

A Quick and Easy, Dynamic, flv (Flash Video) Player

If like me, your not much of a flash developer, you'd probably have no idea where to start if someone asked you to integrate a flash video player into a website, which can play any flv file you want to throw at it (at least I didn't). Well, I worked out a really quick and easy way to do it, and that's what this tutorials for.

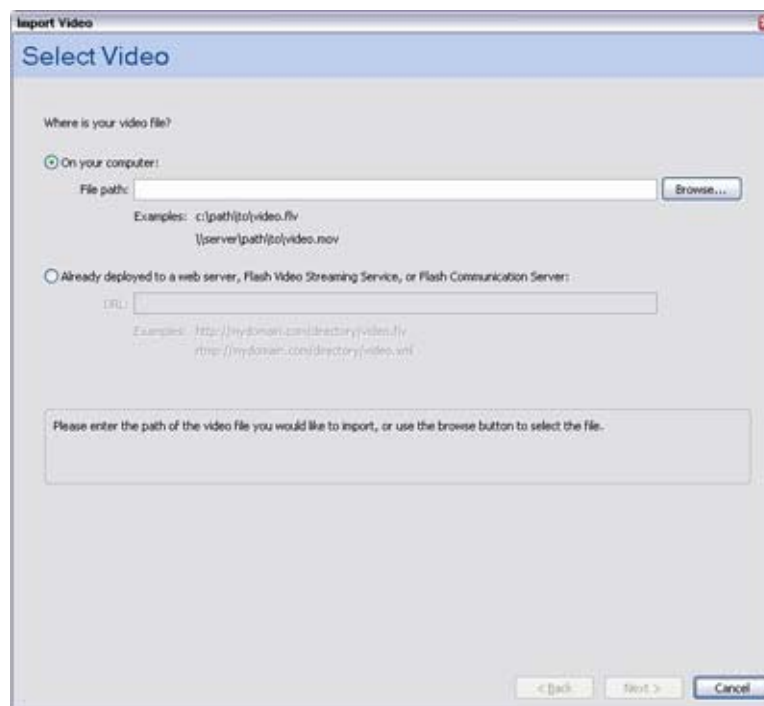
This tutorial will guide you through the process of making a quick and easy, dynamic flv player that can be embedded in an html web page, and play any flv video file you want. The video file is specified through the html that inserts the swf into the page, so you can very easily set the value with php or whichever scripting language you're using.

I have written this with someone who is completely new to flash video in mind, so it might cover things you already know. Flash video requires either Flash 7 or 8, I will be using 8 in this tutorial, you can get a demo from [Macromedia](#). **All the tutorial files can be downloaded at the bottom of the page.**

Converting the video

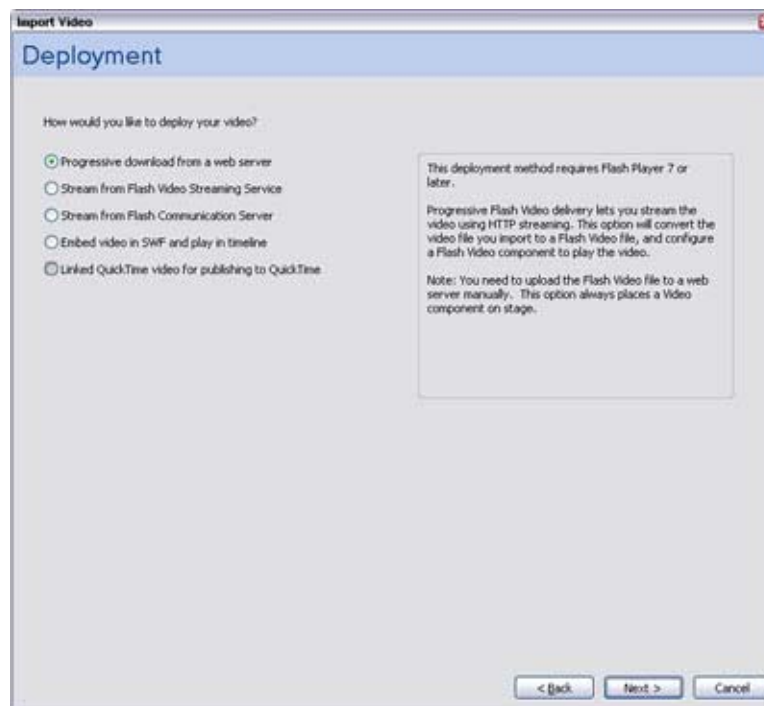
First you need to get a source video file, and convert it to a Flash video file (flv). Although this player is going to be dynamic, I thought it would be beneficial to explain the process of converting a video to the Flash video format, and because by importing a video onto the stage, Flash sets up a default player for you, which just makes things easier. You can convert the video with the stand-alone Flash video encoder (Flash 8 only), the built in flash video encoder (as I will be using) or some other 3rd party tool.

Load up Flash and create a new "Flash Document". Now go to File > Import > Import Video. On the first screen, click the browse button and pick your source video file, then click next.



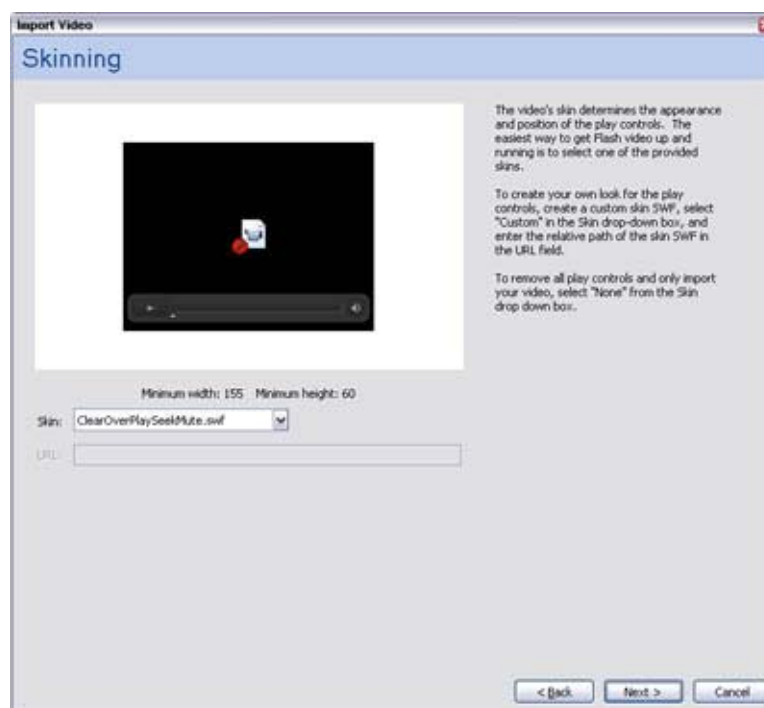
On the next screen you have to select the method you wish to use to deploy your video, I am using progressive download, as it's the simplest, and I don't have a Flash video streaming server, pick your preferred option, and click next.





You now need to pick the compression settings for this video, this is only specific to this particular video, and if you encode another later on, you can have different settings, remember that the player (the swf that you insert into your web page) and the video file (flv) are completely separate. I am going to pick "Flash 8 – Low Quality" and then in "Advanced Settings", I'm going to resize the video to 240x180, and set the bit rate to 30kbps (to keep it small for the download). Pick your preferred options and click next.

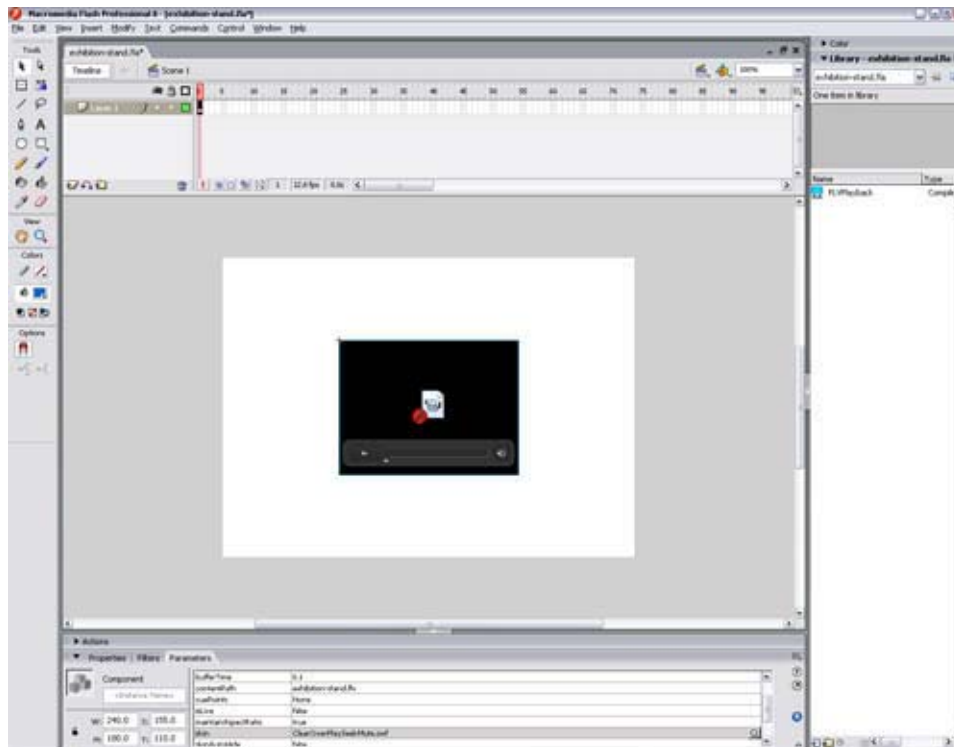
On the next screen you have to pick a skin for the controls of your player. Its worth noting that these controls are also separate from the player swf, and so can be changed later, and even set to different controls dynamically. Select your favourite and click next (I am using ClearOverPlaySeekMute.swf).



The next screen is a confirmation, click finish. You will be asked to save the fla file (Flash Document), and then the video will be encoded.

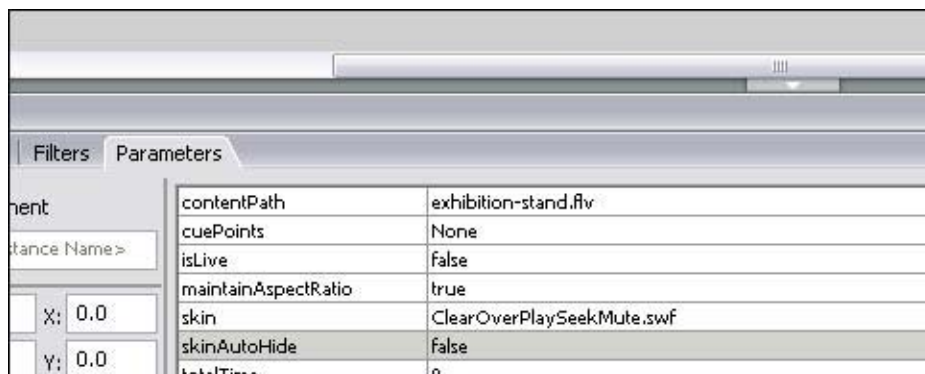
Setting up the player

Once the video has been encoded you will be back to the main Flash window. You should resize the document so that it is the same size as your video (Modify > Document) and then center the player in the document.



Now, in the folder you saved the fla file to, you will also have an flv file, that's the video you just converted. Just so you know, its not possible to play flv files directly through the Flash player, instead you either have to create your own player (as we are) or get a 3rd party flv player, [FLV Player](#) is a good one.

Now, as we want this player to be dynamic, we don't want the name of the video file to be hard coded into the final swf, so click on the player, and the click the parameters tab in the panel at the bottom of flash.



You need to find the contentPath option and clear the value. You will also need to give the player a name, this can be done by typing a name into the "Instance Name" box on the left hand side of the parameters tab, I've called mine "player".

Now right click on the first frame in the timeline, and click "Actions", this is where we put the only one line of actionscript we need to get a video to load dynamically. In the actions box, type this:

```
player.contentPath = file;
```

That's it, the file variable is going to be parsed from the html that's generated to display the swf file. Now just go to File > Publish, and flash will generate your player swf, and its related files.

The html and the clever bit

You will now have three more files in the folder where your fla is. You will have an swf of the same name as your fla (this is the player), another swf with the same name as the skin you chose, and an html file with the required html code you need to insert the player into a web page.

If you open up the html file, you won't see the video playing because we cleared the contentPath setting in the player, we now need to edit the html file so that it sends the player the file variable, with the name of the flv file in.

Open up the html file in a text editor. After all the param tags within the object tag, add another param tag that looks like this, but replace "exhibition-stand.flv" with the name of your flv file

```
<param name="FlashVars" value="file=exhibition-stand.flv" />
```

Then, in the embed tag, add this attribute:

```
FlashVars="file=exhibition-stand.flv"
```

My object tag now looks like this:

```
<object classid="clsid:d27cdb6e-ae6d-11cf-96b8-444553540000"
codebase="http://fpdownload.macromedia.com/pub/shockwave/cabs/
flash/swflash.cab#version=8,0,0,0" width="240" height="180" id="exhibition-stand"
align="middle">
  <param name="allowScriptAccess" value="sameDomain" />
  <param name="movie" value="exhibition-stand.swf" />
  <param name="quality" value="high" />
  <param name="bgcolor" value="#ffffff" />
  <param name="FlashVars" value="file=exhibition-stand.flv" />
  <embed src="exhibition-stand.swf" FlashVars="file=exhibition-stand.flv"
quality="high" bgcolor="#ffffff" width="240" height="180" name="exhibition-stand"
align="middle" allowScriptAccess="sameDomain" type="application/x-shockwave-flash"
pluginspage="http://www.macromedia.com/go/getflashplayer" />
</object>
```

Save the file and open it in a browser, and the videos there! As you can see, its now very easy to just specify the name of another flv file, and get that to play in the same player. If you mix this html code with a bit of php that gets records from a database, you can easily have a dynamic video player that is database driven.



Notes

I mentioned earlier that it was possible to make the skin for the player dynamic, and it is. All you need to do is clear the skin option from the preferences for the player (like you did with contentPath), and then add this line to the action script:

```
player.skin = playerSkin;
```

Then add this to the FlashVars param tag and attribute:

```
&playerSkin=ClearOverPlaySeekMute.swf
```

Now you can easily specify a different skin (just make sure you have the skin file in the same directory).

It's also worth noting that when specifying relative paths to your flv file, and to the skin file, the path to the flv is relative to the folder that the player (swf) is contained in, whereas the path to the skin file is relative to the location of the html file that contains the player.

The end

I hope that's helped if you were looking for an easy way to use flash video, without needing to know much at all about flash or action script. I'm sure there are probably much better ways to do this, however for the sake of a quick solution, this works, and it's all I needed. Let me know what you think.

[Download Files](#)