LAYERS IN ANIMATE

Introduction

Layers in Animate CC (formerly Flash) work very much the same way as in other Adobe applications such as Photoshop and Illustrator. Layers that are higher in the timeline list are drawn on top of layers lower down. New layers are created by clicking on the little folded paper icon in the lower left of the Timeline window, and can be renamed by double clicking on the name. Layer folders can be made using the folder icon. Layers can be dragged up or down, or moved into a folder, by dragging the layer name. When a layer is dragged into a folder the small dot to the left of the line indents slightly. Folders can be placed inside other folders. Note, however, that deleting a folder also deletes all the layers inside it; Animate will warn you about this.

Features

There are a number of features of layers in Animate that don’t appear in other Adobe applications, however. Let’s have a look at them. The visibility and locking options are straightforward: these are the eye and padlock icons in the top row. The top layer and Folder 1 are locked in the image above, and layer 2 and the internal folder are hidden from view on the canvas. Click on the top eye or padlock icons to hide or lock all layers, and again to show or unlock all layers.

In the left hand image we can see the pop-up menu, made clear by right clicking (on PC) or Control-clicking (Mac) on any layer or folder. Note that it’s possible to lock all layers other than the one you’re working on; as it’s easy to change layers by mistake by selecting an object on another layer, it’s worth using this regularly.

Going back to the top image, you can see small colored rectangles to the right of the padlock column. Clicking on any one of them (or the top rectangle) changes the display of that layer from shaded to outline. This allows you to concentrate on what you’re drawing.
**Mask layers**

Here I've drawn a green circle over a brown rectangle. Both have been converted to symbols so that they don’t cut each other apart. When I right click on the Circle Mask layer and choose Mask, however, the circle disappears and the only thing visible is the part of the rectangle that is underneath the circle, as in the image below. The circle can be edited by removing and then reapplying the mask property.

Mask layers only hide layers that are inside them, and can be thought of as similar to folders. Move layers in and out of the masking layer to see this effect.

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