LESSON 6: PUBLISH

OBJECTIVES

When you have finished this section, you will understand:

- how Publish works in the production of a Web site

and you will have learned:

- how to use Publish settings to export an HTML file
- how to export a Flash projector file for PC or Mac

EXERCISES

PUBLISHING FILES FOR YOUR WEB SITE

Flash 4 has an excellent new feature called Publish that allows for batch exporting of all files necessary to deliver Flash media everywhere. You can export to HTML, using the templates supplied with Flash or using custom templates you create. You can export a Windows or Mac Projector file that contains both the movie and the Flash Player in one tidy bundle. You can specify how you want to export sounds and choose whether to have these settings override settings you've made within Flash for individual sound files. You can export to Flash 4 or earlier versions. Publish gives you a flexible, yet batch-oriented way to accomplish all of these tasks quickly and correctly.

The Publish Settings dialog box enables designers to choose what files they want to export and how those files should be exported from Flash. In the following exercise, you'll choose settings for an HTML file.

To export a final Web site with Publish:

1. Open boat31.fla from the My Work folder or the Lesson6 folder.
2. Choose **File › Publish Settings**.
   The **Publish Settings** dialog box opens.

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3. Click on the **Formats** tab and choose **Flash (.swf)**, **HTML (.html)**, **GIF Image (.gif)**, **Windows Projector (.exe)**, and **Macintosh Projector**. For the filename, be sure there's a check next to **Use Default** (see Figure 6-1).
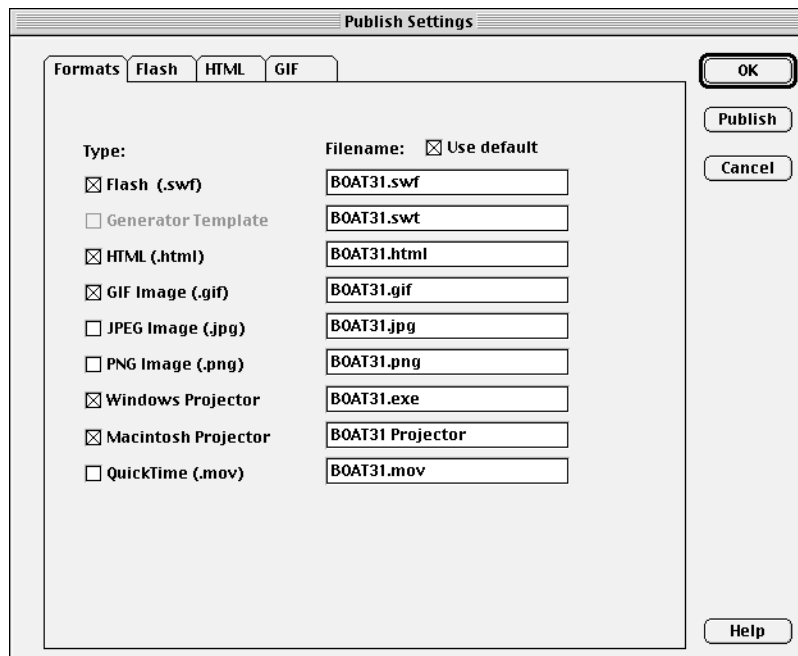

Figure 6-1
Choose these Publish Settings on the Format tab.

Note: "Projectors" are files that bundle the Flash player with the Flash player file (.swf) you have created. The files are executable—the viewer just clicks and the movie plays. If you are distributing your movie by disk or even by e-mail, you do not have to wonder whether the viewer has the Flash 4 player; you've included it. This format is useful for presentations as well.

When you check the GIF Image box, a GIF tab is added to your Publish Settings tabs. Your choices on the Flash tab will define the final settings of the exported Flash file (SWF).

Note: When you activate the Use Default Names option, Flash names the files it creates for export based on the name of the FLA file. For example, if the Flash file is named boat31.fla, the GIF file will be boat31.gif.

4. Click on the **Flash** tab. Choose **Generate Size Report** and **Protect from Import**.
    Generate Size Report will give you a report on the size of each element in your Flash file. **Protect from Import** prevents people from reimporting the SWF file into Flash.

The rule for audio settings is "test and weigh." See how large your files get when you export at higher quality and then at lower quality. Watch and listen to the results; then consider your audience, their equipment, and their expectations.

Try your files on several systems. If you are aiming at a broad home audience, you need to watch your animation and listen to your files on a 28.8 connection on AOL with a SoundBlaster audio card. If you're selling entertainment to a well-equipped client, don't aim at the lowest common denominator or even some imaginary middle. Flash gives you the options—you get to make the decisions.

You can learn a lot by trying many options and selecting Generate Size Report each time. The report gives you statistics to weigh along with your aesthetic preferences.

5. Click on the **Set** button next to **Audio Stream**.
   The **Publish Settings** dialog box opens.
6. On the Flash tab, change the **Bit Rate** to **64** kbps and the **Quality** to **Best**, and then click on **OK** (see Figure 6-2).
   With higher bit-rate and quality settings, you'll get better sounding audio; you'll also take longer to export and produce larger files.
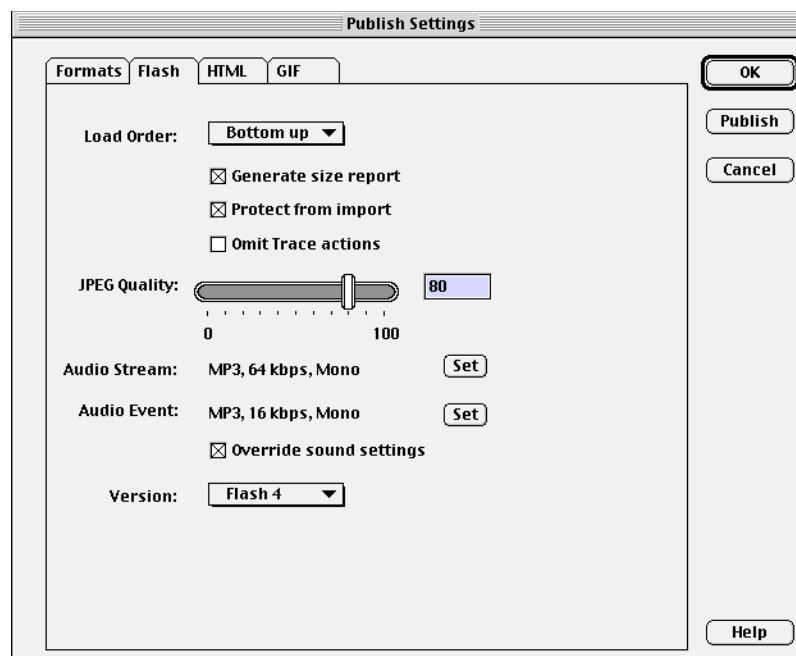

Figure 6-2
Choose these settings for the Flash tab.

If you have set export options for individual sound files, you can override the individual sound settings by checking Override Sound Settings. Otherwise, the settings you choose in Publish will apply only to files for which you have not chosen settings. You have the flexibility to set specifications for individual sound files, to batch-process all files with Publish, or to override earlier specifications and batch-process in Publish with new settings.

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7. Click to check **Override Sound Settings**.

Note: If you are using Macromedia Generator, you should export to Flash 3 until Generator 2 is released. Flash 3 Players cannot play Flash 4 Player files. On the other hand, the new features of Flash 4 will drop out if you export to Flash 3.

8. Choose the **HTML** tab to customize the HTML parameters for Flash movie playback inside a browser. From the **Template** pop-up menu, choose **Flash 4 with Image**.

   This choice embeds codes in your HTML code to automatically detect if a Web site visitor has the Flash 4 Player installed, and if not, to serve an alternative GIF.

9. Click on the **Info** button to see a description of what the template will do (see Figure 6-3). Then click **Cancel** to close the description.
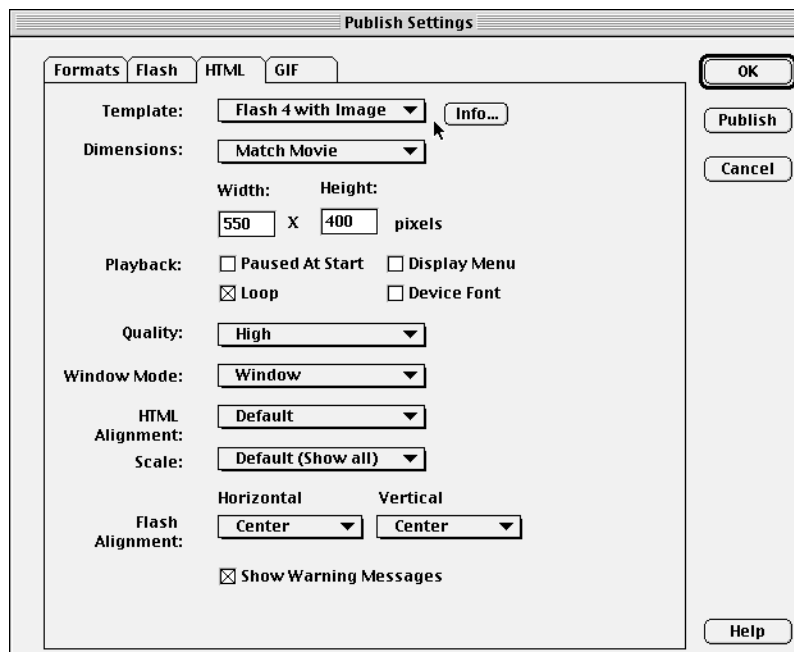

Figure 6-3
Choose these settings on the HTML tab.

Note: You can customize the HTML templates furnished with Flash 4 or add your own custom template that instructs Flash to write custom HTML when you publish a file.

10. Publish exports a GIF image that can be displayed to viewers who do not have the Flash Player on their system yet. Click on the **GIF** tab to adjust settings for the alternative GIF image exported from the Flash movie. For now, accept the default settings (see Figure 6-4).

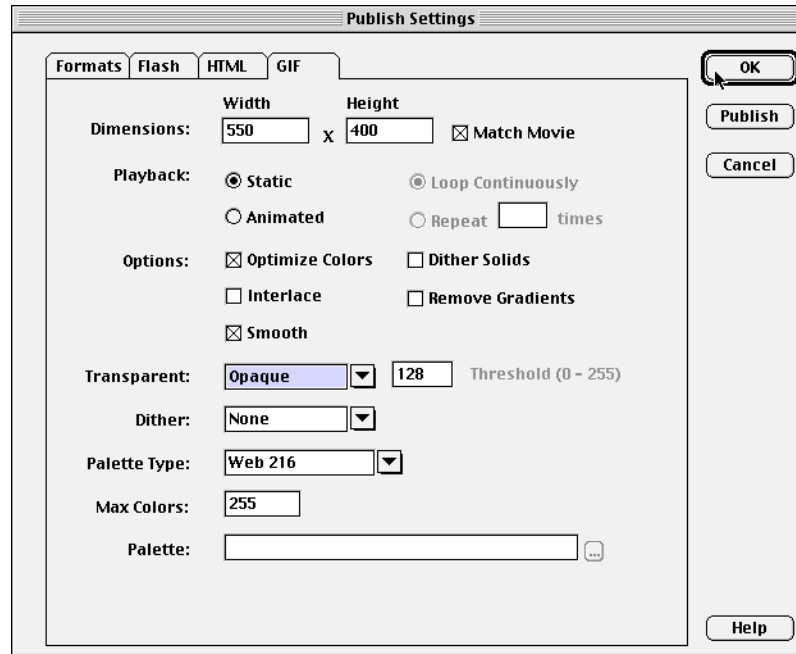   This will be a large GIF file; this feature works better for a small animation.

Figure 6-4
Accept the default settings on the GIF tab.

11. Click on the **Publish** button to export the files with the settings you have chosen.

    A message tells you that the export is happening. The exported files are placed in the same directory where the original Flash file resides.

12. Click on **OK** to close the Sound Settings dialog box. Then save your file as boat32.fla file in the My Work file folder.

13. Open one of the projectors and see your movie in the Flash Player. Just double-click on the filename to launch the Flash player bundled in the projector file.

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Note: The PC projector will have an .exe extension and the Mac projector will have an .hqx extension. The file extension might not show in your Mac file list.

14. Use your browser to open and view the HTML file you "published." Try the Duck button.
15. Choose **View › Source** to see the HTML file you generated with Publish.

    Notice that Publish has found all of the text in your Flash file and included it in the HTML file so it can be found by search engines. That's a task you won't mind letting Publish automate for you.
16. Cheer!

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

- Open the report to see statistics on the files you exported.

- Change the sound export choices and republish. Open the HTML file and compare the speed of play. Take a look at the new statistics.