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Welcome

Thank you for using MatchWare Visual GIF Animator (which we refer to as VGA).

VGA is the latest product from MatchWare and lets private as well as professional users create dazzling animated GIFs and AVIs (videos).

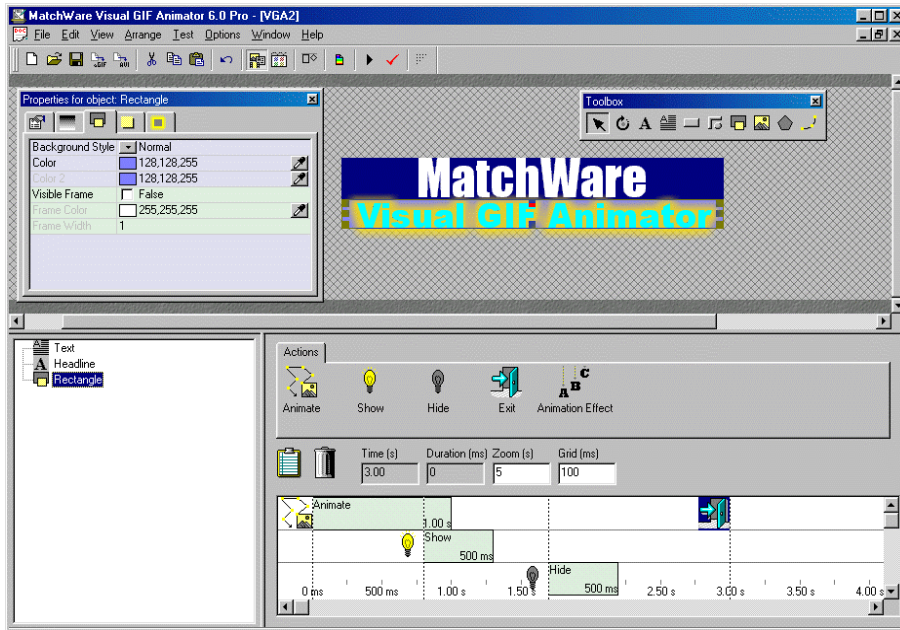
As always with MatchWare products the ease of use of the user interface was the primary focus during the development of VGA. Users that have worked with MatchWare's multimedia authoring tool Mediator will recognize many features in VGA, and will immediately be able to start using the program, creating cool GIFs and AVIs in a matter of minutes.

For users unfamiliar with Mediator, we recommend that you go through the Quick Start example to learn the basics of VGA. When you have completed the example you will have a better understanding of how the program works, and may even have realized the vast potential that VGA holds.

We are sure that you will enjoy working with Visual GIF Animator, and that you will impress and astonish your colleagues, friends, and family with the amazing GIFs and AVIs that you can create with this program.

The environment

The working environment in MatchWare Visual GIF Animator looks like this:



This section will describe the user interface of Visual GIF Animator. The basic components of the user interface are:

- The Main menu
- The Standard bar
- The Toolbox
- The Workspace
- The Banner
- The Timeline
- The Object list
- The Multimedia Catalog

The Standard Bar



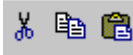
The Standard Toolbar has icons that represent the most commonly used features in MatchWare Visual GIF Animator. Starting from left to right:



Use these icons to create a **New** document, **Open** an existing document, and **Save** your current document.



Use these two icons to export your document to **Animated GIF** or **AVI**.



Use these icons to **Cut**, **Copy**, and **Paste** to and from the Clipboard. They work exactly like the hotkeys Ctrl+C, Ctrl+V, and Ctrl+X.



Use these icons to show / hide the **Object List** and the **Multimedia Catalog**.



Use this icon to access the **Align** dialog.



Use this icon to access the **Windows Color Dialog** to change the background color of your file.



Use these icons to **Run** your document or **Check** it for errors.



Use this icon to access the **Grid** dialog.

The Toolbox



Using the Toolbox, we can place different objects (pictures, buttons, rectangles, etc.) on our empty banner. Here is a brief description of each of the tools. For a more comprehensive description of each tool see the Reference section.

In the Toolbox you will find the following objects:



Select tool

Use the pointer to select one or more objects that you wish to use.



Rotation

Use the Rotation tool to rotate objects. Almost all objects can be rotated.



Headline

The Headline tool lets you create one line of text that is stretchable.



Text

The Text tool lets you write paragraph text, and text with scrollbars.



Button

With the Button tool you can make solid colored buttons and buttons with pictures.



Bump Map

Use the Bump Map tool to apply a 3D look to objects and background.



Rectangle

With the Rectangle tool you can create solid or toned rectangles.



Picture

Use the Picture tool to place pictures on your banner. All major formats are supported.



Polygon

The Polygon tool lets you create anything from straight lines and arrows to complex shapes.



Animation Path

The Animation Path tool lets you create a line, curve or loop for your animations.

You add an object to the workspace in the following way: click once with your left mouse button on an object in the Toolbox. The cursor changes depending on your selection and you can now define (drag) a rectangular shape on the banner.

- Start by placing a rectangle on the banner. Click the Rectangle tool, move the cursor into the top left corner of the banner, and hold down the left mouse button while dragging it towards the bottom right corner. Now let go of the mouse button.

This is the way you create all your objects. For some of the objects a dialog appears in which you must specify which file (picture, bump map) you wish to use.

The Workspace



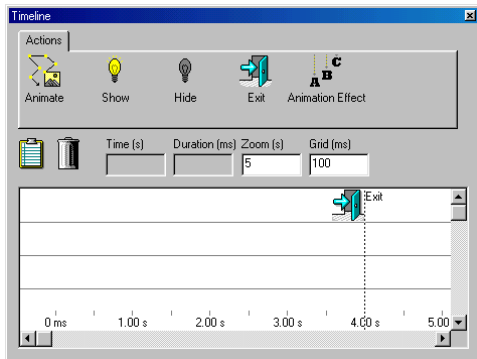
The Workspace in MatchWare Visual GIF Animator is divided into nine equally sized rectangles.

You can use all nine areas when you design your GIF file, but only the middle sector will be visible when you export to GIF or AVI. This is the visible workspace. The eight rectangles around it make up the non-visible workspace.

You can place objects in any of the nine rectangles, have objects stretch across several areas, animate objects from one area to another, etc.

Objects have a maximum height and width equal to two areas, however the animation path can be three areas high or long (meaning that the maximum object size depends on the size of your banner).

The Timeline



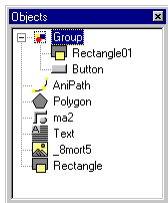
The Timeline is the backbone of all your Visual GIF Animator files. It is on the Timeline that you place actions to be executed, and it is the Timeline that dictates the flow of your videos and GIFs.

When you have created one or more objects using the Toolbox you can start using the Timeline to show, hide, and animate you objects around the screen.

Simply drag the icons from the action field onto the Timeline at the exact time you want the action to be executed. Each action has its own dialog that opens the instant you drop the action on the Timeline.

See "The Timeline" in the Reference section to learn more about this action.

The Object List



The Object List gives you a complete overview of all the objects you have placed in the workspace. The list also shows you the order of the objects (from top to bottom) and you can change the order of the objects by simply dragging and dropping them inside the list. Grouped objects have a '+'. Click the '+' to see the objects in the group.

Note: Even if an object is part of a group you can still edit it. Select the object in the Object List (click the group, then click the '+' to see the objects in the group) and right click the desired object to access its local menu.

If you wish to place a group or any other kind of object in the Multimedia Catalog, drag it straight from the Object List to the Multimedia Catalog User tab.

Sometimes you will find that an object cannot always be selected on the banner. This is because objects can be placed on top of each other making it very difficult to select one of the lower objects. You can solve this problem by selecting them in the Object List. If the Object List is not open, select View | Object

List from the main menu. The Object List often provides you with a better overview if you want to select more objects. The way you select several objects is identical to the way you select several files in Windows: hold down Ctrl and click the objects one by one. Each of the objects you click is then highlighted to indicate that it is selected. If you wish to deselect one or more selected objects simply click them while holding down the Ctrl key.

The Properties dialog

Each object has its own Properties dialog, in which you can change the appearance of the object. You can change the name, apply a different color, add a shadow or glow effect, etc.

Each object's properties dialog is described in the Reference section, where you can also find the General Description of the dialog.

The Multimedia Catalog

The Multimedia Catalog gives you access to a library of pictures, animation paths, backgrounds etc.

You simply drag and drop elements from the Multimedia Catalog into your project. You can also place objects of your own in the User tab of the Multimedia Catalog. You do this by dragging objects directly from the object list to the Multimedia Catalog.

Quick Start

This Quick Start will teach you the basics of creating an animated GIF banner in VGA (Visual GIF Animator).

The banner we want to create is a standard Internet banner that will first display the text "Go to my web site", and then will show our web site: "www.matchware.net".

You can find the finished animated GIF of this example in the Examples folder of your Visual GIF Animator folder (generally C:\Program Files\VisualGifAnimator\). The example is named EX1.GIF. Start Visual GIF Animator and when the Welcome dialog appears select 'Create a New Document'. The New Document dialog appears from which you select '468x60 (Full Banner)'. Click OK. The banner appears in the middle of the workspace.










There are four steps involved in creating this animated GIF:

1. Show the text: "Go to my web site".
2. Hide the text again.
3. Show the text: "www.matchware.net".
4. Turn your file into an animated GIF.

To start creating animated GIFs and banners you must learn how to create objects with the Toolbox. The


Toolbox consists of the selector  and seven different tools.



-  Rotation
-  Headline
-  Text
-  Rectangle
-  Picture
-  Bump Map
-  Button
-  Polygon
-  Animation path

You add an object to the banner in the following way: click once with your left mouse button on the desired object in the Toolbox. The cursor changes depending on your selection and you can now define (drag) a rectangular shape on the work area.

Stage 1

- Start by placing a text object on the banner. Click the Text tool , move the cursor into the top left corner of the banner, and hold down the left mouse button while dragging it towards the bottom right corner. Now let go of the mouse button.


This is the way you create all your objects. Click where you wish to place the top left corner of the object and hold the mouse button down, while moving the mouse to the bottom right corner of your object. For some of the objects a dialog appears in which you must specify which file (picture and bump map) you wish to use.

- In the Text box type: "Go to my web site".

The font size is too small and we would like to center the text as well.


To format your text use the Text toolbar.




If you wish to change the font color, highlight the text (or parts of it) and click the palette icon  to open the Windows color dialog. Select a new color and click OK.

- Highlight the text by holding down the left mouse button and move the cursor across the text. Now select font size 40 and while the text is still highlighted click 'B' in the dialog to

make the font bold. Finally click the  icon to center the text.

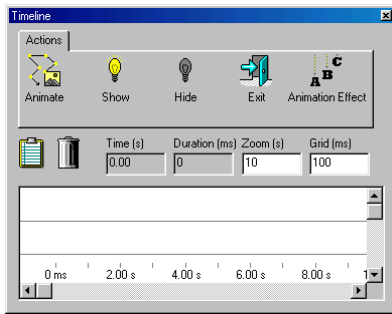
To exit text-editing mode, simply click anywhere outside your text object, click the OK button  or right click and select Exit. Now resize and move the text object to the desired position.


To resize an existing object click one of the handles of the object and while keeping the mouse button down move the handle in the desired direction. To resize an object while keeping its X/Y aspect ratio click and drag one of the corner handles. To move an object simply click anywhere on the object. When the hand  appears drag the object to the desired position (you can place it anywhere in the working space).

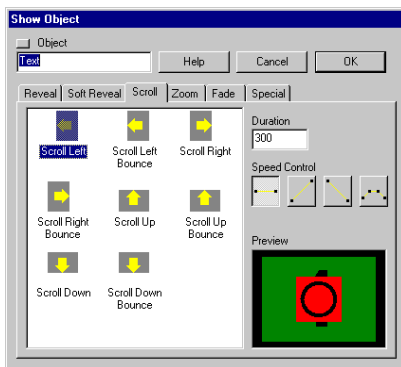
Tip: VGA has a built-in tool to place objects in the exact middle of the screen or close to the edge. To open this tool, select *Arrange / Alignment* from the main menu.


Now it is time to apply our first effect.

In the timeline at the bottom of the screen you see five actions. These five actions (Animate, Show, Hide, Animation Effect and Exit) are the foundation for all documents created with MatchWare Visual GIF Animator. To learn more about the four actions see "The environment" or the Reference section.



- Click the Show action  and drag it into the Timeline. Place it at 0 seconds. The Show dialog appears.




- First you want to select the object you wish to show. Click the browse button  to access the Object List.
- Select the object called Text (the only object you currently have).
- Now select an effect. Click the Scroll tab. Select Scroll Left.
- Set the time for the effect to 300 milliseconds (0.3 seconds).
- Click OK.

You have now "programmed" MatchWare Visual GIF Animator to show your text scrolling in from the right side of the screen. In order for you to be able to see the effect of the Show action, you must first hide the text.

- Right click the text object, and deselect Show Object. The text object is still there, only it is now invisible.


Now you can test the document to see how your show effect looks.

- Select Test | Run from the main menu or click the test button .

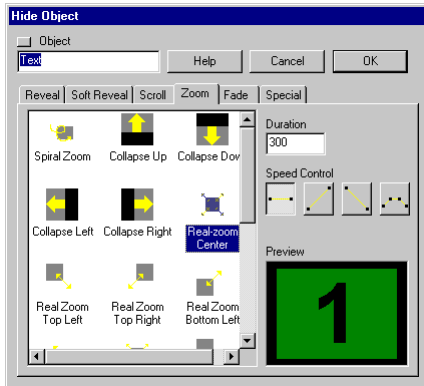
That completes the first of four stages in creating our animated GIF. You are ready to start stage two.


Stage 2

Stage two is very simple: You want to hide the first text we created.

- Drag the Hide action  to the Timeline.
- Place it at 2.0 seconds.


The Hide dialog appears. This dialog is similar to the Show dialog, and works the exact same way.



First you want to select the object you wish to hide. Click the browse button  to access the Object List.

- Select the object called Text (the only object you have created so far).
- Now select an effect. Click the Zoom tab. Select Real-Zoom Center.
- Set the time for the effect to 300 milliseconds (0.3 seconds).
- Click OK.

Now when you run your file the text is shown, then after two seconds it is hidden again.


- Select Test | Run from the main menu or click the test button .

The second stage is complete, and you can move to the third stage of this example.



Stage 3

In the third stage you want to end your animated banner with a text showing your Internet address.

- Select the Headline tool in the Toolbar.
- Move the cursor into the top left corner of the banner, and hold down the left mouse button while dragging it towards the bottom right corner. Now let go of the mouse button.

- In the headline text box type: "www.matchware.net" (you can replace this URL with your own).
- Click the OK button .

Now to complete our banner we want to show the text (just like we did with the first text).


- Click the Show action  and drag it into the Timeline. Place it at 3.5 seconds.
- Select the object you wish to show. Click the browse button  to access the Object List.
- Select the object called Headline (there are now two objects in the Object List).
- Select an effect. Click the Scroll tab. Select Scroll Down.
- Set the time for the effect to 300 milliseconds (0.3 seconds).
- Click OK.

You have now "programmed" MatchWare Visual GIF Animator to show your headline scrolling down from the top of the screen.

Finally in order for you to be able to see the effect of the Show action, you must hide the headline object.

- Right click the headline object, and deselect Show Object.
- On the Timeline , drag the Exit icon to 6.0 seconds.

Test the document to see how your completed file looks.

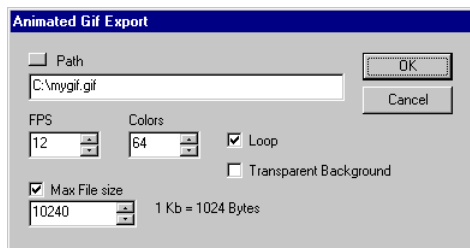
- Select Test | Run from the main menu or click the test button .

Stage 4

In Stage 4 you want to turn your MatchWare Visual GIF Animator document into an Animated GIF file.

- Save (File | Save) the current file as mygif.vga (you can give the file any name you prefer).
- Click File in the main menu. Select Export | Animated GIF.

The following dialog appears:

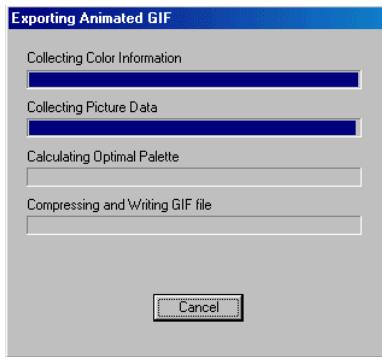


- Check Loop.

This will start your Animated GIF over when the file hits the Exit action on the Timeline (at 6.0 seconds).

- Click OK.

MatchWare Visual GIF Animator starts creating your Animated GIF file.



Upon completion the following dialog appears:



- Click Preview to see the completed Animated GIF file.

This will open your Internet browser (or the program you have associated with Animated GIF files). Close the browser to return to the Export Results dialog.

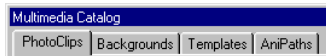
- Click OK to return to MatchWare Visual GIF Animator.

Templates - A good place to start

Visual GIF Animator comes with several cool templates that:

- you are free to use as they are
- you are free to change in order to replace any text, pictures, and background
- show you some of the things you can do

To access the templates open the Multimedia Catalog (click the icon  or select View | Multimedia Catalog from the main menu) and click the Templates tab.



When you have selected the Templates tab, you can choose between these three sub tabs at the bottom of the Multimedia Catalog.



Each sub tab holds several templates that you can drag straight into the workspace. To use a specific template simply click it in the Multimedia Catalog, hold down the left mouse button, and drag it into the workspace.

Here is a brief description of each sub tab.

Miscellaneous

Holds all sorts of different templates that you can use on a web page or multimedia production.

Visit Web Site

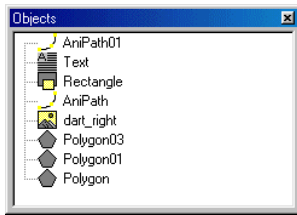
Holds templates that will help you set up a banner or button that directs people to your web site.

Text Based

Holds templates that all have one or more text objects and often use the animation effect to achieve a cool transition.

How to change the objects in a template

When you have selected a template (and it appears in the workspace) you can see the objects that have been used to create the template in the Object List...

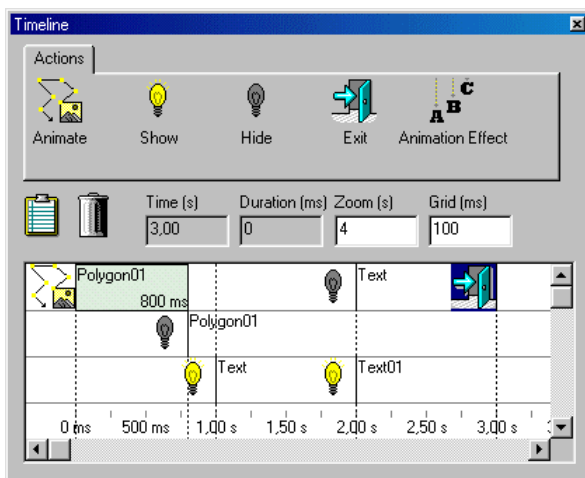


Often objects are placed on top of each other or outside your workspace. This is where the Object List comes in handy.

Here you can select the object you wish to change (edit a text object by double clicking it, change a picture by double clicking it, change an animation path by double clicking it, etc.).

How to change/adjust the timing of the actions

Just as the objects appear in Object List the actions used appear on the Timeline.

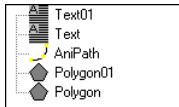


When you change a text object, an animation path, or any other object the timing may no longer be correct. In order to fix this (or to change the selected effect), double click the action you wish to change and make your necessary adjustments.

In the following we will use the golf template (from the 'Visit Web site' tab) as an example:

- Open the Multimedia Catalog.
- Click the Template tab, click the 'Visit Web site' sub tab.
- Drag the file 'Golf' into your workspace.

The file opens and the Object List looks like this:



There are five objects: 2 text objects, an animation path and 2 polygons.

Text 01 says: www.PLAYGOLF.net

Text says: Visit Sct. Nicolas Golf Course

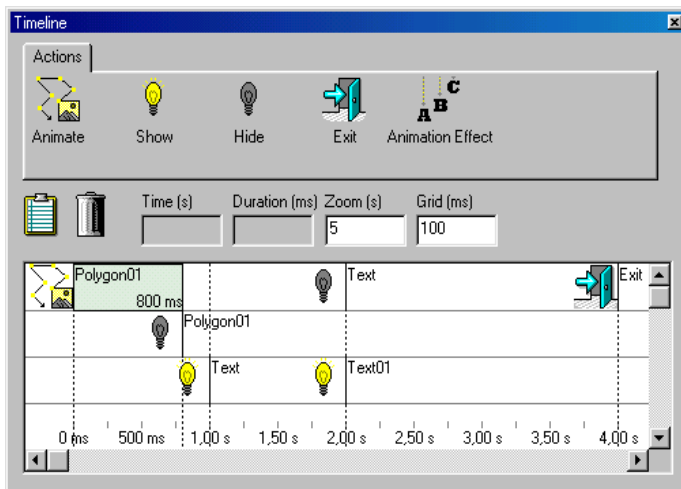
The AniPath: We use this to animate a golf ball into the hole.

Polygon 01: The golf ball. Created with the polygon tool.

Polygon: The hole. Also created with the polygon tool.

Tip: When you have many similar objects it is often very inconvenient that they are called *Text01*, *Text02*, *Text03*, etc. In the Properties dialog you can give the objects better names. E.g. we could rename 'Polygon01' to 'Ball' and 'Polygon' to 'hole'. This way we would always know which was which.

We now want to animate the golf ball into the hole, and show the two texts after each other. Here is what that looks like on the Timeline.



First we animate the golf ball (Polygon01). As soon as the animation is complete, we hide Polygon01 making it look like the ball falls into the hole (Polygon).

At 1.0 seconds we show the text 'Visit Sct. Nicolas Golf Course' (Text).

1 second later we hide that text again and show the text 'www.PLAYGOLF.net' (Text01).

When you try to change any of the objects, you will discover that you can only access the object called Text01 in your workspace. All other objects are located under Text01. This is where the Object List helps you to select the other objects.

To change a text object, double click it in the Object List (you can also edit Text01 by double clicking it in the workspace, since it is the top object).

To change the animation path double click it in the Object List.

To change the hole or the ball, double click the polygons in the Object List. You can also change the size and basic appearance of the polygons (and all other objects) in the Properties dialog.

Tip: *We have used a polygon in the golf template as the ball. To make the finished GIF or AVI look even better use a picture of a golf ball, and animate that instead of the polygon. You can also use a picture of grass as background instead of the green color we have used.*

When you are done, select your desired export option (GIF or AVI).


The other templates work in the same way.

- Select a template.
- Drag it into your workspace.
- Use the Object List and Properties dialog to change the objects.
- Export to GIF or AVI.
- You're done...

Try and open some of the other templates to see how they are structured. There are many good tricks that you can use in your own files.

Adding real motion

We call this section "Adding real motion" because we use the animation capabilities of VGA. As opposed to the Show/Hide effects where the motion is build into the effect (the object is not moving), the animation action actually animates the object to a new position. To define where we want the object to animate to and from we need an extra component, the Animation Path object.

Click the Animation Path tool  in the Toolbox. Your workspace changes appearance to show you that you are now in animation-editing mode, and the animation path toolbox appears.



As you can see the Add Points button  is activated by default, and you can start creating your animation path.

Creating the animation path

To place the first point of your animation path simply click anywhere in the workspace (you do not have to place the points on the banner, but can use any of the nine areas in the work area for your animation path). Place the second point the same way. A blue line appears that connects the two points in the animation path. To place another point simply click again, and another blue line appears connecting animation points two and three.

If you wish to close your animation path (and create a loop) click the very first point you made. VGA asks you if you would like to close the animation path, confirm by clicking Yes.



Select Point: Use this tool to select a point (it becomes white with a red rim instead of green). To move the selected point, hold the left mouse button down and move the mouse to the new position. If you wish to select more points you can do this in one of the following ways:

- Hold down the Ctrl key (on the keyboard) while clicking **each** of the points.
- Hold down the Shift key (on the keyboard) while clicking **two** points (all points between the two will be marked).
- Hold down the Ctrl key and press the letter 'A' (on the keyboard) to select **all** the points.
- Hold down the left mouse button and drag a rectangle out on the banner. All the points inside the rectangle are marked.



Add Points: In the beginning of this section, we briefly described how to use the Add Points tool. There is not much more to it, however, be aware that when you add a point it is added **after** the marked point (the white point with a red rim). If you wish to place a point between two existing points, use the

Select Point tool to mark both points (hold down the Ctrl key and click the two points) then click the Add Points tool and click where you would like to place the new point.



Delete Points: To delete a point in your polygon, click the Delete icon, and then click the point(s) you wish to delete. To return to editing click the Select Point tool or the Add Points tool.



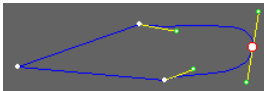
Undo: Click the Undo button to reverse the last editing operation.



Break Apart: This menu item is only available if you have already closed the polygon. Select a point and click the Break Apart tool. The polygon is opened after the marked point and VGA adds a new point to the polygon that has in fact become a line. This way you can change polygons (even the ones from the Multimedia Catalog) to lines or arrows.



To Symmetric Curve: At least one point must be marked to enable this tool. After marking one or more points in the polygon click the Symmetric Curve tool to change the sharp corners into curves. If only one point is marked it will look like this:



At the marked point, you will see a yellow line – a tangent. Pull or move the green dots in either end of the tangent to change the curve. If you pull one of the green dots, the curve flattens at the marked point and is moved further away. If you move the dot, the tangent turns and the curve becomes sharper on one side of the marked point and more rounded on the other.

In contrast to the Curve feature, the feature of the Symmetric Curve tool is that you can change the curve on **both** sides of the marked point simultaneously. This gives you a complete curve without any corners or angles.

As you can see the adjacent points also receive a tangent. These, however, are only half-tangents and therefore only work in one direction.



To Curve: This tool is very similar to the To Symmetric Curve tool, but the To Curve tool lets you change each side of the curve independently. This gives you the opportunity to create all sorts of shapes (with curves, sharp angles, corners etc.). If only one point is marked the To Curve tool will give you a curve, which looks like this:




The object you are designing is not changed (as was the case with the To Symmetric Curve tool), but the tangents are placed on top of the point aligned to the line. To change the polygon and create curves, pull or turn the tangents as we described for the To Symmetric Curve tool.



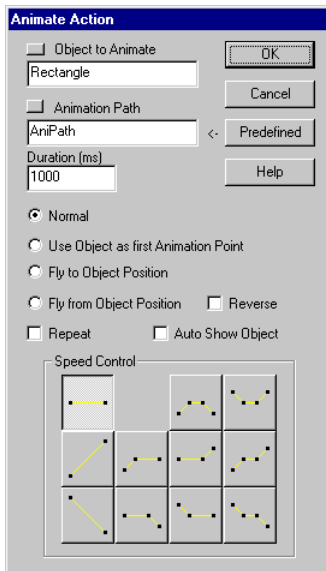
To Line: Every curve you create, can be removed by clicking the To Line tool. Select a point (or more) on the curves and click the tool to erase all curves and return to the original straight lines and angles.



OK: Click the OK menu item to accept all changes and exit the polygon-editing mode. If you want to exit without saving your changes click the  in the top right-hand corner.

Starting the animation with the Animate action

Once you have created at least one object and one animation path you can set up your animation. From the Actions tab above the Timeline drag the Animate action onto the Timeline. As soon as you drop the action the Animate action dialog appears.



First select the object you wish to animate. Click the browse button next to the text 'Object to Animate' to access the Object List. Select the desired object and click OK to return to the Animation dialog.

Now select the animation path you wish to use. Click the browse button next to the text 'Animation Path' to access the Object List (which only shows the available animation paths). Select the animation path and click OK to return to the Animation dialog. If you have only created one animation path, this will automatically appear in the Animation Path field.

If you have not created an animation path before you use the Animate action, you can select a predefined animation path. VGA comes with several predefined animation paths that you can access by clicking the Predefined button. You can also find these paths in the Multimedia Catalog and from here drag one or more directly into your workspace.

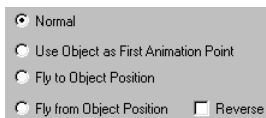
Now you must set the duration of the animation (how long do you want the animation to last). The time in the Duration field is set in milliseconds (1000 milliseconds = 1 second).

See "Animate action" to learn more about the Animate action and its components.

Animating an object to a specific position

If you wish to animate your object to one specific position or from one specific position the Animate action dialog helps you accomplish this. In contrast to all other objects the placement of the animation path can be relative, meaning that an animation path is created in one place on the screen, but can be used in a completely different place.

Beneath the Duration field are four radio buttons: 'Normal', 'Use Object as First Animation Point', 'Fly to Object Position', 'Fly from Object Position'. Each radio button gives you a different way of using an animation path.



Normal: The animation follows the animation path at its current position (where you placed it on the screen). The object "jumps" from its position to the first point in the animation path where the animation starts. The object is then animated from the first point to the last point along the animation path. The "jump" usually looks unnatural and is normally used if the object is hidden when the Animate action is activated. You can check Auto Show to automatically show a hidden object when the animation begins.

Use Object as First Animation Point: The object's current position will be used as the initial animation point meaning that the first point in the animation path actually becomes number two, as the object is animated from its current position to the beginning of the animation path. When the object reaches the first point on the animation path it continues along the path. The time set in the Duration field (time used on the animation) starts when the object is first moved and ends at the final point in the animation path.

Fly to Object Position: Here the animation path is displaced, meaning that the animation does not take place at the animation paths position, but at a position relative to that of the object being animated. The animation path is moved so that the object follows the path and ends at the object's current position. This means that the object can "fly" into the screen, following the animation path, and stop exactly at the point where you originally placed it.

Fly from Object Position: Again the animation path is relative. The animation path is placed so the object starts from its current position and follows the path. This way the object can "fly" off the screen. This option is the most commonly used when the object is visible before the animation starts.

***Note:** When using 'Fly from Object Position', the animated object starts from its current position. This means that you can actually use the same animation path to move an object further and further in any given direction.*

Reusing the same path in different places

Occasionally you want more objects to follow the same path. This is easily accomplished as you just drag down another Animate action on the Timeline, and select a different object to be animated along the same animation path.

You can of course change all the settings in the dialog so that you have a completely different animation than the first you created, however still along the same path.

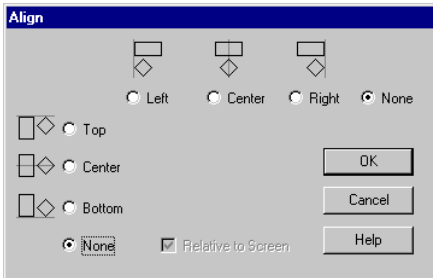
You can select any object as the object to be animated, meaning that you can actually select an animation path to be animated along another animation path thereby creating very complex animations.

If you have created an animation path that you like and would like to save it for later use, you can drag it into the Multimedia Catalog (View | Multimedia Catalog). Simply select the animation path in the Object List and drag it into the User tab of the Multimedia Catalog. Anytime you need the animation path simply drag it from the User tab and into your workspace.

Reference

Alignment

The following dialog appears when you select Arrange | Alignment  from the main menu:



Select an object, a group, or a number of objects and use the four radio buttons in the top section of the dialog to set the horizontal alignment and the four radio buttons on the left-hand side to set the vertical alignment. If you select None in one of the radio buttons, the selected object(s) are not adjusted in this direction.

There is a big difference between selecting one object and selecting several objects:

One object is selected: If only one object is selected it is aligned in relation to the banner, meaning that if you select a picture, open the Align dialog, and click Top and Left the picture is placed in the top, left corner.

Several objects are selected: If you have selected several objects, by default, these are adjusted in relation to the first object you selected. This means that if you have selected Right (in the Alignment dialog), all the selected objects are placed to the right-hand side of the first object you selected. If you have selected several objects, and click Top the objects stay at their horizontal position, but are placed so that the top of all the objects are at the same vertical position (that of the first object selected).

Note: The Alignment is determined by the first object you select, then all the other objects will be aligned to it.

Relative to screen: If you check this box, all the objects react at once as if they are grouped. They are positioned on the banner so that the relationship between the selected objects is maintained. This means that if you select Right, the object furthest to the right will be placed on the right-hand side of your VGA banner and the other objects will move along with it, but they maintain their vertical and horizontal relationship.

Alpha Channels and Bump Maps

Alpha Channels and Bump Maps are special features in all MatchWare products.

A Bump Map is an independent object whereas an Alpha Channel can only be selected through the Properties dialog of another object. Both use gray-scaled pictures to apply a new look to existing objects or backgrounds.

Alpha Channels apply transparency, whereas Bump Maps apply 3D look or textures.

Alpha Channels

In the Properties dialog for the rectangle, picture, and button object you will find an Alpha Channel path field.

The Alpha Channel field works basically the same way as the Picture path field. Click the browse button next to words 'Alpha Channel' to get the Open (file) dialog and select a picture just as before.

However, the picture you select in the Alpha Channel is not shown on the banner, but applies transparency to the picture selected in the Path field.



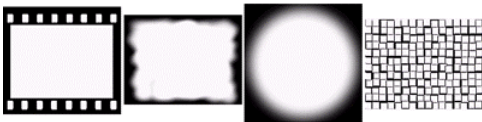
Alpha Channels are rather special and can be used for many different things.

Here we have a picture on the left, and on the right the same picture with the above alpha channel.



Alpha pictures (Alpha channels) apply transparency via levels of gray-scale colors. The color black is completely transparent and the color white completely solid. The gray colors between the black and white apply different levels of transparency: The darker, the more transparent.

Examples of different kinds of alpha channels:



As you can see not all alpha channels are the same size. You don't have to worry about this though, as an alpha channel is scaled to the exact same size as the picture or rectangle it is applied to.

Here the alpha channels have been applied to the same picture. You can easily see the effect achieved by each Alpha channel.



Bump Maps

A Bump Map is created with a gray-scaled picture, which itself is shown and also changes the picture under it.



With Bump Maps you can apply a 3D look to existing objects. Here the bump map has been placed on top of a blue background. It creates a frame on the background, so we have made it a little bigger and placed a picture inside the hollow area.



There are three different ways of using a Bump Map.



You can even place Bump Maps on top of each other or animate a Bump Map to achieve amazing visual effects.

If a pixel in the gray-scaled picture has the value 128 (values range from 0 to 256 in 8 bit pictures, 0 being black, 256 being white) the picture under it is not changed at all.

If the value is higher than 128 the picture becomes brighter and if the value is lower than 128 the picture becomes darker.

Background Color

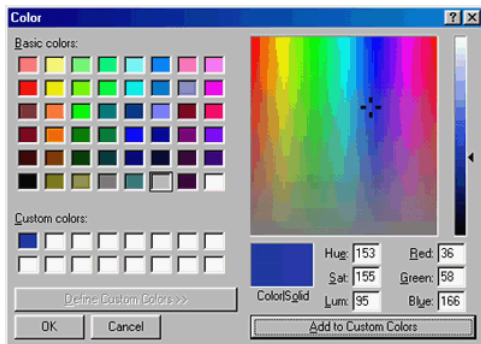


Click the palette icon in the standard toolbar to apply a different background color to your banner. When you click the icon the Windows Color dialog appears:



In the top half of the dialog are all the predefined colors. Click one of the colors and click OK to select that color.

If the color you are looking for is not present, click the Define Custom Colors button:



Here you can select a color in three different ways:

1. To define a custom color, click anywhere in the color matrix, and then use the slider at the right of the dialog box to adjust the color's attributes. The slider displays the possible amounts of white and black in the color. The result of your choice is displayed in the Color/Solid box.
2. Enter the RGB values (Red, Green, Blue) manually. The result of your choice is displayed in the Color/Solid box.

3. Enter the Hue, Saturation, and Luminosity values manually. The result of your choice is displayed in the Color/Solid box.

The easiest way to experiment with different colors is to press and hold the mouse and move it around the color matrix.

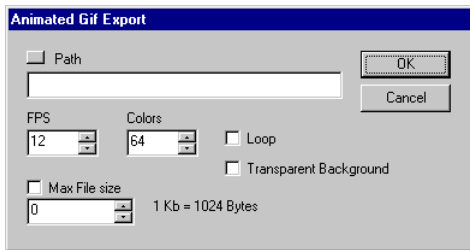
When you click OK, Visual GIF Animator applies the color to your background (or object), but the color is not saved for later use. If you wish to save a color, click Add to Custom Colors. The color is added to the Custom Colors palette and when you wish to apply it to an object or background, simply click it in the color dialog.

If you wish to export your banner with a transparent background, make sure you select a color that is not present in any of your objects, since the color will be removed from the objects as well.

For more about exporting, see "Export to Animated GIF".

Export to Animated GIF

When you select Export to Animated GIF the following dialog appears:



In the Path field VGA suggests a name and a path for your Animated GIF. The suggested path is identical to the path where you have placed your VGA file, just as the name of the GIF is identical to your VGA file only with the extension *.gif. If you wish to select a different path, simply click the browse button above the field.

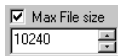


In the FPS (short for Frames Per Second) field you set the number of pictures you want VGA to generate for your GIF file per second.



In the Colors field you select the number of colors you wish to use for your GIF. Animated GIF files can use up to 256, but as default the value is set to 64 (6 bit).

***Note:** The settings in FPS and Colors are the key to the size and quality of your Animated GIF file. To learn more about how to optimize the GIF file, see "How to make small GIF files".*



In 'Max. File Size' you can set a maximum size for your GIF file. When you check the 'Max File Size' box, the number 10240 appears in the field. 10240 bytes equals 10 Kb, an often used maximum

size for Animated GIFs. Use the arrows to change the size, or enter the value directly in the field using the keyboard.

☒ **Loop** Check Loop to have your GIF start over when it reaches the Exit action in your VGA file.

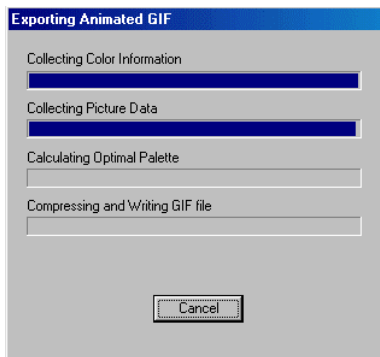
☒ **Transparent Background** Check Transparent Background to remove the color you selected as your background color from the finished GIF file.

***Note:** Some of your objects may contain the same color as the background color, and toned rectangles may have areas where the color is identical to that of the background. This will create "holes" in the objects, since they too are subject to the transparency. To avoid this, simply select a different background color, and make sure you use a color that is not present in your other objects.*

***Technical note:** Animated GIF does not support the use of antialiasing with transparency. Because antialiasing uses an interpolated smooth transition between the object and the background, it is not possible to apply transparency as well. The antialiasing is ignored, and the transparent color is activated.*

When you are ready to create your Animated GIF click OK.

The following dialog appears:



VGA starts creating your GIF, and you can see the progress in this dialog.

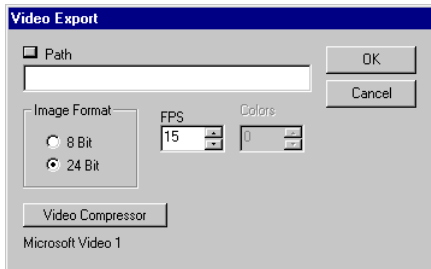
When the compression is complete the following dialog appears.



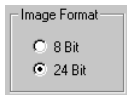
Here you can select to view the GIF in your default browser or go back to the VGA editor. Click Preview to open your default browser. Click OK to back to Visual GIF Animator.

Export to AVI

When you select Export to AVI (Audio Visual Interleave) the following dialog appears:



In the Path field VGA suggests a name and a path for your video. The suggested path is identical to the path where you have placed your VGA file, just as the name of the video is identical to your VGA file only with the extension *.avi. If you wish to select a different path, simply click the browse button above the field.



In the Image Format field you set the amount of colors you wish to use in your AVI. The field has two radio buttons, and by default radio button two 24 Bit is selected. If you select 8 Bit, the Colors field becomes available (see further down).



In the FPS (short for Frames Per Second) field you set the number of pictures you want VGA to generate for your AVI file per second. The default value is set to 15, which all PCs should be able to handle. The higher the value, the better the quality, the larger the file.

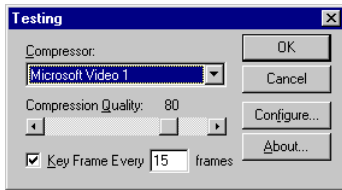


When you have selected 8 Bit colors (in Image Format) you may select the exact number of colors you wish to use for your AVI. You can use up to 256, but can easily reduce the number by clicking the arrows to the right of the field (or use the keyboard to enter a new value).

Note: The settings in FPS and Colors are the key to the size and quality of your AVI and Animated GIF files. To learn more about how to optimize the files, see "How to make small GIF files".



When you click the Video Compressor button the following dialog appears:



Here you select which Compressor you wish you use. Click the black arrow to access the available codices on your PC.

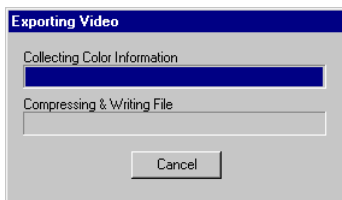
Set the Compression Quality simply by dragging the slider back and forth. The higher you set the quality, the larger the file becomes.

In Key Frame you select how often you wish to generate a full picture of the video. The default value is set to 15, which is equal to the value set in the FPS field, giving you one key frame per second.

When you have selected your compressor, you can click the Configure and About buttons to learn more about the specific compressor, and enter a dialog with special settings for that specific compressor.

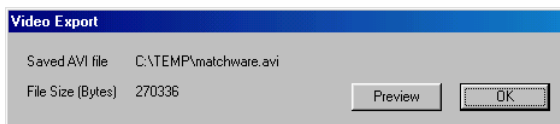
Technical note: When compressing a video the PC saves only the changes from frame to frame, not the full frame. Every 15 to 20 frames you wish to update the full frame, also called 'Key Frame'. It is the frequency of these full frames that you set in the Key Frame field.

Click OK to go back to the Video Export dialog. When you are ready to create your AVI click OK. The following dialog appears.



VGA starts creating your AVI, and you can actually see the progress in this dialog as well as on your screen, where the video is being generated.

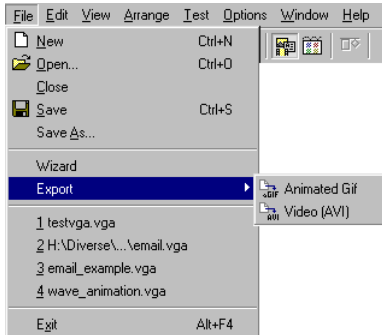
When the compression is complete the following dialog appears:



Here you can select to view the AVI in the associated AVI player or go back to the editor. To view the AVI click Preview, to go back to the editor click OK.

Export File

When you have completed your VGA file it is time to select which file type you wish to export to. You can select between Animated GIF and AVI (video).



- Save your document.
- Select File | Export from the main menu.
- Select file type.

Depending on your selection a new dialog appears in which you must adjust the settings before the actual exporting begins. To learn more about the dialogs, see "Export to Animated GIF" or "Export to AVI".

How to make small GIF files

The key to making small animated GIF files is to understand how the animated GIF file is stored. An animated GIF file is a series of frames.



The advantage is that the entire frame is not stored each time. The GIF compressor determines what has changed compared to the previous frame and specifies the smallest rectangle containing the changes.
Example: If something changes in the left hand side of the GIF only the left hand side is stored in the next frame. If only 4 pixels in one of the corners change, only these four pixels are stored. On the other hand, if 1 pixel in the upper left corner and one pixel in the lower right corner change, the entire frame has to be stored.



The next advantage is that what's inside the rectangle will be compressed. The compression rate will differ with the content. In general, if there's only one solid color in the rectangle the compression will be very good. Photo graphic images normally give a poor compression.

If you need to make small animated GIFs it's important to understand the above paragraphs.

Lets say that you have two small lights blinking in opposite corners. It will save a lot of space if they don't blink at the same time, so the change from frame to frame will only be the two corners, one after the other.

Effects

Clearly a Fade effect changing the whole background (or in the worst case, a picture) will use the entire rectangle and thereby result in a large file size.

If you just use the fade effect to show or hide a text object things look better. Even though the text object can be large, only the text changes, not the area around the letters, and this will normally give a good compression.


What's inside the rectangle is also important

If you use the fade effect to show a solid colored rectangle object, it will not increase the file size dramatically simply because the rectangle has a solid color, which can be compressed considerably. On the other hand if you fade a picture object and the picture is complex (a photograph or the like), that image is not very compressible and will result in a substantial file size increase (if the object size is not very small).

Multimedia Catalog

Visual GIF Animator comes with a whole series of professional clipart free for you to use.

The hundreds of pictures and backgrounds are available in the Multimedia Catalog alongside pre-defined animation paths and templates.

To access the Multimedia Catalog, click the  icon or select View | Multimedia Catalog from the main menu.

The Multimedia Catalog appears.



At the top you will see the different categories in the Multimedia Catalog (Photoclips, Backgrounds, etc.), and at the bottom you will see the sub categories for each category. Click the tabs on top to access that category, click the sub tabs to see the clipart available in that sub-category.

You will also see a sub tab called User. Here you can place your own files, texts, animation paths etc. The User tab is described further below.

To use a picture from the Multimedia Catalog...

- Select Photoclips (and the desired sub category).
- Select the picture by clicking it.
- Keep the left mouse button down and drag the picture into your workspace.
- Resize the picture to fit your file (use the handles or the Properties dialog).

To use a background from the Multimedia Catalog...

- Select Backgrounds (and the desired sub category).
- Select the background by clicking it.
- Keep the left mouse button down and drag the background into your workspace.

The background is resized to fit your banner, and placed at the back.

***Note:** If you drag in more than one background, you cannot see the second, third, etc, because they are placed behind the first background. To view a background, delete the backgrounds in front of it, or select the background in the Object List and drag it to the front, or right click and arrange the backgrounds.*

***Note:** If your background is not resized to fit your banner, your PC does not have Microsoft ScriptEngine installed.*

To install ScriptEngine follow these steps:

- Open your web browser.
- Go to <http://msdn.microsoft.com/scripting>.
- Click VB Script on the left-hand side.
- Click Download.
- Select language and download (remember where you save the file).
- Install the file (double click it).

To use an animation path from the Multimedia Catalog...

- Select Animation Paths (and the desired sub category).
- Select the Animation Path by clicking it.
- Keep the left mouse button down and drag the Animation Path into your workspace.
- Double click the Animation Path to change it.

To open a template from the Multimedia Catalog...

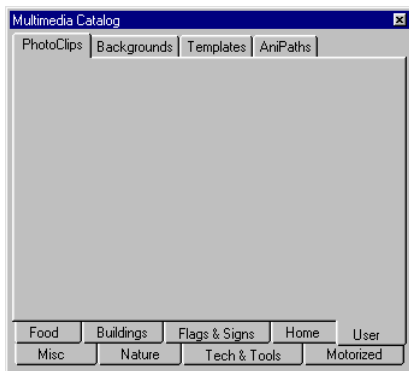
- Select Templates (and the desired sub category).
- Select the template by clicking it.
- Keep the left mouse button down and drag the template into your workspace.
- Change the objects and actions to your liking.

The User Tabs

At the bottom of the Multimedia Catalog you have the sub tabs for each category, and a sub tab called 'User'.

The User tab is a visual clipboard that lets you save your own objects. You can save text, animation paths, pictures, backgrounds, groups, etc. Any item you have created can be saved.

To access a User tab click one of the categories at the top of the Multimedia Catalog (all tabs have a User tab except Templates). Click the User tab at the bottom right.



As you can see the User tab is empty.

To save an object in a User tab...

- Open the User tab (open Multimedia Catalog, click the User tab at the bottom).
- Click an object in the Object List.
- Drag it to the user tab in the Multimedia Catalog.

Note: You cannot drag an object directly from the workspace and into the Multimedia Catalog. You must click it in the Object List and drag it from there and into the selected User tab.

When you drop an object in the Multimedia Catalog User tab an icon appears that represents the object.



You can now use the object in any future file you are working on, simply by clicking it and dragging it into the workspace.

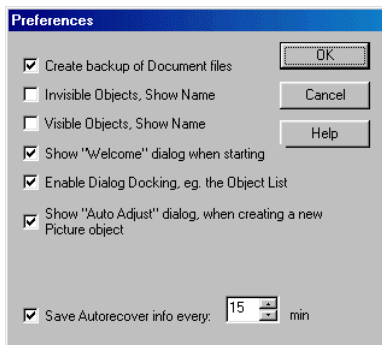
If you wish to delete or rename an object in the Multimedia Catalog User tab right click the object.

Select Delete to remove the object from the tab (an 'Are you sure...' dialog appears).

Select Rename to change the name (the name is highlighted, and you can type in another).

Preferences

In Preferences (main menu Options | Preferences) you can set several interface options.



Create Backup of Document files:

Creates a backup of the md8 file and saves it as a *.bak file. The *.bak file is a copy of the last saved version of your document.

Invisible Objects, Show name:

Check this box to display the name of hidden objects in the top left corner of each object. It is checked by default and it is recommended that you keep it like this.

Visible Objects, Show name:

Check this box to display the name of all visible objects in the top left corner of each object.

Show Welcome Dialog when Starting:

If the checkmark is removed VGA starts with an empty window.



Enable Dialog Docking:

Check this box to enable dialog docking, meaning that when you move a dialog near the edge of the screen a sort of magnetic field locks the dialog to the side of the screen.

Show Auto Adjust (Pictures):

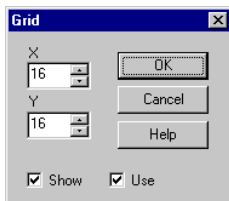
Here you select to show the Adjust dialog when you import a picture. The dialog lets you automatically adjust a picture to fit the picture frame or revert to its original size.

Save AutoRecover info every:

Visual GIF Animator automatically stores information about your open files. In case of a computer crash, your files are saved and restored the next time you open Visual GIF Animator. It is recommended that you store at least every 15 minutes.

The Grid


The Grid is a series of evenly spaced horizontal and vertical dots that are used to help you arrange your objects. The greater the spacing, the greater the "jump" will be when you move your objects.



The X and Y Fields: The X and Y fields in the Grid indicate the number of pixels between the horizontal and vertical dots. Usually they should be set between 8 to 16. Remember the greater spacing, the greater the "jump".

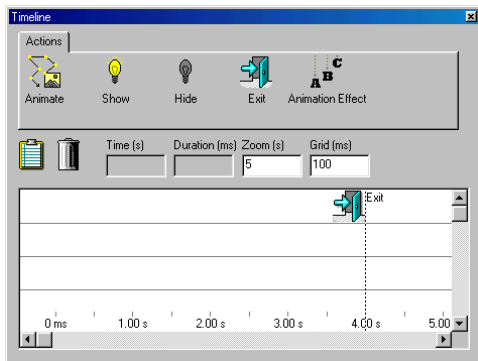
Use: Check this box to activate the grid.

Show: When you check the Show box, you will see a series of tiny dots that symbolize the grid. Even if you have not checked Use in the dialog, you can still Show the grid (and vice versa). Be careful not to set the X and Y values too low, as your banner will then be covered with tiny dots.



You can activate the grid in Options | Grid, or by clicking the grid icon  in the main menu, or by clicking the similar icon inside polygon or animation path editing.

The Timeline

The Timeline is what sets Visual GIF Animator apart from all other GIF tools.



The horizontal top field contains the available actions in VGA. Underneath the actions field you have the

clipboard icon , the wastebasket icon , and four other time fields that we will describe shortly. The large, white field at the bottom is the actual Timeline. You place the actions on the Timeline by dragging and dropping them from the actions field.

You have several "tracks" on the Timeline to give you a better overview of the different actions placed there. If you wish to show more tracks simply pull the edge above of the Timeline (or use the scroll bars). Right above the Timeline are the four time fields that help you place your actions very precisely.

Time (s)	Duration (ms)	Zoom (s)	Grid (ms)
1.00	500	5	100

Time (s): This field tells you when the selected action is executed.

Duration: This field tells you how long it takes to execute the selected action. If you wish to change the Duration double click the particular action on the Timeline and enter the new duration time.

Zoom: In this field, you decide how much (or little) you want to see of the Timeline (set in full seconds). Increasing the Zoom factor will give you a better overview of the Timeline when there are many actions to be seen.

Grid: In this field you set the accuracy of the Timeline (in milliseconds, 1000 Ms. = 1 second). The Grid field is very useful when you wish to start more actions at exactly the same time or when you wish to place actions one after the other with exactly the same time interval between them.

Example 1: If Grid is set to 100 (milliseconds) you can place actions on the Timeline at intervals of 0.1 second (100 milliseconds = 0.1 second). This means that you can place an action at 1.20 seconds or 1.10 seconds, but not at 1.15 seconds.


Example 2: If Grid is set to 10 (milliseconds) you can place actions on the Timeline at intervals of 0.01 second (10 milliseconds = 0.01 second).

Select actions: To select an action, click it once. To select several actions simply press (and hold down) the Ctrl key on the keyboard while you click each of the actions you wish to select.

Move an action: If you want to move one or more actions first click the actions to select them, then simply drag them to the desired point on the Timeline (hold down the left mouse button while moving the actions).


Cut – Copy – Delete actions:

To **Cut** actions from the Timeline and place them on the clipboard, first select the icons you wish to cut

and then move them to the Clipboard icon  in the top left corner of the Event dialog. (Hold down the left mouse button while moving the selected icons and let go when the mouse cursor appears on top of the clipboard icon). You can also right click the selected icons and click on Cut.

To **Copy** actions, simply right click the selected icons and click Copy or drag the actions to the clipboard while holding down the Ctrl key. The actions are still on the Timeline, but are also on the clipboard where they will stay until you replace them with other actions.

When you decide to **Delete** actions, you remove them from the Timeline and they are not placed on the

clipboard. To delete selected actions, right click and select Delete or drag them to the wastebasket . You can change your mind about deleting icons by selecting Edit | Undo from the main menu.

Saving actions in the Multimedia Catalog:

The clipboard works as in Windows, but unfortunately the clipboard only works as a temporary memory. Anything stored on it is lost when something else is placed on the clipboard or the PC is shut down.


Visual GIF Animator, however, gives you the possibility of saving favorite actions for later use in a kind of 'permanent clipboard'.

To open the Multimedia Catalog select View | Multimedia Catalog from the main menu. When the Multimedia Catalog is open click the tab named User and now drag and drop the icons you have selected into the Multimedia Catalog.

For more information, see "Multimedia Catalog".

Pasting actions on the Timeline:

You have three ways to **Paste** any copied or cut actions onto the Timeline.

1. Move the mouse to the clipboard icon  click and hold down the mouse button to drag the copied icons into the Timeline.
2. Right click the Timeline and select menu item Paste.
3. Open the Multimedia Catalog and drag and drop your user-defined actions directly on to the Timeline.

Select Tool

Description



The Select tool is a special tool. Use the Select tool to select, resize or move existing objects.

When VGA is opened the Select tool is activated automatically and as soon as you have completed a new object, VGA switches back to the Select tool. To not have VGA switch back to the Select tool, hold down the Shift key (on the keyboard) while creating an object.

If you press (and hold) down the Ctrl key before you click and drag with the mouse you can pan the entire workspace. The effect is exactly the same as using the Workspace scroll bars. You will probably find that using the Ctrl drag method is much quicker than using the scroll bars.

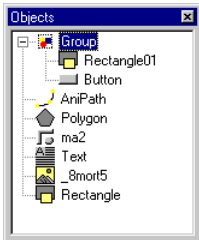
Selecting Objects

The select tool is activated by default, which means that to select an object you simply click the object once.

If you wish to select more objects hold down the Ctrl key (on the keyboard) while clicking all the objects you would like to select. (Please note that objects with transparent areas only react when you click the visible areas).

Sometimes you will find that an object cannot always be selected. This is because objects can be placed on top of each other making it very difficult to select one of the lower objects.

You can solve this problem by selecting them in the Object List. If the Object List is not open, select View | Object List from the main menu.



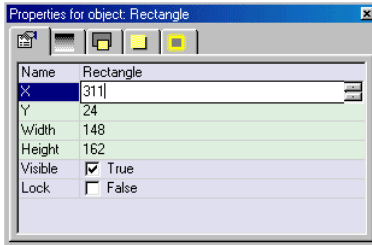
The Object List often provides you with a better overview if you want to select several objects. The way you select several objects is basically identical to the way you select several files in Windows: Hold down Ctrl and click the objects one by one. Each of the objects you click is then highlighted to indicate that it is selected.

If you wish to deselect one or more selected objects simply click them while holding down the Ctrl key. To select an object that is in a group, simply click the + to open the group, then select the object. Even though it is grouped you can manipulate it without affecting the other objects in the group.

Moving Objects

You can move an object anywhere in your workspace simply by selecting it and dragging it to the desired location.

If you wish to position it accurately, you can do this in the Properties dialog: Click the General tab and in the X and Y fields enter the top left corner coordinates of the object.



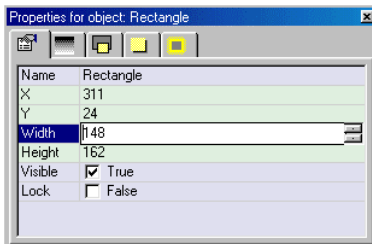
The third way to move an object is by using the keyboard. Select the object and use the arrow keys to move the object one pixel at a time. If you hold down the Shift key while doing this you will move the object quicker (instead of one pixel at a time the object is moved the number of pixels defined in the grid. For more information on the Grid see "The Grid").

If you press (and hold) down the Ctrl key **after** you have started dragging the object, the object's movement will be confined to the horizontal or vertical direction. This enables you to move an object left or right while maintaining the horizontal alignment, or up and down while maintaining the vertical alignment.

Resizing Objects

The quickest way to resize an object is by selecting it and pulling one of the eight handles (one in each corner, and one on each side). If you pull one of the corner handles the X/Y aspect ratio is maintained, while pulling the side handles will make the object wider or taller.

If you wish to resize the object accurately you can do this in the Properties dialog: click the General tab and in the Width and Height fields enter the exact size (in pixels) of the object.



You can resize pictures and bump maps to their original size by selecting Adjust Size from the local menu (right click the object to open the local menu).

When you resize an object using one of the four corner handles the X/Y aspect of the object is maintained. If you press (and hold) down the Ctrl key **after** you have started resizing you can freely resize the object in both the X and Y direction.

Objects

General Description



Except for the Select and Rotation tools, all the tools are used to place an object (picture, text, etc) in the workspace. Most of the tools work in the same way:

1st Step: Click the desired tool in the Toolbox. When the cursor is moved back out of the Toolbox, you can see the tool has been activated (e.g. when you click the rectangle tool the cursor changes into a rectangle).

2nd Step: Move the cursor into your workspace and drag out a rectangle in the size and position you want for your new object (you can change both the size and position later).

To 'drag out' an object, place the cursor at the point on the banner where you would like your object's top left-hand corner to be. Click and hold down the left mouse button while moving the mouse toward the bottom right corner and let go of the mouse button when you are satisfied with the size of your object.

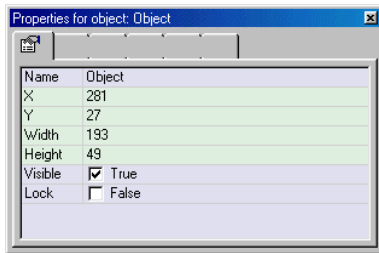
Some of the objects are now complete, whereas others need additional input from you. These are the objects that require a file (picture and bump map) and as soon as you let go of the mouse button, an Open file dialog appears where you can browse through the available files on your PC and select the exact file you are looking for.

All the objects have a Properties dialog in which you can make all the necessary changes for your objects. First, we will give the general description of the particular object and then describe each object's Properties dialog. If the Properties dialog is not open select View | Properties from the main menu, or right click the object and select Properties.

The Object's Properties Dialog

As introduction to the Properties dialog we will describe the properties that are common for all the objects.

The General Tab



Name: In the Name field is the object's default name. Objects that have a file attached will have the same name as the first file opened in that object. In projects with many objects, it is a good idea to give the objects relevant names to make it easier to identify them in the Object List.

Name is not available if you have selected more than one object.

X and Y: These fields tell you the exact position of your object. X and Y represent the top left corner coordinates of the object and by entering new values in these fields you can change the position of the object (use the arrows next to the numbers to change the coordinates one pixel at a time).

If you have selected more than one object the fields are empty, but by clicking them you can enter a value, hereby moving all the selected objects to the new position.

Width: Tells you the width of your object in pixels. Change the width of your objects by entering a new value in the Width field.

If you have selected more than one object the field is empty, but by clicking it you can enter a value, hereby resizing all the selected objects (independent of position).

Height: Tells you the height of your object in pixels. Change the height of your objects by entering a new value in the Height field.

If you have selected more than one object the field is empty, but by clicking it you can enter a value, hereby resizing all the selected objects (independent of position).

Visible: In the check box next to Visible, you can select whether you want an object to be visible or hidden. The reason for hiding an object could be that you wish to show it later (see Timeline and Show/Hide). You can also hide an object by right clicking it and de-selecting Show Object.

Lock: Check Lock to glue an object to its current position. Once locked you cannot select the tool using the select tool. The only way to select locked objects are by clicking them in the Object List.

Why lock an object?

If you have placed a picture, bump map or another object as a background, and would like to select one or more objects placed on top of it, you can drag a rectangle around them without accidentally selecting and moving the background.

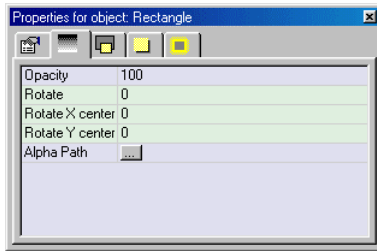
If you have an object on top of other objects you cannot select these using the select tool. When you lock

an object you indicate that you are happy with the placement of this object and would like to be able to access the objects underneath it.

To unlock an object select the object in the Object List and remove the check mark from Lock.

The Visibility Tab

Several objects (all except button and animation path) have the Visibility tab in their Properties dialog.



All objects have the Opacity field set to 100. By reducing this number you apply transparency to the selected object, 100 being 100% visible, 0 being 0% visible.

You can use the keyboard to enter a new value in the field or you can change the opacity level of the object using the arrows next to the number.

The Rectangle and Picture objects also have an Alpha Channel field, giving you the possibility of applying transparency to the rectangle using an Alpha Channel. Click the browse button next to words 'Alpha Path' to access the Open (file) dialog and select an alpha channel picture. See "Alpha Channels" to learn more about this topic.

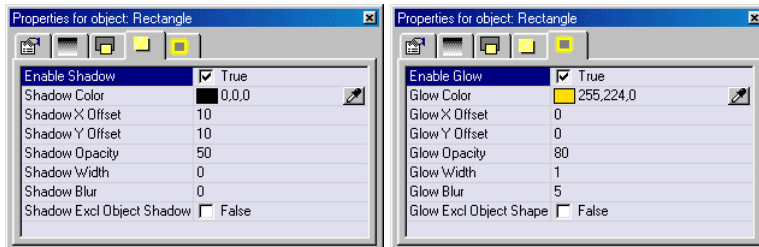
The Rectangle, Picture, Polygon, and Headline objects can all be rotated. In the Rotate field you can see and set the object rotation in degrees (359 degrees being the maximum).

The Rotate X Center and Rotate Y Center fields tell you the displacement of the rotation center in relation to the center of the selected object.

For more information about rotating objects, see "Rotation".

The Shadow Tab

A number of the Properties Dialogs also have two tabs called Shadow and Glow. Since the way the two tabs work is identical, we will describe both of them at the same time.



Enable: Check Enable to activate the effect.

Color: Click the color button to select the exact shadow or glow color you wish to use.

X and Y Offset: Here you set the displacement of the shadow effect.

- Positive values will displace the effects to the right and down.

- Negative values will displace the effects to the left and up.

Width: For Shadow the default value is 0, meaning that the size of the effect is identical to that of the object. Especially when working with the Glow effect, it can enhance the appearance to have the effect larger than the object. The default value for Glow is therefore set to 1.


Opacity (%): Here you set the opacity level (visibility) of the effect. The lower the value the more transparent the effect becomes.

Blur: This value defines how solid the edge color of the effect is. The value 0 equals completely solid, but the higher the value the more the effect blurs.


Exclude Object Shape: Check this menu item to draw only the shadow and not the part of the shadow covered by the object. The only reason to exclude the object shape (checking this option) is when the selected object is semi-transparent, so you can see the shadow or glow through it.

The Object's Local Menu

All objects have a local menu. You open the local menu by clicking the object with the right mouse button. Since the local menus are more or less identical, we have described them all below:

Edit 

The menu item Edit has the same options as Edit in the main menu, but also contains a couple of special options:

Edit | Object 

Object editing is only available if it is relevant for the specific object. If you select Edit | Object in the local menu for a text object, it will go into editing mode (where you can change the text). Edit | Object, on a picture, lets you select a different file for the object (this goes for all objects that have files attached). For objects where editing is not relevant (e.g. a rectangle) Edit | Object will be grayed out.

Edit | Copy 

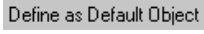
The menu item Copy copies the object (including size, position, color, events and actions) and places it on the Windows clipboard.

Edit | Cut 

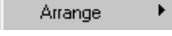
The menu item Cut places the object (including size, position, and color) on the Windows clipboard, and removes it from the document.

Edit | Delete 


The menu item Delete erases the object from the document. The difference between Cut and Delete is that you cannot paste a deleted object, as it has not been placed on the Windows clipboard.

Edit | Define as Default Object 

The menu item 'Define as Default Object' saves you a lot of work. A selected object can be defined as the default object for this type of object. This means that the next time you create this type of object it will be a copy of the object you set as default. (Example: You have created a blue button with yellow text. You select Edit | Define as Default Object and the next time you create a button it will have the same color and text).

Arrange 

The menu item Arrange lets you decide at what level the object is placed on your banner. The first object you create appears at the bottom level; the last object appears at the top. You can use Arrange to alter the level of the objects on the banner. In the Object List you can see which object is at top level and which one is at the bottom level.

Arrange | Backward 

Moves the object to the level immediately below its current level.

Arrange | Forward 

Moves the object to the level immediately above its current level.

Arrange | To Back 

Moves the object to the bottom level (back).

Arrange | To Front 

Moves the object to the top level (front).

Show Object 

Click this menu item to show or hide the object. A check mark next to Show Object indicates that the object is currently visible.

Adjust Size 

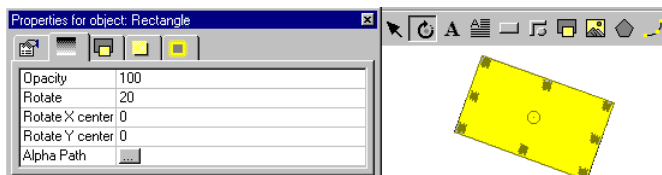
Clicking Adjust Size will resize picture and bump map objects to their original size (original resolution). This means that a 640x480 picture will be shown using this exact resolution in your document.

The Rotation tool



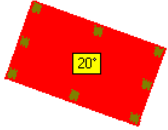
The Rotation tool enables you to rotate other objects. Only text (paragraph) and buttons cannot be rotated.

To rotate an object select the Rotation tool and click the object you wish to rotate. A circle appears in the middle of the selected object and your cursor changes to a rotation arrow. The circle is your rotation center.



You can now rotate the object around the rotation center by pressing and holding down the left mouse button, while moving the cursor in the direction you wish to rotate the object.

While rotating the object a yellow 'rotation degree' field appears in which you can see how many degrees you have rotated the object.



You can also see and change this number in the Visibility tab in the Properties dialog (Rotate). When you want to unrotate the object set the Rotate value to 0.


To move the rotation center hold your cursor over the circle until your cursor changes to a cross. You can now click and move the rotation center. This enables you to rotate the object around a point (rotation center) that is not the center of the object.

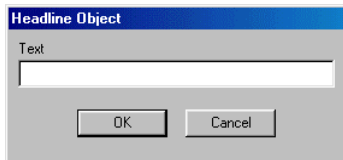
You can see the displacement of the rotation circle in the Visibility tab in the Properties dialog. The Rotate X Center and Rotate Y Center tell you where the rotation center is placed compared to the center of the object.

To move the rotation center back to the exact center of the object enter 0 in both fields.

The Headline tool

The Headline tool is a text tool that allows you to write one line of text. For small pieces of text, you might find typing, editing, and formatting text in the Headline tool easier than the paragraph text tool.

To create a headline, click the Headline tool  and drag out a rectangle for the headline. The headline dialog appears, in which you can now enter your headline text.



When you are done click OK.

The headline text is fitted inside the rectangle you dragged out for the object.

You can resize the headline object by pulling the object handles, the text remains fitted inside the rectangle (to keep the X/Y aspect ratio pull the corner handles).

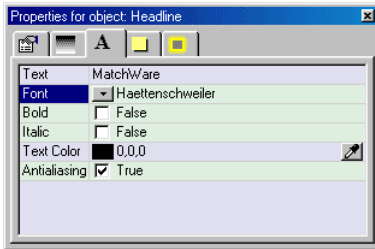
If you would like to adjust the headline text to the closest actual font size right click the Headline object and select:

- Adjust Height to resize the object while maintaining the width of the object
- Adjust Width to resize the object while maintaining the height of the object

Headline Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab named Headline the following dialog appears:



Here you can change the following settings:

Text: Enter or change the Headline text.


Font: Select the font you wish to use for your headline. To see the font list click the black arrow next to the font name and the entire list of available fonts appears. Select the font you would like to use from the list.

Bold: Check this box to make your text **Bold**.

Italic: Check this box to make your text *Italic*.

Underline: Check this box to Underline your text.

Text Color: Select a solid color for the Headline. Click the color button to access the Windows Color Dialog, from which you can select the exact color you wish to use. See "Background Color" for more information.

Use the pick tool  to select a color from anywhere within the program. When you click the pick tool, your cursor changes into a cross, and you can now click and select any color on your screen (color on objects, pictures, icons, dialogs, text etc.).

***Technical note:** You can see the RGB color code next to the color button.*

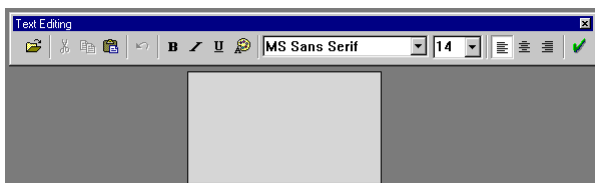
Antialiasing: Antialiasing smoothes the text. This is checked by default. Click to remove antialiasing from the headline object.

***Technical note:** Antialiasing is not active during animations and show / hide actions. As soon as the animation or effect is complete, antialiasing is activated.*

The Text object



You use the Text tool to write, edit and format text. To create a text object, click the Text tool in the Toolbox and drag out a rectangular frame on your banner. As soon as you let go of the mouse button, VGA automatically goes into text editing mode and the screen changes appearance:



You can now type in text, paste text from the clipboard or import text from an RTF file or TXT file (ASCII). The RTF format is very convenient, as almost all word processors (e.g. Microsoft Word®) can save text as an RTF file. The text is sometimes scaled, but the text formatting is maintained. When you have completed editing your text (or you wish to resize the text object), simply click once outside the text field. If you wish to change the text later double click the text object and VGA will go back to text editing mode.

The way you edit text in VGA works the same way as most word processors and you will recognize most of the menu items:



Click this icon to open a file (and import the text into your text field). An Open dialog appears in which you can select an RTF file or a TXT file. To accept and close the dialog click Open.



When you have selected text you can click the Cut icon to cut the selected text and place it on the Windows clipboard. Keyboard shortcut: Ctrl + X.



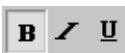
When you have selected text you can click the Copy icon and the text will be copied and placed on the Windows clipboard. Keyboard shortcut: Ctrl + C.



When you have placed text on the clipboard (from a VGA text field or any other word processor) the Paste icon is available. Click once in the text field where you would like to place the copied text and click the Paste icon to insert it from the Windows clipboard. If you have **not** copied any text to the Windows clipboard the Paste icon is grayed out. Keyboard shortcut: Ctrl + V.



Use the Undo icon to undo your last action. When you click Undo the text field will return to the look it had immediately before you clicked Undo. Keyboard shortcut: Ctrl + Z.



These three icons help you format your text. If your text is already formatted, you will see that one or more symbols are selected. The symbols will be 'B' for **bold**, 'I' for *italic*, and 'U' for underlined. Keyboard shortcuts: Ctrl + B, Ctrl + I, and Ctrl + U.

You can combine the three any way you prefer.



Click the Color icon to change the color of selected text. You must select the text first by dragging the cursor over the words, then click the icon and select the desired color.



The font field tells you which font you are currently using. If you already have text in the text field you can see which font is being used where the cursor is placed. If you have highlighted text that has two or more fonts the font field is empty, but you can easily format the highlighted text to the same font by selecting a font from the font field. Click the arrow button to the right of the font name (or empty field) to see a list of all the available fonts.



Here you set the font size. It works in the same way as the font field (highlight the text you wish to change and select the appropriate size from the list), and you can even enter a size that is not available in the list by clicking the numbers and enter the new size.



These three icons let you align text to the left, to the right, or in the center of the text field. If you have not selected any text the alignment will only work on the line where the cursor is. If you wish to format (resize, color, change font, etc.) the entire text in your text field you can press Ctrl + A simultaneously on the keyboard to highlight everything in the text field.

The Text Object's Local Menu

If you are in editing mode, text editing has its own local menu, which you access by right clicking inside the text object.

Edit

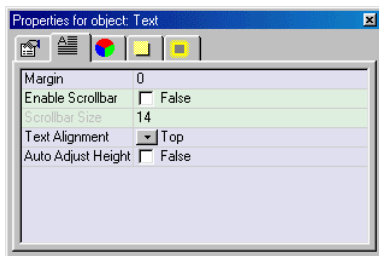
In the first menu item Edit, you will see some familiar options (Copy, Paste etc.) that all relate to any highlighted text you might have in the text object.

Import file lets you import a file directly into the text object. VGA supports ASCII text and RTF files.

Text Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab named Text the following dialog appears:

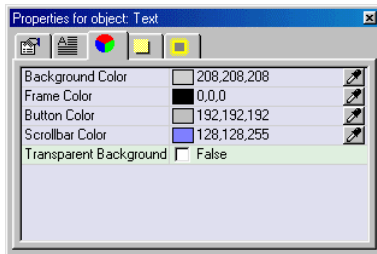


Margin: In the Margin field you set the spacing between the frame of the text object and the text itself. The margin is set in pixels.

Scrollbar: Used to place a scrollbar on the right of your text object. An empty check box means you will **not** have a scrollbar.

Size: This sets the width of the scrollbar. In the tab Colors you will find more ways of designing your scrollbar.

When you select the tab named Color the following dialog appears:



In this dialog, you can change four different color settings. There are four different areas where you can change color. By clicking the corresponding color buttons, the standard color dialog appears in which you can select the color you prefer.

As default Transparent Background in the bottom left corner is checked and you must uncheck this in order to change the colors.

Background: The background color of the text object can be changed by clicking the (light gray) color button.

Frame: Click the color button on the left (black button in the picture) to change the color of the frame of the text object. As long as Transparent Background is checked the frame is not visible.

Scrollbar Colors

Button: Sets the color of the scrollbar button.


Scrollbar: Sets the color of the scrollbar.

Transparent Background: Is checked by default, which means that the text object does not have a background color and you only see the actual text. Remove the checkmark (click it once) to see the selected background and frame colors.

The Button object



It is quick and easy to create buttons with the Button tool. Click the button icon in the Toolbox to select the Button tool, and use the mouse to drag out a rectangular frame for your button. When you let go of the

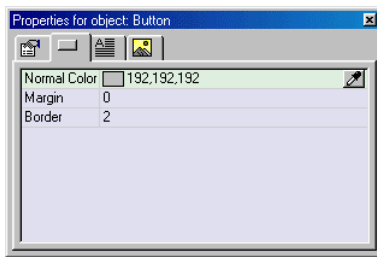
mouse, a button appears with the default look and settings: .

The default text on the button is "TEST", and if you would like to change this, simply double click the button to enter text-editing mode. You can now change the text and write as many letters or lines of text as there is room for on the button. When you have finished, or would like to resize the button, click anywhere outside the button to go back to design mode. You can resize the button by pulling the handles (placed on the sides and in the corners).

Button Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab named Button the following dialog appears:



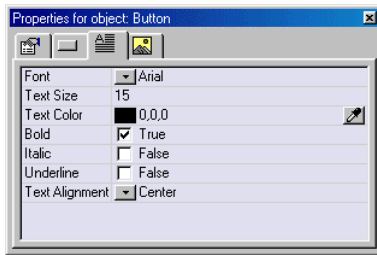
At the top you see a color button: The color button changes the basic appearance of the button.

Under it you have two additional ways to design the button.

Border: The Border refers to the 3D effect on the button and the value in the Border field determines the width of the border. Two sides on a button are lighter than the button face and the two other sides are darker. This way it looks as if the button is three-dimensional. The greater the value you choose in the Border field, the greater the 3D effect appears.

Margin: In the Margin field you set the spacing between the frame of the button face and the button text itself. The margin is set in pixels. The Margin field helps you prevent the text from getting so close to the edge of the button that it becomes unreadable. If you select a margin which is too big, you may experience problems seeing the text. To overcome this problem, you can either increase the size of your button or reduce the margin. The margin setting also applies to pictures that you may have placed on your button (see the Picture tab).

Click the Text tab to open the following dialog:



This dialog contains all the settings that relate to the text formatting on the button.

Font: In the Font field you select the font you wish to use on the button. To see the font list click the black arrow next to the font name and the entire list of available fonts appears. Select the font you would like to use from the list.

Size: You set the font size for the text used on the button. To see the different sizes available click the black arrow next to the font size. If your desired font size is not available you can enter it manually.

Color: Click the color button (the black button in the picture) to determine the font color.

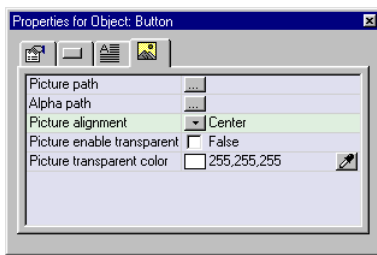
Bold: Check the boxes next to **Bold** to apply the format to the button text.

Italic: Check the boxes next to *Italic*.

Underline: Check the boxes next to **Bold**, *Italic* or Underline to apply the format to the button text.

Alignment: On the right side of the button is a field with nine radio buttons. Click one of the radio buttons to select where the text should be placed on the button.

Click the Picture tab to open the following dialog:



Picture: Click the Picture Path browse button to select the picture you wish to use on your button (the standard Open dialog appears, in which you select the path and picture file). This picture will be shown on the top face of your button and maintains its X/Y aspect ratio (i.e. it is not stretched in order to fill the entire button).

Alpha Channel: Click the Alpha Channel browse button to select the picture you wish to use as an Alpha Channel (the standard Open dialog appears, in which select the path and picture file). The purpose of an Alpha Channel is to add a transparent effect to the picture on the button. You do not have to use an Alpha Channel, so if you do not want a transparent effect, leave this field empty.

Alpha Channels are described in "Alpha channels and Bump Maps".

Alignment: Use the Alignment option to place a picture in one of five positions on the button (top, bottom, left, right, middle). Alignment is only relevant when working with Normal buttons (Custom buttons are scaled to fill the entire button frame, making the Alignment option unnecessary).

Transparent Color

Enable: Check this box to enable transparency for the button picture

Color: In this part of the dialog, you select a color within the picture that you would like to be transparent. Click the color button to open the Windows Standard Color Dialog and select the color you would like to be transparent.

An easier way to get the exact color you are looking for is by using the pick tool. Click the pipette button to change the cursor from the normal arrow to a cross. Now you can click anywhere on the screen and the pipette will pick up the color you click, and make this your transparent color.

Note: You can select one color, and one color only, as your transparent color.

The Bump Map object (3D-surface tool)



With this new tool you can give objects or parts of objects a 3D-surface by placing a 'Bump Map' on top of them.

Click the Bump Map tool in the Toolbox and drag out a rectangular frame on your banner. It works exactly like the ordinary picture object. When you have completed the frame, the Open file dialog appears in which you select the picture you wish to use as a Bump Map.

However, unlike the ordinary picture object **you can only use gray-scaled (8 bit) pictures** as Bump Maps. You will find a whole array of Bump Maps in the Multimedia Catalog (select View | Multimedia Catalog from the main menu) that you can drag and drop onto your banner.

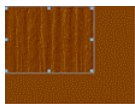
How It Works

A Bump Map is created with a gray-scaled picture, which itself is shown **and** also changes the picture under it.

***Technical note:** If a pixel in the gray-scaled picture has the value 128 (values range from 0 to 256 in 8 bit pictures, 0 being black, 256 being white) the picture under it is not changed at all. If the value is higher than 128 the picture becomes brighter and if the value is lower than 128 the picture becomes darker.*

The Possibilities

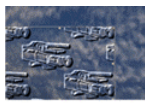
With Bump Maps you can apply a 3D look to existing objects. There are three different ways of using a Bump Map.



Texture



3D Buttons



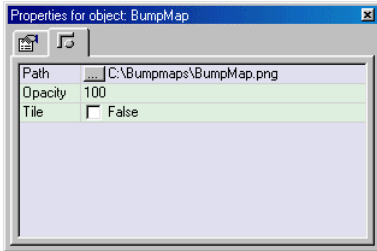
3D Objects

You can even place Bump Maps on top of each other or animate a Bump Map to achieve amazing visual effects.

Bump Map Properties

The description for the tab General is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab Bump Map the following dialog appears:



Path: In this tab you will see the path to the BumpMap picture (next to the browse button).

If you would like to change the Bump Map click the browse button and the Open dialog appears.

Opacity: Sets the transparency of the Bump Map. See "Objects General Description".

Tile: Is not checked by default. If you check Tile, the Bump Map will not be scaled, but will be shown as many times in the object frame as there is room for.

On one hand, this means that if the picture is larger than the picture object, parts of the picture will be cut off.

On the other hand, it means that if the object is larger than the picture, the picture will be repeated until it fills out the object. This way you can use a very small Bump Map picture to create a 3D-surface for the entire banner.

The Rectangle object

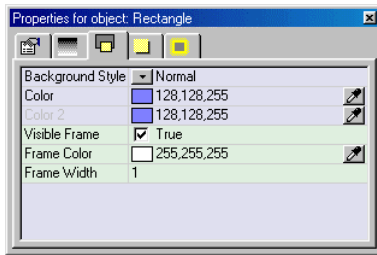


With the Rectangle tool you can create rectangles of any size, shape and color. To create a rectangle, select the Rectangle tool in the Toolbox and on the banner, drag out the rectangle to the size you want.

Rectangle Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab Rectangle the following dialog appears:

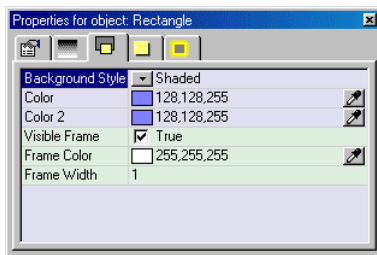


Background Style: In Background Style you can use the drop-down menu to select between:

Normal: Select Normal to give your rectangle a solid color. The default color is light blue, but by clicking the color button you can select the exact color you would like from the Windows Color Dialog.

Transparent: Select Transparent to make your rectangle transparent. This option is useful if you only want to create a frame (see the frame description a little further down), or if you want to create an invisible area.

Shaded: When you select Shaded the Color 2 button becomes available. Use both color buttons to create a horizontal transition from the top color on to the bottom color.



The bottom half of the dialog has the Frame settings.

Visible Frame: Click to decide if the rectangle should have a frame or not

Frame Color: Use the color button to select the exact frame color.

Frame Width: Set the frame width.

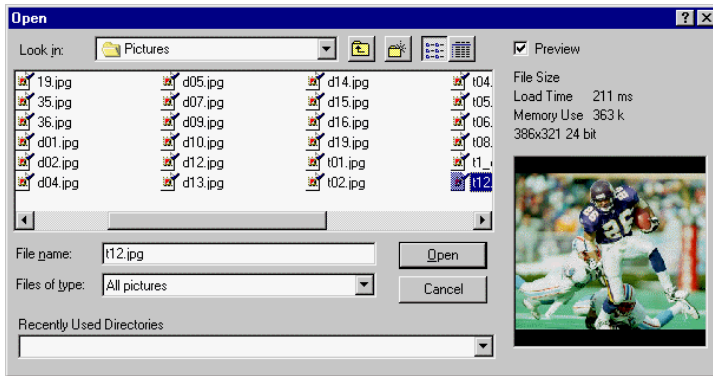


Use the color pick tools to select a color from anywhere within Visual GIF Animator. When you click the pipette the cursor changes into a cross, and you can now click any item, color or dialog to use that color. The picked color appears in the corresponding color button.

The Picture object



Use the Picture tool to drag out a picture object on your banner. When the picture frame is created an Open (file) dialog appears:



In the Open dialog you select the file (picture) you want to place in the picture object. The picture file you select will appear in the Preview window in the lower right corner. To accept the selected file and close the dialog, click Open and the picture is placed in the picture object.

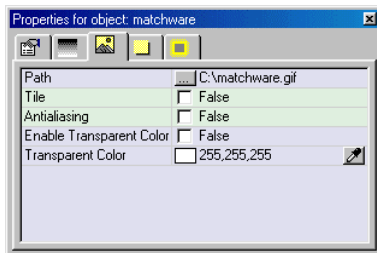
***Tip:** At the bottom of the Open dialog you will see a field containing the last paths you have used. This is very convenient when you use files from several different folders. Simply click the path to the folder you wish to select your picture file from.*

When you have selected the picture the Auto Adjust dialog appears. This dialog lets you automatically adjust a picture to fit the picture frame or to the original size of the picture. To resize to fit the picture in your banner simply click OK.

Picture Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

When you select the tab named Picture, the following dialog appears:



Path: Shows you the path to the picture. If you would like to change the path (or picture) click the browse button and the Open dialog appears (see above).

Tile: Is not checked by default. If you check Tile, the picture will not be scaled, but will be shown as many times in the picture object as there is room for.

On one hand this means that if the picture is larger than the picture object, parts of the picture will be cropped.

On the other hand it means that if the object is larger than the picture, the picture will be repeated until it fills out the object.

In this way, you can use a very small picture to create a background for the entire banner (e.g. bricks, boards, etc.)

Antialiasing: Is not checked by default. However, scaled pictures often look better when you use antialiasing.

You can test the effect by simply clicking it on and off in the editing mode.

***Technical note:** If you check Antialiasing the picture is not scaled by placing and replacing pixels, but via interpolation.*

Transparent Color

Enable: Check this box to enable transparency for the picture.

Color: In this part of the dialog, you select a color within the picture that you would like to be transparent. Click the color button to open the Windows Standard Color Dialog and select the color you would like to be transparent.

An easier way to get the exact color you are looking for is by using the pick tool. Click the pipette button to change the cursor from the normal arrow to a cross. Now you can click anywhere on the screen and the pipette will pick up the color you click, and make this your transparent color.

***Note:** You can select one color, and one color only, as your transparent color.*


The Polygon object





With the Polygon tool you can create polygons as well as curves, lines, circles, arrows etc. For technical reasons the polygon tool works differently from most of the other tools. When you click the Polygon tool in the Toolbox the following dialog appears...




... and the workspace is darkened. The dark workspace tells you that you are now in the polygon-editing mode.

As you can see in the picture above, the  icon is activated by default and you can create your polygon by placing fix-points on the banner. To place a point, simply place the cursor where you would like the point and click the left mouse button.

A white point with a red rim around it  appears. Click somewhere else on the banner to place the next point.

 The first point we placed changes to green and the new point now has the red rim around it, meaning that this point is activated. A blue line connects the two points. This is all you would have to do if the shape you wanted to create was a straight line or an arrow.

You could now exit the polygon-editing mode by clicking the . Click somewhere else on the banner or work areas to place more points.

You do not decide whether you want a line, a polygon, or a curved object until you place the final point. If you leave polygon-editing mode without having closed your polygon you have created a line. If you wish to close your object (and create a polygon) click the very first point you made. VGA asks you if you would like to close the polygon, confirm by clicking Yes.



Select Point: Use this tool to select a point (it becomes white with a red rim instead of green). To move the selected point, hold the left mouse button down and move the mouse to the new position. If you wish to select more points you can do this in one of the following ways:

- Hold down the Ctrl key (on the keyboard) while clicking **each** of the points.
- Hold down the Shift key (on the keyboard) while clicking **two** points (all points between the two will be marked).
- Hold down the Ctrl key and press the letter 'A' (on the keyboard) to select **all** the points.
- Hold down the left mouse button and drag a rectangle out on the work area. All the points inside the rectangle are marked.



Add Points: In the beginning of this section, we briefly described how to use the Add Points tool. There is not much more to it, however, be aware that when you add a point it is added **after** the marked point (the white point with a red rim).

If you wish to place a point between two existing points, use the Select Point tool to mark both points (hold down the Ctrl key and click the two points) then click the Add Points tool and click where you would like to place the new point.



Delete Points: To delete a point in your polygon, click the Delete icon, and then click the point(s) you wish to delete. To return to editing click the Select Point tool or the Add Points tool.



Undo: Click the Undo button to reverse the last editing operation.



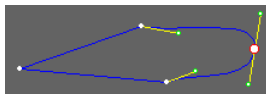
Break Apart: This menu item is only available if you have already closed the polygon.

Select a point and click the Break Apart tool. The polygon is opened after the marked point and VGA adds a new point to the polygon that has in fact become a line.

This way you can change polygons (even the ones from the Multimedia Catalog) to lines or arrows.



To Symmetric Curve: At least one point must be marked to enable this tool. After marking one or more points in the polygon click the Symmetric Curve tool to change the sharp corners into curves. If only one point is marked it will look like this:



At the marked point, you will see a yellow line – a tangent. Pull or move the green dots in either end of the tangent to change the curve. If you pull one of the green dots, the curve flattens at the marked point and is moved further away.

If you move the dot, the tangent turns and the curve becomes sharper on one side of the marked point and more rounded on the other.

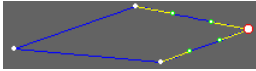
In contrast to the Curve feature, the feature of the Symmetric Curve tool is that you can change the curve on **both** sides of the marked point simultaneously. This gives you a complete curve without any corners or angles.

As you can see the adjacent points also receive a tangent. These, however, are only half-tangents and therefore only work in one direction.



To Curve: This tool is very similar to the To Symmetric Curve tool, but the To Curve tool lets you change each side of the curve independently.

This gives you the opportunity to create all sorts of shapes (with curves, sharp angles, corners etc.). If only one point is marked the To Curve tool will give you a curve, which looks like this:




The object you are designing is not changed (as was the case with the To Symmetric Curve tool), but the tangents are placed on top of the point aligned to the line.

To change the polygon and create curves, pull or turn the tangents as we described for the To Symmetric Curve tool.



To Line: Every curve you create, can be removed by clicking the To Line tool. Select a point (or more) on the curves and click the tool to erase all curves and return to the original straight lines and angles.

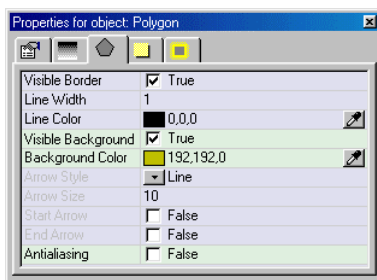


OK: Click the OK menu item to accept all changes and exit the polygon-editing mode. If you want to exit without saving your changes click the  in the top right-hand corner.

Polygon Properties

The description for the tabs General, Visibility, Shadow, and Glow is identical to the description we made earlier in "Objects General Description".

Click the Polygon tab to see the following dialog:



Visible Border: Here you select to show the border color of your polygon object. This option is only relevant when working with closed polygons (connected end-points).

Line Width: If you have made a polygon (closed with corners and curves) you set the width of the polygon border.

If you have made a line (not closed) you set the color of the line.

To change the width, just click the arrows to right of the width field, or enter it manually.

Line Color: If you have made a polygon (closed with corners and curves) you set the color of the polygon border.

If you have made a line (not closed) you set the color of the line.

To change the color, click the color button. The color dialog appears from which you can select your desired border color.

Click the pick tool to select any color from within the program.

Background

Visible: Is Checked by default. Remove checkmark to give the polygon a transparent background. This is used when you want only to show the outline of your polygon.

Color: To change the background color, click the color button. The color dialog appears from which you can select your desired border color. Click the pick tool to select any color from within the program. This is only relevant when Visible Background is checked.

At the bottom half of the dialog you'll find the Line or Arrow options. These options are only available for lines (unclosed polygons).

Arrow Style	<input type="button" value="v"/> Filled
Arrow Size	10
Start Arrow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> True
End Arrow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> True
Antialiasing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> True

Arrow Style: Use the drop-down menu to select which kind of line or arrow you prefer. Line will give you thin arrow heads, Filled will give you thick arrow heads.

Arrow Size: Set the width of the arrow heads. Click the field and use the black arrows to change the size up and down, or enter the size directly in the size field.

Start Arrow: Check to place an arrow head at the beginning of your line.

End Arrow: Check to place an arrow head at the end of your line.

Antialiasing: Antialiasing smoothes the edges of your line or polygon. This is not checked by default. Click to apply antialiasing to the polygon object.

Technical note: Antialiasing is not active during animations and Show / Hide actions. As soon as the animation or effect is complete, antialiasing is activated.


The Animation Path object



Basically the Animation Path tool works exactly like the Polygon tool (see also "Adding real motion" and "Animating an object to a specific position") – and for a good reason: both tools connect points with straight lines or curves. The editing-mode for the two tools is identical, so to learn how to use the Animation Path tool, please read the section about the Polygon tool.



Each point of the animation path represents the exact middle of the animated object. To see how the

animated object looks at each point of the animation click the Preview button , and select the object you are planning to animate. If you wish to use the animation path for more than one object, simply click the button again and select another object.



You can close the animation path (exactly like you closed a polygon) and this way create a never-ending loop.

The Animation Path tool properties are very simple. The dialog only has the General tab, which we described earlier in "The Object's Properties Dialog".

Important: The position of an Animation Path object can be absolute or relative to the object that uses the path. This means that you can let any object follow the animation path at the path's current position. You can also let the animation path start from the object's current position or let the animation path end at the object's current position (the entire path is actually displaced so the start – or end point is at the object's position). An animation path is not attached to a specific object, but can be used by any number of objects (and moved relatively to each one).

In general: Several objects with different start and end coordinates can use the same animation path.

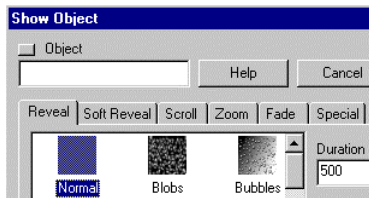
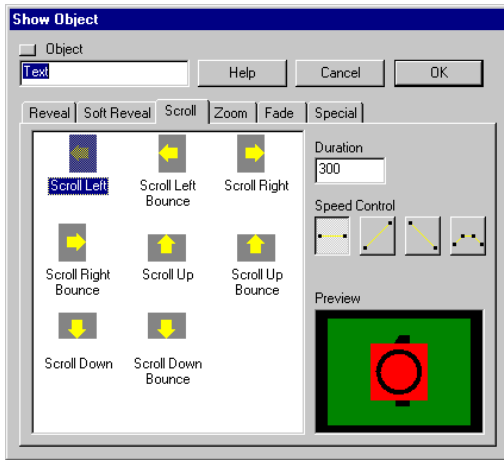
Actions

Show/Hide actions

Show

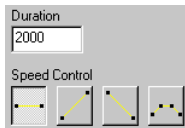


You use the Show action to make hidden objects in the banner become visible. When you drop the Show action on the Timeline the Show dialog appears.



Select the object you wish to show. When you click the browse button (next to the word Object) the Object List appears, from which you can select the object you wish to show. The Show action is only relevant to objects that are currently not visible (hidden).

Click an effect to see a preview (in the Preview window at the bottom right-hand corner) of how your object will be shown. If you select Normal in the Reveal tab, your object is shown without any effect.



The duration is automatically set for the effect, but you can easily enter another. Simply click the Duration field and type in the amount of time you wish to allocate for the effect (the time is shown in milliseconds, 1000 Ms = 1 second).

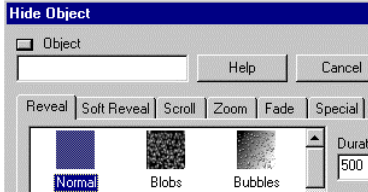
You can also change the acceleration of the effect. You have four different acceleration settings: None, Accelerate, Decelerate, Combination. Some effects may look good using one type of acceleration and others may look good using another. Try for yourself to find out what kind of acceleration you prefer for different effects.

When you have selected an effect and changed other settings, click OK to accept and close the dialog.

Hide



The Hide action does the opposite of the Show action and hides currently visible objects.



When you drop the Hide action in the Timeline the Hide dialog appears. This dialog is identical to the Show dialog. When you click the browse button (next to word 'Object') the Object List appears from which you can select the object you wish to hide.

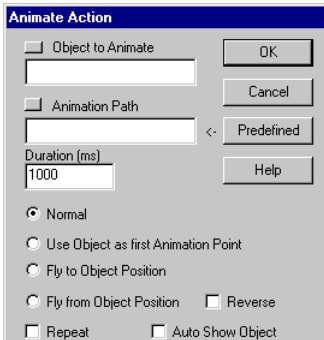
The Hide action is only relevant to objects that are visible.


You have all the same effects available as in the Show dialog. Click an effect to see a preview in the Preview window in the bottom right-hand corner. When you have decided on the effect you wish to use, click OK to accept and close the dialog.

Animate action

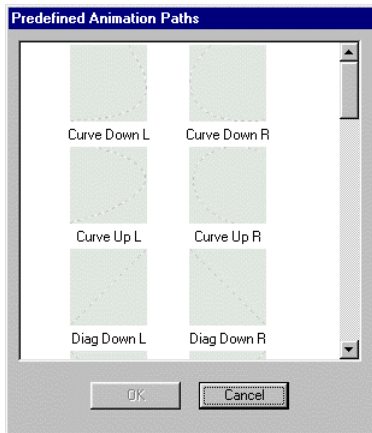


The Animate action lets you move objects across the screen. In order for the animation to take place you must have created at least one Animation Path for the object to follow (see the description of the Animation Path tool). As soon as you drop the Animate action on the Timeline the following dialog appears:



Object to Animate: In the first field you select the object you wish to animate. Click the browse button  (next to the words 'Object to Animate') and select the object from the Object List.

Animation Path Object: In the second field you select the animation path the object should follow. Click the browse button (next to the words 'Animation Path Object') and select the animation path from the Object List. If you have only created one animation path it will automatically appear in this field. You may also click the Predefined button to select a predefined animation path from the Multimedia Catalog.



Duration: In the Duration field you set the time for the entire animation. You set the value in milliseconds (1000 milliseconds = 1 second). The time is independent of the Speed Control described below.

Under the Duration field, you have four radio buttons. Each one allows you to select a different type of animation and the type you choose will decide the starting point for the animation. The four radio buttons are:

Normal: The object follows the animation path at the path's current position (where you placed it on the screen). The object "jumps" from its position to the first point in the animation path where the animation starts. The object is then animated from the first point to the last point along the animation path. The "jump" usually looks unnatural and is normally used if the object is hidden when the Animate action is activated. You can check Auto Show to automatically show a hidden object when the animation begins.

Use Object as First Animation Point: The object's current position will be used as the initial animation point meaning that the first point in the animation path actually becomes number two, as the object is animated from its current position to the beginning of the animation path. When the object reaches the first point on the animation path it continues along the path. The time set in the Duration field (time used on the animation) starts when the object is first moved and ends at the final point in the animation path.

Fly to Object Position: Here the animation path is displaced, meaning that the animation does not take place at the animation path's position, but at a position relative to that of the object being animated. The animation path is moved so that the object follows the path and ends at the object's current position. This means that the object can "fly" into the screen, following the animation path, and stop exactly at the point where you originally placed it.

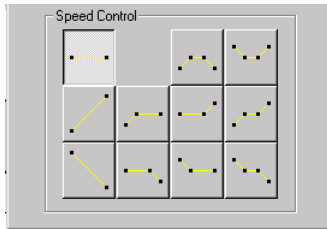
Fly from Object Position: Again the animation path is relative. The animation path is placed so the object starts from its current position and follows the path. This way the object can "fly" off the screen. This option is the most commonly used when the object is visible before the animation starts.

Reverse: Click this checkbox to start the animation from the last point in the selected animation path going back to the first point. This is convenient if you want to animate an object back and forth along a complex line or curve, or if you would like to animate several objects from both sides of the screen along the same type of path.

Repeat: Select Repeat to start the animation over as soon as the animation reaches the end of the animation path.

Auto Show Object: A hidden object is automatically shown when the animation starts. This is useful when you have several hidden objects on your banner that you animate one by one, or if you have animation paths that start outside the screen and animate the object into the screen.

Speed Control: In the bottom half of the animation dialog you set the acceleration of the animation. As default, the animation speed is constant and does not change. The dialog looks like this:

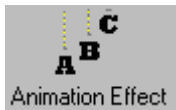


The speed buttons show you the object acceleration and deceleration during the animation. The line in each button shows the speed (going from left to right):

- A horizontal line means that the speed does not change.
- An upward pointing line means that the object accelerates.
- A downward pointing line means that the object decelerates.

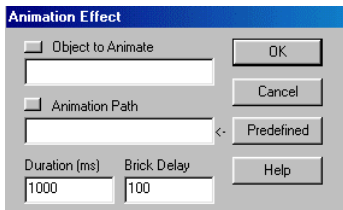
Click the speed button that gives you the best appearance for your animation.


Animation Effect action



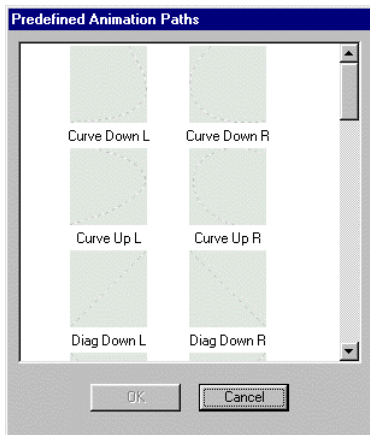
With the Animate Effect action you can animate an object across the screen while splitting it up in small pieces.

In order for the animation effect to take place you must have created at least one Animation Path for the object to follow (see the description of the Animation Path tool). As soon as you drop the Animate Effect action on the Timeline the Animation Effect dialog appears. Its top half is shown here:



Object to Animate: In the first field you select the object you wish to animate. Click the browse button  (next to the words 'Object to Animate') and select the object from the Object List.

Animation Path: In the second field you select the animation path the object should follow. Click the browse button (next to the words 'Animation Path') and select the animation path from the Object List. If you have only created one animation path it will automatically appear in this field. You may also click the Predefined button to select a predefined animation path from the Multimedia Catalog.



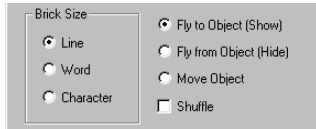
Duration: In the Duration field you set the animation time for each brick. You set the value in milliseconds (1000 milliseconds = 1 second). The time is independent of the speed control described below.

Brick Delay: Each brick is animated along the animation path. Here you set the delay between each brick in milliseconds.

The Brick Size part of the dialog changes depending on the object you select in the Object to Animate field.

Text-based objects

If you select a text-based object (Headline or Text) the Brick Size part of the dialog will look like this:



Brick Size

Line: Click to animate the selected text object one line at a time (works only with paragraph text as a Headline is just one line).

Word: Click to animate the selected text object one word at a time.

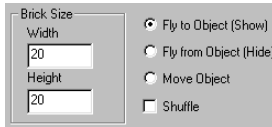
Character: Click to animate the selected text object one character at a time.

***Tip:** To show text one letter at a time without animating the letters, click the Animation Path tool and make just one animation point. In the Animation Effect dialog select Character and Fly to Object.*

***Note:** If your text is antialiased, antialiasing is disabled as long as the animation effect runs. As soon as the animation effect is complete antialiasing is applied.*

Other objects

If you select any other type of object or group the Brick Size part of the dialog will look like this:



Brick Size

Here you select the size of the bricks that your object or group will be divided into.

Width: Sets the width of the bricks in pixels.

Height: Sets the height of the bricks in pixels.

When the animation effect is executed the selected object or group is divided into bricks and each brick animated along the selected animation path.

The first brick is the one in top left corner (unless you have checked Shuffle), then the second brick in the top row, then the third, continuing until the last brick in the top row. Then the first brick in the second row, second brick etc.

Technical note: The number of pixels entered in Brick Size is used to divide the object into bricks, going from left to right, top to bottom.

If the object size values are not exactly divisible by the brick size values (resulting in whole number values), the bottom row bricks and / or right-hand side bricks will be larger than the other bricks.

***Tip:** Animation effects look best when all bricks are the same size. Therefore it is often a good idea to take the time to calculate a height and width that will work well for the specific object.*

1. Check the size of the object in the Properties dialog (General tab, Height and Width).
2. Select a good size for your bricks, by finding a number that your object is divisible by.
3. Enter the brick size in the Animation Effect dialog.

***Note:** Glow and shadow are disabled while the animation effect is running. As soon as the animation effect is complete glow and shadow are applied.*

On the right-hand side you select how you wish to use the Animation Effect

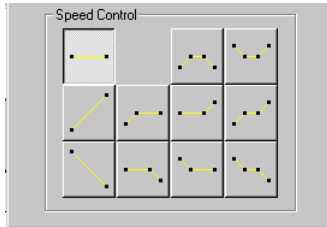
Fly to Object (Show): Check this radio button when you wish to show an invisible object or animate an object that is located outside the banner. The object is divided into the specified bricks and animated one brick at a time. When the animation is over the object remains shown.

Fly from Object (Hide): Check this radio button when you wish to hide a visible object or animate an object off the banner. The object is divided into the specified bricks and animated one brick at a time. When each brick animation is over the brick is hidden.

Move Object: Check this radio button when you wish to move a visible object on the banner. The object is divided into the specified bricks and animated one brick at a time. When the animation is over the object remains shown.

Shuffle: When you do not check Shuffle the bricks are animated one by one starting from the top left corner or with the first letter, word, or line. Check Shuffle to animate the bricks randomly.


The bottom of the animation effect dialog is identical to that of the animate action. Please see "Animate Action" for details.

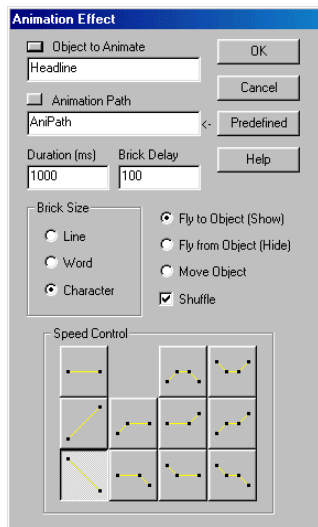


Example 1:

- Click File | New. Select 392*72 (Full banner with nav bar).
- Drag out a Headline object on your banner. Enter your headline, e.g. "MatchWare". Click OK.
- Right click the Headline and in the local menu deselect Show Object.
- Drag the Animation Effect action onto the Timeline and drop it at 0.2 seconds.

The Animation Effect dialog appears.

- As Object to Animate select Headline.
- Click the Predefined button to select an animation path from the Multimedia Catalog.
- Set Duration to 1000 and Brick Delay to 100.
- In Brick Size select Character.
- Check Shuffle.
- Select acceleration (Speed Control). In this example we have selected full deceleration .



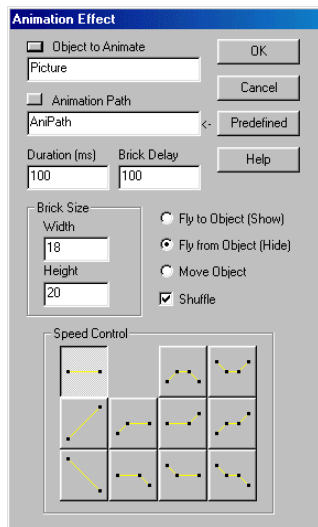
- Click OK.
- Test the banner (select Test | Run or click the black play button in standard bar).

Example 2:

- Click File | New. Select 234*60 (Half banner).
- Drag out a picture object on your banner. Select a picture from your hard drive and resize it to fit the whole banner.
- Drag the Animation Effect action onto the Timeline and drop it at 0.5 seconds.

The Animation Effect dialog appears.

- As Object to Animate select your picture (it has the same name as the file).
- Click the Predefined button to select an animation path from the Multimedia Catalog.
- Set Duration to 100 and Brick Delay to 100.
- In Brick Size set Width to 18 and Height to 20.
- Check Shuffle.



- Click OK.
- Test the banner (select Test | Run or click the black play button in standard bar).

Size of the Animated GIF

When you use the animation effect the animated GIF may become very large. Therefore use the animation effect with caution. Make it short and try to keep the animation in a small area of the banner. For more information on how to optimize your banners see "How to make small GIF files".

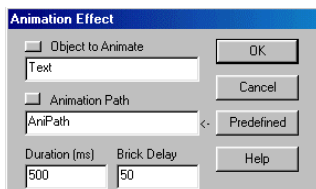
Technical note: *Calculating the total duration of an animation effect*

The total duration of the animation effect can be calculated as follows:

- Take the number of bricks and multiply by Brick Delay value. Add Duration value.

Example 1:

Text Object: Visual GIF Animator (3 words, 17 characters)
 Duration: 500 Ms
 Brick Delay: 50 Ms



If Brick Size set to Character:

Calculation:

$$\text{Total duration} = (17 * 50 \text{ Ms}) + 500 \text{ Ms} = 1350 \text{ Ms} = 1,35 \text{ seconds}$$

If Brick Size set to Word:

Calculation:

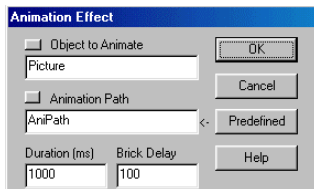
$$\text{Total duration} = (3 * 50 \text{ Ms}) + 500 \text{ Ms} = 650 \text{ Ms} = 0,65 \text{ seconds}$$

Example 2:

Picture Object: Height: 60 pixels
Width: 240 pixels

Duration: 1000 Ms

Brick Delay: 100 Ms



If Brick Size set to:

Width: 20

Height: 20

Calculation:

$$\text{Number of bricks} = (240 * 60) / (20 * 20) = 36$$

$$\text{Total duration} = (36 * 100 \text{ Ms}) + 1000 \text{ Ms} = 4600 \text{ Ms} = 4.6 \text{ seconds}$$

If Brick Size set to:

Width: 40

Height: 40

Calculation:

$$\text{Number of bricks} = (240 * 60) / (40 * 40) = 9$$

$$\text{Total duration} = (9 * 100 \text{ Ms}) + 1000 \text{ Ms} = 1900 \text{ Ms} = 1.9 \text{ seconds}$$

Exit action



The Exit action determines the total time of your GIF or AVI.

If you want the VGA file to last 10 seconds, simply place the exit action at the 10-second mark on the Timeline.

When you test your document, test mode is closed when it reaches the Exit action and the document returns to editing-mode. When you export your file to Animated GIF and select Loop, the loop is executed where you placed the Exit action, meaning that your GIF runs from the beginning to the Exit action over and over.

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