

Desktop Science

BY OLAV MARTIN KVERN

Felicitous Frames. PageMaker's other layout method is something to explore, not ignore

Frames!

Did you jump? I've found that the word *frames* seems to terrify longtime PageMaker users. Every other page-layout application uses them—to get text or graphics onto a page, you create a frame and then insert content into the frame. To many PageMaker users, frames are the antithesis of PageMaker's free-form text blocks and independent graphics. To many creative people, PageMaker “feels” better than other page-layout programs because it doesn't use frames.

In this column, I'll try to explain how to use frames and why they're not something to be scared of. Frames are just containers, and PageMaker, like every other page-layout program, has always had containers to put elements in. In previous versions of PageMaker, we couldn't see or format these containers, but they were there nonetheless. Other publishing programs (FrameMaker, for example), made their containers more obvious, let you control various aspects of their behavior or apply fills and

strokes to them, and called them frames.

In PageMaker 6.5, you can choose to work either way: with the “invisible” frames that you've had in previous versions of the program, or with frames you can modify and format, as in other page-layout and drawing programs. And now, with frames, you can fearlessly mix and match methods as it suits you—combining them in a layout, or changing specific elements from one to the other as you see fit.

Why use frames?

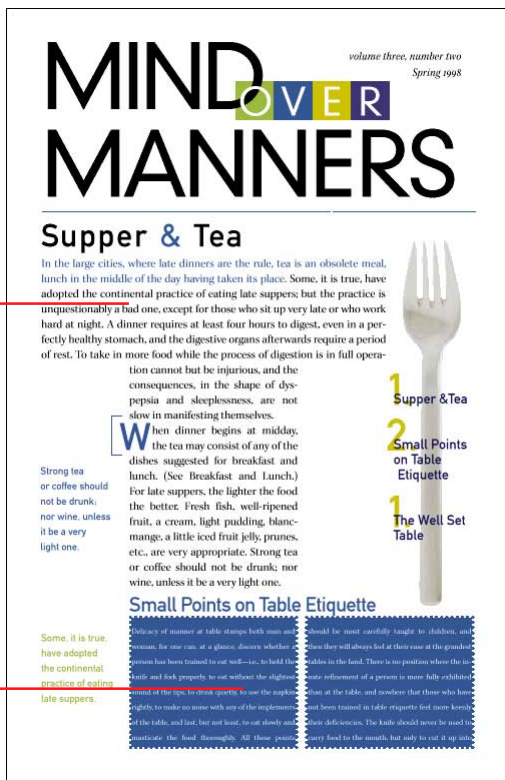
If you're laying out a newsletter, newspaper, or magazine, you'll probably find frames easier to use than text blocks. You can, for example, use a frame to hold a place for a particular story, even if the text for the story isn't yet ready for layout. (To do this using text blocks, you'd have to lay out a “placeholder” story, and then replace the text of that story.)

If you work with a lot of sidebars, you can use a frame to enclose the entire sidebar, and then apply a color to the background of the frame. This is far easier than drawing a rectangle behind a text block and then grouping the rectangle and the text block. I also think frames provide a good way to work with tables, or with designs that require headings or other text that must “hang” outside the main column of text. And if your design calls for angled columns of text, you'll have a very hard time producing it without using frames.

Like just about anything else in life, PageMaker's frames come with a set of “ground rules.”

Frames make it easier to manage text flow between columns of differing widths.

The background color of these two linked frames is an integral part of the frame, not a separate object.



Desktop Science

ground rules:

- There are two types of frames in PageMaker 6.5: text frames and graphic frames. The content of a frame determines which type of frame it is, and how it behaves.
- You can set graphic frames to automatically expand to fit the graphics they contain.
- Text frames cannot automatically expand to fit the text they contain.
- You can't paste a frame into a text block or into another text frame.
- You can link a series of text frames, just as you can link a series of text blocks, but you can't link a text block to a text frame, or link a text frame to a graphic frame.
- Any PageMaker-drawn shape—excluding lines, but including open-path polygons—can become a frame containing text or a graphic.
- Any text frame can be turned into a graphic frame, and vice versa.

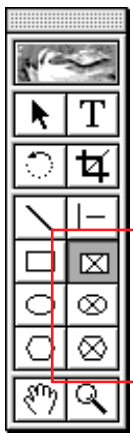
Creating frames

To create a frame, you can draw it using any of the frame-drawing tools or convert any PageMaker-drawn object to a frame. To do this, select the object and choose Change to Frame from the Frame submenu of the Element menu (Ctrl + Alt + Shift + F in Windows or Command + Option + Shift + F on the Macintosh).

You can add content—text or a graphic—to a frame using any or all of the following methods.

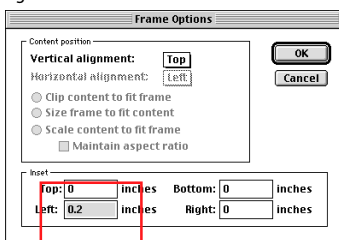
Type text into a frame: Create a frame, select the text tool, and click the tool inside the frame. When you start typing, PageMaker will insert the characters you type into the frame. You can also paste text from the Clipboard into a frame.

Place content into a frame: Create a frame and select it. Choose Place from the File menu (Ctrl + D in Windows or Command + D on the Macintosh) to display the Place Document dialog box. Select a file, select Within Frame, and click OK. If you forgot to turn on the Within Frame option, and find yourself staring at a loaded place icon, you might think you have to cancel the place operation, but you don't—you can still place the file inside a frame by clicking the place icon on the frame.



frame-drawing tools

figure 1



Some, it is true, have adopted the continental practice of eating late suppers.

or coffee should wine, unless it be

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Frame options for the text frame control the alignment and "gutters" of paragraphs.

Some, it is true, have adopted the continental practice of eating late suppers.

Join content to a frame: Select a text block or imported graphic using the pointer tool, and press Shift and select a frame. Choose Attach Content from the Frame submenu of the Element menu (Ctrl + F in Windows or Command + F on the Macintosh), and PageMaker puts the object inside the frame. Note that this technique does not work for PageMaker-drawn objects.

Frame a story using a script: Click the text tool inside a text block, and then run the script named "Frame Story." (You'll find this script in the Frame and Story folder inside the Text folder in the Scripts palette.) PageMaker draws a frame around all of the text blocks in the selected story (it also preserves any overset text). This is a great way of converting previously created text blocks to text frames.

Sometimes you need to get the content *out* of a frame. To do this, select the frame and choose Separate Content from the Element submenu of the Frame menu. PageMaker separates the content from the frame and leaves both the frame and the content on the page.

Setting frame options

Once you've added text or a graphic to a frame, you'll probably want to adjust how the content of the frame is aligned, how the frame itself looks, and so forth.

Changing alignment. To display the options for a frame, select the frame using the pointer tool, and then choose Frame Options from the Element submenu of the Frame menu (Ctrl + Alt + F in Windows or Command + Option + F on the Macintosh). See figure 1.

The options you see in the Frame Options dialog box depend on the frame you've selected and on the content of that frame. If you've selected a text frame, you'll be able to set the vertical alignment and the inset distances (the inner "margin," or border) of the text inside the frame (figure 1). If you've selected a graphic frame, you'll be able to specify that the frame should expand to fit the graphic, or that the graphic should get clipped or scaled to fit the frame (see the illustration on page 58). You can also tell PageMaker how to align the graphic horizontally and vertically inside the frame.

So how do you control the horizontal alignment of text inside a text frame? It's easy—you use paragraph alignment, just as you would inside a text block. Since this setting is paragraph-specific, you need to assign it to individual paragraphs manually with the text tool or automatically via paragraph styles; you can't assign it to the text frame per se.

Adjusting a frame's appearance. You can apply fills and strokes to frames, too, just as you can to any other PageMaker-drawn graphic. Select the frame with the pointer tool, and then make choices from the Fill and Stroke submenus of the Element menu or the Fill and Stroke dialog box, or use the Colors palette's controls to apply colors to the frame's fill or stroke.

When you apply a stroke of None to a frame, the frame's border displays on screen as a one-pixel-wide gray line even when you deselect the frame

Supper & Tea

In the large cities, where late dinners are the rule, tea is an obsolete meal, lunch in the middle of the day having taken its place. Some, it is true, have adopted the continental practice of eating late suppers, but the practice is unquestionably a bad one, except for those who sit up very late or who work hard at night. A dinner requires at least four hours to digest, even in a perfectly healthy stomach, and the digestive organs afterwards require a period of rest. To take in more food while

(though, of course, it's a nonprinting line). To hide this line, turn off PageMaker's guides.

Linking text frames

Like text blocks, text frames can be linked together to form a threaded story. To link text frames, click the lower windowshade handle of the first text frame (which probably contains text, but might not). PageMaker changes the cursor into the link icon (figure 2). Click the link icon on the next text frame. PageMaker links the two text frames.

You can link text frames even if the frames aren't on the same page or spread. Click a windowshade handle, and then, after PageMaker displays the link icon, turn to the page containing the text frame you want to link to. Click on the frame, and the two text frames are linked. You can click the page icons, move the scroll bars, and use keyboard shortcuts without losing the link icon (just as you can when you're placing text and the cursor is a place-text icon).

To unlink a text frame from the preceding frame, hold down Ctrl + Shift (Windows) or Command + Shift (Macintosh), and click the upper windowshade handle of the frame. PageMaker breaks the story where you clicked, flowing any text contained in text frames following the point at which you clicked back into the text frames preceding that point.

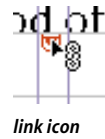
Creating angled columns

An angled column is an effect that's difficult to get using text blocks, but easy to produce using text frames. Here's how you do it.

1. Double-click the polygon tool (not the frame polygon tool). PageMaker displays the Polygon dialog box. Type 4 in the Number of Sides field, make sure that the Star Inset field is set to 0 (zero), and then click OK to close the dialog box.

What are we doing? Ultimately, we're after an editable rectangular frame. But rectangles created with the rectangle tool can't be edited, so we're going to use the polygon tool to create a rectangle instead, and we're changing the settings via the regular polygon tool because

figure 2



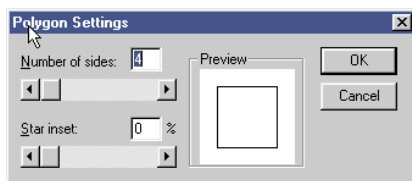
To link text frames together as you create them, hold down Ctrl (Windows) or Command (Macintosh) as you draw the frames. Each new frame you create will be linked to the frame you drew before it. Please note that this works only with "regular" frames (frames created with a single click-and-drag of any frame tool), not with irregular polygons you create by clicking to draw each line segment. Also note that in PageMaker for Windows before version 6.52, you couldn't link frames while you created them.

To navigate your linked text frames quickly and easily, click your text tool in the text and use the arrow keys to move up and down; PageMaker will automatically jump to another page if necessary. Try that with text blocks!

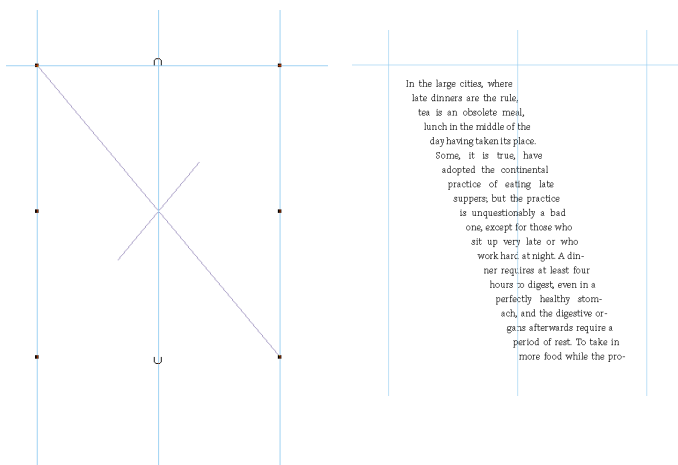
those settings carry over to the frame polygon tool.

2. Set up guides to define a rectangle the width and height of the desired column. Don't worry about the angle of the column—we'll come to that later.
3. Select the frame polygon tool from the toolbox and draw a rectangular frame that's the height you want the angled column to be.
4. Double-click the frame to edit its shape. Drag the two bottom vertices of the frame to create the angle you want. You'll have to move them one at a time. You might want to watch the Control palette as you move the vertices—that way, you'll be able to move them the same distance.
5. Attach text to the frame.

If you want more than one angled column, duplicate the first column before you add text to it, link the columns together, and then attach text to the column.



We've created an editable polygon to achieve this angled-column effect, but you could also create a polygon of any shape and then convert it to a frame.

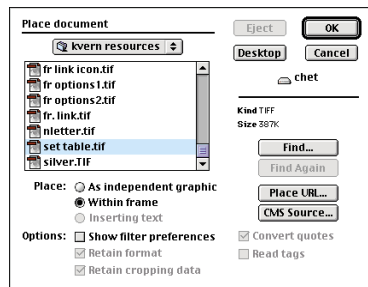
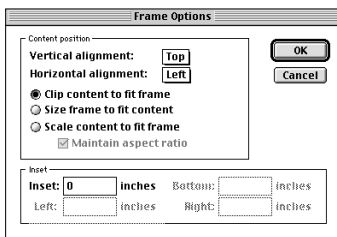


Desktop Science

Frames as placeholders for graphics

Traditionally, many of us have used rectangles as placeholders for graphics, and then replaced them with our imported graphics. The trouble is that the incoming graphic scales, or stretches, to fit the area of the placeholder. The result? I'm sure you've seen newsletters full of distorted graphics—what I call the “funhouse mirror” effect. How can you use a graphic placeholder to make sure that the incoming graphic fills the area you've defined using a placeholder, but doesn't get distorted?

It's easy—use a frame. Draw the frame, and then open the Frame Options dialog box. Select the Clip Content to Fit Frame option (I leave the various alignment options up to you). When it's time to place a graphic, select the frame and choose Place from the File menu. Select a file, select Within Frame, and click OK. PageMaker crops the graphic so that it fills the frame.



Does the graphic scale to fit the frame, or does the frame scale to fit the graphic? With PageMaker's frame controls, you have a choice.

though—you can't undo this drag. If the image is smaller than the frame, you'll probably want to detach it, scale it so that it's larger than the frame, and then attach it to the frame again. Either way, you'll avoid the “stretched and squashed” look.

Adding graphics to frames using a script

As I mentioned previously, PageMaker 6.5 includes a script for turning selected text blocks into text frames. But suppose you want to put all of the hundreds of graphics in your catalog inside graphic frames—maybe you want to put a keyline around each image, and this is the easiest way. To do that, you'll have to draw a frame for each graphic, select the graphic and the frame, and then attach each graphic to its frame.

Or will you? I've written a script that will save you the trouble. You don't need to know much about PageMaker's scripting language to use it; just type the script in the right place and you'll have a handy tool you can use over and over again.

1. Display the Scripts palette, if it's not already visible

(choose Show Scripts from the Plug-in Palettes submenu of the Window menu).

2. Choose New Script from the Scripts palette's pop-up menu. PageMaker asks you to name the script file. Enter a name you can remember (such as “Frame graphics”) and save the script file somewhere in PageMaker's Scripts folder. Click Save, and PageMaker displays the Script Editor window.

3. Type the following script in the window. Click OK when you've finished editing the script. The script appears in your Scripts palette.

```
--This script puts all of the imported
--graphics in the current selection inside
--graphic frames. This script doesn't
--handle transformed (i.e., rotated) objects
--particularly well.From Olav Martin
--Kvern's "Desktop Science" column,
--Adobe Magazine, Spring 1998 issue.
getselectidlisttop>>numberOfObjects,objectList
loop counter = 0, numberOfObjects
set objectList>nObjectID, nMaskID,
nGroupID, nDrawNumber, objectType,
bTransformed, bLinked, x1, y1, x2, y2, ulX,
ulY, lrX, lrY, objectList
if (objectType # (6,8,9,10,11,14))
box x1,y1,x2,y2
toggleframe
framecontentpos 1,1,1,1
selectIDextend nObjectID
attachcontent
endif
endloop
deselect
```

Note: The text highlighted in blue (above) is one long line of code; don't press Return until you've typed it all.

4. Select a series of (unframed) graphics. You can actually use Select All to select everything on a page—the script will put frames only around the imported graphics and groups it finds in the selection.

5. Double-click the script in the Scripts palette. If you've typed everything correctly, PageMaker will place frames around all of the graphics you selected.

The final frame

As a faithful follower of PageMaker, I find the inclusion of frames in PageMaker 6.5 a beautiful and moving reconciliation of competing views of page layout. We can have it both ways—the fluidity of free-form layout with text blocks and graphics, and the rigidity and control offered by frames. All in one package.

Please feel free to drop me a line care of the magazine or at okvern@ix.netcom.com. I'd love to hear from you, and your comments help me make this column better. I can't always reply quickly, but I read and think about every message. Thanks! ♦

Olav Martin Kvern is a software developer, writer, designer, and illustrator, and is the author of the Real World PageMaker and Real World FreeHand books.