

Understanding how ActionScript fits into Flash

You've probably heard that ActionScript is an important component of Flash. It is, and it probably won't take long until you get to the point where you do need to know a few things. So, we'll cover some very basic ActionScript in this course, however you don't need to know a lot of ActionScript to be able to create functional Flash pieces. There's even built-in little snippets of code available to help you out as well. Let's take a look at some examples of what needs ActionScript and what doesn't. Now, in many cases, but not all, whether you need script or not, boils down to if your project is something a person just watches, or if it's something they need to interact with. We'll start with an example where you don't need ActionScript. When I double-click the file called `lynda_biker_banner.swf` in the ExerciseFiles for this chapter, you'll see a somewhat complex animation with nice motion of the biker's legs, her hair blowing in the wind, and the changing perspective of the bridge and landscape as she rides. None of this is ActionScript based.

It's all just well-done graphics animated on what's called the Flash timeline. You don't interact with this piece at all, you just watch it. So again, you wouldn't need ActionScript to build this. Now, I'll open `needsActionScript.swf`. Not all of the examples here require interaction on the part of the user, but they do all need ActionScript to work. To start, the click me button is on the screen, but without ActionScript nothing would actually happen when you push it. So, there's some ActionScript listening for that button to be pressed. When it is, it either shows or hides the rocket in response to the click. Moving on, even though it's not necessarily interactive, Math also requires ActionScript.

You can see that the left box is perpetually counting upward and the right box is perpetually adding one to the value in the left box. In this case, the actual Mathematical calculation requires ActionScript, as well as actually outputting those numerical values to the screen. Our last example shows taking in user input and doing different things based on that input. First, I'll type in my name in the box indicated. Now, if I click Yes, I ate my dinner, my name is repeated back, and I get to have some dessert. If I say No, that I didn't eat my dinner, I have to eat five more bites.

So, you can see that something as simple as a button click requires ActionScript. So, getting to the point of needing to use it will likely come relatively soon for you. Again, a good rule of thumb is that as soon as you want the user to be able to interact with your movie, not just watch it, you need script. But there is a tool in Flash called Code Snippets that writes ActionScript for you. We'll be using Code Snippets in this course quite a bit.