



WORKING WITH GRADIENTS IN FLASH MX 2004

In this tutorial, you'll learn how to create, manipulate and apply gradients in Flash MX .

If you are new to graphic design, you may not have heard of gradients before. A gradient is basically a fill type that has a gradual stepping of colour. Gradients may contain a gradual stepped progression from one colour to another colour. This is the case in the black to white linear gradient showed on the right. However, you can also have gradients that contain numerous base colours that are gradually turning into eachother. This is the case with the radial gradient shown in the circle to the left. This features a custom selection of four colours that were set up in the Flash MX colour mixer.





Linear Gradient with gradual stepping from black to white.



Radial Gradient with custom colours.

Let's Get Started

The steps below will help you set-up a series of shapes which we will use to explore the different options Flash offers for the use of gradients fills.

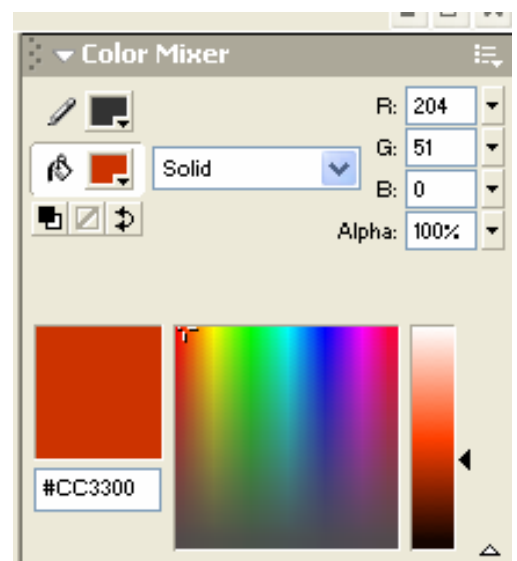
1. Open a new flash file by selecting **File > New**.
2. From the tools at the left of the stage, select the  rectangle tool. Draw two rectangles on the stage as shown below.
3. Once you have done that, select the  oval tool from the tools menu and draw two circles on the stage as shown below.



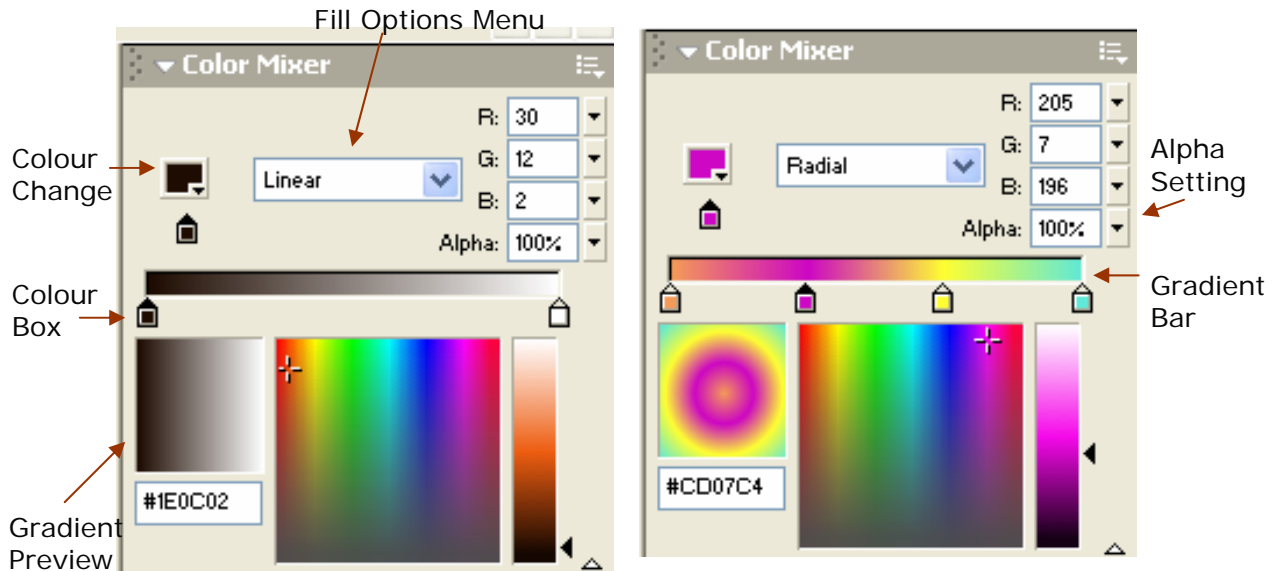
Working with the Color Mixer

Now that you have set-up the shapes, we'll start exploring the different fills we can make using the color mixer.

The color mixer should be visible at the top of the panels at the right hand side of the screen. If you can't see the mixer, select **Window > Design Panels > Color Mixer** or press **Shift + F9**.

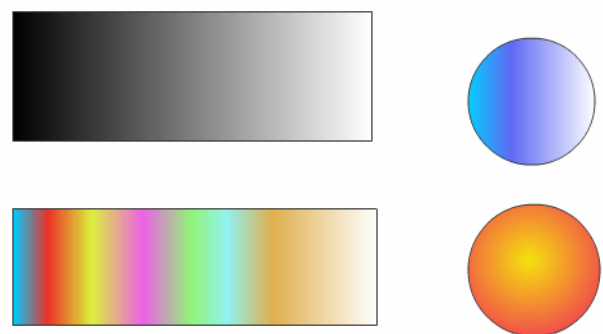


- Click on the fill inside one of the rectangles you have drawn. In the Color Mixer panel, you should see that this is a solid color. To change it from a solid color to a gradient, **select either linear or radial gradient** from the drop down menu (see examples below).



- When you select either linear or gradient, you will see the default gradient colours. You can customise the gradient by doing the following actions:
 - **To add more colours** move your mouse underneath the gradient bar until you see a plus sign next to your cursor. Click to add a new colour box. You can drag this colour box along the gradient bar until you get the effect you desire. To change the colour of the box, select the colour of your choice from the colour change options.
 - **To remove colours from a gradient** click on the colour box of the colour you don't want and then drag the colour box downwards until it disappears.
 - **To make a colour in the gradient transparent** click on the colour box and then change the Alpha Setting from 100% to the level of transparency you require. Note that you probably won't see the transparency effect until you place the fill over another object on the stage.

- Create your own gradients now by following the steps above and apply them to your shapes using the fill bucket tool. Once you are confident with making your own radial and linear gradients, make sure each shape has a gradient applied. Your file should look similar to this.





USING THE FILL TRANSFORM TOOL

If you thought being able to make your own gradient colours was pretty cool, you're going to love the fill transform tool. This tool, which is located directly above the paint bucket tool, allows us to change how the gradient appears.



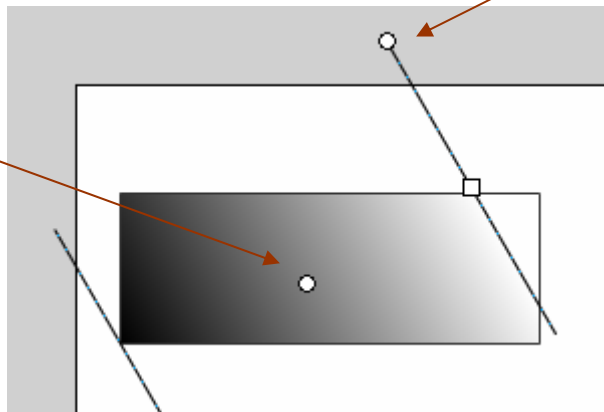
↑
Fill Transform Tool

7. To explore how this tool works, click on the tool and then on one of the rectangles you have drawn and applied a gradient to.

You should see two small circle handles and one square handle appear over your rectangle. Each of these can be used to transform the fill.

This circle handle allows you to rotate the gradient.

This circle handle allows you to move the gradient.



This square handle allows you to resize the gradient.

Experiment with these handles to **transform** each of the gradient fills you have applied to each shape.

Important Note: Sometimes you may not see the handles when you select the fill transform tool. This may be because they have previously been dragged out of view. To find them again, change your view setting to 25% and then move them back onto the stage. Once you have them where you want them, change your view back to the size you want.

TRY THESE OTHER IDEAS..

Use your **paintbrush** instead of bucket to paint using the gradient you have created.



Instead of selecting a gradient fill, select the Bitmap option from the Drop Down menu in the Color Mixer. **Select a photo** of your choice and use it as your fill. Experiment with the fill transform tool to achieve the effects shown here.



Inspired? Then why not learn more in our Making Fills with Photographs tutorial.