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Creative Tip: Build Animated GIFs in Photoshop.

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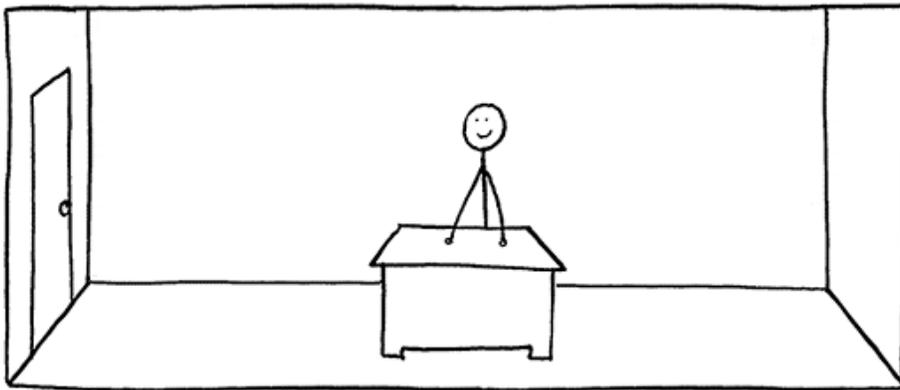
If you've ever wondered how to create animated GIFs in Photoshop, we've created a simple tutorial with some example files you can download and try out.

We use a lot of animated GIF files in our weekly tips. They are fun to build, and better for our email subscribers because Flash animations are not supported in most email readers.

A Simple Example

For a quick hands-on tutorial on creating animated GIFs in Adobe Photoshop, we'll walk you through creating the following animation:

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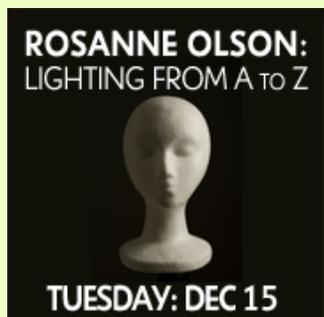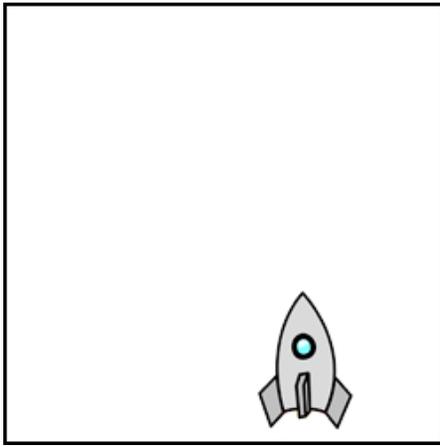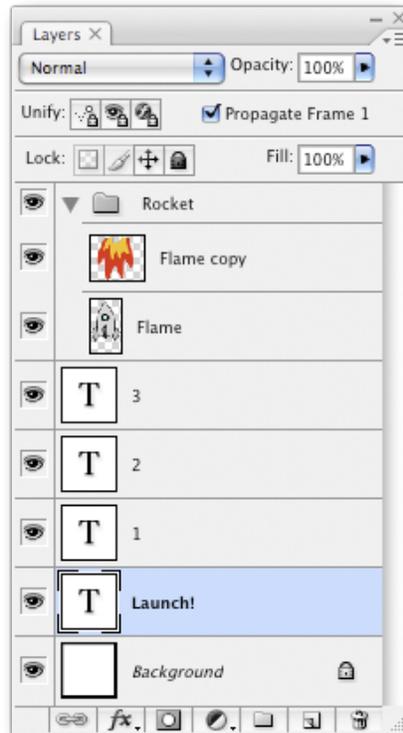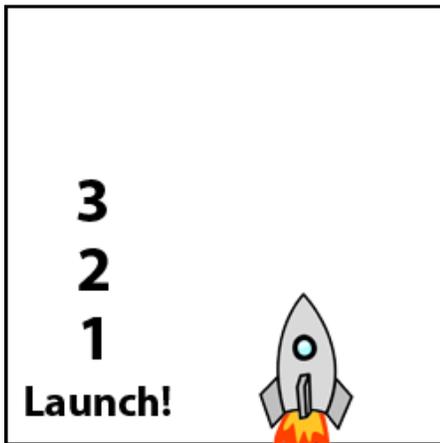
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This simple animation combines the two most common animation techniques in Photoshop: Turning layers off and on, and using the Tween command to animate the movement of an object on a layer.

Step 1: Set up your layers.

The first step in creating any animation in Photoshop is to build a layered Photoshop file with all the elements you plan to animate. Our example document has 7 layers containing the text for our countdown, and layers for the rocket and flame.

You can download our example Photoshop file here:

ExampleAnimation.psd

Step 2: Create Animation Frames with Layer Visibility.

Add new Frame.

Chose **Windows > Animation** to show Photoshop's animation palette.

On the first frame, turn off visibility for all layers you do not want visible at the start of your animation. Then add one frame at a time, and turn on the layers you want visible for each step in the animation.

Changing layer visibility one frame at a time is a classic Photoshop animation technique that covers a wide variety of needs.

In our example, continue this pattern to reveal the countdown and the flame at the bottom of our rocket.

Step 3: Create Animation Frames using Tween.
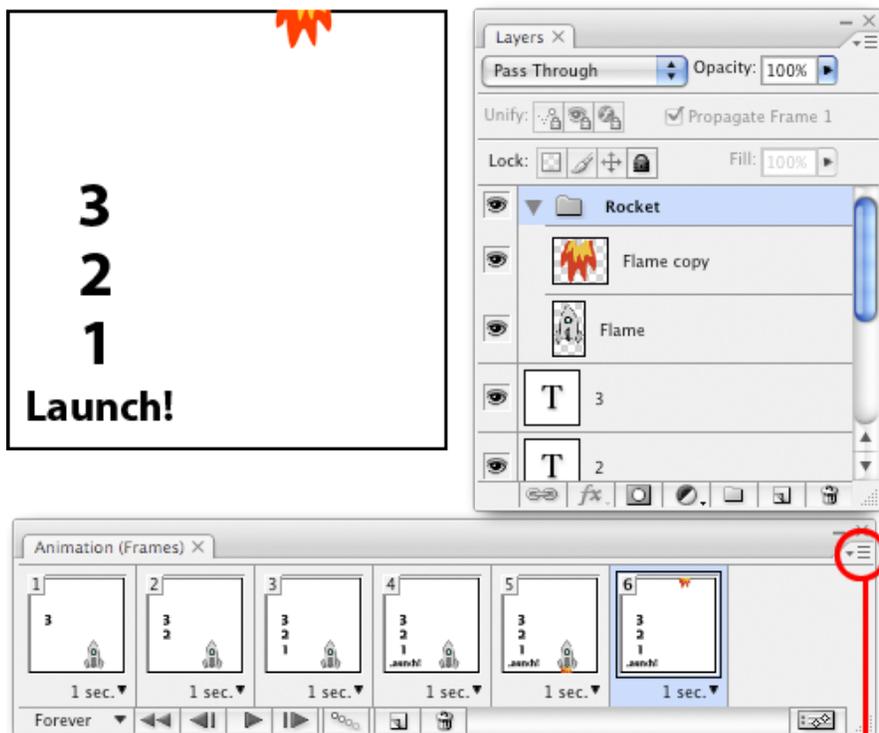
Choose "Tween" from the pop-out menu.

Now that the countdown is complete, we need to create the illusion that our rocket ship is taking off. Add one more frame, and this time select the group called "Rocket" in layers and move your rocket off the top of your image window.

Then choose "Tween…" from the Animation palette's pop-out menu.
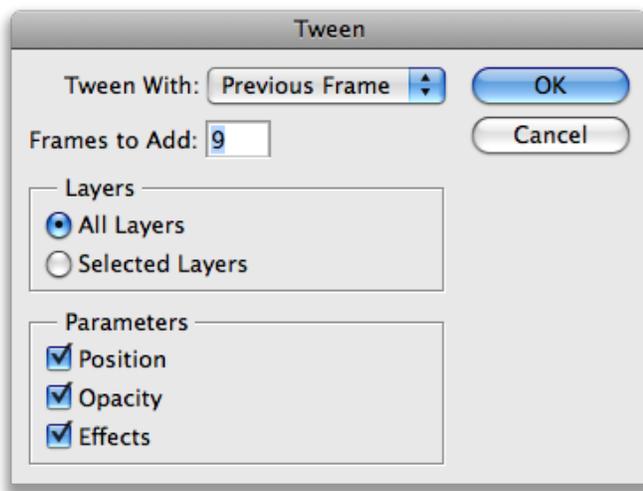
Set how many frames to add, and Photoshop spreads the movement of your layer across those extra frames.

Step 4: Adjust your Timing.

Finally, go back through and adjust the delay for each frame of your animation. That time is shown in seconds below each frame.

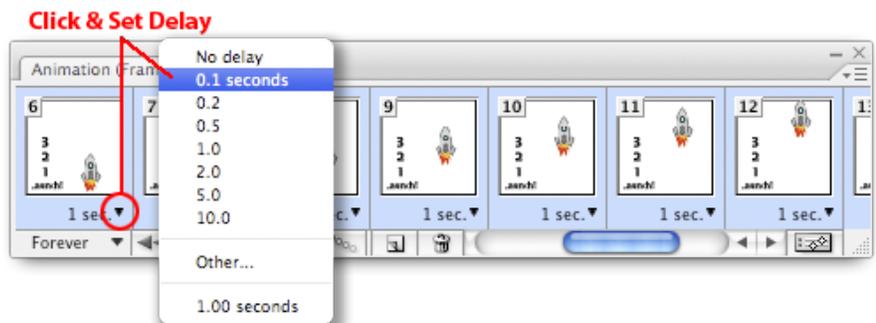Tip: You can hold down the Shift-key to select a range of frames (such as the 9 frames we added for the rocket's takeoff) and change them together.

Step 5: Export the Animated GIF.

Finally, to export your animated GIF choose:

In Photoshop CS3: File > Save For Web & Devices...

In Earlier Photoshops: File > Save For Web...
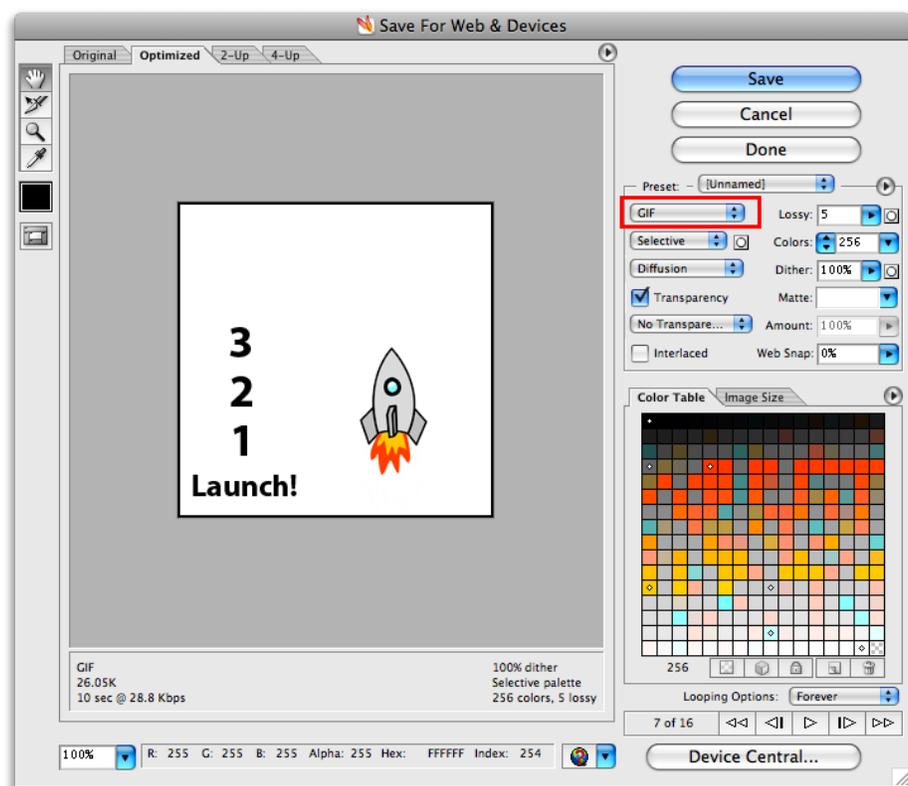
Make sure the image type is set to GIF, feel free to experiment with some of the other options, and save your file.

To test your resulting animated GIF, drag the file onto you web browser.

As a final reference, you can download our finished Photoshop file here:

📄 [ExampleAnimation-Final.psd](#)

Source: The animated spokesperson at the top of this tip is a homage to Tacoma illustrator Mark Monlux's daily comic strip [The Return of Stickman](#). Mark is a talented and funny guy, who generously allowed us to butcher his creation for this tip. Check out [Mark's site](#), and sign up for his daily email Stickman comic.

[Nov 14, 9:30-11am — Photoshop: Preparing Images for the Web.](#) This topic comes directly from client requests. What are the best ways to prepare images for the web in Adobe Photoshop? What formats work best? Can you create animated graphics directly in Photoshop? Come spend a fast-paced morning at CreativeTechs — your web developer will thank you for it.

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319 Responses to "Build Animated GIFs in Photoshop."

mili Says:
[November 29th, 2008 at 7:03 am](#)

very nice, thank's

Cubie Says:
[December 1st, 2008 at 12:14 pm](#)

Very helpful. Thanks bunches.
CW

Rae Stanton Says:
[December 1st, 2008 at 12:41 pm](#)

That is VERY cool … and so easy. You guys are awesome … thanks!

Jill Says:
[December 2nd, 2008 at 11:23 am](#)

Do you have alternative help for non-Mac Windows XP users?

Tris Says:
[December 3rd, 2008 at 4:32 am](#)

Nice one guys, you just taught me something very useful that I needed, today, in my job!

Thanks.

[Craig Swanson](#) Says:
[December 3rd, 2008 at 5:37 am](#)

Jill, I believe the process for creating animated GIFs in the Windows version of Photoshop is basically the same. The windows look slightly different, but the commands and steps are identical.