

2

The Flash Tools Panel

What we'll cover in this chapter:

- The Flash **Tools Panel**: where we find Flash's integral drawing and manipulation tools, and what they're capable of.
- How to use these tools to create and amend movie content: images and text.
- Precision drawing and fine-tuning with Bezier curves.

In the previous chapter, we took a look at the key structures contained in every Flash movie – the stage, the timeline, keyframes, frames, layers and layer folders. In this chapter, we're going to start exploring Flash's built-in facilities for creating and manipulating movie content.

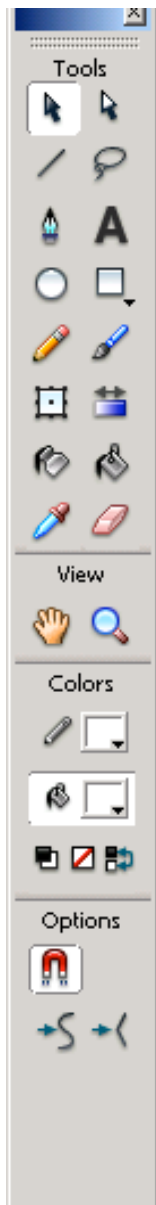
To do this, we'll examine each of Flash's drawing and editing tools in the context by creating a Flash illustration: these tools are the integral means that Flash gives us for drawing pictures, creating text, and manipulating these and other visual elements on the stage.

All of these built-in content creation tools are accessed via the Flash Tools Panel.

The Tools panel

The Tools panel is where you'll find all of Flash's drawing and editing tools. Using these tools in conjunction with Flash's Property inspector and other panels, you'll have at your disposal everything you need to design and manipulate the visual components and building blocks of your movie.

By default, the Tools panel is situated on the left-hand side of the screen when you open up Flash for the first time, but you can move it around or hide it, just like any other window. The Tools panel itself is subdivided into four sections – **Tools**, **View**, **Colors**, and **Options**:



The **Tools** section is where all of the basic design and manipulation options are found. These tools can be used to draw pictures, create text elements, select objects, and move them around the stage – amongst other things.

The **View** section contains tools for two main functions: zooming in and out on the stage, and changing the stage's position on the screen. These changes of view and position only apply to the screen display in the authoring environment where you're creating the movie – any changes you make to the view here don't have any effect on the way that the finished movie itself is rendered in the user's browser. You might, for example, wish to shift the stage around on screen so that you can see other screen elements – such as open panels – more clearly.

The **Colors** section is used to control the color of the **stroke** (line) or **fill** of an object. For instance, if you wanted to have a blue circle with a black outline, you'd choose those options in the Colors section. The topmost tool in the Colors section determines the stroke color, and the tool below it (the one with the paint bucket icon) controls the object's fill color. Reading from left to right, the three remaining tools in the Colors section are responsible for: setting the stroke and fill colors to black and white; switching off the stroke or fill (depending on which of them is selected); and swapping back and forth between black stroke/white fill and white stroke/black fill. You can actually assign your own colors to stroke and fill – more on that later.

The **Options** section is where you can change some of the properties of the currently selected tool. For example, you can change the size and shape of the Brush tool to make different kinds of brush marks. Note that not every tool in the Tools panel has options that modify their characteristics, so don't worry if this section appears blank for some tools.