

Making Animated Buttons

Use button symbols to create interactive buttons that respond to mouse clicks, rollovers, or other actions. You define the graphics associated with various button states, and then assign actions to a button instance. Animated buttons provide advanced interactivity. Simple rollovers and down states are very common on websites, cartoons, and in games to name a few. To read about buttons in the HELP e-book go to page 164.

Buttons are actually four-frame interactive movie clips. When you select the button behavior for a symbol, Flash creates a Timeline with four frames. The first three frames display the button's three possible states; the fourth frame defines the active area of the button. The Timeline doesn't actually play; it reacts to pointer movement and actions by jumping to the appropriate frame.

To make a button interactive, you place an instance of the button symbol on the Stage and assign actions to the instance. You must assign the actions to the instance of the button in the document, not to frames in the button's Timeline.

Each frame in the Timeline of a button symbol has a specific function:

- The first frame is the Up state, representing the button whenever the pointer is not over the button.
- The second frame is the Over state, representing the button's appearance when the pointer is over the button.
- The third frame is the Down state, representing the button's appearance as it is clicked.
- The fourth frame is the Hit state, defining the area that responds to the mouse click. This area is invisible in the .swf file.

1. Begin by placing some graphics on the stage. Create your graphics in preparation for the animation techniques you plan to use such as keyframing, motion tweening, or shape tweening. Create content on separate layers to prepare for animating.

2. Select your graphics and click F8 to convert it into a symbol. Give it a name and select movie clip as the type of symbol.

3. Go to your library window and right click on that symbol. Duplicate it. Give it a new name such as "nameanimated" and make it a movie clip also.

4. Double click on that symbol in your library. You are now inside that symbol in the editing mode.

*If you already created your animation on the main timeline stage you will need to copy the frames of the animation and paste them into this symbol or go to INSERT NEW SYMBOL and paste the frames into that timeline.

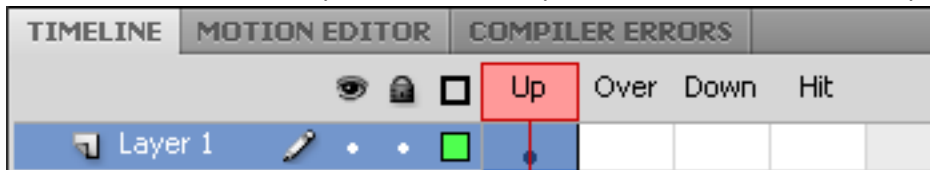
5. Animate your symbol here. This animation will take place when the mouse rolls over or hovers over your button. You may need to break apart your symbol to keyframe it or “distribute it to layers” to motion tween. Remember that you can only tween one symbol at a time on it’s own individual layer. You cannot tween 2 symbols on one layer. Completely finish animating the rollover part for the button before proceeding.

6. When finished animating go back to the main stage by clicking the SCENE 1 tab or the back arrow.

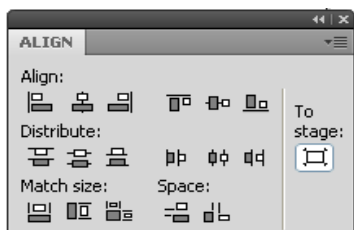


7. Go to the library again and duplicate your original symbol again. This time call it “namebutton” and make it a button symbol instead of a graphic or movie clip.

8. Doubleclick the button symbol in the library and notice the new button style timeline below.



9. Open the ALIGN WINDOW by going to WINDOW, ALIGN. Make sure the “TO STAGE” option is selected in the align window.



10. Click the symbol on the stage. Make sure it is aligned to the middle of the stage by clicking on the second ALIGN option. Click on second DISTRIBUTE option also which aligns vertically in the middle.

11. Now it’s time to keyframe the button. The first frame on the button timeline should be selected and blue. It should have a solid keyframe inside it. If it’s not blue, select it now. Press F6 to create a keyframe. You should now have an “OVER” keyframe too.

12. Click on the raw shape on the stage and delete it. Drag out the animated symbol you previously created. Align it to the stage vertically and horizontally like you did previously in step 10.

13. Click on the “HIT” state in the button timeline and press F6 to create another keyframe. The Hit state defines the area that responds to the mouse. This area is invisible in the SWF file.

14. Go back to the main timeline. Delete the current instance on the stage. Drag the button from the library unto the stage. Try it by pressing Ctrl + Enter and hover over your symbol! If it does not work review the steps above and make sure the symbols are movie clips.