

FM8 to RoboHelp7 Formatting Strategies

(Using Adobe Tech Comm Suite I)

This document covers the strategies I explored as I struggled to get presentable formatting for my .chm help projects.

Three strategies for formatting

The methods include:

- Strategy 2: Minimum mapping
- Strategy 3: Total mapping
- Strategy 4: Create and use myOwn.css

(I don't cover Strategy 1: The RJ Way. This refers to RJ's right-out-of-the-box demos that make it all look like child's play. The default Strategy 1 may work for you if you have simple FrameMaker documents.)

All strategies start with preparation in the source FrameMaker files, including creating and applying an FM template geared toward how you want your final RH help files to look.

I use Dreamweaver for all my troubleshooting; and CSS creating and editing.

At the end of this document, I list the settings I use for the .chm TOC pane.

Introducing The Players

When you first set up your RoboHelp project, an fmstyles.css is created and placed in the top folder of your project.

After you have linked to an FM book, RoboHelp creates a main folder with the name of the book.

Under the main book folder are sub-folders which represent chapters in the book.

Each chapter sub-folder has its own private CSS: chapterTitle.css.

fmstyles.css

You can find the fmstyles.css in the top folder of your RoboHelp project.

This is the style sheet you map to when you are in Properties / Style Settings / Style Mappings / Edit / Paragraph Styles.

Any style you map to gets added to your chapter's CSS AFTER the next force / update to the FrameMaker files. Any edits you make to fmstyles are saved. RoboHelp does not overwrite fmstyles.css during force updates.

fmstyles.css contains:

- (At the start of a new project) a few simple styles, including the RoboHelp heading styles used to break topics.
- Any new styles you add, to map your FM styles to.

Note: The output help HTML topic files do not link to the fmstyles.css.

chapterTitle.css

Inside the subfolder for each chapter is another CSS, someChapterName.css. This CSS contains:

- The styles for FrameMaker format tags that are mapped to Source. The names for these auto-generated styles have a prefix “FM_” For example, “FM_step1”
- A copy of the mapped-to styles sent from fmstyles.css

You can edit these local CSS files, but your edits are temporary, because RoboHelp rewrites these files at the next force update. You can prevent the local CSS files from being overridden, but this becomes a Herculean task if you have many books that have many chapter files.

Note: The output HTML help topic files link directly to a chapterTitle.css.

Another Note: After the HTML topics are compiled into a .chm file, more local styles may be added to the header of each topic page (table, row, and cell styles, and if you converted AutoNumbers to lists, list item tags).

AutoNumbers

In RoboHelp Properties/Style Settings, if you select Convert AutoNumber to HTML list, RH assumes that any FM tag that uses an AutoNumber format is a ordered or unordered list.

So... any FM tag that uses any autonumber formatting becomes either a bullet or a numbered list.

What about pre?

pre is an html style element.

When text on an HTML page is enclosed with pre tags:

```
<pre> content content content </pre>
```

all the white space (including spaces, tabs, and returns) is included on the output HTML page displayed by the browser.

In RoboHelp Properties/ Style Settings, if you select User Defined HTML Tag for a tag, and you have pre as your User Defined HTML tag, the checked tags will be surrounded with <pre> </pre> tags. (I hope you like Courier.)

Prep in FrameMaker for all strategies

Do these things first, to save time and frustration.

Create a special template for RoboHelp

If you design and apply a custom template in FrameMaker first, once you move into RoboHelp, you'll find that a lot of the heavy lifting has been done.

- Add a para tag for Step 1, that resets number lists to one, and apply it throughout your documents. (RH doesn't pick up renumbering from headings you may have set up to do this.)
- Change serif fonts to san serif.
- Remove numbering from headings and titles.
- Remove any indented layout format.
- Rename any style tags that differ only by case. (RH will only notices one.)
- Edit sublists to include: <0> in the numbering format (Paragraph Designer / Numbering) For example:
a:< ><a=1>.\t
(This lets RH know this list should be indented from the parent list.)
- Make these adjustments for para tags that go in tables:
Paragraph Designer / Basic
 - Add first and left indent, maybe 0.081, also add 0.081 to any tab values. (This keeps cell text from slamming against the cell border.)
 - Remove any spacing above paragraph.

Edit your table formats

- If you use colors derived from tints, make sure shading fills are set to 100% . (The percent slider doesn't come over well in RH.)
- If you use shading by column, select 100% White for plain columns.

Edit your FrameMaker document

- From the automatic table titles, remove any Continued variables.
- Link directly to icons, don't depend on Paragraph Designer / Advanced and link to icons on reference page.
- Make sure all graphic frames and tables are hanging from a special anchor tag.
- Remove any cross references that are in graphic frames.
- Add an empty space to paragraph tags that don't have text (such as anchor tags).
One instance per tag type, per project is fine.

Prepare your graphics

- For graphic frames, use Alignment: left (to remove excess left-margin white space)
- For .jpg graphics, set the size in Photoshop:
 - Crop to the height and width you want, at a resolution of about 221 ppi.
 - 300 ppi is too big; if you are adding callouts they will be fuzzy.
- Size any screen shots by ppi, not by percent.
(Click the graphic, select Object Properties / Scaling Set dpi (it's really ppi).

TOC

- Exaggerate the indents of the chapter levels.
- Remove autonumbering from chapters (HTML topics don't use chapter numbers).

Conditional text

In FrameMaker: Set the conditions in FM, not RoboHelp.

Use Boolean expressions, for example:

```
NOT"bookOnly"ANDNOT"otherProduct"ANDNOT"editorComments"
```

Strategy 2: Minimum mapping

This is very handy if you are already three weeks overdue on your project.

Big Picture

- Design a special FM template to use for RoboHelp projects.
- Map to the headings your topics break to.
- Add a few special tags in fmstyles.css, and in RoboHelp, map to them.
- Leave all other paragraph styles mapped to [Source].
- Don't select Convert AutoNumber to HTML List.

In RoboHelp

Set up your project, but before you Add a FrameMaker File by Reference, edit the default fmstyles.css.

Edits in fmstyles.css (use Dreamweaver if you have it)

- Add the custom styles for your special cases. These are tags whose white space will need adjusting (name them p.something):
 - Anchor tags
to add white space above and below
 - Figure titles
to add a negative top margin, this makes up for the extra line RH inserts after a graphic)
 - Body tag
for white space margin
Example: `b {margin: 22 p;}`
- Edit the headings you are mapping to: adjust font size, and remove extra left indent

Edits to make in: Properties Content Settings/ Style Settings

Make these selections after you have added your FrameMaker file by Reference.

- In Properties / Content Settings:
Select your FM TOC and Index and create names for them.
- In Properties / Content Settings / Other Settings:
Check Apply FrameMaker Conditional Text Build Expression.
- In the Properties / Style Settings tab:
Do not select Convert AutoNumber to HTML List.
- In Paragraph Styles
 - Keep most styles mapped to [Source].
 - Link to the heading styles of the level you want to break topics to.
 - Link your anchor tags and figure titles to new styles to control white space.
For example:


```
p.anchorFig {
margin-top: 24pt;
margin-bottom: 10pt;
font-size: 10pt;
}
p.fig_title_left {
margin-top: -38pt;
margin-bottom: 18pt;
font-size: 12px;
font-weight: bold;
color: #000060;
margin-left: 64pt;
}
```
 - If you have a sublist that's not indenting properly, try mapping both step 1 and step+ to a tag with the same indent.
RH's BodyLevel1 works for me.
- In Cross Reference Styles:
Use <\$paratext> building block.
- In Pagination Settings:
Check the heading styles of the level you want to break topics to.

Strategy 3: Total mapping

This gives you a feeling of control. It may be a good way to go once you have finished all the formatting tweaks.

Start by designing and applying a special FM template to use for RoboHelp projects.

In RoboHelp:

- Don't map anything to fmstyles.css except the headings that break topics.
- After the first RH run, copy the contents of your chapterTitle.css into the fmstyles.css.
- Rename the styles (leave the .p), so that in the future, you will know which ones are yours.
For example: p.FM_bullet
Might become: p.M_bullet
- Remove any duplicate styles and any styles you do not need.
- Add any element tags that may come in handy, for example:
 - body margin:


```
body {
margin-left: 22px;
}
```
 - table text top align:


```
td, th {
vertical-align: top;
}
```
- Edit and organize the styles as needed.
- Map all the FM paragraph styles to styles in fmstyles.css.
- Create a mapping file for next time.

Strategy 4: Create and apply myOwn.css

I really like this because I don't have to do a force update and wait and wait and wait and wait to see the results of my formatting tweaks. I only need to refresh the single source layout, which doesn't take long.

You will need to re-link myOwn.css each time you make a force update to the FM source files.

Create your own CSS:

Start by designing and applying a special FM template to use for RoboHelp projects.

In Robohelp:

- Don't map anything to fmstyles.css except the headings that break topics.
- After the first RH run, select the most representative chapter CSS, copy it and rename it.
For example: myOwn.css.
- Keep the style names the same: FM_somethingStyle.
- Add any missing styles from other CSS.
- Add any element tags that may come in handy, for example:
 - body margin:


```
body {
margin-left: 22px;
}
```
 - table text top align:


```
td, th {
vertical-align: top;
}
```
- Reorganize and edit as you like, for instance:
 - h1, h2, h3 tags
 - anchor tags and figure tags for spacing
 - list tags for proper indents

Apply your own CSS:

1. In Robohelp's Topic List pane, select all your topics.
2. Right click, and from the shortcut menu, select Properties / Appearance.
3. Click on the folder icon and browse to yourOwn.css.
4. Click OK to copy, and then Apply.
5. In the Single Source Layouts pane, select your layout and apply.

Note: You'll need to repeat this (select topics, apply myOwn.css) every time you do a Force/Update to the linked FM files.

Single Source Layouts: Setting up the TOC for Microsoft HTML Help

These are the settings I use to make the help TOC more usable:

- Select the TOC and Index you named earlier when you set up Properties / Content Settings.
- Select Advanced Options/Edit... /TOC Styles:
Try these selections:
 - Border
 - Dialog Frame
 - Lines from Root
 - Plus/Minus Squares
 - Always Show Selection
 - Raised Edge

Troubleshooting techniques

- Create simple test FM books and small RH projects to test only one problem, for instance, graphics.
- Use Dreamweaver to explore HTML code, CSS inheritance, and to edit the permanent CSS.
- Keep running notes on problems and solutions.
(Those who don't record history are doomed to repeat it.)

