Using Masks

Some interesting and effective animations can be created using a layer to cover (or mask) part of another layer. The portion of layer being covered can only be seen though whatever shape is drawn in the mask layer.   The process is called MASKING.
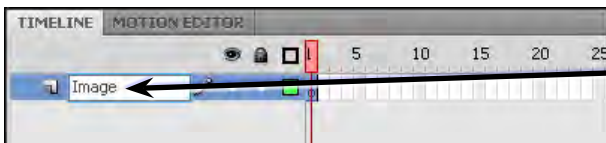
Creating a Mask over a Background

For this first example a mask will be used to display only part of a picture of London.

A   Creating the Background Layer

1   Load Flash and create a NEW FLASH FILE, or close the current file and create a NEW FLASH FILE.

> 2 Set the ZOOM to FIT IN WINDOW so that the whole stage is visible.
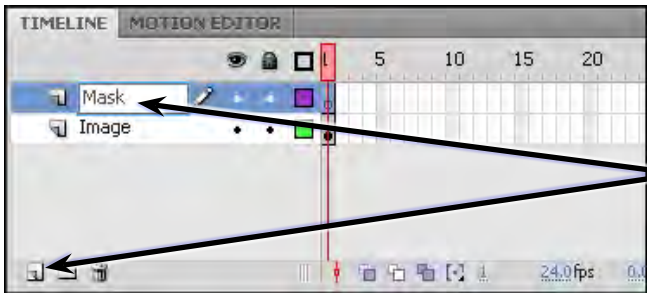
> 3 Alter the name of the layer to IMAGE.

4   Display the FILE menu, highlight IMPORT and select IMPORT TO STAGE.

5   Access the FLASHcs4 SUPPORT FILES, open the CHAPTER 14 folder and import the LONDON image.
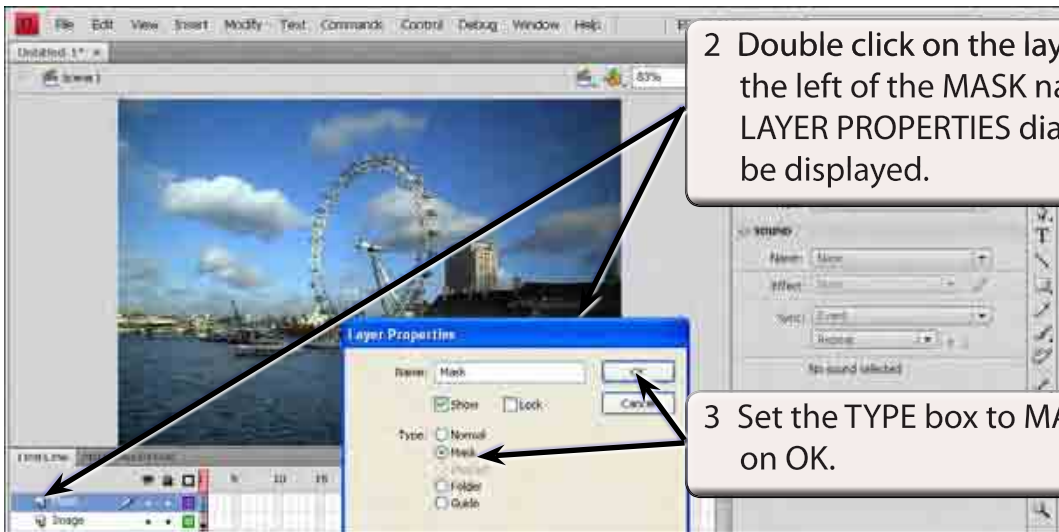
> 6 Use the FREE TRANSFORM TOOL to adjust the image so that it covers the stage area.

B   Inserting the Mask Layer

In order for a mask to operate a layer must be converted to a MASK layer.
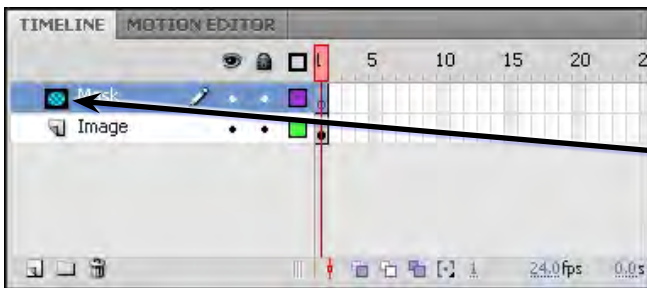

1 Insert a new layer in the TIMELINE panel and call it:

    Mask

2 Double click on the layer icon to the left of the MASK name and the LAYER PROPERTIES dialogue box will be displayed.
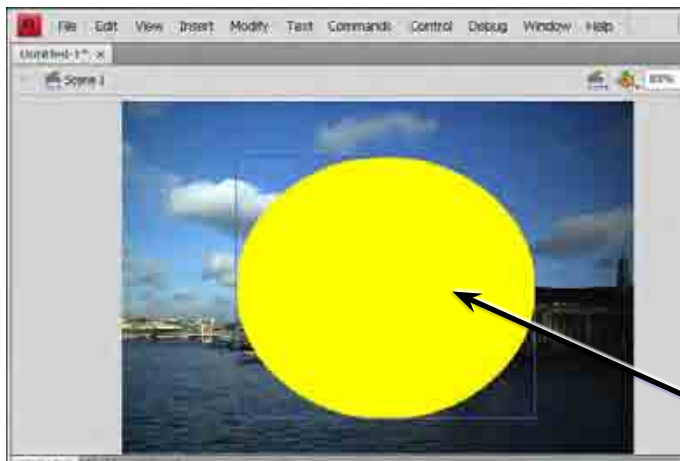
3 Set the TYPE box to MASK and click on OK.

NOTE: You can also RIGHT+CLICK or CONTROL+CLICK on the layer name and select MASK from the CONTEXTUAL (or SHORTCUTS) menu.

4 The MASK layer is given different icon to distinguish it as a mask layer.
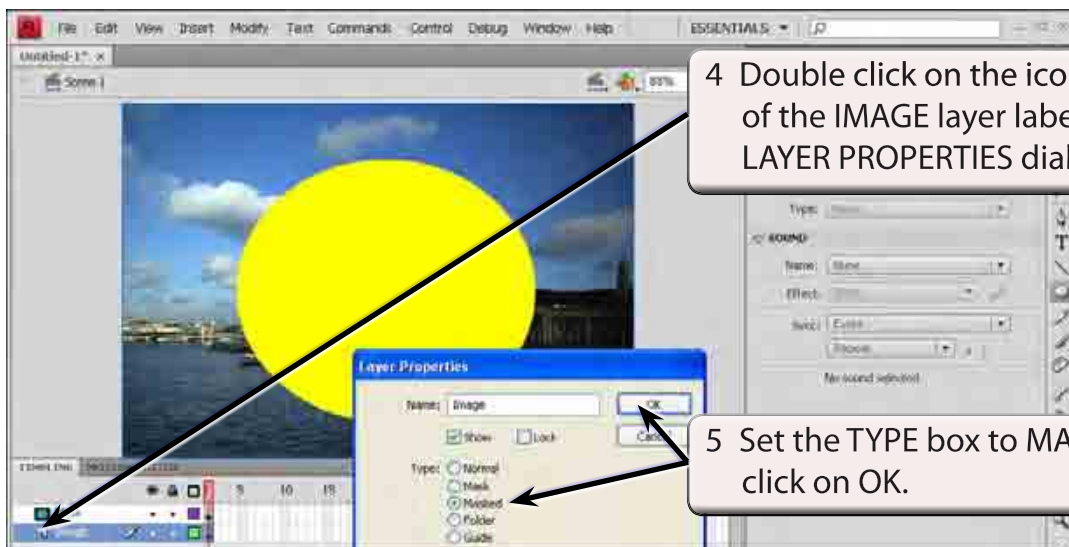
C   Creating the Mask

A shape now needs to be drawn in the MASK layer. The background will only be seen through this shape. You can use the shape tools such as the OVAL and RECTANGLE TOOLS to create the shape, or use the BRUSH TOOL to draw a more complicated shape.

1 Select the OVAL TOOL from the SHAPES TOOL and set the STROKE COLOUR to NO COLOUR.

2 Draw an oval over the centre of the photo, the fill colour doesn't matter as you will see the background through the oval.
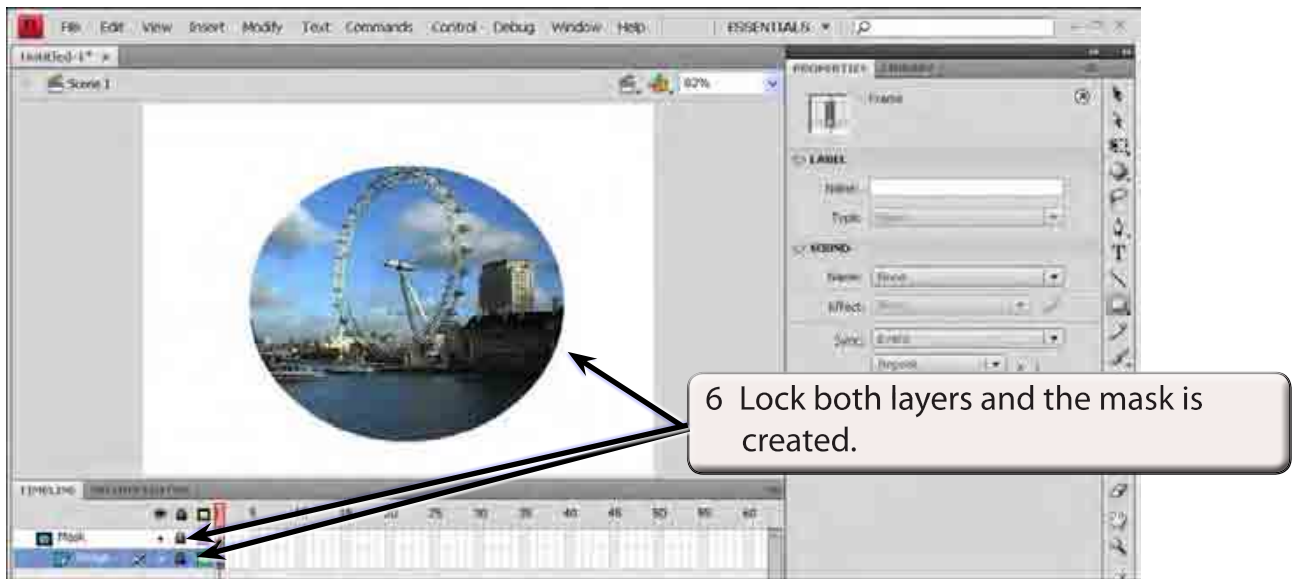
3   The program needs to be told which layer is to be masked. In this case it is the IMAGE layer.

4 Double click on the icon to the left of the IMAGE layer label to display its LAYER PROPERTIES dialogue box.
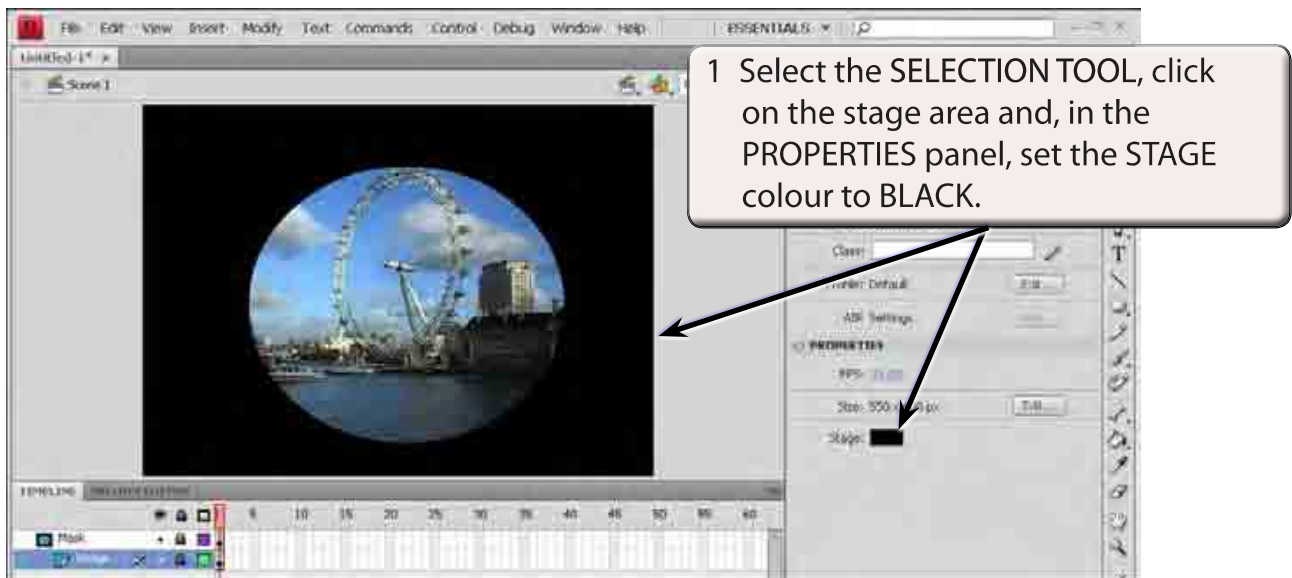
5 Set the TYPE box to MASKED and click on OK.

NOTE: i   The IMAGE layer is indented under the MASK layer to indicated that it is masked by the MASK layer.

ii   You can drag a layer to the lower edge of a MASK layer to quickly set it to a MASKED layer.

6 Lock both layers and the mask is created.

D   Background Colours

Some interesting effects can be created by changing the background colour.

1 Select the SELECTION TOOL, click on the stage area and, in the PROPERTIES panel, set the STAGE colour to BLACK.

2   Set the ZOOM to 100% to see the effect more clearly.

3   Try some other background colours if you wish.