



ADOBE FLEX

mobile application framework

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About the Tutorial

Flex is a powerful, open source application framework that allows you to build mobile applications for iOS, Android, and BlackBerry Tablet OS devices, as well as traditional applications for browsers and desktops using the same programming model, tool, and codebase.

You can build Flex applications using Adobe Flash Builder which is an enterprise-class Eclipse based IDE. This tutorial will provide you an in-depth understanding on Flex concepts needed to get a web and mobile application up and running.

Audience

This tutorial is meant for software professionals who would like to learn Flex Programming in simple and easy steps. After completing this tutorial successfully, you should be at an intermediate level of expertise from where you can take yourself to higher level of proficiency.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, it is advisable to have a basic understanding of other web technologies like HTML, CSS, or AJAX for better understanding.

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Table of Contents

	About the Tutorial	i
	Audience	i
	Prerequisites	i
	Copyright & Disclaimer	i
	Table of Contents	ii
1.	FLEX – OVERVIEW	1
	What is Flex?	1
	Advantages of Flex	1
	Disadvantages of Flex	2
2.	FLEX – ENVIRONMENT SETUP	3
	System Requirement	3
	Step 1 – Verify Java installation on your machine	3
	Step 2 - Setup Java Development Kit (JDK)	4
	Step 3 - Setup Adobe Flash Builder 4.5	4
	Step 4 – Setup Apache Tomcat	5
3.	FLEX – APPLICATIONS.....	7
	Application Build Process	7
	Application Launch Process	7
	Flex Framework Libraries	8
	Client-side Code.....	8
	Public Resources	9
	HelloWorld.mxml	9
	Server-side Code.....	11
4.	FLEX – CREATE APPLICATION	12
	Step 1 – Create Project	12
	Step 2 – Create External CSS File.....	13
	Step 3 – Modify Wrapper HTML page template	14

Step 4 – Create Internal CSS file	18
Step 5 – Modify Entry Level Class	19
Step 6 – Build Application	20
Step 7 – Run Application	21
5. FLEX – DEPLOY APPLICATION	23
Create WAR File	27
Deploy WAR file	27
Run Application.....	27
6. FLEX – LIFE CYCLE PHASES	29
Life Cycle of Flex Application	29
Flex Life Cycle Example	30
7. FLEX – STYLE WITH CSS	33
Way # 1: Using External Style Sheet File	33
Way # 2: Using Styles Within Ui Container Component	33
Class Level Selector	33
Id Level Selector	34
Type Level Selector	34
Flex Style with CSS Example	35
8. FLEX – STYLE WITH SKIN	39
What is Skinning?	39
Step 1 – Create a Skin	39
Step 2 – Apply Skin	40
Apply skin in MXML script (statically)	40
Apply skin in ActionScript (dynamically)	40
Flex Style with Skin Example	40
9. FLEX – DATA BINDING	46
What is Data Binding?	46
Data Binding – Using Curly Braces in MXML.....	46
Data Binding – Using <fx:Binding> tag in MXML.....	46
Data Binding – Using BindingUtils in ActionScript	46
Flex Data Binding Example	47

10. FLEX – BASIC CONTROLS 51

Flex UI Elements 51

Flex – Event Dispatcher Class 52

Introduction 52

What is an Event? 52

What is an Event Target 52

Class Declaration 53

Public Methods 53

Events 54

Methods Inherited 54

Flex – UIComponent Class 54

Introduction 54

Class Declaration 54

Public Properties 55

Protected Properties 65

Public Methods 66

Protected Methods 75

Events 77

Methods Inherited 81

Basic Controls 81

Flex - Label Control 81

Introduction 81

Class Declaration 82

Public Methods 82

Methods Inherited 82

Flex Label Control Example 82

Flex – Text Control 84

Introduction 84

Class Declaration 84

Public Methods 84

Methods Inherited 85

Flex Text Control Example 85

Flex – Image Control 87

Introduction 87

Class Declaration 88

Public Properties 88

Public Methods 89

Events 90

Methods Inherited 90

Flex Image Control Example 90

Flex – LinkButton Control	93
Class Declaration	93
Public Methods	94
Methods Inherited	94
Flex LinkButton Control Example	94
11. FLEX – FORM CONTROLS.....	97
Flex – Event Dispatcher Class	97
Introduction	97
What is an Event?	97
What is an Event Target	97
Class Declaration	98
Public Methods	98
Events.....	99
Methods Inherited	99
Flex - UIComponent Class	99
Class Declaration	99
Public Properties	100
Protected Properties.....	110
Public Methods	111
Protected Methods	120
Events.....	122
Methods Inherited	126
Form Controls.....	126
Flex – Button Control.....	127
Class Declaration	127
Public Properties	127
Public Methods	127
Methods Inherited	128
Flex Button Control Example	128
Flex – ToggleButton Control	130
Class Declaration	130
Public Methods	131
Methods Inherited	131
Flex ToggleButton Control Example	131
Flex - CheckBox Control	133
Class Declaration	133
Public Methods	134
Methods Inherited	134
Flex CheckBox Control Example	134

Flex – ColorPicker Control.....	136
Introduction	136
Class Declaration.....	136
Public Properties.....	136
Protected Properties.....	137
Public Methods	137
Events.....	138
Methods Inherited	138
Flex ColorPicker Control Example	139
Flex – ComboBox Control	140
Class Declaration.....	141
Public Properties.....	141
Public Methods	142
Methods Inherited	142
Flex ComboBox Control Example	142
Flex – DateChooser Control	145
Class Declaration.....	146
Public Properties.....	146
Protected Properties.....	148
Public Methods	148
Events.....	148
Methods Inherited	149
Flex DateChooser Control Example.....	149
Flex – RadioButton Control.....	151
Class Declaration.....	152
Public Properties.....	152
Public Methods	152
Methods Inherited	152
Flex RadioButton Control Example	153
Flex – TextArea Control	156
Class Declaration.....	156
Public Properties.....	156
Public Methods	157
Methods Inherited	157
Flex TextArea Control Example.....	158
Flex – TextInput Control	160
Class Declaration.....	160
Public Properties.....	160
Public Methods	161
Methods Inherited	161

Flex TextInput Control Example	161
Flex – DropDownList Control	163
Class Declaration	163
Public Properties	163
Public Methods	164
Methods Inherited	164
Flex DropDownList Control Example	164
Flex – NumericStepper Control	167
Class Declaration.....	167
Public Properties	168
Public Methods	168
Methods Inherited	168
Flex DropDownList Control Example	169
12. FLEX – COMPLEX CONTROLS	172
Flex – Event Dispatcher Class	172
Introduction	172
What is an Event?	172
What is an Event Target.....	172
Class Declaration.....	173
Public Methods	173
Events.....	174
Methods Inherited	174
Flex - UIComponent Class	174
Introduction	174
Class Declaration.....	174
Public Properties	175
Protected Properties.....	185
Public Methods	187
Protected Methods.....	195
Events.....	197
Methods Inherited	201
Complex Controls	201
Flex - DataGrid Control	202
Class Declaration.....	202
Public Properties	203
Public Methods	206
Protected Methods.....	208
Events.....	209
Methods Inherited	210
Flex DataGrid Control Example	211

Flex – AdvancedDataGrid Control	213
Class Declaration.....	213
Public Properties.....	214
Protected Properties.....	215
Public Methods.....	216
Protected Methods.....	217
Events.....	218
Methods Inherited.....	219
Flex AdvancedDataGrid Control Example	219
Flex – Menu Control	222
Class Declaration.....	222
Public Properties.....	222
Public Methods.....	223
Protected Methods.....	223
Events.....	224
Methods Inherited.....	224
Flex Menu Control Example	225
Flex – ProgressBar Control	228
Class Declaration.....	228
Public Properties.....	228
Public Methods.....	230
Events.....	230
Methods Inherited.....	230
Flex ProgressBar Control Example.....	231
Flex – RichTextEditor Control	233
Class Declaration.....	233
Public Properties.....	233
Public Methods.....	235
Events.....	235
Methods Inherited.....	235
Flex RichTextEditor Control Example	236
Flex – TileList Control	238
Class Declaration.....	238
Public Methods.....	238
Methods Inherited.....	239
Flex TileList Control Example	239
Flex – Tree Control	242
Class Declaration.....	242
Public Properties.....	242
Public Methods.....	243
Protected Methods.....	244
Events.....	244

Methods Inherited	245
Flex Tree Control Example	245
Flex – VideoPlayer Control.....	248
Class Declaration.....	248
Public Properties	248
Public Methods	250
Protected Methods.....	251
Events.....	251
Methods Inherited	252
Flex VideoPlayer Control Example	252
Flex – Accordion Control.....	254
Class Declaration.....	254
Public Properties	254
Protected Properties.....	255
Public Methods	255
Events.....	256
Methods Inherited	256
Flex Accordion Control Example	256
Flex – TabNavigator Control	259
Class Declaration.....	259
Protected Properties.....	259
Public Methods	260
Protected Methods.....	260
Methods Inherited	260
Flex TabNavigator Control Example.....	261
Flex – ToggleButtonBar Control	263
Class Declaration.....	263
Public Properties	264
Public Methods	264
Methods Inherited	264
Flex ToggleButtonBar Control Example	264
13. FLEX – LAYOUT PANELS.....	268
Flex – Event Dispatcher Class.....	268
Introduction	268
What is an Event?	268
What is an Event Target.....	268
Class Declaration.....	269
Public Methods	269
Events.....	270
Methods Inherited	270

Flex - UIComponent Class	270
Class Declaration	270
Public Properties	271
Protected Properties	281
Public Methods	283
Protected Methods	291
Events	293
Methods Inherited	297
 Layout Panels	 297
 Flex – BorderContainer	 298
Class Declaration	298
Public Properties	298
Public Methods	299
Methods Inherited	299
 Flex BorderContainer Example	 299
 Flex – Form	 302
Class Declaration	302
Public Properties	302
Public Methods	303
Methods Inherited	303
 Flex Form Example	 303
 Flex – VGroup	 305
Introduction	305
Class Declaration	305
Public Properties	306
Public Methods	307
Methods Inherited	307
 Flex VGroup Example	 308
 Flex – HGroup	 311
Class Declaration	311
Public Properties	311
Public Methods	313
Methods Inherited	313
 Flex HGroup Example	 313
 Flex – Panel	 316
Class Declaration	317
Public Properties	317
Public Methods	317
Methods Inherited	317
 Flex Panel Example	 318

Flex – SkinnableContainer	320
Class Declaration	320
Public Properties	321
Public Methods	321
Protected Methods	322
Events.....	323
Methods Inherited	323
Flex SkinnableContainer Example	324
Flex – TabBar	327
Class Declaration.....	327
Public Methods	327
Methods Inherited	328
Flex TabBar Example	328
Flex – TitleWindow	330
Class Declaration.....	330
Public Methods	330
Events.....	331
Methods Inherited	331
Flex TitleWindow Example	332
Step 1 – Create a Project.....	332
Step 2 – Create a custom Title Window component	332
Step 3 – Modify HelloWorld.mxml.....	333
Step 4 – Compile and Run application	334
14. FLEX – VISUAL EFFECTS	336
Flex - Effect	336
Class Declaration.....	336
Public Properties	336
Protected Properties.....	338
Public Methods	338
Protected Methods.....	340
Events.....	340
Methods Inherited	341
Basic Effects	341
Flex – Fade Effect	342
Class Declaration.....	342
Public Properties	342
Public Methods	342
Methods Inherited	343
Flex Fade Effect Example	343
Flex – WipeLeft Effect	345

Class Declaration	345
Public Methods	346
Methods Inherited	346
Flex WipeLeft Effect Example	346
Flex – WipeRight Effect.....	348
Class Declaration	348
Public Methods	349
Methods Inherited	349
Flex WipeRight Effect Example	349
Flex – Move3D Effect	351
Class Declaration	351
Public Properties	351
Public Methods	352
Methods Inherited	352
Flex Move3D Effect Example	353
Flex – Scale3D Effect.....	355
Class Declaration	355
Public Properties	356
Public Methods	356
Methods Inherited	357
Flex Scale3D Effect Example	357
Flex – Rotate3D Effect	360
Class Declaration	360
Public Properties	360
Public Methods	361
Methods Inherited	361
Flex Rotate3D Effect Example	361
Flex – AnimateProperties Effect	364
Class Declaration	364
Public Properties	364
Public Methods	365
Events.....	365
Methods Inherited	366
Flex Animate Effect Example	366
15. FLEX – EVENT HANDLING	369
Event Flow Phases	369

16.	FLEX – CUSTOM CONTROLS	374
	Using ActionScript	374
	Using MXML	375
17.	FLEX – RPC SERVICES.....	380
	Items.xml	380
	HTTPService Declaration	380
	RPC Call	381
	RPC Service Call Example	381
18.	FLEX – FLEXUNIT INTEGRATION	384
	Create a Test Case Class	384
	Flex Unit Integration Example	385
	Running Test cases	387
19.	FLEX – DEBUG APPLICATION	389
	Debugging Example	389
	Step 1 - Place Breakpoints	390
	Step 2 - Debug Application	391
20.	FLEX – INTERNATIONALIZATION.....	398
	Workflow of internationalizing a Flex Application	398
	Step 1 – Create folder structure	398
	Step 2 – Create properties files.....	398
	Step 3 – Specify Compiler options	399
	Internalization Example	399
21.	FLEX – PRINTING SUPPORT	404
	Prepare and Send a Print Job	404
	Printing Example	404

1. Flex – Overview

What is Flex?

Flex is a powerful, open source application framework that allows you to build traditional applications for browser, mobile and desktop using the same programming model, tool, and codebase.

Flex provides FLEX SDK consisting of the Flex class library (ActionScript classes), the Flex compilers, the debugger, the MXML and ActionScript programming languages, and other utilities to build expressive and interactive rich internet applications (RIA)

Flex takes care of the user interface (UI) or the client-side functionality of a web application. Server-side functionality is dependent on server-side components written in a traditional scripting language (Java/ PHP etc.)

A Flex based application actually delivered as a SWF file and it closely resembles the HTML / JavaScript portion of a traditional web application.

Flex application is deployed as SWF file(s) plus an HTML wrapper, the CSS file(s) and any server-side script files (i.e. Java, .CFM, .PHP, etc.) to the server. Like traditional web applications.

These resources are delivered from a server to the client's browser using the customary HTTP request / response fashion and Flash Player which runs the application in a browser.

Advantages of Flex

- Flex applications are usually Flash Player based which can access device capabilities like GPS, camera, local database, graphics accelerometer.
- Flex applications can run on Android, BlackBerry Tablet OS, and iOS devices.
- Flex applications can run on Browsers as well as on Desktop.
- Flex applications are platform independent. UI can be native to platform or can be made same on each platform.
- Flex applications can interact with server with all major server side technologies like Java, Spring, Hibernate, PHP, Ruby, .NET, Adobe ColdFusion, and SAP using industry standards such as REST, SOAP, JSON, JMS, and AMF.

- Flex Applications assures rich user experience through intuitive interaction with the application and presenting information in a visually richer interface.
- Flex application is a single page application where states can transition from one state to other state without having to fetch a new page from the server or to refresh the browser.
- Flex application reduces the load on the server to great extent because it is only required to return the application once, rather than a new page every time when the user changes views.

Disadvantages of Flex

- Flex applications are single threaded applications but Flex provides an asynchronous programming model to mitigate this concern.
- Flex is ActionScript and XML based. Learning of these two is a must to work in Flex.

2. Flex – Environment Setup

This tutorial will guide you on how to prepare a development environment to start your work with Adobe Flex Framework. This tutorial will also teach you how to setup JDK and Adobe Flash Builder on your machine before you setup Flex Framework.

System Requirement

FLEX requires JDK 1.4 or higher, so the very first requirement is to have JDK installed in your machine.

JDK	1.4 Or above.
Memory	No minimum requirement.
Disk Space	No minimum requirement.
Operating System	No minimum requirement.

Follow the given steps to setup your environment to start with Flex application development.

Step 1 – Verify Java installation on your machine

Now open the console and execute the following **java** command.

OS	Task	Command
Windows	Open Command Console	c:\> java -version
Linux	Open Command Terminal	\$ java -version
Mac	Open Terminal	machine:~ joseph\$ java -version

Let's verify the output for all the operating systems:

OS	Generated Output
Windows	java version "1.6.0_21" Java(TM) SE Runtime Environment (build 1.6.0_21-b07) Java HotSpot(TM) Client VM (build 17.0-b17, mixed mode, sharing)
Linux	java version "1.6.0_21" Java(TM) SE Runtime Environment (build 1.6.0_21-b07) Java HotSpot(TM) Client VM (build 17.0-b17, mixed mode, sharing)
Mac	java version "1.6.0_21" Java(TM) SE Runtime Environment (build 1.6.0_21-b07) Java HotSpot(TM)64-Bit Server VM (build 17.0-b17, mixed mode, sharing)

Step 2 - Setup Java Development Kit (JDK)

If you do not have Java installed, then you can install the Java Software Development Kit (SDK) from Oracle's Java site: [Java SE Downloads](#). You will find instructions for installing JDK in downloaded files, then follow the given instructions to install and configure the setup. Finally set PATH and JAVA_HOME environment variables to refer to the directory that contains java and javac, typically java_install_dir/bin and java_install_dir respectively.

Set the **JAVA_HOME** environment variable to point to the base directory location where Java is installed on your machine. For example:

OS	Output
Windows	Set the environment variable JAVA_HOME to C:\Program Files\Java\jdk1.6.0_21
Linux	export JAVA_HOME=/usr/local/java-current
Mac	export JAVA_HOME=/Library/Java/Home

Append the Java compiler location to the System Path.

OS	Output
Windows	Append the string ;%JAVA_HOME%\bin to the end of the system variable, Path.
Linux	export PATH=\$PATH:\$JAVA_HOME/bin/
Mac	not required

Step 3 - Setup Adobe Flash Builder 4.5

All the examples in this tutorial has been written using Adobe Flash Builder 4.5 Profession IDE Trial Version. Hence, suggest you to have latest version of Adobe Flash Builder installed on your machine. Also, check compatibility of operating system.

To install Adobe Flash Builder IDE, download the latest Adobe Flash Builder binaries from <http://www.adobe.com/in/products/flash-builder.html>. Once you downloaded the installation, unpack the binary distribution into a convenient location. For example, in C:\flash-builder on windows, or /usr/local/flash-builder on Linux/Unix and finally set PATH variable appropriately.

Flash Builder will start, when you execute the following commands on windows machine, or when you can simply double click on FlashBuilder.exe

```
%C:\flash-builder\FlashBuilder.exe
```

Flash Builder can be started by executing the following commands on Unix (Solaris, Linux, etc.) machine:

```
$/usr/local/flash-builder/FlashBuilder
```

Adobe Flash Builder Trial Version can be used for 60 days. Just accept the terms and conditions, and skip the initial registration steps to continue with the IDE. For our understanding, we're using the trial version for teaching purpose.

After a successful startup, if everything is fine then it should display the following result:

Adobe Flash Builder comes pre-configured with FLEX SDKs. We're using FLEX SDK 4.5 in our examples which come bundled with Adobe Flash Builder 4.5.

End of ebook preview

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