The Flash workspace

Stage

The *Stage* is the white, rectangular area of the Adobe Flash CS3 workspace (**Figure 1**). Objects you place on the Stage will appear in your published movie. Objects placed in the pasteboard (the gray area around the Stage) will not appear in the finished movie, but you can place objects there until you want them to appear on the Stage.
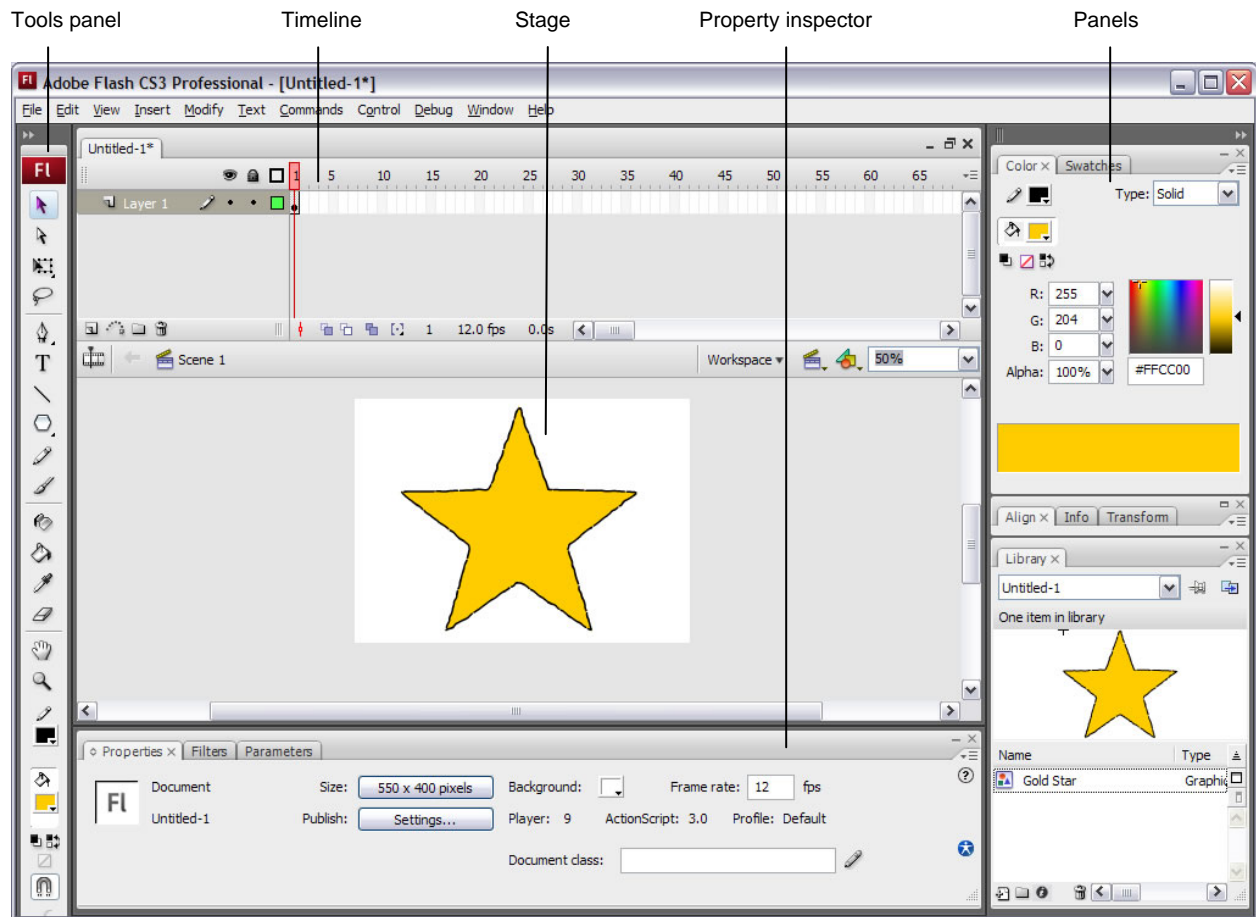

Figure 1 Flash workspace

Timeline and layers

The *Timeline* is where you control the images and sounds in your Flash document (**Figure 2**). The Timeline is divided into frames. You can add content to the frames on the Timeline.

Current frame, frame rate, and elapsed time are all shown at the bottom of the Timeline. The *playhead*, represented by a red rectangle with a long red line, shows the current frame you are viewing on the Timeline. You can click a frame to move the playhead to that frame, or you can drag the playhead back and forth on the Timeline to quickly view all or any part of your animation.

Layers in the Timeline provide a way to organize the elements of your movie. You can draw and edit objects on one layer without affecting objects on another layer. Layers control the stacking order of objects—the order moves from top to bottom, so objects displayed in front are in the top layer, while objects displayed in back are in the bottom layer. This allows you to place objects in front of or behind one another. To change the order of layers, drag the layer name to a new position. The layer controls appear on the left side of the Timeline. Each layer has an option for hiding or showing the layer, locking it, and displaying its contents as outlines.
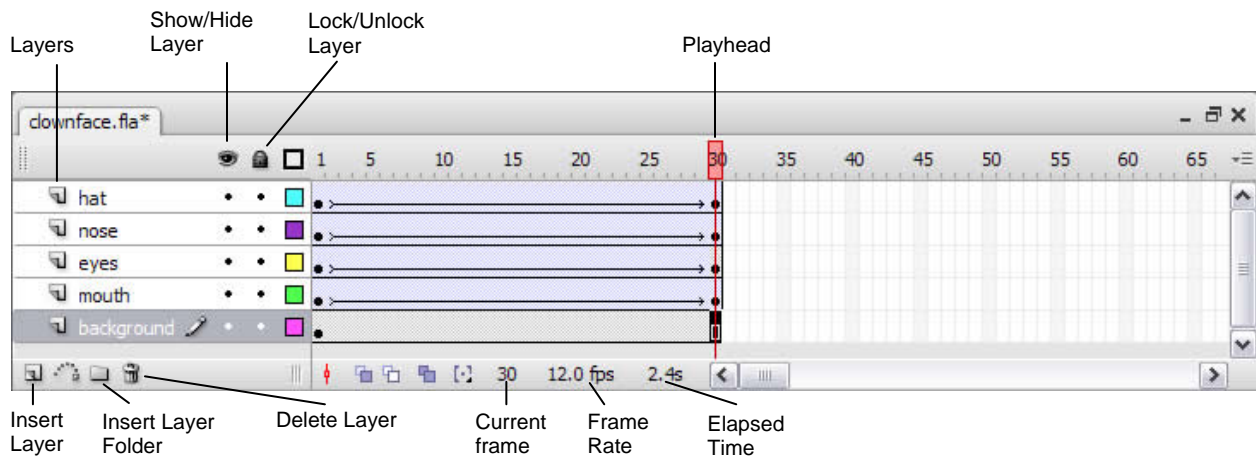

Figure 2 Timeline

Edit bar

The *edit bar*, at the top of the Timeline, lets you quickly navigate between different parts of your Flash document (**Figure 3**). It indicates the current object being edited and lets you switch between scenes and symbols. You can also change the magnification level of the Stage. You can also show or hide the Timeline.

Figure 3 Edit bar

Panels

Panels provide easy access to controls that help you work with the content in your document (**Figure 4**). By default, the panels are docked to the right side of the workspace. You can undock panel groups, add panels to a group, undock individual panels, rearrange the order of docked panels, and collapse and close panel groups. To undock a panel, drag it by its tab or title bar away from its current position. You can drag it into another dock or make it free-floating.
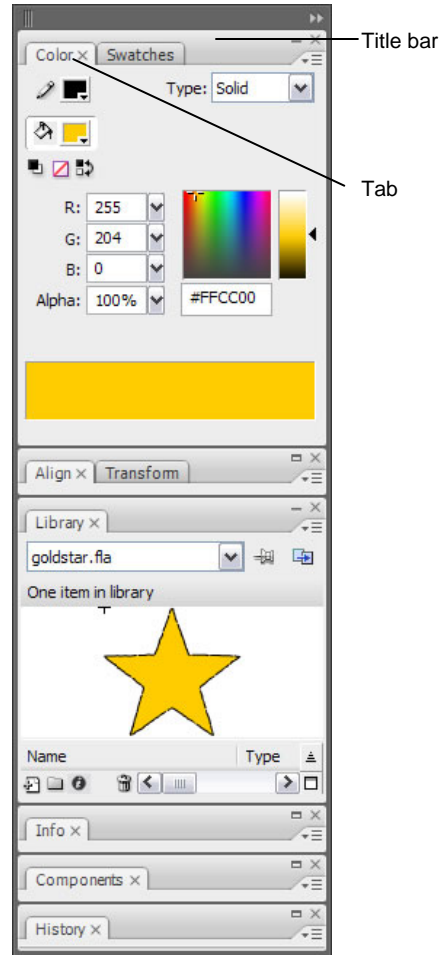

Figure 4 Panels

Tools panel

The tools in the *Tools panel* let you draw, paint, select, and modify artwork, as well as change the view of the Stage (**Figure 5**). The Options area at the bottom of the Tools panel lets you modify a tool you have selected. If the Tools panel is not visible, you can display it by selecting Window > Tools. To select a tool, just click it. (You can also use the shortcut key shown in parentheses in the tool tip that appears when you rest the pointer over a tool for a few seconds.)
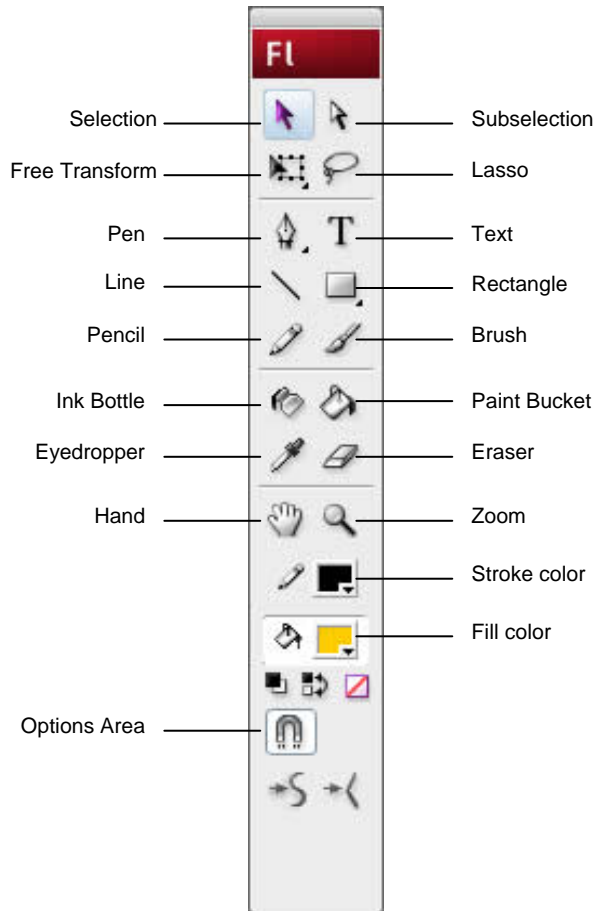

Figure 5 Flash Tools panel

Selection tools

Selection tool (black arrow): Click an object to select it. Drag a selected object to move it.

Subselection tool (white arrow): Select and move points of an object or edit paths between adjacent points.

Free Transform tool: Resize or rotate selected objects by clicking and dragging. Also has the Gradient Transform tool (transform a gradient or bitmap fill by adjusting the size, direction, or center of the fill).

Lasso tool: Click and drag to select an area.

Drawing tools

Pen tool: Create straight or curved lines. You can also create Bezier curves.

Text tool: Create or edit text and text fields.

Line tool: Draw straight lines.

Rectangle tool: Create rectangles or squares composed of fills and strokes, just fills, or just strokes. Also has the *PolyStar tool* (create either polygon or star shapes—you can set how many points both shapes have), the Oval tool (create circles and ovals), the Rectangle Primitive tool, and the Oval Primitive tool. Primitive shapes are individual objects that can be edited in the Property inspector.

Pencil tool: Create lines in any of three modes—straighten, smooth, or ink.

Brush tool: Create shapes with fills only.

Ink Bottle tool: Change the color or width of a line, or add a stroke to a shape.

Paint Bucket tool: Add fill inside a shape or change the fill color.

Eyedropper tool: Sample a color from swatches or anywhere on the screen.

Eraser tool: Erase parts of an image.

View tools

Hand tool: Drag the Stage to view another part of your document.

Zoom tool: Zoom in or out to view more or less of the Stage. To zoom out, hold down the Alt key (Windows) or the Option key (Mac OS).

Color tools

Stroke Color: Set the stroke color.

Fill Color: Set the fill color.

Property inspector

The *Property inspector* displays options that change according to the current object or tool selection. When you open a document, the Property inspector displays document properties. When you select certain tools, it displays tool options. When you select a vector object, it displays options such as stroke and fill. You can change these and other options directly from the Property inspector. By default, the Property inspector is visible; you can hide or show it by selecting Window > Properties > Properties. **Figure 6** shows the properties for a text object and a rectangle shape, respectively.
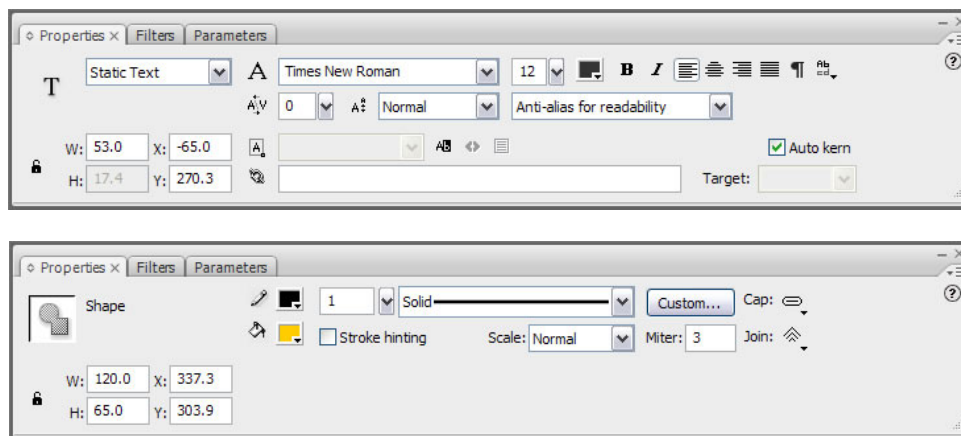

Figure 6 Property inspectors