Flex 3.0

Flex is an INIT/cdev (i.e., Flex is loaded automatically each time you start up - that's the INIT part - and appears as one of the icons on the left side of the Control Panel - that's the cdev part). It is a screen dimmer, especially designed to work on the Mac II (although it works fine on other Macs from the 512e and up). It will work on any screen size and it will dim all monitors connected. It will draw in color (very nice color, in my opinion) on the Mac II. It may not work on the Radius screen in some modes (why, I don't know. Write and tell if you do.) I think it works on everything else, but it hasn't been rigorously tested.

To install Flex, just drag it into your System folder. When you reboot, Flex will be loaded automatically. That's the INIT part of Flex doing it's job. By default, when Flex is loaded it will show its icon in the upper left of the screen (soon after the Welcome To Macintosh box appears). To temporarily uninstall Flex, hold down the mouse button or any of the modifier keys (Shift, Control, Command, Option) when you're starting up. Hold them down until Flex displays it's icon upside down to indicate it isn't installed (or, if you've turned the icon display off in the Control Panel as described later, just hold them down until after it would have displayed its icon). To more permanently uninstall Flex, drag it out of your System Folder. You can also turn Flex off in the Control Panel as described below, which is probably preferable to dragging it around between folders every time you want to install or uninstall it for a while.

Once Flex is installed, it will start automatically after you don't do anything (like moving the mouse or typing) for a while. Just how long it waits before starting can be changed - we'll get to that later. It will clear all screens to black, and on the screen that usually has the menu bar (the only screen for most of us), it will display a little hello message. After a few seconds, the message will disappear and Flex will begin. Flex will stop as soon as you do anything, redrawing the screen and restoring everything to how it was before Flex started.

The part described above is the INIT part of Flex, which is loaded automatically. The other half of Flex is the cdev half, used to change Flex's settings. Cdevs are the icons that appear on the left side of the Control Panel (assuming you have a new enough version of the System - if you don't, you can't use Flex). When you click on Flex's icon in the Control Panel, the right side of the window changes to show you what you can change about Flex. Any changes you make take effect right away, except turning Flex on and off, which don't take effect until you reboot.

One thing you can change about Flex is whether or not it displays its icon at startup. Just click in the check box "Show icon at startup" and the change will be recorded. If the icon is turned off, it will never show it. If the icon is on, it will show it as long as Flex is in your System Folder, even if you turn off Flex as described below, or hold down a modifier key or the mouse button. If Flex is installed, it will show the icon right side up. If it is off, or if you hold down the button or a modifier key, or if there is an error in installation, it will show the icon upside down to indicate Flex isn't installed.

Another thing you can change is whether background events are enabled or not. This changes several things. First, if they are enabled, other critters like Menu Clock will be given time to run. In the case of Menu Clock, this means that you will get burn-in where the time appears, and so if you use Menu Clock or a similar beastie, you probably want background events disabled. Second, if they are enabled, things like AppleTalk events or Suspend/Resume events will cause Flex to stop, and pass the event on to the application running. If background events are disabled, Flex will keep those events under it's hat until the user stops Flex by moving the mouse or clicking. Unless you have a specific reason to turn background events on, keep them off, so that things like Menu Clock don't draw to the screen while Flex is going and cause burn-in.

Another thing you can do is turn Flex on or off. This is a way of uninstalling Flex without taking it out of your System Folder, and without having to hold down keys or buttons every time you start up. Just turn it off, and the next time you reboot, Flex will not be loaded (although its icon will be displayed, upside down, at startup). The cdev part of Flex works whether Flex is installed or not, so you can turn Flex back on.

You can set how many minutes Flex will wait before starting. Click in the box to the right of the words "Minutes until Flex starts", and the box will change into a menu, from which you can select how many minutes.

Flex keeps track of two special rectangles on the screen, the Sleep Now Rectangle and the Never Sleep Rectangle. You can set each of these by clicking the appropriate button in the Control Panel. If you move the mouse into the Sleep Now rectangle, Flex will start in about a second instead of ten minutes or whatever you've told it to start in. If you move the mouse into the Never Sleep rectangle, Flex will never start (until you move out of it again).

One note-if you start Flex by putting the cursor in the Sleep Now rect, when you interrupt Flex you must move out of that corner and back in to make Flex resume. This is to prevent a problem with network software like InBox, where the networking stuff would interrupt Flex to display a message, then Flex would interrupt that while it was showing the message, then the networking stuff would interrupt again, etc. It happened, it doesn't anymore. I think Flex is compatible with InBox and Appleshare servers. I haven't tested it much (if at all) with other network/communications stuff. I also think it's MultiFinder compatible, but again, I'm not sure.

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