

Flash

Name:	Adobe Flash (Professional) CS4
Produced:	Adobe Systems, USA
Operating system:	Mac, Windows, Linux, Solaris
Native filetype:	SWF
Description:	Multimedia animation and moving graphic componentry software
Next version release:	Expected late 2010
Home page:	Flash
See also:	Adobe Systems
	HTML CSS
Link:	LEARN, The Catalogue
	Official Support Post a question to Media Centre
Introduction:	Flash is a multimedia animation and moving graphic componentry software. It is primarily used to create front-end animation for websites or webpage components. The injection of greater, more diverse and usually more interactive media content into webpages is also handled by Flash. It offers greater creativity and a more stimulating platform to work from than scripting. Flash is essentially a giant compiler for a wide variety of formats that can output into a single digital container (video, or rich PDF etc).
Primary functions:	<p>Flash is primarily called upon to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create animations especially vector based animations. You could think of Flash's animations functions like an animated version of Illustrator. Create interactive web components Create web-based games and applications Create presentations especially in close association with Illustrator. Owing to Flash's ability to tie together a wide variety of formats the software offers exciting opportunities for digital presentations over and above the standard slideshow. <p>Similar to Flash in terms of its animation function is After Effects. After Effects is perhaps more powerful for creating and animating animation but it doesn't offer any interactive content creation options. Web-based animations can also be achieved with CSS [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CSS] and Dreamweaver. Powerpoint and InDesign are alternatives for putting interactive together presentations. Interactive components could also be achieved with Processing however this software requires fairly good scripting skills in order to achieve even basic tasks.</p> <p>Future versions of the software are expected to address the use of Flash on the web. Focus is likely to lie on the methods of incorporating advertisements and digital rights management issues regarding advertisement content link-ups.</p>
Primary outputs:	<p>Outputs from Flash naturally centre on interactive environments such as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive video sequences (off- or online) are usually created as SWF files. Animation video sequences (off- or online) are usually created as FLV files. <p>Over and above this, owing the Flash's integration within the Creative Suite [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_suite] it is possible to obtain outputs such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Printing single frames or all frames in an animation series. These would be typically subjected to post-production editing as raster files. Printing outputs also includes HTML for direct online publication. Laser-cutting via Illustrator. Most components within an animation sequence are vector based. Exporting the frame as AI, Illustrator's native filetype, maintains vector data.
Usability:	<p>Usability with Flash is comparable to other Creative Suite programs. The interface features tool bars, floating windows, overviews and panels. The modular nature of the toolboxes means the user can customise their interface to suit working needs and methods.</p> <p>The majority of input is via graphic menus. However, interactive content (clickable buttons for example) is reliant on Action Scripts, accessible via a script editor.</p> <p>Flash is highly interoperable. As Flash is a multimedia production software it is natural that it support a wide variety of filetypes for different media types. It exports and imports various content from audio content to image and video content.</p> <p>It is usually recommended to maintain as much vector image content as possible in your working file. This facilitates back editing of original content in Illustrator, whose vector editing functions far out-weigh those of Flash.</p> <p>Drawing in Flash will be familiar to Illustrator users and timeline editing will be familiar to After Effects users. It's the combination of these two working methods which presents the challenge of Flash. Also, it is important that users understand the difference between a simple drawing object and a symbol in order to use the programme effectively. This difference is spelled out here.</p>
Strengths/weaknesses:	

Learning support:	<p>Official Adobe support, trouble shooting and learning resources can be found here. There is also official forums and contact detail for Adobe. Otherwise there are plenty of other forums dealing with Flash owing to its popularity in online publishing fields.</p> <p>Media Centre suggests the following tutorials to get going:</p> <p>Beginner A: Animation basics Beginner B: Further animation Beginner C: Graphic effects</p> <p>Intermediate A: Official video channel for flash Intermediate B: Video workshop Intermediate C with flash specific playlist</p> <p>Advanced A: Animation via Action Script Advanced B: Character animation Advanced C: Bone kinematics</p>
Miscellaneous:	"The library is a good management tool where different formats can be categorised and used in multiple instances within the Flash document."
References:	
External links:	
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