Flash LESSON 4

Animated Characters

CHARACTER ANIMATION

Animating with a computer is very similar to writing with a word processor. Both are creative tasks that just happen to involve technology. In both cases, the creativity is what matters. People - not computers - are creative. Technology is simply a tool to assist that inventiveness.

You may have the best animation software money can buy, but the actual animation is driven by your creativity. Character animation is the study of motion, timing, and acting, and it is just as creative an art as acting, writing, and painting. Like the word processor, the computer is a tool that makes it easy to get the animation that's in your head onto film or videotape so that people can see it.

This lesson may be the toughest so far. For some of you it will be easy. Others will have a tough time. Take your time, follow the insructions - they are well written, and don't give up and you will succeed. Be sure to have fun along the journey.

In this lesson we will create an animated bird that flies across the sky.

To draw the bird:

1. Hide and lock all the layers in your scene by clicking the white dots under the eye and padlock icons. You will see a plain white stage if done correctly.

2. Add a new layer by clicking the Add Layer icon.

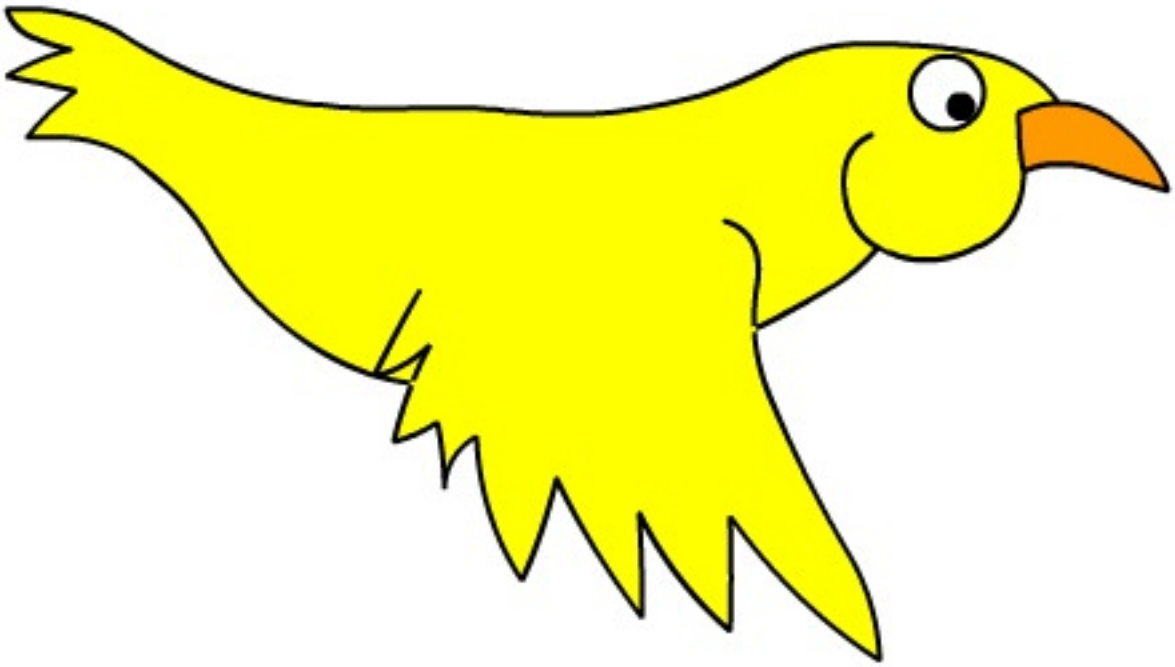
3. Name the new layer Bird. Hint: double click the layer name and then type Bird.

4. Drag the Bird layer to the top of the stack of layers.

Drag the Bird layer to the top.

5. Select the pencil tool in smooth mode with line width tool. Prepare yourself to draw a masterpiece.

6. Do your best to draw the bird below - don't laugh, I did my best. Here's the best way to draw the bird: Draw the outline of the beak first - don't fill it in. Next, draw the outline of the head and body. Then draw the outline of the wing. Now use the Paint Bucket tool to Fill the beak and the body. Use the oval tool to draw the two circle for the eye. Hint: draw the white of the eye first. Finally, use the selection tool to delete any unwanted lines.



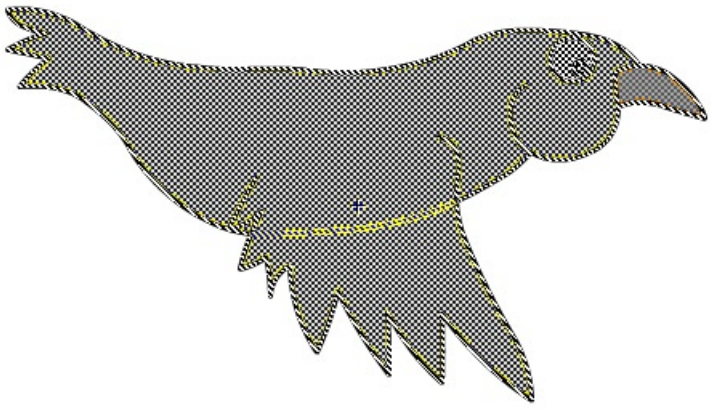
Draw a bird with its wings down.

How does your bird look? Better than mine I hope.

Before we can animate the bird we have to turn it into a symbol.

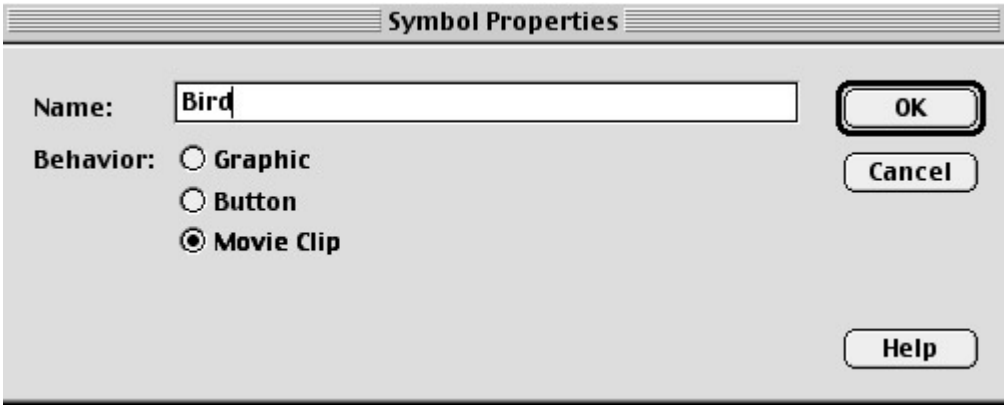
To animate the bird:

1. Use the selection tool to highlight the entire bird (see right). Be sure to select the entire bird.



Select the entire bird.

2. Choose Insert->Convert to Symbol from the menu bar. The Symbol Properties window appears.

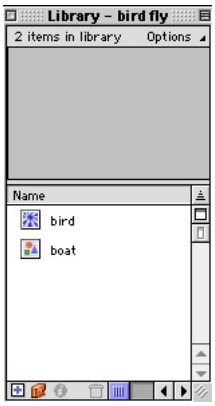


The Symbol Properties window with the Movie Clip circle checked

3. In the name box, type Bird. Click the movie clip circle. Click OK to close the window.

4. Delete the bird on the screen by highlighting it and pressing the delete key.

5. Choose Window->Library from the menu bar. The Library window opens. Notice that the window has two objects in it, the bird and the boat. We made each of these objects symbols so they appear in the library window.

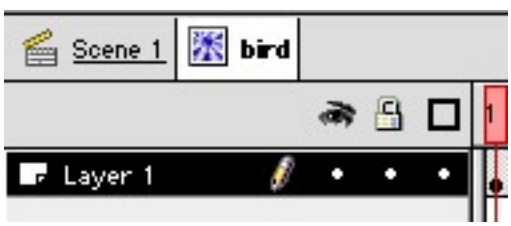


6. Click once on the word "bird" in the library window to highlight it.

Highlight bird by clicking it.

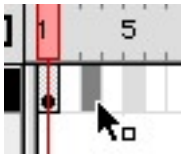
The bird will appear in the Libray window. We now have to edit the bird to make it an animated character. We are going to make it look like it is flapping it's wings.

7. Double click the the picture of the bird in the library window. The layers will change - we're not in Kansas anymore. You are no longer working on the movie, you are just editing the bird.



8. Change the name of Layer 1 to Bird. See Lesson 2 if you forgot how to do this.

9. Highlight Frame 3 of the Bird layer (see right).

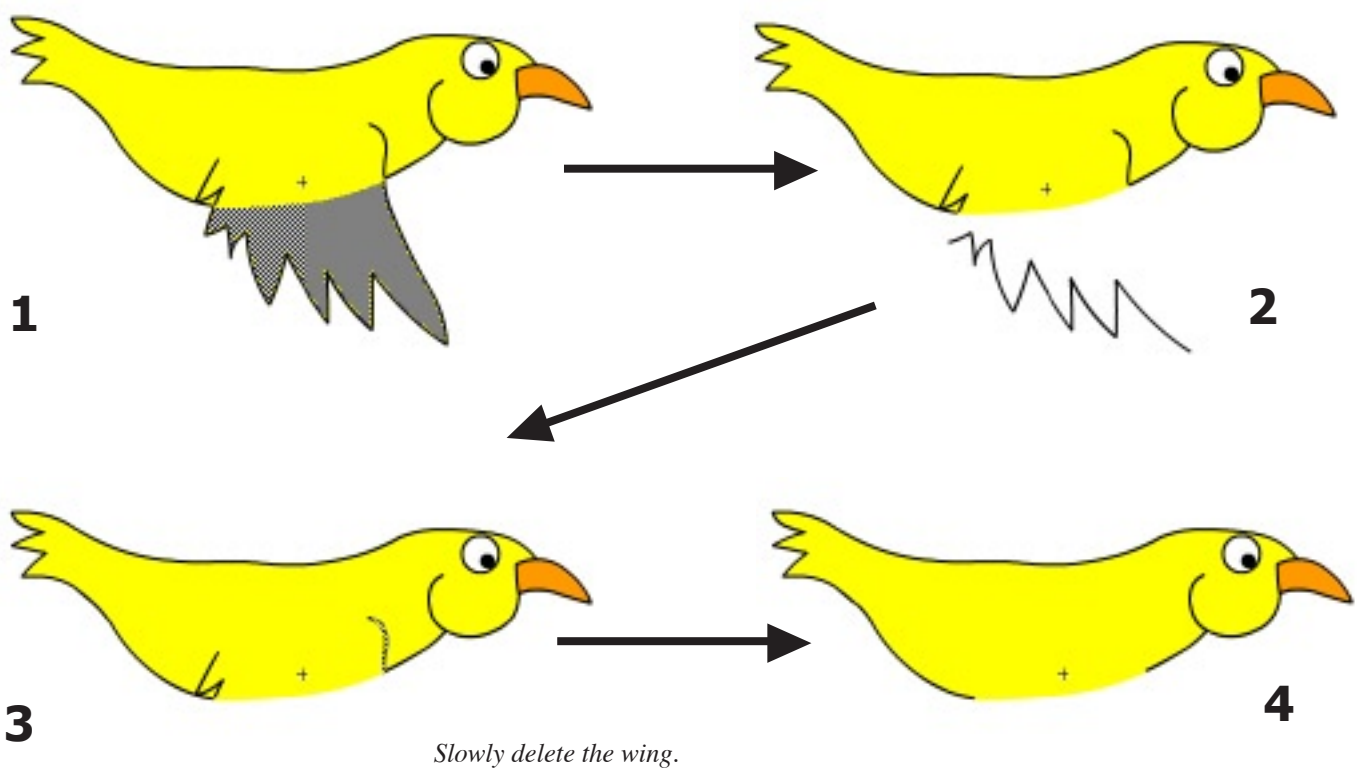


10. Choose Insert->Keyframe from the menu bar. A black dot will appear in frame 3.

11. Deselect the bird by clicking an empty part of the stage with the selection tool.

We will now draw the bird with its wings in the up position to simulate flying.

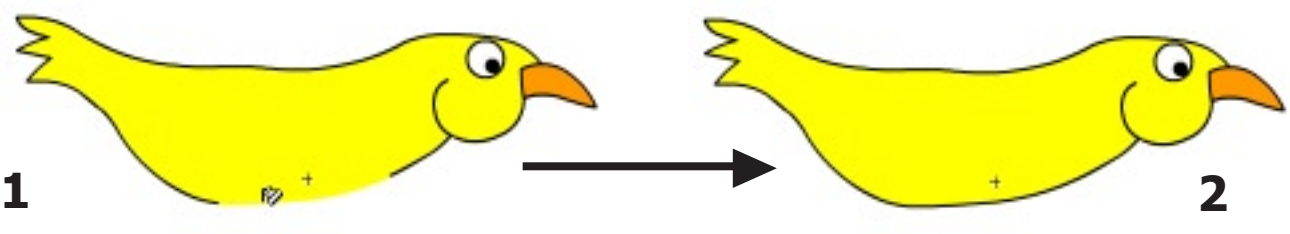
12. Click on portions of the bird's wing to slowly delete the wing (see below). Note: do not use the eraser tool it does not work correctly.



Slowly delete the wing.

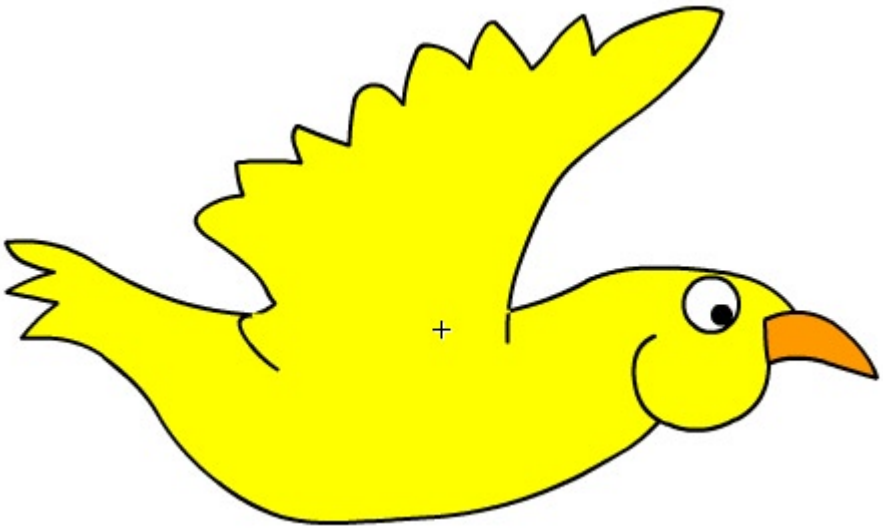
13. Get the Ink Bottle tool. Choose a black line and thickness 2.

14. Use the ink bottle to fill in the black line around the bird's body (see below).



Use the ink bottle to fill in the black line.

15. Use your skills to redraw the bird's wing so it is in the up position (see below). Take your time to draw it; your work is a reflection of you.

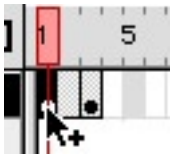


Redraw the bird's wing in the up position.

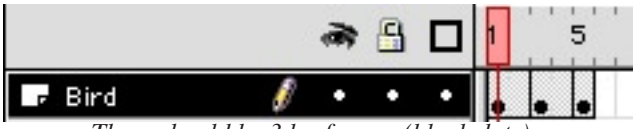
Instead of redrawing the bird again, we will copy frame 1.

16. Highlight frame 1 in the Bird layer.

17. Move the cursor over the dot in Frame 1 and hold down the option key on the keyboard. Your cursor should have a + in the lower right hand corner (see right). Do not go on until your cursor has a +.



18. Continue holding the option key and click and drag the dot from frame 1 to frame 5. There should now be a dot in frame 5 (see below).



There should be 3 keyframes (black dots).

19. Play the bird animation using your controller. Yes! the bird is flying.

20. Click the word Scene 1 in the upper left hand corner of the window (see below).

Magically you will return to the boat movie you have been working on.

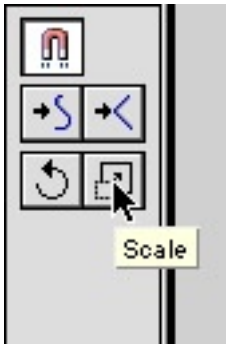
To scale the bird and make it move:

1. Drag the current time indicator to frame 1.

2. Highlight the bird layer by clicking it.

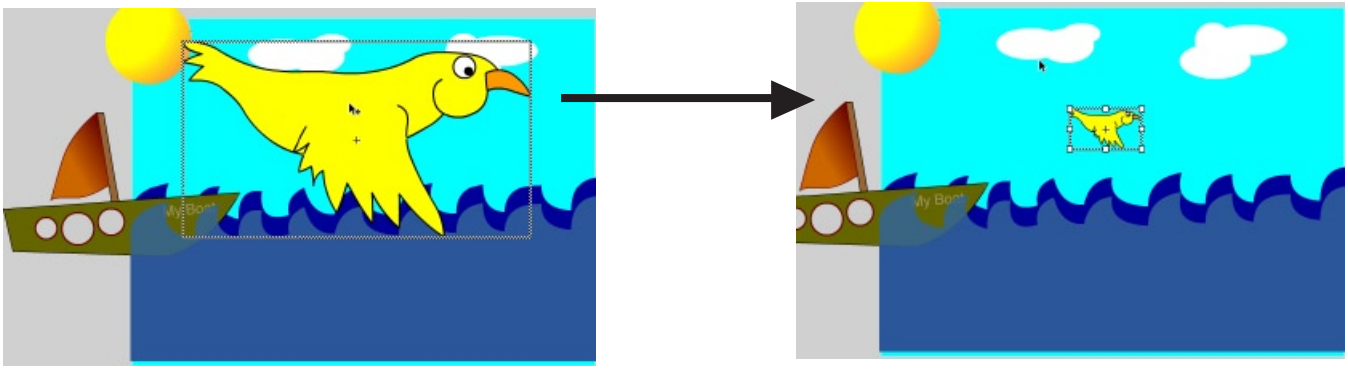
3. Make all layers visible - See Lesson 2 if you forgot.

4. Click and drag the bird from the library window to the middle of the Stage. The bird will be too large for the scene.



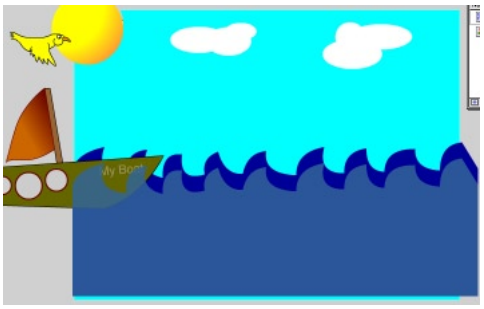
5. Click the Scale icon on the toolbar.
The bird outline will change by adding some squares.

6. Scale the bird to an appropriate size by dragging one of the corners (see below).

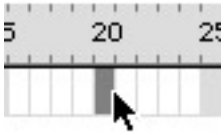


Scale the bird to an appropriate size.

7. Move the bird off the stage to the upper left hand side (see below).



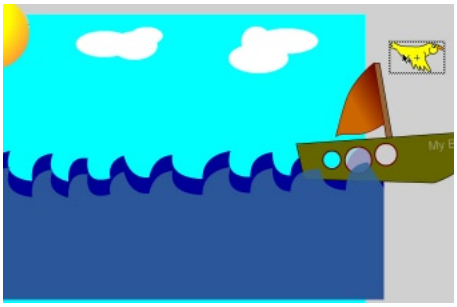
Move the bird into position.



8. Highlight frame 20 in the bird layer.

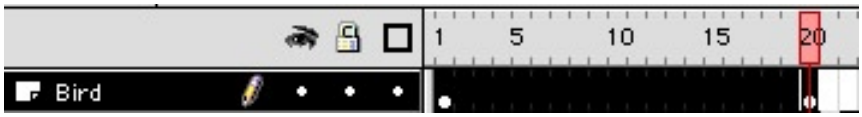
9. Choose Insert->Keyframe from the menu bar.

10. Click and drag the bird across to the right hand side of the stage (see below).



Move the bird to the right side.

11. Highlight frames 1 - 20 in the Bird layer.



12. Choose Insert->Create Motion Tween.

In order to see the bird flap its wing we have to view the test movie. Using the controler to play your movie will not show the bird flap it's wings.

13. Choose Control->Test Movie to see the bird flap it's wings.

14. Save your movie!

15. For more points, make a motion path for your bird and have it fly out the top of the screen.

16. Show your instructor the finished movie.

Lesson 5 will show you how to add sound to your movie.