

Adobe Photoshop

Use a layer mask for special animation effects

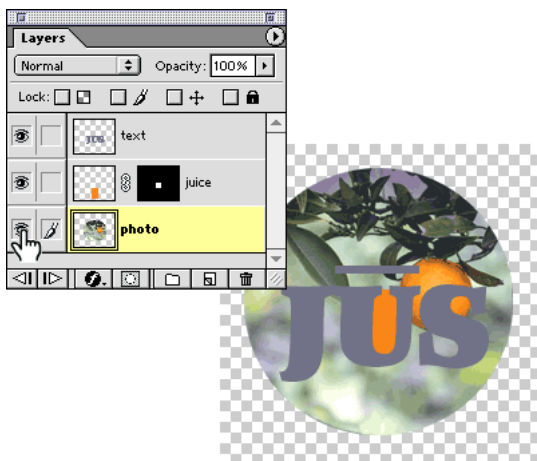
Layer masks cover up part of a layer without affecting the actual pixels on that layer. You can use a layer mask in Adobe® ImageReady™ to set boundaries for your animations. This is especially handy with animations that change an object's position because you can have the object appear to move in or out of the bounded area. In this tip, we'll use a layer mask to make an object come out from behind the mask and fill the area revealed by it.



1. Hide layers not affected by the animation.

Create an ImageReady file that contains several layers, and hide any layers you don't need to set up the animation. In our example, the animation shows orange juice filling to the top of the U in the logo, so we need to work with the juice and text layers but not the background photo layer.

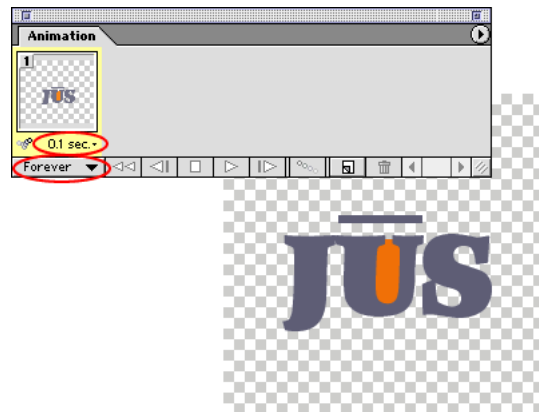
Hiding extra layers makes it easier to focus on the elements you really need.



2. Set the animation parameters.

Choose a delay time from the Delay menu in the Animation palette, and choose Forever from the Looping menu. Try 0.1 second for the delay time—you can see how it looks when you preview later, and come back and adjust it if you want.

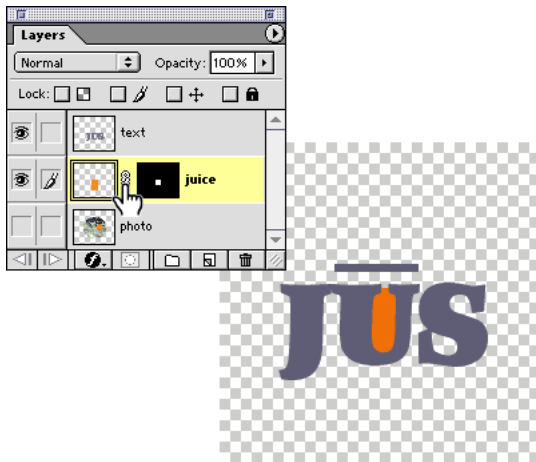
The delay time specifies the amount of time a frame is displayed during the animation. The Forever option repeats the sequence indefinitely during the animation.



3. Add a new frame, and remove the link between the layer and its mask.

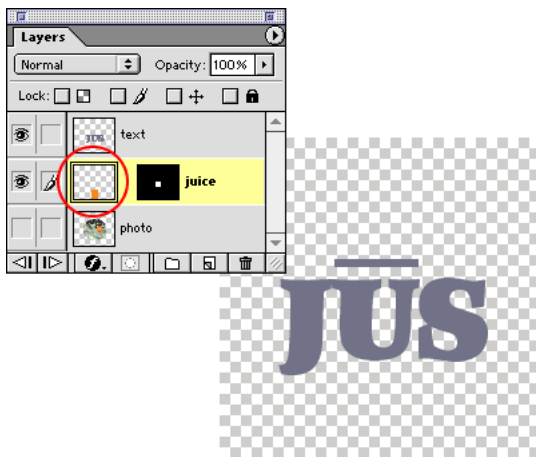
Click the New Frame button at the bottom of the Animation palette. Then click the link icon in the masked layer for the frame in the Layers palette.

Removing this link allows you to move the content of the layer without moving the mask along with it. Notice in the example that the juice fills to the brim of the U. The layer mask is U-shaped, restricting the juice to appear only through the U. We want to keep the mask where it is and move the juice down to create the illusion of emptying the U.



4. Modify the masked layer in the new frame.

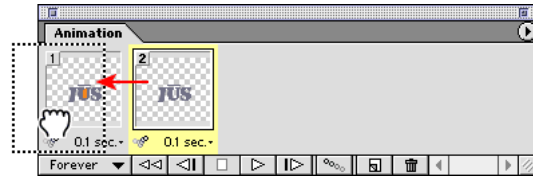
Make sure the new frame is selected in the Animation palette and the masked layer is selected in the Layers palette. Then make your changes to the layer. Here, we're using the move tool to reposition the orange color below the curve of the U.



5. Move the new frame to the beginning of the sequence.

Drag the frame to the first position in the Animation palette. The animation will start with this frame when it is played back.

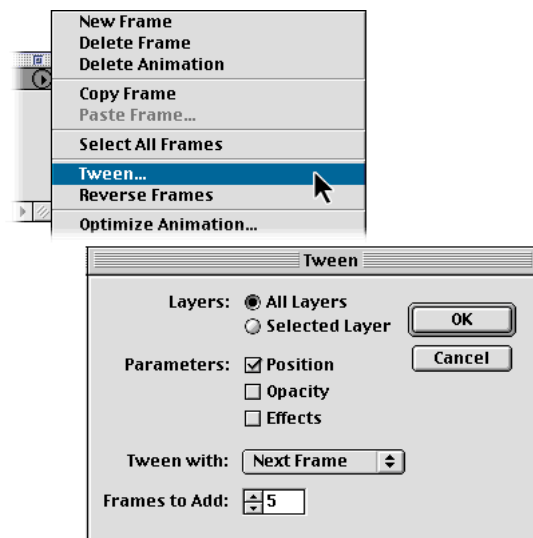
You could also leave the new frame where it is to make it the ending state in the animation rather than the beginning state. If we don't move the new frame in the example, the juice will go from full to empty during the animation.



6. Add intermediate frames to the sequence.

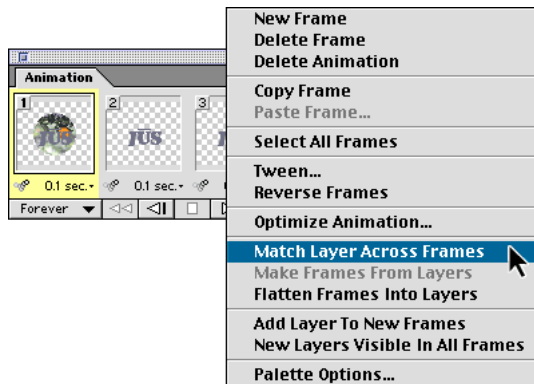
Make sure frame 1 is selected in the Animation palette, choose Tween from the palette menu, and set the tweening options. We're adding five intermediate frames and varying the position of all layers in them.

Tweening adds a sequence of frames between two existing frames and varies the differences between the beginning and ending frames evenly and gradually throughout the sequence. This is the easiest way to fill out an animation because you don't need to set effects individually for each frame. You can edit the frames after they're created if you want.



7. Show the layers you hid earlier.

If you want to show layers you hid when you started the process, select any frame in the Animation palette, and select a hidden layer in the Layers palette to show the layer in the frame. Then choose Match Layer Across Frames from the Animation palette menu. Do this for each layer you want to show throughout the sequence.



8. Preview, optimize, and save.

Choose File > Preview In, and choose a browser from the submenu to see the animation. You can go back and change the delay time now if you want to speed it up or slow it down.

Choose Optimize Animation from the Animation palette menu, and select Bounding Box and Redundant Pixel Removal. Choose GIF in the Optimize palette, and set other options to optimize for display on the Web. Then choose File > Save Optimized, and save the animation.

That's all there is to it. With layer masks in your arsenal, you can easily bring elements in or out of view as part of your animations.

