A Quick Introduction to the Flash Interface

The interface of Flash has a timeline, it has a number of tools for drawing and creating text. It has its own programming language, called ActionScript, based on the syntax of Javascript. There are quite a few palettes and windows that you will need to use to author a Flash movie.

Most important windows: the stage the timeline, the tool palette, the property inspector, the library.

Interface Elements:
The **stage** is where all the action takes place- this is where the visual content of Flash lives.

The **timeline** is where you control action through time. It is composed of layers, which are composed of frames. In Flash layers are created by clicking the new layer icon, or by going to the INSERT MENU > LAYER. You can name them in Flash, and you should always do so. Additional frames can be added to a layer by right-clicking on the layer and selecting INSERT FRAME.

Keyframes are control points on a timeline. They allow the user to specify the behavior of an object at any frame in the timelime or clip rather than just the first and last frames.

In Flash, there are no separate windows for drawing. You make graphical cast members right on the stage using the tools in the tool palette. More about the drawing tools later.

The **property inspector** is context sensitive, and you can set many properties dependent on the context, like stage size, stage color etc.

In Flash we create objects called **symbols**, and when we put them on the stage we refer to them as an instance of the symbol.

There are 3 types of symbols, **movie clips, buttons, and graphics**.
A symbol is a graphic, button, or movie clip that you create once in Flash and can reuse throughout your movie. It lives in the library. You edit it in **symbol editing mode**, by double clicking it's icon in the library or by selecting in the edit menu EDIT >EDIT SYMBOL. It is important to realize that symbols each have their own timeline.

An **instance** is a copy of a symbol located on the Stage or nested inside another symbol. You can change the instance by making changes in the property inspector.

The **library** contains some of your resources, for example symbols, sounds, bitmaps - but not necessarily all of them- shapes for example do not show up in the library.

To create a new symbol:
Go to the INSERT MENU, select NEW SYMBOL. A dialog box pops up where
you can choose the type of symbol you wish to create.

To convert selected elements to a symbol:
Select an element or several elements on the Stage and do one of the following:
Choose Insert > Convert to Symbol.

Drag the selection to the Library panel.

Right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Macintosh) and choose Convert to
Symbol from the context menu.

In the Convert to Symbol dialog box, type the name of the symbol and choose
the behavior—Graphic, Button, or Movie Clip.

Applying changes to instances: To set color and transparency options for
instances, you use the Property inspector. You can adjust tint, alpha (opacity),
brightness as a **color effect.**

Tweening in Flash
Motion Tweening:To tween the changes in properties of instances, you use
motion tweening. Flash can tween position, size, rotation, and skew of instances.
Additionally, Flash can tween the color of instances and type, creating gradual
color shifts or making an instance fade in or out. **Only symbols can be motion
tweened.**

Create the starting and ending keyframes for the animation and use the Motion
Tweening option in the Property inspector. Or right click on the layer in the
timeline, and select motion tween after you have made the changes in the start
and ending keyframe.

Shape Tweening
By tweening shapes, you can create an effect similar to morphing, making one
shape appear to change into another shape over time. Shape tweening only
works with shapes, not instances of symbols.

To make a shape tween, first create or place the artwork for the first frame of the
sequence on a keyframe. Next, create a second keyframe the desired number of
frames after the first keyframe, and place the second artwork there**. Only shapes
can be shape tweened.**

Select Shape from the Tween pop-up menu in the Property Inspector. Or rightclick on
the layer you want to tween in the timelime and select shape tween.