Introduction to the Flash User Interface

(Note to Mac users: this workshop is conducted with the Windows version of Flash. The main difference between Mac and Win pertaining to this workshop is our use of the Control key for various commands. Typically with Mac versions of Macromedia products, including Flash, you would use the Command key instead of the Control key. There are no doubt some exceptions to this rule of thumb, and I would be happy to help solve any problems which may arise due to this, both during and following this workshop)

Before we begin work on a new document, let’s take a look at the Flash interface.

Select panel sets and arrange panels
One of the first functions worth mentioning is the ability to hide all panels with one function key, F4. Also notice that there are only six menus and the menus themselves contain fewer items when no document is open.

You can move panels around, and you can resize an undocked panel by dragging the lower right edge out to enlarge the panel. You can undock a panel by clicking the upper left corner of the panel, in the Title bar, and dragging the panel to another location in the work area.

Notice as you move the panel over different areas a black border appears indicating that if you release the mouse button the panel will dock in that area. If the panel snaps against a border, it is docked in a new location (or docked in the same location, if you moved it back). Otherwise, the panel is undocked. Undocked panels may float above the main Flash interface. Professional Flash developers will typically develop using two monitors because there are so many panels to manage that a single monitor constrains productivity.

Create a New Document

First you'll begin by creating a new document that you'll use to complete this lesson. You may create a new document in one of four different ways. When Flash first launches, you will see a screen similar to the one below:
You may create a new document by clicking the "Flash Document" link in the center of the screen under the "Create New" heading, or you may click the "New Document" icon on the Main Toolbar:

or you may select "New..." from the File menu, or you may simply press the Ctrl-N keys on the keyboard.

The new document opens in the Flash authoring environment. The document already includes one layer in the Timeline. You'll learn more about layers later. Observe the changes to the interface when a new document is created. The centrally located white rectangular Stage area is where you can arrange objects as you wish them to appear in your published file. The Timeline panel appears above the Stage, and the document Properties panel appears below. The document Properties panel is where you may modify the document size (currently 550 pixels wide and 400 pixels high), the document background color, the frame rate of playback, and your publish settings.
Note: In Windows operating systems, you can open several documents at once and use document tabs, above the Stage, to navigate between them.

The toolbar, to the left of the Stage, offers a variety of controls that let you create text and vector art. You'll learn more about using toolbar tools later.

1. Click the Pencil tool in the toolbar. Click the Stroke color box, in the toolbar Colors area, and select any color except white.
2. Click and drag around the Stage, without releasing the mouse, to draw a line.

You've created Flash content. However, your finished document will be much more impressive.

**Undo actions**

Flash can undo a series of changes to your document. You'll undo the artwork that you just created.
1. To see the undo feature in action, first open the History panel (Window > Other Panels > History).

The Pencil tool appears in the panel, because using the tool was your last action.

2. Do one of the following:
   - Select Edit > Undo Pencil Tool.
   - Press Control+Z (Windows) or Command+Z (Macintosh).

   Your scribbles disappear from the Stage. The History panel now shows a dimmed Pencil tool, which indicates the undo action was executed.

   Flash, by default, is set to undo 100 of your changes, in reverse order of execution. You can change the default setting in Preferences. To change your preferences, see Setting Preferences in Flash in the "Getting to Know the Workspace" chapter of Getting Started Help.

3. To close the History panel, click the options menu in the upper right corner of the panel and select Close Panel.

## Change Background Color and Stage size

The Stage provides a preview of how your Flash content will appear in your published file. You'll change the size of the Stage, to accommodate artwork designed for a smaller Stage, and you'll change the background color of the Stage.

In the toolbar, click the Selection tool.

On the Stage, click anywhere in the gray work area that surrounds the Stage, or on the background area of the Stage.

The Property inspector, below the Stage, displays properties for the document when no objects are selected. To change the Stage background color, click the Background color box and select a light shade of gray, such as gray with the hexadecimal value of #CCCCCC.

To change the Stage size, click the Size button in the Property inspector. In the Document Properties dialog box, enter 480 for the Stage width and 360 for the height, then click OK.

## Change your view of the Stage

You can change your view of the Stage without affecting the actual Stage size of your document.

In the Stage View text box, in the upper right corner of the Stage, click to open the view percentage popup menu, and select 50%.
Your view of the Stage reduces to half its original view size.

In the Stage View pop-up menu, which you access by clicking the control to the right of the text box, select 100% to view the Stage in dimensions that correspond to the size of the published Flash content.

Try other percentages, and try typing in your own percentage that is not in the menu

**View the Timeline**

Just above the Stage, you see the Timeline and layers. You can create and name layers, then add content to frames on layers to organize how your Flash content plays as the playhead moves across the frames.

- Move the mouse pointer over the area that separates the Stage from the Timeline. When the resizing handle appears, drag up or down slightly to resize the Timeline as necessary.

The playhead (the red indicator line) is on Frame 1 in the Timeline. The keyframes are designated by small circles in the frames, which are filled, indicating there's content in those frames. You can add a keyframe to a document when you want the Flash content to change in some way in that frame.

This concludes our introduction to the Flash interface. Continue on to Lesson 1.