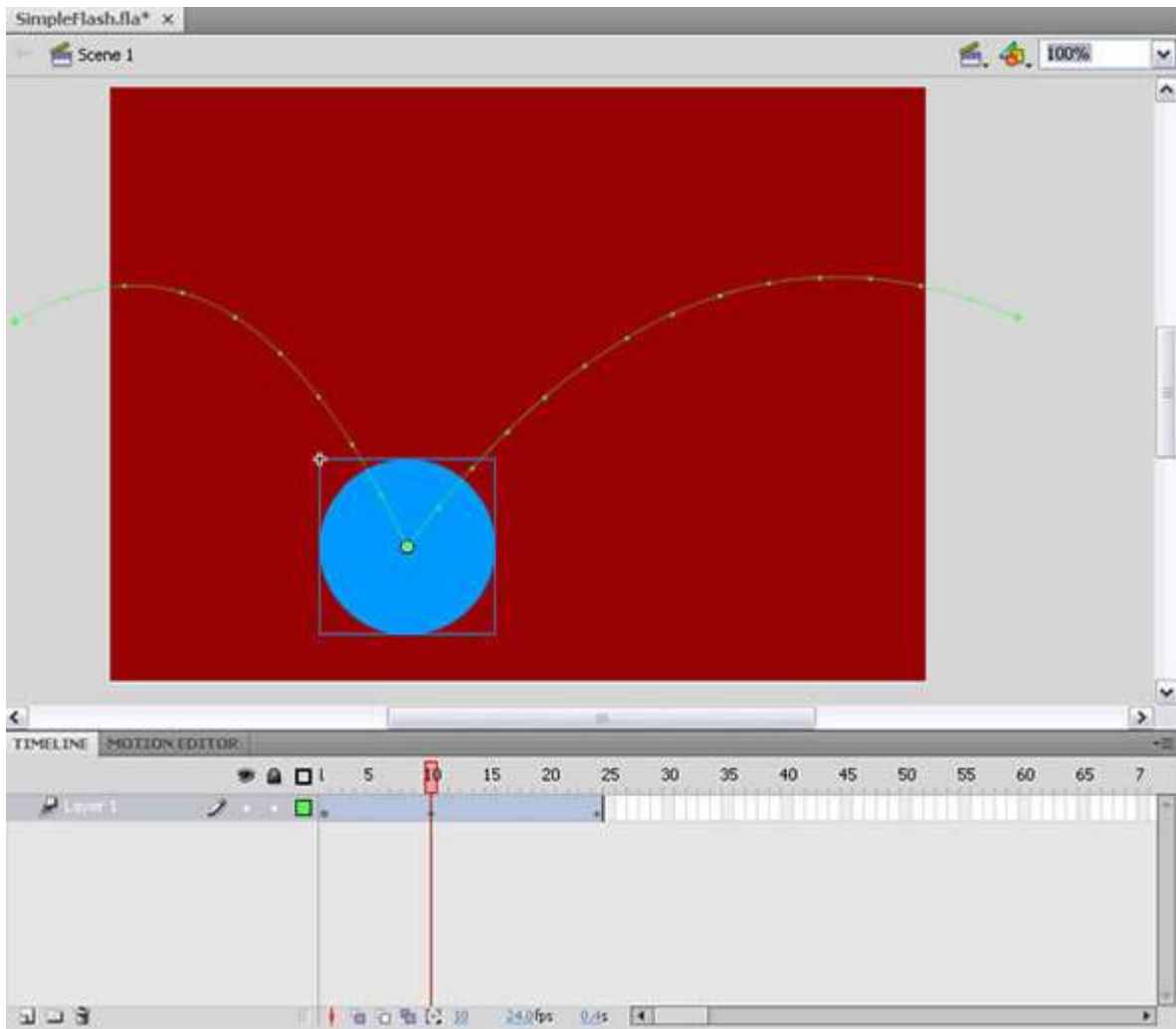


Figure 13. The tweened animation showing curves added to the motion guide line

7. Choose Control > Test Movie to test the FLA file.
8. Close the Test Movie window.

Publishing your file

When you finish your FLA file, you are ready to publish it so it can be viewed in a browser. When you publish the file, Flash Professional compresses it into the SWF file format. This is the format that you place in a web page. The Publish command can automatically generate an HTML file with the correct tags in it for you.

To publish the FLA file and view the SWF in a browser:

1. Choose File > Publish Settings.
2. In the Publish Settings dialog box, select the Formats tab and verify that only the Flash and HTML options are selected (see Figure 14). This action causes Flash to publish only the SWF file and an HTML file. The HTML file is used to display the SWF file in a web browser.



Figure 14. Flash and HTML options on the Formats tab

3. In the Publish Settings dialog box, select the HTML tab and verify that Flash Only is selected in the Template pop-up menu (see Figure 15). This template creates a simple HTML file that contains only your SWF file when displayed in a browser window.

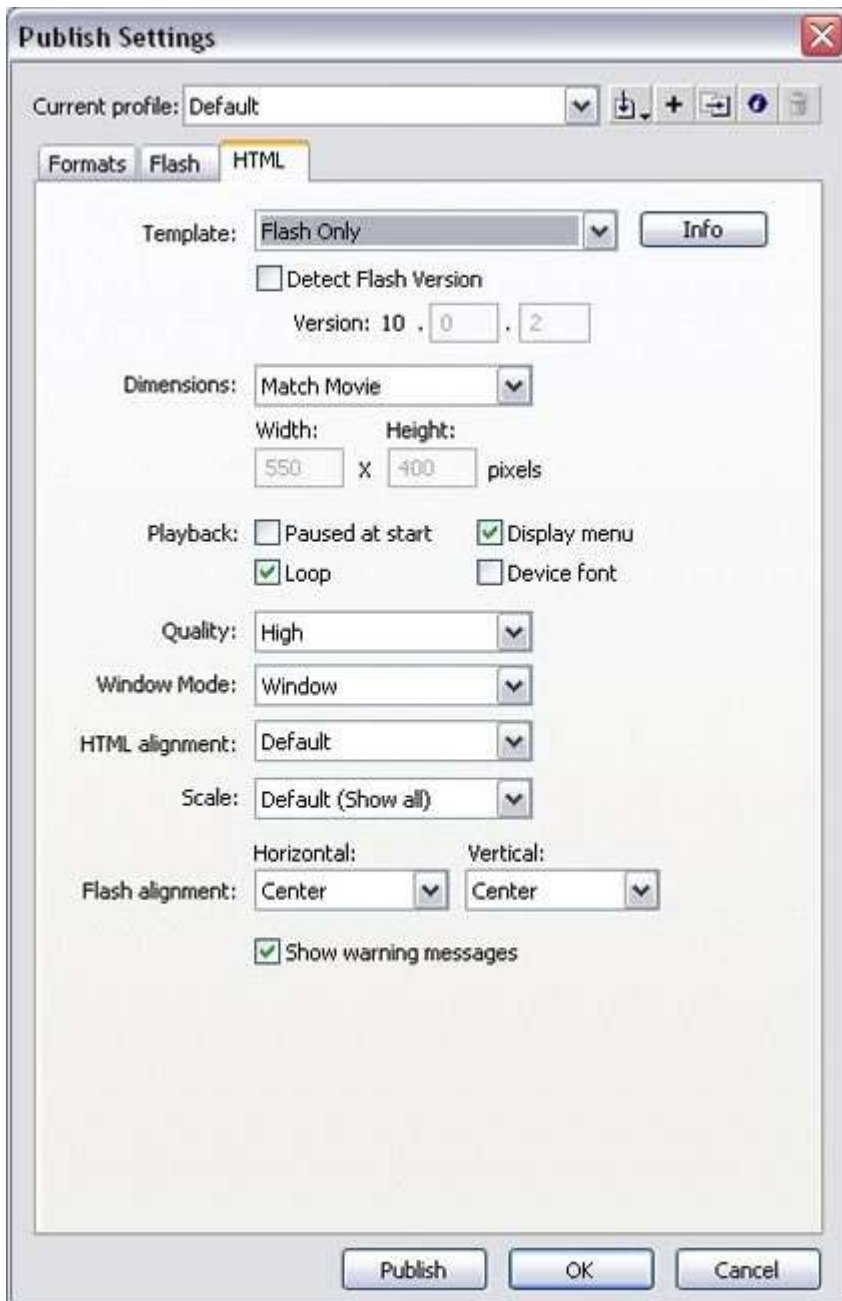


Figure 15. Choosing Flash Only from the Template menu

4. Click OK.
5. Choose File > Publish and open your web browser.
6. Choose File > Open in the web browser.
7. Navigate to the folder where you saved your FLA file. The SimpleFlash.swf and SimpleFlash.html files are there. Flash Professional creates these files when you click Publish.
8. Select the file named SimpleFlash.html.
9. Click Open. Your application displays in the browser window.

Congratulations! You have now completed your first FLA file.