

Chapter 1

Introducing FileMaker Pro

In This Chapter

- ▶ Why FileMaker?
 - ▶ Knowing what to use FileMaker for
 - ▶ Choosing a version of FileMaker
 - ▶ Using toolbars
 - ▶ Configuring FileMaker
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How many times have you heard the phrase “information is power”? The ability to keep and manage information accurately is indeed powerful, especially when that information is vital to your business or personal life. FileMaker places that power in your hands by giving you the ability to easily create, manage, and view vital (and sometimes not so vital) information. The good news is that a certificate from High Tech U is *not* required to tap into all that power!

Why Use FileMaker?

Yes, you can choose from a lot of products designed for keeping track of information. Just off the top of my head, I can think of Microsoft Access, Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, Acius 4D, FoxBase, MySQL, and dBASE (Yes, it's still around). So, with all these other products out there, why should you use FileMaker? Here are just some of the reasons:

- ✔ Through the use of layouts, FileMaker provides a point-and-click interface for designing databases without requiring you to have prior database experience.
- ✔ FileMaker allows for cross-platform databases for Microsoft Windows and Mac OS X. You can design your database in one environment and run it on both platforms.
- ✔ You can publish your database to the Web in just a few clicks, which means that users on any platform with a compatible browser can use your database — even Linux users.

- ✔ FileMaker lets you save data as an Adobe PDF, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, an XML document, and many other formats for importing and exporting data.
- ✔ FileMaker comes with 30 Starter Solutions databases that you can put to work right away, or you can examine their script code, layouts, and databases to find more about FileMaker development.
- ✔ You can easily use FileMaker for storing and showing pictures and movies, playing sounds, and linking with many different multimedia file types.
- ✔ FileMaker provides full, multiuser support for up to five users without requiring the user to add any additional licenses or patches. (FileMaker Server supports up to 250 users.)
- ✔ FileMaker has a powerful point-and-click script programming environment for creating sophisticated applications, while it preserves an easy-to-use list of robust functions that can be assigned to buttons and layout objects.

With over 10 million licensed copies sold, FileMaker is a significant database design and development tool for use by novices and seasoned developers.

Common uses for FileMaker

Now that you have the power of FileMaker in your hands, what are the types of things that you can use FileMaker for? Here are some common databases that have been designed with FileMaker:

- ✔ **Contact management:** That's a fancy way of saying *an address book*. This is one of the most prevalent uses for FileMaker. In fact, one of the sample applications that comes with FileMaker is named Contact Manager. It's perfect for tracking your personal and business contacts.
- ✔ **Inventory control:** Need a place to track all your products? Many developers design inventory control applications with FileMaker. And with the integration with e-mail, you can use FileMaker to automatically e-mail your vendors when your products on hand are getting low.
- ✔ **Project management:** This is another great example of the type of things that people are doing with FileMaker. They track their projects, tasks associated with the projects, and the people assigned to handle those tasks and projects.
- ✔ **Time and billing:** This is one way my employer and I use FileMaker. As we do projects for our customers, we keep track of how much time we put into a project. Then FileMaker generates invoices and reports for billing our customers.
- ✔ **Tracking newspaper ads:** This is how the USA Today folks use FileMaker. They keep track of all the newspaper ads in the newspaper, their locations in the paper, and the date they are to be included in the print run. Plus, the information is shared with their AS/400 computer via SQL. Now that's power!

Picking the Version That's Best for You

The full range of FileMaker products is designed to fit the needs of any database, but you most likely want FileMaker Pro or FileMaker Pro Advanced. Although FileMaker Pro is the base version of FileMaker, don't think that it lacks power. It provides all the tools necessary for creating, customizing, and managing databases for use as stand-alone, multi-user, or Web-based databases.

However, FileMaker Pro Advanced comes with extra features that you'll find especially useful in database design and scripting. Along with the features of FileMaker Pro, FileMaker Advanced supports tooltips, custom menus, advanced script debugging with data viewing, a built-in calendar control, and the ability to create runtime FileMaker applications. Tooltips make it easier to blend seamless hints and reminders on using your database application. Custom menus let you tailor a database solution to your particular clientele, eliminating unnecessary menus and providing menus and menu items specific to your solution and client. Although FileMaker Pro's scripting is one of the easiest-to-use programming environments around, scripting is still programming and the ability to step through a script to ascertain why it is doing something you don't expect (or not doing something you do expect) is very helpful in getting your scripts just right.

A version to suit every purpose

In addition to FileMaker Pro and FileMaker Pro Advanced, you can get FileMaker in a few other ways, too. The following versions suit more specialized uses of FileMaker:

- ✔ **FileMaker Mobile 8** helps you extend your FileMaker databases to the Palm OS and Pocket PC PDA devices, and it lets you synchronize your data with all the FileMaker 8 products. In this hand-held world, you and/or your clients are prone to be tethered to a PDA. Being able to access your FileMaker Pro data from your PDA is an obvious step.
- ✔ **FileMaker Server 8** is used in larger, multi-user environments. It offers support for up to

250 users, along with the necessary tools for security, automated backups, and remote administration. If you develop for a corporate or institutional user, five simultaneous users just won't cut it. Deploying your solution via FileMaker Pro Server is the next step up.

- ✔ **FileMaker Server 8 Advanced** has the same features as FileMaker Server 8; plus, it supports up to 100 Web-based users, 50 ODBC/JDBC users, and 250 FileMaker 7 and FileMaker 8 users. The top rung on the FileMaker Pro ladder is for those of you with really heavy usage requirements.

The Happy Modes of FileMaker

The word *mode* makes me think of the word *mood*. I guess I'm just weird that way. However, notice the following similarity. The mood of your spouse, friend, or coworker can determine what you're going to ask for, just as the mode that FileMaker is in dictates what you can ask it to do. I'm just glad that all the modes of FileMaker are happy modes. Each of the four modes helps you get something done by offering different types of functionality. If you're new to FileMaker, I'm happy to introduce them:

- ✓ **Layout** is the mode where you'll spend much of your time because it's for designing the layouts and reports your customers see and employ (in the Browse and Find modes) when entering, perusing, and searching for data.
- ✓ **Browse** mode is for browsing and editing the data in the database. This is the mode where you can check out your final product, and it's the mode that your users will likely use most often.
- ✓ **Find** mode is for searching for specific data within the database. This is where your customers search for records in your database, so you should make sure to design layouts that facilitate searching.
- ✓ In **Preview** mode, what you see is what you get! It's for previewing what the printed layout or report will look like before your customer actually prints it.



So, where will you spend most of your time? Initially, if you're designing a database application, you do most of your work in Layout mode as a developer. After you complete the application, you spend most of your time in Browse mode as an application user with an occasional jaunt into the Find and Preview modes.

To move in and out of the different modes, you can use the Tool palette. Although most of the tools on the palette change as you move between the modes, you always see the following buttons, which you click to move to a different mode:



Browse mode

Find mode

Layout mode

Preview mode

Dealing with data in Browse mode

I was in a bookstore a little while back, and one of the store clerks asked if they could help me find anything. My reply was, “No thanks. I’m just browsing.” Then it hit me. I was standing in the middle of a huge database in browse mode. Every book was a record in a huge, physical database. And as I moved around the store, I was changing my view and stepping through different records in the database. FileMaker Pro mimics that real-world process with the Browse mode. When you design your layouts and create your scripts, keep in mind that your customers will be using them to facilitate this browsing, so make them easy to navigate and use. Cluttered layouts are like a store whose aisles form a maze — they frustrate the customer.

Browse mode is primarily for viewing, editing, sorting, hiding, and deleting database records. Figure 1-1 shows a sample application (the FileMaker Contact Management example) in Browse mode.

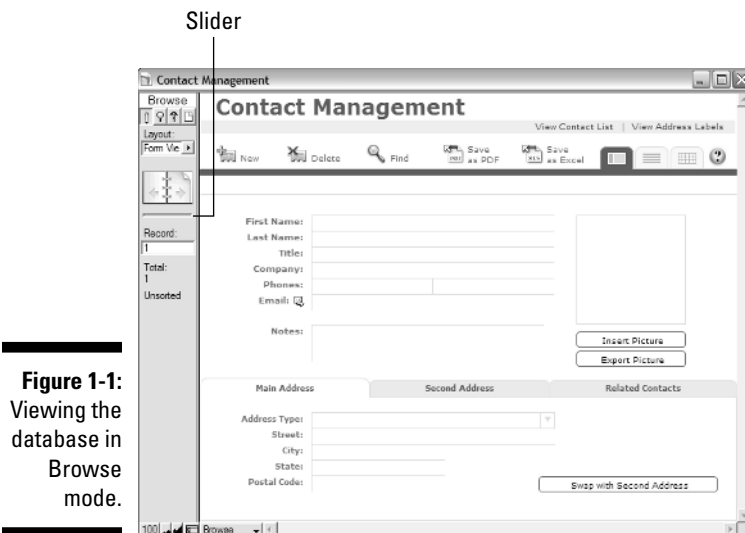


Figure 1-1:
Viewing the
database in
Browse
mode.

The Tool palette in Browse mode is simple and easy to use. Here’s what each tool does:

- ✓ **Layout drop-down list:** Shows a list of available layouts. Select one to view and use that layout. Some layouts might be designed for data entry, some for reports, and still others for searching; so name them appropriately for their purpose.
- ✓ **Book icon:** Navigates a database page by page. Click the left page to go to the previous record, or click the right page to go to the next record.

- ✓ **Slider:** Navigates a database more quickly than the Book icon. Use this to slide through multiple records in the database instead of clicking through each record with the arrows on the Book icon.
- ✓ **Record:** Shows the current record number. The user can go to a specific record by typing the record number in this box (but he usually doesn't know the number because it varies based on search criteria and sorting order).
- ✓ **Found:** Displays the number of matching records resulting from a Find (not shown in Figure 1-2).
- ✓ **Total:** Shows the total number of records in the currently active table.
- ✓ **Sorted/Unsorted:** Shows the current sort state of the active table.

Searching in Find mode

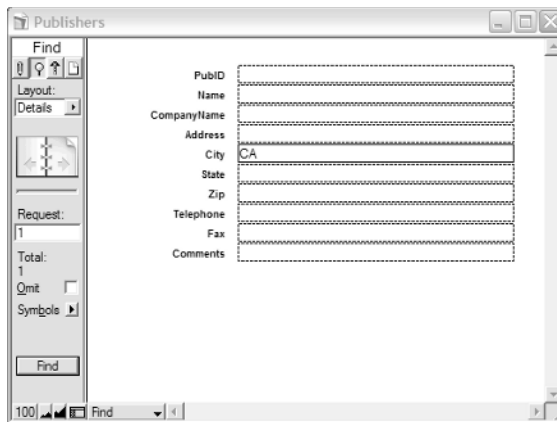
"Finders, keepers. Losers, weepers!" It's amazing that this phrase from my childhood can have so much of a correlation to searching for data. It's true! When you know the data you're looking for is in the computer among thousands of records, trying to find it can sometimes be a frustrating experience. FileMaker presents an easy-to-use approach to help you find data. It's called the Find mode.

The FileMaker Find mode, shown in Figure 1-2, presents a layout view of the table fields. By entering what you want to search for in any of the presented fields, you can search for data. The tools in the Tool palette can also help you track down the data you're looking for.

Here's a brief explanation of each tool, which I explain how to use in more detail in Chapter 6:

- ✓ **Layout selector:** Shows a list of available layouts. Select one to view that layout.
- ✓ **Book icon:** Navigates a database page by page. As in Browse mode, click the left page to go to a previous record, or click the right page to go to the next record. This icon isn't active until results are returned from the Find request.
- ✓ **Slider:** Navigates a database more quickly than the Book icon. Use this to slide through the records in the database. The slider isn't active until results are returned from the Find request.
- ✓ **Request:** Displays the ID number of the Find request that you are currently working with.
- ✓ **Total:** Displays the total number of records in the result of the Find request.

Figure 1-2:
Search for
data in
FileMaker
Find mode.



- ✓ **Omit:** Tells FileMaker that you want to omit an item from the search. Activate this feature by clicking the Omit check box. See Chapter 6 for more information.
- ✓ **Symbols:** These are logical relations (for example: greater than, not equal, and so on) that you can employ when specifying your search criteria. See Chapter 6 for more information.
- ✓ **Find:** Executes the Find and then places FileMaker in Browse mode.

Taking a look in Preview mode

Isn't it nice when you order something and you get exactly what you ordered? In FileMaker, the Preview mode, shown in Figure 1-3, is a great method for taking a sneak peek at a report before you print it so that you can make sure you get the printout you asked for.

As in the Browse and Find modes, you see the Layout drop-down list and the Book icon for navigating through pages of your review. The Page text box displays the current page number, and Total shows how many pages are in your preview.

Laying out the layouts in Layout mode

The Layout mode is the primary mode for designing the layouts (dialog boxes) used in FileMaker. In Figure 1-4, you can see that the Tool palette has some icons that also appear in the other modes. The Layout drop-down list lets you select a layout, and you can use the Book icon to navigate to the next or previous layout. You also see the layout number in the Layout box and the total number of layouts in the current database.

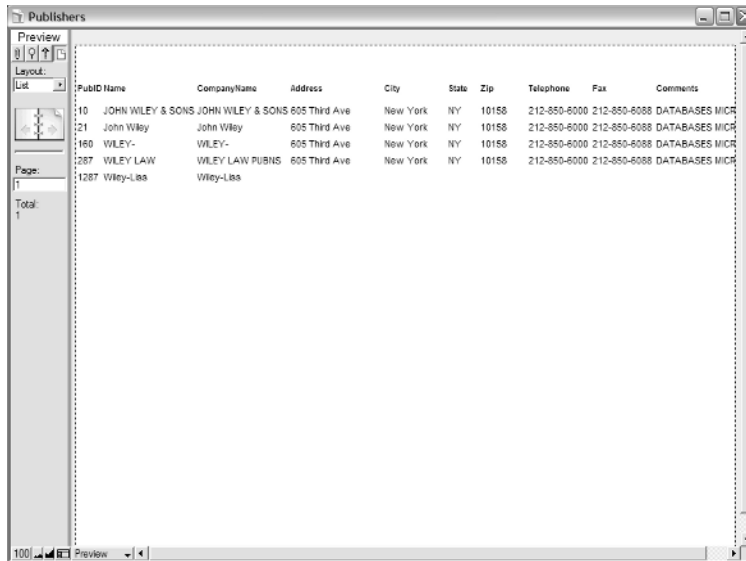


Figure 1-3:
Take a look at the final product before you print.

You might notice that Layout mode offers a lot more tools than the other FileMaker modes — all of which are quite easy to use, as I explain in Table 1-1. You find out all the details about creating great custom layouts in Part II.

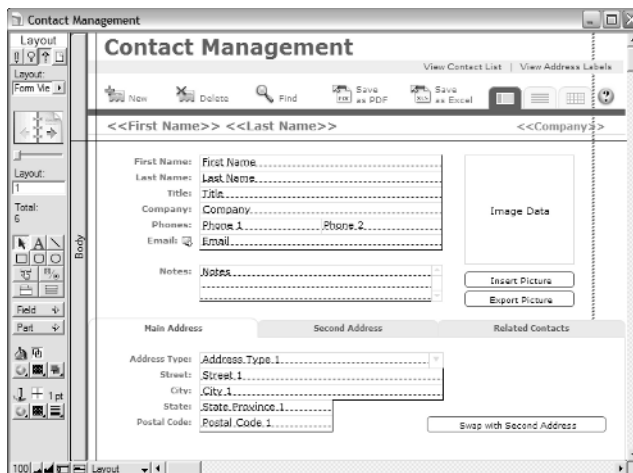









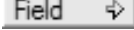
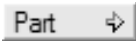




Figure 1-4:
Choose the look of your project in Layout mode.

Table 1-1 Tool Palette Tools in Layout Mode		
<i>Icon</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
	Selector tool	Select objects on the layout. By holding down the Shift key while using the Selector tool, you can select multiple objects. Or you can select multiple objects by dragging a box around them.
	Text tool	Insert text labels on the layout.
	Line tool	Draw lines on the layout. Lines can be used for borders, or as separators between areas on the layout.
	Box tool	Create boxes and rectangles on the layout. Boxes can be used for making borders or visually sectioning off areas of the layout.
	Round Box tool	Create boxes with round corners (so you don't hurt yourself). Round boxes make good borders and visual sections.
	Circle tool	Draw circles and ellipses.
	Button tool	Create buttons. You'll be using this one a lot when designing layouts. You assign a function or a script to the button, which executes when a user pressed the button.
	Tab Control tool	Create folderlike tabs on your layout to group data fields that you can hide when they're not needed.
	Portal tool	View data from a related table by using the sub-form that this very powerful tool provides. See Chapter 8 for more information.
	Field tool	Place a field from the current table onto the layout. See Chapter 6 for more information.

(continued)

Table 1-1 (continued)

<i>Icon</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
	Part tool	Add a new part to the layout. The layout can be divided into parts (sections).
	Fill controls	Set the fill color, pattern, and the object effects for the currently selected object(s) on the layout. This set of tools is grouped with the paint bucket that lies just above them, left-justified. The first tool on the left is the Fill Color tool.
	Pen controls	Set the pen color, pattern, and the pen (or line) effects for the currently selected object(s) on the layout. These tools are grouped with the Pen icon.

What's on the Menu?

Like almost any application, FileMaker has a number of menus along the top of the application window, and each holds commands to help you use this powerful program. Unfortunately, there's no Chinese menu among them for those nights when you're up late designing a database and get hungry. But this section introduces the many menus, so that as you're creating layouts or scripts, you know what tools are available and have an idea of where to find them. I point out the tools that are especially useful for creating layouts and scripts along the way.



If you don't like using a mouse, you can use keyboard shortcuts for opening menus and executing commands. These keyboard shortcuts vary slightly from PC to Mac.

On a PC, holding down the Alt key reveals underscored letters on the main menu bar. You can open a menu by pressing Alt and the underscored letter. Alt+F opens the File menu. Likewise, you can choose an item *within* the menu by pressing Alt and the key that's underscored. For example, you can choose New Database in the File menu by pressing Alt+N. If a particular menu item doesn't have an underscored letter, that means that menu item doesn't have a keyboard shortcut.

So, you see that when you choose a menu option, you might be presented with more choices. But, for now, I give you an overview of the primary menus.

- ✔ **File menu:** The primary purpose of the File menu is to help you manage the current FileMaker database file with commands for starting a new database, opening a database, printing, importing and exporting records, and more.
- ✔ **Edit menu:** The Edit menu offers the standard cut/copy/paste/find features along with the ability to edit FileMaker application settings. I'm still waiting for the Edit Weather function, which should help my golf game.
- ✔ **View menu:** The View menu provides functions specific to the current mode. For example, in Figure 1-5, you can see how the menu changes in Layout mode versus Browse mode.



For the most part, this menu offers check mark options that you can select or deselect, depending on the options you want to view. Similarly, when you see the black dot, then that menu option is currently active, and the other menu options it is grouped with are not. And if you see a little can of Red Bull, then you've been up too late. Quit working and go to bed!

- ✔ **Insert menu:** Like the View menu, the Insert menu's options change depending on FileMaker's current mode. In Layout mode, you can find a more varied selection of items to insert — such as field controls, buttons, and pictures — than in other modes. Outside of Layout mode, you can insert the date, time, and username. Part II of this book covers how you use the layout options in more detail.

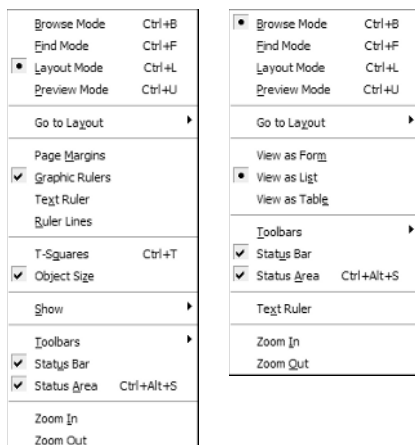


Figure 1-5:
The View menu in Layout mode and Browse mode.



- ✓ **Format menu:** Anytime I see the word *format*, I have flashbacks to the time when I accidentally reformatted my hard drive when I thought I was formatting a floppy disk. (Shiver!) Don't worry though — nothing that dangerous here. The Format menu provides the ability to *format* (or make orderly) the current layout objects.
- ✓ **Records menu (Browse mode):** The functions within the Records menu enable you to navigate and manage the database records. This menu is available only in Browse mode.
- ✓ **Requests menu (Find mode):** The functions within the Requests menu help you search for data within the records. This menu is available only in Find mode.
- ✓ **Layouts menu (Layout mode):** The functions within the Layouts menu are for navigating and managing the layouts. This menu is available only in Layout mode.
- ✓ **Arrange menu (Layout mode):** I, personally, use these functions a lot when designing and editing a layout. You find that you'll soon have the shortcuts memorized. The functions within the Arrange menu, shown in Figure 1-6, provide functions for arranging the placement of objects on the layouts. This menu is available only in Layout mode.
- ✓ **Scripts menu:** There's only one static item on this menu — ScriptMaker. ScriptMaker is the editing environment for creating and editing FileMaker *scripts* (programs), and its shortcut is Ctrl+Shift+S (⌘+Shift+S on a Mac). If other items appear on this menu, they are scripts that have been written and provided as part of the FileMaker database. Those are easily selected via Ctrl+ the index number of the script (or ⌘+ the index number on a Mac). You can find more information about the ScriptMaker in Chapter 8.
- ✓ **Tools menu (FileMaker Pro Advanced only, in Layout Mode):** The Tools menu is basically the menu for all functions and tools that don't really fit anywhere else — kind of like that old, rusty, red toolbox that I keep next to the garage door, with the tools that I use the most. On this menu, you find script debugging tools and developer utilities, among other things.

Figure 1-6:
You get to know the Arrange menu very well as you edit layouts.

	Group	Ctrl+R
	Ungroup	Ctrl+Shift+R
	Lock	Ctrl+Alt+L
	Unlock	Ctrl+Alt+Shift+L
	Bring to Front	Ctrl+Alt+[
	Bring Forward	Ctrl+Shift+[
	Send to Back	Ctrl+Alt+]
	Send Backward	Ctrl+Shift+]
	Rotate	Ctrl+Alt+R
	Align	▶
	Distribute	▶
	Resize To	▶
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Object Grids	Ctrl+Y

Getting Help in FileMaker

I always need help of one type or another. In fact, my wife says I need help — but I think she means in a different way. At least FileMaker has an extensive help system.

You can access FileMaker Help in various ways. The initial way to get into FileMaker Help is via the F1 key (Windows), the Help key or $\mathbb{H}+$? (Mac), or by selecting FileMaker Pro Help from the Help menu.

One of the most common methods of using the FileMaker Help system is to drill down into the topic that you want to see. Just click any linked topic to see that topic's help page.

You can print the topic by clicking the Print button on the toolbar (Windows) or choosing File \rightarrow Print (Mac).

If you're using the Windows version and you find yourself referring to a specific topic often,

you can save it as a favorite. Click the Favorites tab at the top of the left pane. Click the Add button at the bottom of the left pane to add the current topic to your Favorites list. Now, when you want to revisit this topic, just go to the Favorites tab, select the topic that you want to see, and then click the Display button at the bottom of the left pane. (Mac users can use the Integrated Spotlight functionality to quickly find anything in the FileMaker Help contents.)

Personally, I like using the Search feature of FileMaker Help. It allows me to find topics when I don't quite know how to find the topic via the drill-down process. To use Search, click the Search tab at the top of the left pane. In the Search box, enter a topic that you want to search for and click the List Topics button. You can then select topics that appear in the results

- ✔ **Windows menu:** The Windows menu helps you place and view the windows on the FileMaker desktop.
- ✔ **Help menu:** When all else fails, use the Help menu, which provides help and general information about FileMaker. I cover your resources for help in more detail later in this chapter.

The Right Toolbar for the Job

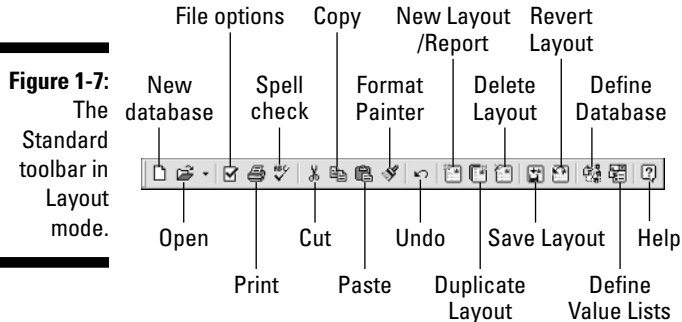
I'm a very visual person. In fact, I think most people are. That's why toolbars are such a good idea. Finding a picture that represents what you want to do is easier than looking through a bunch of menu items. (Though I'm sure my menu guide makes this a lot easier.) FileMaker Pro has the following four sets of toolbars:

- ✔ Standard
- ✔ Text Formatting
- ✔ Arrange
- ✔ Tools

To view or hide any of these toolbars, simply choose View⇨Toolbars and select or deselect its name from the Toolbars submenu. The following sections introduce each toolbar.

The Standard toolbar

The Standard toolbar is the most common set of tools in just about any software product. Some of the tools — such as New Database, Open, Print, Copy, and Paste — may be familiar to you already. Others are unique to FileMaker and change depending on FileMaker’s mode. Figure 1-7 shows the toolbar in Layout mode.

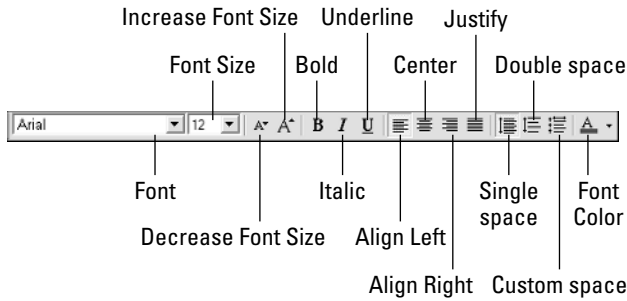


The Text Formatting toolbar

In the beginning there was Text. The Text was readable and everyone was pleased with the Text. Then a Text Artist came along and created Fonts, Styles, Sizes, and Colors. The world was thrown into a state of panic and chaos. The greatest minds in the world got together and created the Text Formatting toolbar. And once again, the world was at peace.

Yes, the Text Formatting toolbar serves a great purpose by helping you manage the many different combinations of text formatting. Take a look at the toolbar in Figure 1-8. Later in this chapter, you find out how to set preferences for default fonts and more.

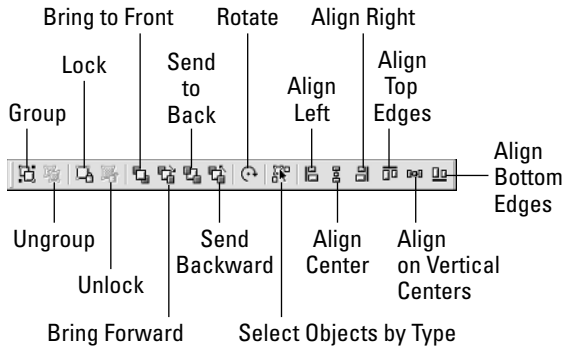
Figure 1-8:
The Text
Formatting
toolbar.



The Arrange toolbar

What do florists and software developers have in common? They both like to make arrangements. Well, in this case, FileMaker provides a toolbar for arranging the objects on a layout form. Therefore, the Arrange toolbar is available only in Layout mode. You can see it in Figure 1-9.

Figure 1-9:
The Arrange
toolbar.



The Tools toolbar

The “Tools toolbar”? Isn’t that kind of like a double negative? Shouldn’t it just be “The Toolbar”? But then, it would be just a blank toolbar. Which would then be called, “The Bar.” And that’s where one goes for drinks. Anyway, in FileMaker Pro, it’s the Tools toolbar. This toolbar, shown in Figure 1-10, is a duplication of the tools that are available on the Tool palette when in Layout mode.

This toolbar works a little differently, however, in the sense that whichever tool is selected becomes the active tool controlled with your mouse.



You may not be familiar with some terms that FileMaker uses. A *control* is a generic term for an interface element such as a check box, radio button, or text box; a *portal* is FileMaker's term for a subtable; *part* is a layout feature such as a header or footer. I introduce all these elements in more detail in Part II, which explains the ins and outs of designing a FileMaker layout.

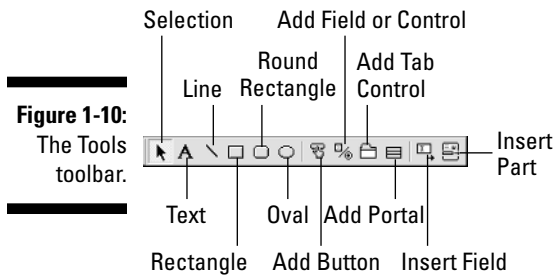


Figure 1-10:
The Tools toolbar.

Configuring Your FileMaker Installation

Come on! You know you want to tweak your installation of FileMaker Pro.



If you think that you can just install FileMaker and then start cranking out databases, then — well, I guess you can. However, you would be missing some of the really cool features of FileMaker that you wouldn't normally see with the default installation.

To see what some of these features are, just choose Edit⇨Preferences to open the Preferences dialog box. The options are organized into five tabs, and the following sections describe the options available on each one.

Setting general preferences

On the General tab, you find the following options:

- ✓ **Allow Drag And Drop Text Selection:** When selected, provides the ability to drag and drop text from other FileMaker fields or from other applications. I leave this on (the default), but if you don't like drag and drop, feel free to turn it off.

- ✔ **Show Templates In New Database Dialog Box:** Did you notice that, when you first started FileMaker, the opening dialog box had a list of predefined templates? If you don't want to see this list, just uncheck this check box. Then when FileMaker loads, it automatically displays the Open File dialog box. I turn this off, but the default is to leave it on.
- ✔ **Show Recently Opened Files:** In the File menu, in the Open Recent option, a list of recently opened files is listed. This selection allows you to set how many of the recently opened files you want to see in the list. The range is from 1 to 16. Personally, I would like to see 42 — but that's just me.
- ✔ **Enlarge Window Contents To Improve Readability (Windows version only):** When selected, this makes the text on the layout easier to read by increasing the size of all the layout objects. I leave this off, but if you're vision-impaired or your database layouts include a lot of fine print, feel free to turn it on.
- ✔ **Reset Dialog Sizes And Positions:** One of the nice features about FileMaker is that all the dialog boxes that appear can be resized, and FileMaker remembers what size you used and keeps that size. However, if you decide that you want to reset all the dialog boxes back to their original sizes, you can click the Reset button.
- ✔ **User Name:** This is the default username that you want to use with FileMaker. Mac users can choose their system login name or specify another.
- ✔ **User Interface Language (Windows only):** If you want to change the default language that FileMaker uses for the interface, select the language that you want to see. *Capisca?* Mac users handle this via the OS X Language tab of the International System Preferences pane.
- ✔ **Font Smoothing Style (Windows only):** This allows you set the style of font smoothing for making the fonts look better. What you choose here depends on your personal preferences and the type of display you're using (CRT or LCD). Mac users make this setting in their Display System Preferences.

Choosing your layout preferences

On the Layout tab, you have the following choices:

- ✔ **Always Lock Layout Tools:** Select this option to make your tool choice stick; otherwise, the Select (arrow) tool will be reselected after any tool is used. I leave this off because double-clicking a tool locks it, and I tend to use the Select tool to reposition layout objects after I create them.

- ✔ **Add Newly Defined Fields To Current Layout:** When selected, FileMaker automatically adds fields to the current layout when they are added to the database table. The default setting is on, and that's how I leave it.
- ✔ **Save Layout Changes Automatically (Do Not Ask):** When you're making changes to the layout, your changes are automatically saved if this check box is selected. The default setting is off, and that's probably safest.
- ✔ **System Subset (88 Colors):** If selected, FileMaker provides an 88-color palette for color selections. The 88-color palette is a subset that the graphic artists and user-interface folks at FileMaker think makes a good base set. This is the default choice, and I usually leave it there.
- ✔ **Standard System Palette (256 Colors):** This sets the color palette to the system-standard 256 colors (which is different between Mac and Windows). In addition to the platform differences, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between one shade of a color and another when trying to match a previous selection.
- ✔ **Web Palette (216 Colors):** If you want your application colors to be common for both the Windows platform and the Mac, select this option. This option isn't as useful in this day of thousands or millions of colors as it was when 8-bit color was the norm (early to mid '90s), but if you're going to deploy your solution on the Web and you think some of your users might be employing older operating systems and browsers, the Web palette is a safe baseline.

Practicing memory control

Controlling how memory is used in FileMaker probably won't make you feel like a mad scientist attempting mind control. (You can decide for yourself whether that's a good thing.) But tweaking these settings can definitely make you feel better about FileMaker's performance — and about not losing your data, if you're worried about those things. You find the following settings on the Memory tab:

- ✔ **Attempt To Set File Cache To:** While you work in FileMaker, it temporarily keeps track of your changes in cache memory. As a default, this is set to 8MB. You can enter a different value to see if it improves performance. When you change this setting, it takes effect after you restart FileMaker. The larger the cache, the more data is memory-resident, resulting in fewer disk accesses. However, increasing the cache takes memory away from other tasks and setting it higher than the amount of data in your file doesn't gain anything.

- ✔ **Save Cache Contents:** The default is to save during idle time. However, if you want to save your cached changes more often, select the Every radio button and enter the time segment. The shorter the duration, the less likely you are to lose data in the event of a power failure. If you're using a laptop and are concerned with battery life, setting a higher time segment reduces the drain on the battery.

Plugging (and unplugging) plug-ins

A *plug-in* is a module that provides additional functionality to FileMaker. For example, one plug-in allows you to launch a script file at a specific time. You can get plug-ins from FileMaker, from third-party software companies, or from your friendly neighborhood C++ programmer. Plug-ins can be developed in the C or C++ programming language and with FileMaker Pro Advanced.

Any plug-ins that you see in the list are plug-ins that are installed. (See the instructions that come with the plug-in for installation.) When the check box is selected, that plug-in is available for use. When highlighted, you can see a brief description of what that plug-in does. And if the Configure button becomes active, you can set configuration options for that plug-in. Check out Chapter 14 for examples of some plug-in sources.

Fiddling with fonts

On the Fonts tab, FileMaker lets you make a few choices about which fonts you prefer and how you like them to behave:

- ✔ **Default Font For Each Input Type:** You can select the type of font that you want to use for each language input type (in case you are working with Cyrillic, Kana, Simplified Chinese, or some other language and its related, data-input methodology). Just select the Input Type that you want to change, and then select the font that you want to use in the Specify Font list box.
- ✔ **Synchronize Input Method With Font On Field Entry:** When selected, the font shown when users enter data is the font that has been defined specifically for the field. (To define that font, you use the field's Field/Control, Behavior option when in Layout mode.) Synchronization is off by default.
- ✔ **Use Font Locking:** This is an interesting option. When selected, if you have a character in a field that doesn't have a corresponding character in the selected font, the character continues to be displayed in its original font. This is specifically handy when you are supporting multiple languages, such as Japanese and Roman, in the same field. Font Locking is selected by default.

