

Cutting Edge HTML5 Design

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In this presentation, I will explain the differences between skins, master pages, and stylesheets. I will also present design tips and tricks for creating HTML5 targets using real-world examples, including projects highlighted in the customer showcase, and explain how the designs can be replicated in attendee's projects.

Skins

Skins specify the high-level layout for desktop-, tablet-, and phone-sized screens.

There are three high-level skin options for HTML5 targets:

- Tripane
- Top Nav
- None

You can select a skin in a target on the Skins tab.

Tripane

The Tripane layout is the original HTML5 design option. Best-in-class tripane designs include:

- **Blackbaud:** www.blackbaud.com/files/support/guides/infinitydevguide/infSDK-developer-help.htm
- **MakeMusic:** usermanuals.smartmusic.com/SmartMusic/smartmusic.htm
- **WEBfactory:** www.webfactory-support.de/knowledgebases/KB_WF2010V34/Default.htm

Topnav

Topnav is the latest HTML design option, and it is (by far) the most commonly used. The most popular Topnav design is Flare's help system (help.madcapsoftware.com/flare2017/Content/Home.htm).

None

The "none" or ("do it yourself") design option provides the most flexibility, but it is much more work to create. Best-in-class "none" designs include:

- **Bomgar:** www.bomgar.com/docs/index.htm
- **OverDrive:** help.overdrive.com
- **Sage:** desktophelp.sage.co.uk/sage200/sage200standard/Content/Home.htm

Best practices: skin design

- Select design option first (tripane or topnav)
- Review the customer showcase examples for ideas and to see what's possible
- Work within Flare's simplified Foundation framework
- Gather company guidelines and resources (icons, colors, fonts, etc)
- Design before creating

Master Pages

Master pages add content to topics. You can add your own content (for example, a copyright statement) and/or include built-in content blocks called proxies.

Most projects have two master pages: one for the home page and one for the other topics. The “home page” master page is usually more complex, with a prominent search box and multiple sections that describe and link to various subsections. If you only need one master page, you can set it in your target. If you want to use multiple master pages, you can select a master page in a topic in the Topic Properties tab or by using the mc-master-page stylesheet property.

The two most popular “home page” master page designs are:

- “Flare help”
- Tiles

“Flare help” home page design

The “Flare help” design is based on the Flare help system, and it can be created using Flare's “Top Navigation Advanced” project template. You can watch Paul Stoecklein's two-part webinar about the template at www.madcapsoftware.com/demos/signup.aspx?id=1142749518434736021.

The “Flare help” home page design is extremely popular. It's used in the following best-in-class projects:

- **Medial:** help.medial.com/Content/Home.htm
- **SolarWinds:** www.solarwinds.com/documentation/en/flarehelp/orionplatform/content/home.htm
- **Team Software:** solutionsonline.teamsoftware.com/Content/TopDown_Home.htm

Tiles home page design

A tiles design provides tiles (also called “blocks” or “cards”) to provide links to content sections. The tiles typically contain an icon and a short description. The tiles design is sometimes combined with the “Flare help” design, but it can also be a complete replacement.

The tile design is used in the following best-in-class projects:

- **AlienVault:** www.alienvault.com/documentation/index.htm
- **Fred:** webhelp.fred.com.au/nxt/home.htm
- **GFI:** manuals.gfi.com/en/faxmakeronline/content/home.htm
- **inContact:** help.incontact.com/16.1/Content/Home.htm
- **Toonboom:** docs.toonboom.com/help/harmony-14/advanced/book/index.html

The tile design is combined with the “Flare help” design in the following best-in-class projects:

- **kCura:** help.kcura.com/9.5/Content/index.htm
- **MedView:** webhelp.medview.com.au/medview/practitioner/home.htm
- **Rediker:** redikersupport.com/documentation
- **xMatters:** help.xmatters.com/OnDemand/xmatters.htm

Topic master page design

The “topic” master page typically contains a toolbar, the topic content, and a menu.

Best-in-class examples include:

- **ASI:** help.imis.com/100_200/Implementation/Configuration/Using_social_media_to_log_in.htm
- **Episerver:** webhelp.episerver.com/latest/commerce/order-management/creating-an-order.htm
- **OpenMarket:** docs.openmarket.com/Content/devguides/integration/high-availability.htm

Proxies

Proxies are built-in blocks of content that can be included in master pages or topics. The most commonly used proxies in master pages are:

- Body
- Breadcrumbs
- Menu
- Search Bar
- Topic Toolbar

Responsive layouts

Responsive layouts can be used to create tiles and other side-by-side layouts. They are based on a simplified version of Zurb's Foundation framework. A responsive layout "row" can be up to 12 columns wide (100%), and each column is 8.33% of the available screen width. You can specify the row's width for desktop-, tablet-, and phone-sized screens.

Best practices: master pages

- Review the customer showcase examples for ideas and to see what's possible
- Develop "topic" master page first
- Use MadCap's template if you want to match their design
- Use Flare's built-in responsive layouts, if needed

Stylesheets

A stylesheet specifies how topic content (e.g., headings, lists, and paragraphs) should be formatted. A stylesheet can be set for all topics (and targets) by selecting a master stylesheet in the Project Properties. If you want to use different stylesheets for different targets, you can select a stylesheet for a target on the General tab. If you want to use a stylesheet for specific topics, you can select a topic's stylesheet in the Topic Properties.

Flare help stylesheet

You can download the Flare help stylesheet at docs.madcapsoftware.com/Styles/styles.css

Selecting a master page

You can select a master page in the Topic Properties or by setting the mc-master-page style property for the HTML tag.

Formatting proxies

Proxies can be formatted using special "MadCap" styles. For example, the breadcrumb proxy can be formatted with the MadCap | breadcrumbsProxy. You can also format them using skin components.

Formatting responsive layouts

Responsive layouts are style classes. You can modify them or add pseudo classes if needed.

Best practices: stylesheets

- Create a naming convention
- Gather company stylesheets and use/match class names
- Keep it simple
- Use Flare's built-in "tablet" and "mobile" mediums

- Use Flare's built-in responsive layouts
- Learn more about CSS

About the presenter

Scott DeLoach is the Founder of Click**Start**, where he provides training and consulting for MadCap Flare, embedded user assistance, JavaScript/jQuery, CSS, and HTML5. He has been developing browser-based help systems for 20+ years, and he has received four Best in Show awards for his work from STC.

Scott is a certified Flare and Doc-to-Help instructor, and he is the author of *MadCap Flare 2017: The Book*, *CSS to the Point*, *HTML5 to the Point*, and *Word 2013 to the Point*. For more information about Scott's books see www.lulu.com/clickstart.

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