

About Symbols

In Adobe Flash, a *symbol* is a reusable asset that you can use for special effects, animation, or interactivity. The three (3) kinds of symbols you can create are: graphic, movie clip or button.

Copies of symbols do not add to the overall file size of the Flash Project. This means you can add hundreds of copies of one particular symbol and the project size does not increase.

When using a symbol, the original asset is kept in the *Library*, and any copies made in the stage are considered *instances*.

Types of Symbols

Movie Clip Symbols

These are animated symbols that contain their own independent timeline. You can use them to place an animation inside an animation. They are powerful when combined with ActionScript which allows the user to control the actions through the Flash Player.

Button Symbols

These are symbols used for interactivity. A Button symbol contains four frames on an independent timeline. These frames control the up, over, down and hit stages for a typical web button. Similar to a Movie Clip, ActionScript is required to set the buttons navigational properties.

Graphic Symbols

These are the most basic kinds of symbols. Graphic symbols do not support ActionScript, as well as their inability to allow filters or blending modes make them very primitive. They are the best alternative for duplicating copies of basic shapes, graphics, or text.

Creating a Symbol

There are two methods of creating a symbol in Flash. Both methods will prompt you to choose a symbol name and type.

Method 1: Deselect all assets on the stage then choose **Insert>New Symbol**. This enters symbol editing mode where you can draw or import a graphic.

Method 2: Select an existing asset (other than audio) and choose **Modify>Convert to Symbol**. The items selected become an instance and the symbol is placed in the Library.