

Creating a Rollover Navigation Button

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Many navigation buttons are designed to look and operate just like a 3-D buttons in the real world, so that the button looks elevated (referred to as being “up” or “at rest”) when the mouse is not over it, and depressed (or “down”) when the mouse is over it, called a mouseover or rollover.

To implement a rollover, we first create two different images, one for the “up” button and one for the “down” button. We use JavaScript to tell the browser that the original “up” image is swapped for the “down” image when the mouse rests over the image. The reverse is true on mouseout.

To create the two images, you actually create only a single .png file in Fireworks but export different “views” of the file as two different .gif or .jpg files.

Creating the Button Images

Open a new file in Fireworks, setting the resolution to 100 pixels, the page size to way bigger than you need (a typical oval button is around 100 pixels wide), and the background color to the background color of the web page. Make sure the Properties, Tools, Layers, and Optimize windows are open (turn them on under the Window menu).

Use a shape tool (rectangle, rounded rectangle, circle, whatever – Experiment!) from the Tools window to draw the basic shape of the button. With the shape selected, change the fill color and stroke color to whatever you choose, done by using either the two color pans under Colors on the Tools window or the Properties window down below. Use an Effect if you want to make the button look 3-D, or give it a glow, or give it a drop shadow. Effects are accessed under the "+" box on the right-hand area of the Properties window.

To put text on the button, choose the "A" button on the Tools window, position the cursor where you want the text, and type. Notice that this gives you a new layer in the Layers menu on the right. You can modify colors, effects, etc. just as you did for the shape above, using the Properties window, or color pans on the Tools window, or the Text menu. If your text doesn't show up on the button after you have finished it, look again at the Layers menu on the right; the text layer needs to be above the shape layer or the shape layer will hide the text. If the text layer is below the shape layer, select it and drag it above the shape layer.

After the "up" button is the way you want it, you need to create the "down" button, in the same .png file. (I am assuming you want the same text for both buttons, and all you want to do is modify the down button to look depressed.) (That would be "pushed in", not "sad" ;-). Go to the Layers window, click on the layer for the shape of the "up" button, press ctrl-C (for copy) then ctrl-V (for paste), and you should now have two identical layers containing the same shape. Rename one of them (click on the name and type) to say "button-up" and rename the other one "button-down" so that you can keep track of which is which. Click on the "eye" symbol for the "button-up" to turn it off for now, because it's done. Click on the layer for the "button-down" to select it, and then modify the Effects so that it looks depressed.

Now, to save your two buttons... First, go to the Modify menu > Canvas. Change the background color to transparent. Also under the Modify menu, choose Trim Canvas to get rid of the extra canvas space around your button. On the Optimize panel, make sure GIF is selected, not JPEG, and choose a Matte color that matches the background color of your web page, so that anti-aliasing is done to the proper color. On the Layers panel, make sure the "eye" symbol is turned on for the parts you need for Make sure the "up" button looks the way you want it to look. Under File menu > Export, type in an appropriate file name (button_up, for instance), and say OK. Go through exactly the same process for the "down" button, making sure that the eye is "on" for only the parts that should be used for the "down" button. Even though the .png file won't actually be used on the web page, save it so that you can use it for future modifications. When all of this is done, you should have a button_up.gif, a button_down.gif, and a button.png.

Don't forget that Fireworks has a built-in tutorial. Also, feel free to play with the various commands above. For instance, with Fill, you can choose from various options like built-in textures and gradients. Or you can change the degree of roundness on a rounded rectangle from the Properties panel. Or you can make a 13-point star instead of a rectangle by choosing the Polygon shape instead of a rectangle. Play, have fun, and learn.

Inserting the Rollover on the Page

After you have created both an "up" and a "down" button, you can use Dreamweaver to insert the appropriate JavaScript into your web page so that the buttons behave interactively. Choose "Insert...Image Objects...Rollover Image." Fill in the following fields:

- *Image name:* Leave Dreamweaver's default name, or put in your own, more descriptive name.
- *Original image:* The "up" image, for when the mouse is not over the button.
- *Rollover image:* The "down" image, for when the mouse is over the button.
- *Preload:* Leave this checked, so that rollover images are downloaded to the visitor's computer prior to the first actual mousover. In that way, the visitor doesn't have to wait for a download in order to see a rollover effect.
- *Alternate text:* What you want in the alt="..." of the image tag.
- *When clicked, go to URL:* The href for the <a> tag.

Test the page in the browser, and you're done!