

How to create masks

In Adobe Flash Professional CS5, a *mask* is a special type of layer that lets you reveal select parts of another layer. For example, if you want to show people walking around inside a house, and you want them to be visible when they pass by a window but invisible otherwise, you can use a mask. You can use masking for effects such as creating a spotlight or showing pictures behind images.

Creating a mask

In the following steps, you'll create a mask by using a simple shape.

To create a mask:

1. Start Flash and open a document.
2. Import an image to the Stage.
3. Create a new layer and name it **mask**. Put this layer directly above the layer containing the image.
4. Use a drawing tool, such as the Oval tool or the Rectangle tool, to define the area of the mask layer that you want to be transparent (**Figure 1**).

Make the transparent area of the mask a solid, noticeable color. This will help you see where the transparent area is.

5. Right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Mac OS) the mask layer, and select Mask from the context menu.

The two layers change to indicate that the bottom layer is masked. The name of the masked layer is indented under the name of the masking layer and its icon changes to a mask layer icon (**Figure 2**). Both of the layers are locked by default.

Note: To display the mask effect, lock both the mask layer and the layer containing the masking content. Unlock one or both layers to hide the effect.

6. Select Control > Test Movie > In Flash Professional to see it play.

Observe that only the masked area is visible.

7. Select File > Close to close the preview window.

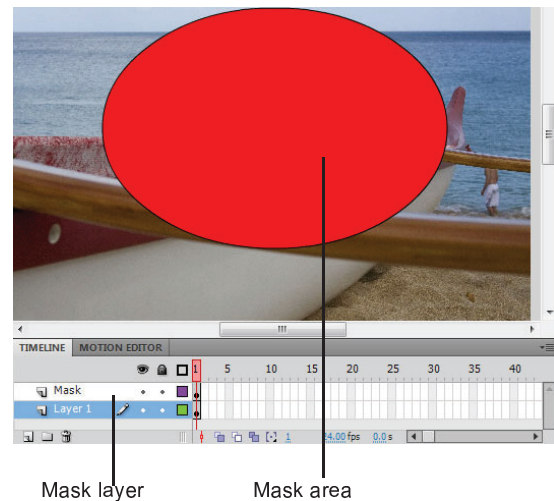


Figure 1 Mask layer with mask area

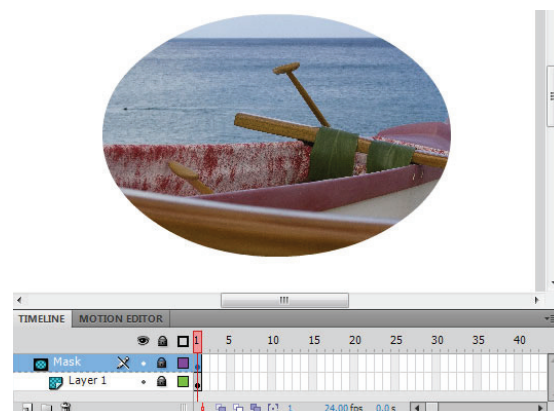


Figure 2 Mask applied

Animating the mask

You can animate the mask so that, for example, the mask pans along a picture.

To animate the mask:

1. Continue where you left off in the previous steps.
2. On the mask layer, add a frame at frame 20.
3. On the masked layer below, also add a frame at frame 20.
4. Click the Mask layer anywhere between frames 1 and 20, and then select **Insert > Classic Tween**.
5. Unlock the mask layer, click frame 20, and move the mask object (**Figure 3**).
6. Adjust the motion guide as necessary.
7. Select **Control > Test Movie > In Flash Professional** to see it play.

Observe that only the masked area moves across the content beneath it.

8. Select **File > Close** to close the preview window.

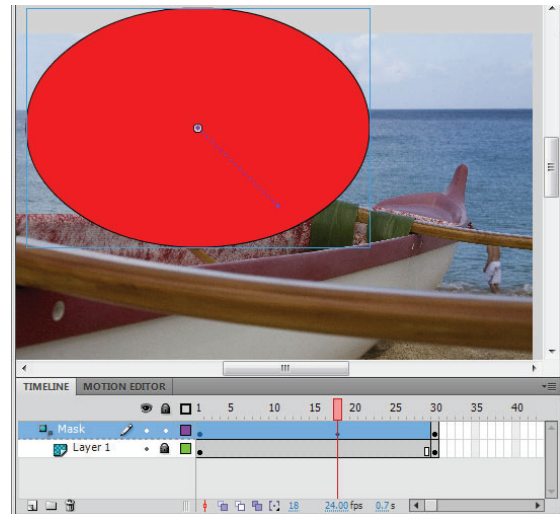


Figure 3 Motion tween on the mask layer

Change the masked content

You can change content on the layer below the mask while keeping the mask the same.

To change the masked content:

1. Continue where you left off.
2. On the masked layer, select frame 10 and select **Insert > Timeline > Blank Keyframe**.

Inserting a blank keyframe clears the contents of the frame.

The contents of the masked layer clear.

3. Add new content to the masked layer at frame 10. (Unlock the masked layer, if necessary.)

For example, you could drag a different picture to the Stage.

4. Select **Control > Test Movie > In Flash Professional** to see it play.

Observe that the area under the mask changes halfway through the animation.

5. Select **File > Close** to close the preview window.

To revert the masked content to its original state:

1. Continue where you left off.
2. Select frame 10 (where you inserted the second keyframe), and select **Modify > Timeline > Clear Keyframe**.

This reverts the keyframe to a regular frame, and changes the layer back to its original state.