How to use transparent or invisible buttons

If you create a button with no graphics in the Up, Over, or Down states, the button will be transparent. However, you can control how a transparent button will operate when a visitor clicks within the hit area. You can use transparent buttons in Adobe Flash Professional in the same way you use hot spots in an image map in Adobe Dreamweaver.

Create a button

Your first step is to create a button symbol and add an instance of the button to the Stage.

To create a button:

1. Start Flash and open a new blank document (ActionScript 3.0).

2. Rename Layer 1 **Graphics**.

3. Insert a new layer and name it **Button**.

4. On the Graphics layer, add a photo or a graphic to the Stage.

   The document illustrated in **Figure 1** contains a photo of San Francisco. You can place transparent buttons over different areas of a photograph. Viewers can then click different parts of the photo to navigate to information about the subjects in the photograph.

   In this activity, you create a transparent button used to turn the hillside (in the background) into a clickable area linked to more information.

5. Select the Button layer.

6. Select the Rectangle tool.

7. Choose any color for the fill.

8. Set Stroke Color to No Color.

9. Draw a rectangle over an area in the photograph or graphic to which you want to add a button (**Figure 2**).

10. Select the Selection tool.

11. Click the rectangle to select it.

12. Select Modify > Convert To Symbol.

13. In the Convert to Symbol dialog box, type a name for the button in the Name text box.

14. Select Button as the Type.

15. Click OK.

    The button is added to the library. The instance of the button remains on the Stage.
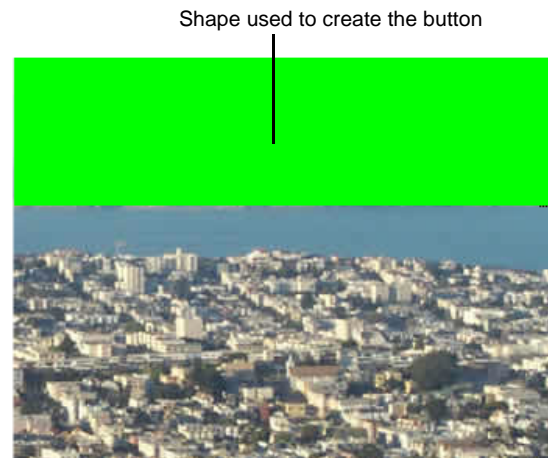

Figure 1 Photograph

Shape used to create the button

Figure 2 Rectangle drawn over hill

This document requires Adobe Flash Professional CS6. Technical instructions may differ depending on your version.

Make a button transparent

In the following steps, you add a keyframe to the Hit frame of the Button symbol timeline, then delete the button in the Up frame. The result is a button that is active, but not visible in the Flash document.

To make a button transparent:

1. Continue from where you left off in the preceding activity.

2. On the Stage, double-click the button instance.

   The button opens in symbol-editing mode. The Up frame is selected in the Timeline panel.

3. Add a keyframe to the Hit frame.

4. Select the Up frame.

5. Press Delete.

   The colored rectangle representing the button on the Stage disappears.

   The Hit frame should be the only frame containing a colored rectangle on the Stage. The Up, Over, and Down frames are empty, which makes the button invisible. (**Figure 3**).

6. On the edit bar, click Scene 1 to exit symbol-editing mode and return to the main timeline.

   The button is now transparent. Although you can still see it on the Stage (**Figure 4**), the button will not be visible when the movie plays.

   In this example, the button represents the hills. You can now link this instance of the button to information about this part of the photo.

   You can also add other instances of the transparent button to other parts of the document, such as over other areas of the photo. You can use the Free Transform tool in the Tools panel to resize each instance of the button.

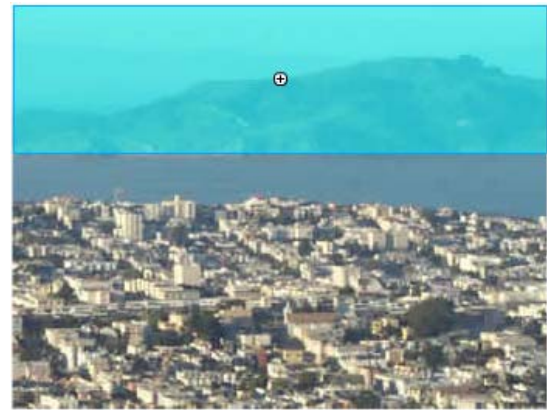

Figure 3 Only the Button Hit frame has content

Figure 4 Transparent button over the photograph

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Add ActionScript to launch a website

In the following steps, you use ActionScript code to instruct Flash to open a web page when a user clicks the transparent button.

To add ActionScript to launch a website:

1. Continue from where you left off in the preceding activity.

2. Select the button instance to which you want to add an action.

3. Click in the Instance Name box in the Properties panel (**Figure 5**) and enter a unique name to identify the button instance. The name should be descriptive, such as hills_btn, and cannot contain spaces.

4. In the main timeline of your movie, create a new layer named Actions.

5. Make sure there is a keyframe in the Actions layer that corresponds to the keyframe where your button first appears on the Stage. Select this keyframe in the Actions layer.

   Note: If your button doesn't appear on this frame, Flash generates an error message when you publish the movie because the ActionScript you include on this frame refers to an object that isn't on the Stage yet.

6. Select Window > Actions to display the Actions panel.

7. If you don't see the parameters area in the Actions panel, click the Script Assist button.

8. In the Actions toolbox on the left side of the panel, expand Flash.Events, EventDispatcher, and Methods. Double-click AddEventListener.

   The AddEvent listener is added to the Script pane of the Actions panel (**Figure 6**).

9. Click in the Object box in the parameters area of the Actions panel.

   The Insert A Target Path button is now active.

10. Click the Insert A Target Path button.

    The Insert Target Path dialog box appears (**Figure 7**).

11. Select the Relative option, select the instance name of your button, and click OK.

12. In the Actions toolbox on the left side of the panel, expand Flash.Events, MouseEvent, and Properties. Locate the CLICK Property.

13. In the Script pane, select the AddEventListener() line to display the parameters for this method. Then click in the Type box in the parameters area.
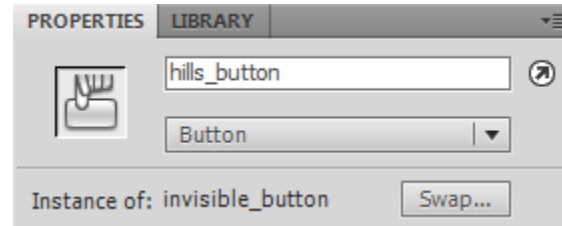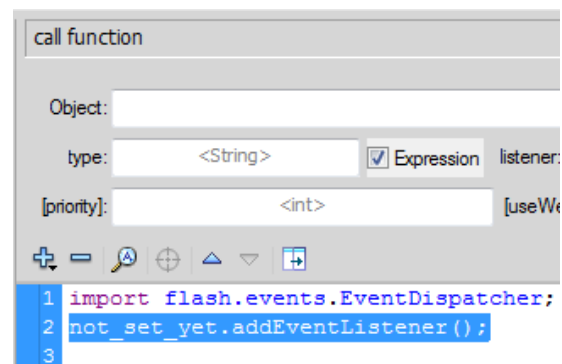

Figure 5 Properties panel

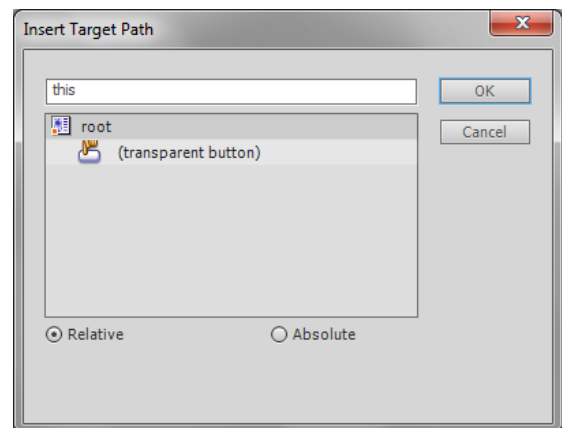**Figure 6** AddEventListener method in the Actions panel

Figure 7 Insert Target Path dialog box

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14. In the Actions toolbox, double-click the CLICK property.

Script Assist adds the property to your code as MouseEvent.CLICK (**Figure 8**).

15. In the Listener box in the parameters area, type a name for the function that should execute when a user clicks the button. You can use any name you like, but make sure the name of the function is unique and contains no spaces. (example: openURL)

The function name appears in the Script pane as you type. You have named the function, but you haven't created it yet.

16. In the Actions toolbox, expand Language Elements, Statements, Keywords & Directives, and Definition Keyword.

17. Double-click Function in the Actions toolbox.

The code for creating a function appears in the Script pane.

18. In the parameters area of the Script pane, type the name of your function in the Name box.

Note: The function name must be typed exactly as you typed it for the AddEventListener function. Function names are case-sensitive.

19. In the parameters area of the Script pane, type event:MouseEvent in the Parameters box (**Figure 9**).

In this box, you are naming a variable (event) and indicating what type of variable it is (MouseEvent).

20. In the Actions toolbox on the left side of the panel, expand Flash.Net and Methods.

21. Select the function line in the Script pane and double-click the NavigateToURL method in the Actions toolbox.
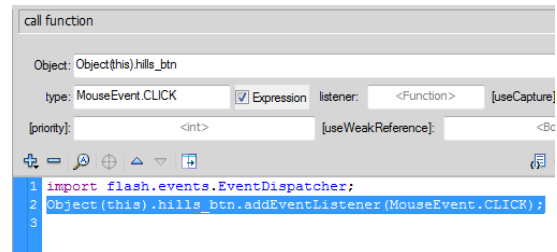
The method is added to the function (**Figure 10**).

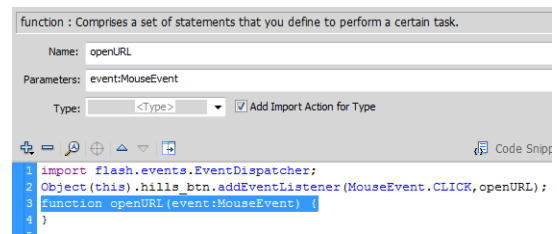**Figure 8** CLICK property in the Actions pane
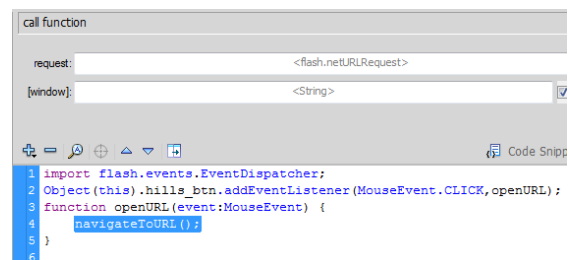

Figure 9 Function parameters

Figure 10 NavigateToURL method in the Actions panel

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22. In the Request box, type:

new URLRequest("http://www.adobe.com") (**Figure 11**).

Note: Be sure to include the spaces between the parentheses and the quotation marks.

You can replace www.adobe.com with a web address of your choice.

Figure 11 URL entered in the Request box

23. Collapse the Actions panel.

24. Save the document.

25. Select Control > Test Movie > In Flash Professional to test the button.

26. Click the area of the graphic on which you created the invisible button.

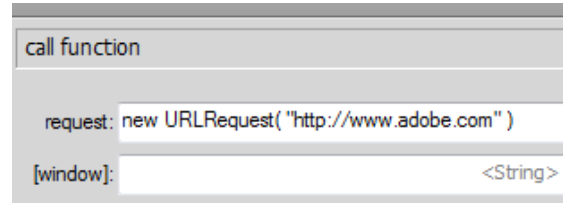A browser window opens and navigates to the website you defined for the button.

For more about ActionScript, see Programming ActionScript 3.0, "Getting Started with ActionScript" (in Flash, select Help > Flash Help).

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