

:: flashwebsite

intro

This tutorial is a continuation of tutorial #5. The goal of this tutorial is to add a preloader to our flash site. There are several different ways to build a flash preloader and there are many resources online to help you do so. Rather than write a preloader from scratch, we are going to do a google search for flash preloader tutorial and use one of the first ones that we see: <http://www.bestflashanimationsite.com/tutorials/3/>. This simple tutorial will provide for us a fast intro into how preloaders work and will provide for us some basic code and graphics that we can then customize when we build our own preloader.

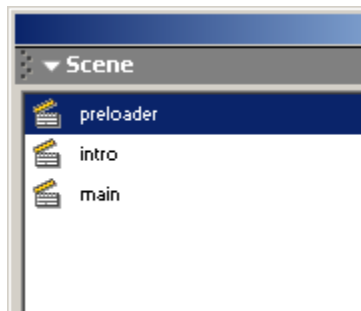
setup

Before you begin to build your preloader, you should first read the online tutorial found here: <http://www.bestflashanimationsite.com/tutorials/3/> and then download their source files, found on page 1 of the tutorial. Be sure to open up the flash file and look at all of their code so that it makes sense to you completely. Do not try to customize their code until you understand it first.

customizing/implementing your own preloader

If you completed tutorial #5, you should have two scenes to your flash site: and “intro” scene and a “main” scene.

1. The first thing that we need to do is open up both our latest flash file of our site and the preloader.fla file that you already downloaded from the tutorial site listed above.
2. Next, we need to make a new scene called “preloader”. Let’s make this scene play before all of the others by dragging it up on top of the others in your scene window/palette.



3. Next, let’s go to the preloader.fla source file from the online tutorial, and let’s copy the top three layers: labels, actions, and preloader. You can do this easily by selecting the layers and then going to EDIT > COPY FRAMES.
4. Then, return to your “preloader” scene in your flash site file, and paste the frames right into frame #1.
5. Whenever you copy and paste frames from another file, you should always check your library immediately afterwards to see whether or not you imported any symbols during the copy-and-paste.

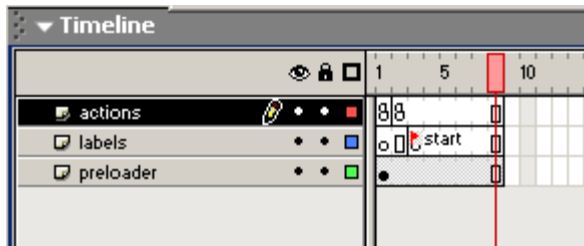
Open your library window/palette and you will notice a movie clip was added called “bar”. Let’s rename it to mc_bar, and then let’s place it where it belongs: inside of the “_movieclips” folder.

6. Next, let’s clean up our timeline.

Since I usually put the actions layer on the top, I’m going to move it to be the top layer simply by dragging the actions layer above the labels layer.

7. After examining the actions layer keyframes, I’ll know that the action in frame #1 sets my variables and contains my conditional “if” statement. The action in frame #2 simply loops my animation back to frame#1. And the action in frame #3 stops my movie. Since I want my user to either see the intro, or go directly to the home page, once the site is loaded, I can **delete the keyframe at frame #3** (the stop(); action) and then let my movie play out to the end of the timeline and continue on to the next screen.

Your timeline and layers should now look something like this:

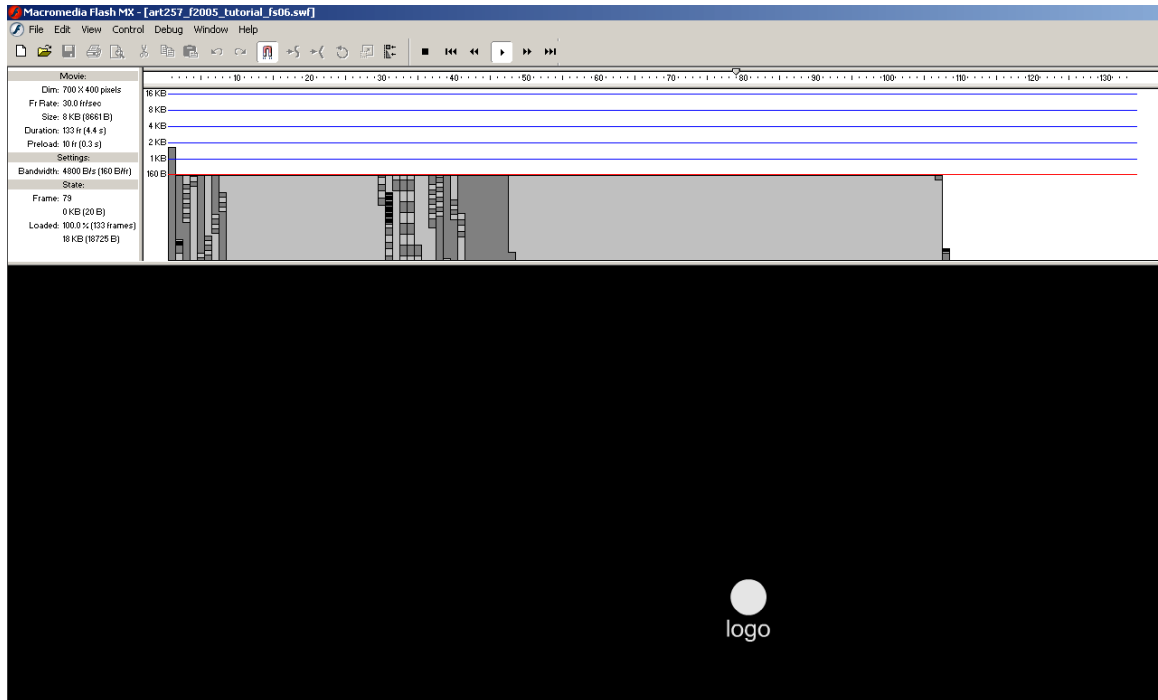


8. After deleting the stop(); action at keyframe # 3, I am now ready to test my movie.
9. What you’ll notice is that there is a slight flash before our movie plays. This is good. This means that our preloader existed only for a brief “flash” while our site loaded. We didn’t see it because our site is so small (in K size) that it loads too fast to warrant a loading bar. That’s ok, we want a preloader anyway, because we will eventually be adding more content and graphics to the site, so it will be nice to provide a preloader for the user.

In order to see if the preloader is working, what we need to do utilize two of flash’s built in pre-visualization tools: one is called the debugger speed and the other is called the bandwidth profiler.

Whenever you test a movie in Flash (CONTROL > TEST MOVIE or Ctrl-enter on a PC or Command-Enter on a Mac) it launches a window inside of flash showing the swf playing. While on the window, if you hit Ctrl-Enter or Command-Enter again, the swf will begin to play again from the start, but this time at a rate that is set under the Debug menu above. If you go to the Debug menu (top menu), you’ll notice that you have a few options and several to customize. In this case, let’s make sure that it is set to 56K. This will simulate what it will look like when a user views this swf from a 56K modem.

Next, we need to turn on the bandwidth profiler. You do this by going to VIEW > BANDWIDTH PROFILER. It will add these bars to the top of your swf movie display:



Hit Ctrl-Enter or Command-Enter several times while testing your movie in order to see the preloader in action. You should be able to watch the bar load.

- Next, let's clean up the preloader and customize it slightly. One can customize a preloader to their heart's content, but in this tutorial we are going to keep it simple and clean.

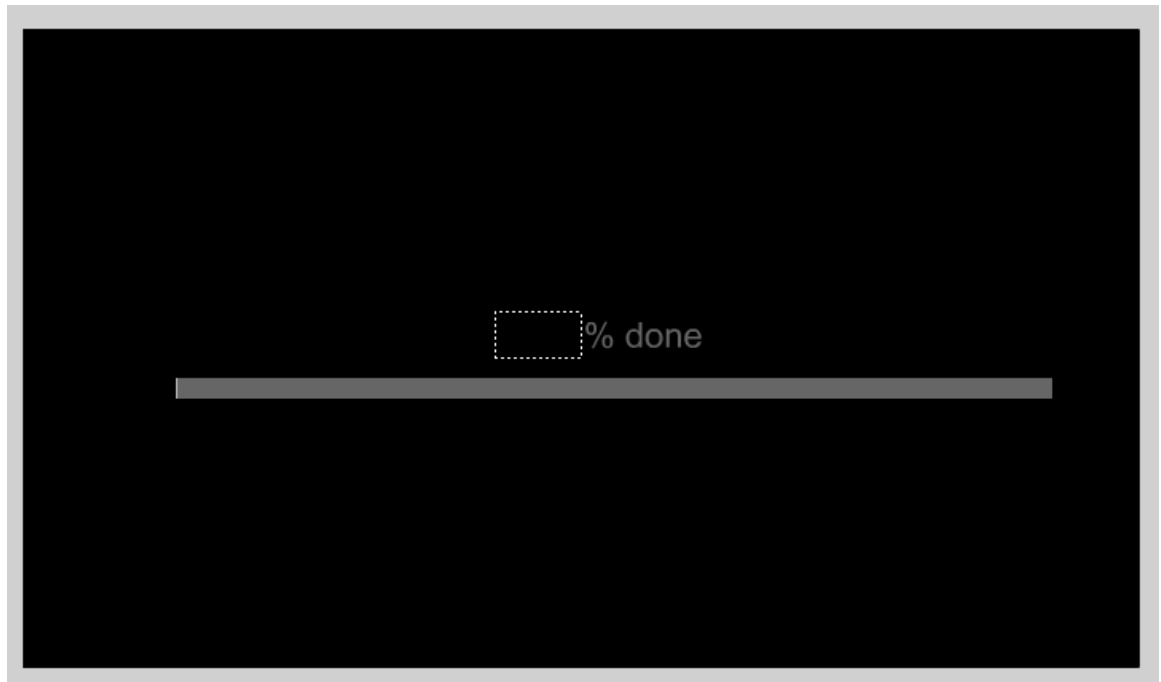
First, center your loading bar into the center of your canvas.

- Next, let's change it from displaying the # of Kilobytes that it is loaded to displaying the percent that is loaded.

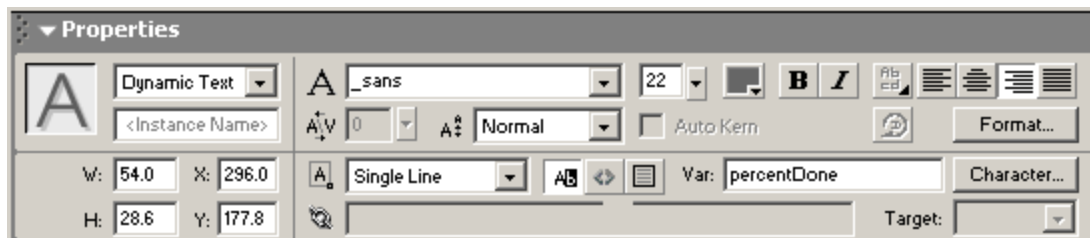
If you remember, in keyframe #1 there is a variable called "percentDone". However, this variable is not used on the canvas of the preloader that we found online. So let's add it.

To do this, I'm going to delete out two of the text boxes and keep two there – one dynamic and one static.

- Next, I'm going to change the static text, on the right side, to say "% done".



13. Then, I'm going to select the dynamic text box, on the left, and change the variable name setting "Var" inside of the properties palette (bottom of the flash interface) to percentDone.



14. Lastly, I'm going to adjust the font sizes to be equal, adjust the size and alignment of the text boxes, then test my movie. It should work.

In class I will go over how you can customize this preloader even further.