Fireworks Tutorial: Creating Animated GIFs

Animated GIF files are one of the basic ways to create characters for games and other applications. The following tutorials were created as a refresher for creating animated GIF files with Macromedia Fireworks 8.0.

Method One: Using Multiple Images

Step 1: Find the images you would like to turn into an animated GIF. An example would be a sprite sheet.

Sprites by MechaChao
Coming N̲o̲t̲ soon :all monsters

Step 2: **Separate** the images you want from the background and other images. First, open the image in Fireworks, then use the **marquee tool** to select one image at a time. This image will become the first frame of the animation. Once you have selected the image, **copy** it using the Edit menu or keyboard shortcut. Next, create a new Fireworks file, setting the dimensions to be about twice as large as your copied image to provide room to work. Once you have done this, **paste** the image into the new file. Now move the image into the center of the stage. Use the **Wand tool** to remove any background color from the perimeter of the image. Next, make a new frame by clicking the **New/Duplicate** button in the lower right of the **Frames and History** window. Then copy the image you want for the second frame of the animation from the sprite sheet or other resource, and paste it into the second frame. Continue to copy, paste, and remove backgrounds from each image, placing them each in a new frame.
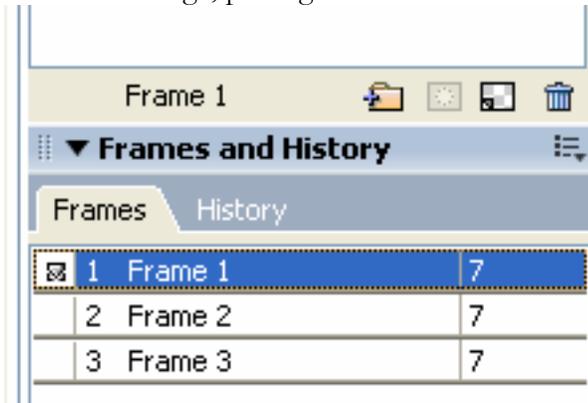
Step 3: **Align** the images. You want each image to look as if it has flowed smoothly from the previous image. Align images by choosing one feature of the images to align. In the example, I chose Kefka's eyes, since his head does not move, while his body does. An easy way to align things in different frames is through the use of **onion skinning**. Onion skinning allows you to see not only what is in the current frame, but also what is in other frames. To use onion skinning, click the button on the left side of the Frames window. There are several options to choose from, but for this I would suggest using the **'Before and After'** option. This lets you see the frames to either side of the one you have selected, so that you can align all the images frame by frame.

Step 4: After you have aligned the images, check to see that they work properly by clicking the **play** button in the bottom right of the stage. This will show you a preview of the animation. If it seems to work, the next thing to choose is **Modify > Canvas > Fit Canvas**. This removes all the extra canvas around the animation. Once you have done this, you may want to change the background color of the stage, or make it **transparent**, which you can do through the **Stage Properties**.

Step 5: **Exporting** the animation as an animated GIF file is the last step. To do this, choose **File > Image Preview**. The image preview window is displayed. Make sure that under **Format**, it says **Animated GIF**. If it does, click **Export**. Once you have chosen a place to export your image, you're done!

Method 2: Modifying a Single Image.

Step 1: Find or make an image. Try to keep it simple, because the more complex it is, the more work you'll have to do later. Open the image in Fireworks, and **remove the background**. The **Wand tool** works best for this.

Step 2: Next copy the image. Make a new frame by using the **New/Duplicate** button in the bottom right corner of the **Frames** window; then paste the image into the same position in the new frame, either by using the **paste in place** command, or pasting and then changing its location in the properties window to match the original.

Step 3: Now, make a **slight alteration** to the image. The smaller the change the better, because that will keep the animation looking smooth. After you are done, copy the new image.

Step 4: Repeat steps 2 and 3 as necessary until done.

Step 5: If you are satisfied with your animation, then it is time to make it look good and **export** it. First choose **Modify > Canvas > Fit Canvas** to remove all blank canvas surrounding the image. Then choose **File > Image Preview**. When the image preview window comes up, make sure that the field marked **Format** says **Animated GIF**. If it does not, then change it. When you are ready, click **Export** and select a location for the file. Now you're done!