

Dreamweaver and Fireworks MX Integration

Brian Hogan

This tutorial will take you through the necessary steps to create a template-based web site using Macromedia Dreamweaver and Macromedia Fireworks. The new MX versions of these products offer almost total integration.

Throughout this tutorial, I'll be offering some design tips and tricks as well, to help leverage the value of these programs.

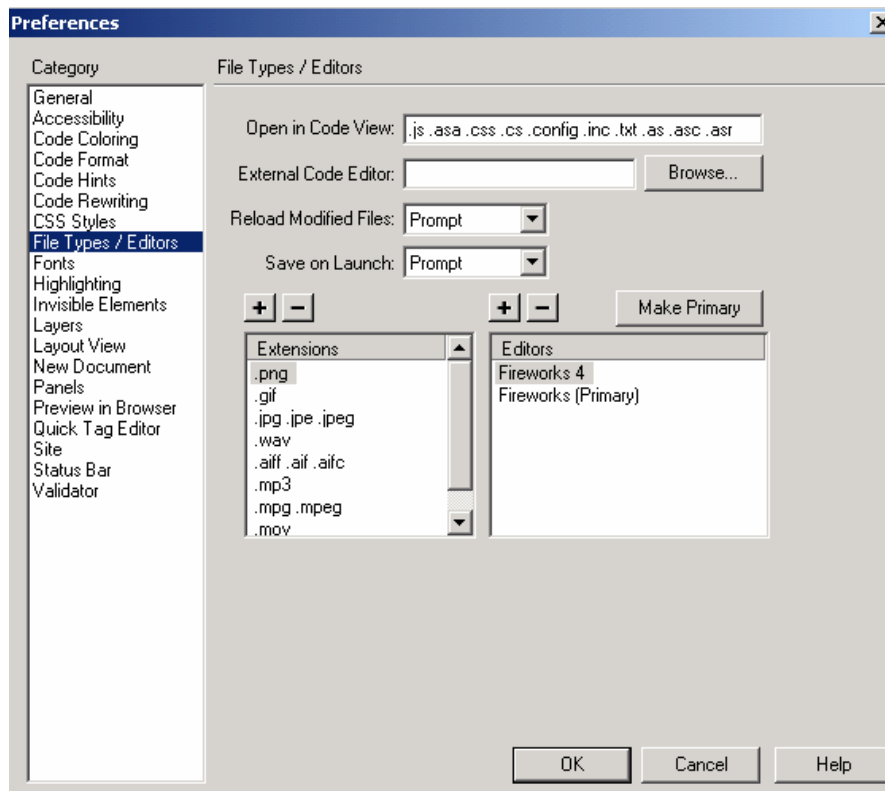
Before we begin, make sure you have a good understanding of web site design and coding, and that you have installed the trial or full versions of both Dreamweaver MX and Fireworks MX.

Setting up the programs

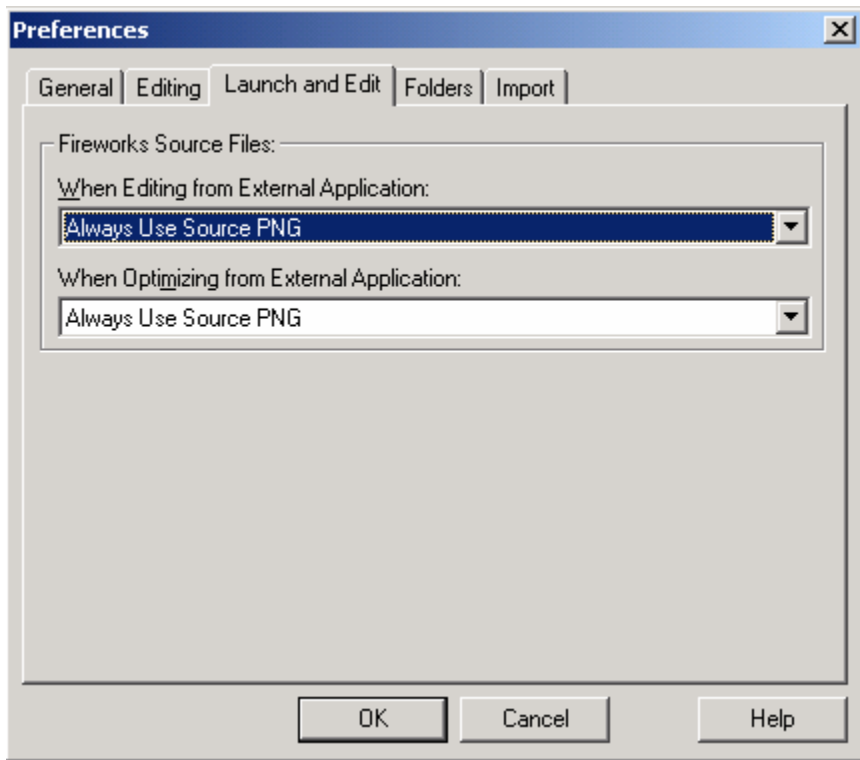
Before we begin, you'll need to do some preliminary setup in both Dreamweaver MX and Fireworks MX.

Dreamweaver MX Setup

Go to the **Edit** menu and choose **Preferences**. Select the **File Types / Editors** category and then look for the PNG extension. Make sure that it's set to open with Fireworks. You should see the word (PRIMARY) next to the Fireworks entry. Click **OK** to apply your changes.



Go to the **Edit** menu and choose **Preferences**. Select the **Launch and Edit** tab and make sure you set both options to the values shown below. When the values are set, click **OK** to save the changes.

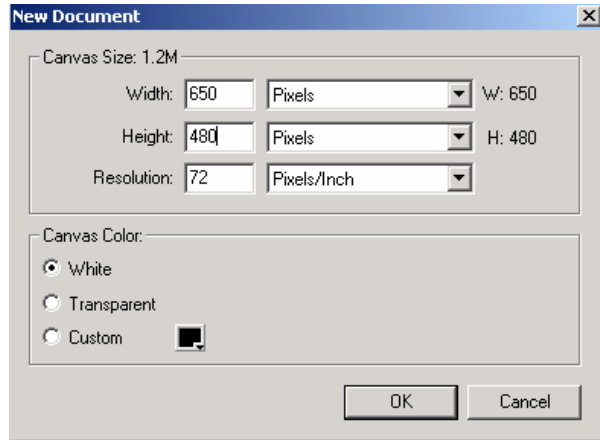


Fireworks MX Launch and Edit settings

After you've made these changes, you're ready to begin designing your page. Fireworks MX can import a Photoshop 6.0 document, or you can begin designing it all by yourself.

Designing your first Fireworks MX web page template

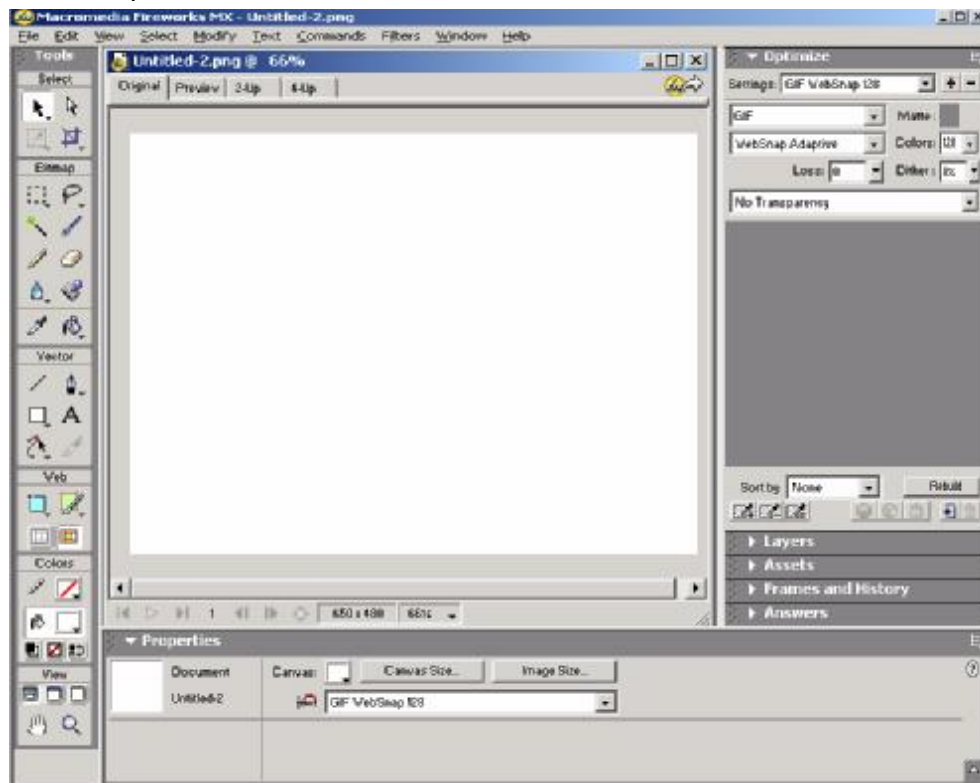
In this example, we will build a simple web page template for an online business. We'll use the Fireworks MX drawing tools to create the page, and then get it ready to work with in Dreamweaver.



In Fireworks, click on the **File** menu and select **New**. You'll be presented with the following dialogue box.




This is where you control the height and width of your page. The width is more important than the height because we'll be making a page template that will expand. When you have your width and height selected, click **OK** to allow Fireworks to set up your new canvas.

You'll be presented with the Fireworks interface.




Using the square tools and the text tool, we want to design a web page that looks something like the design at the right. These instructions are simply a guide, because I assume you are already familiar with a design program like Fireworks, Illustrator, or Photoshop.



First, select the **Square** tool  from the **Vectors** section of the tool palette. Next, select the **Stroke** color to nothing  and the **Fill** color to Blue .


Draw the top rectangle area in the canvas.

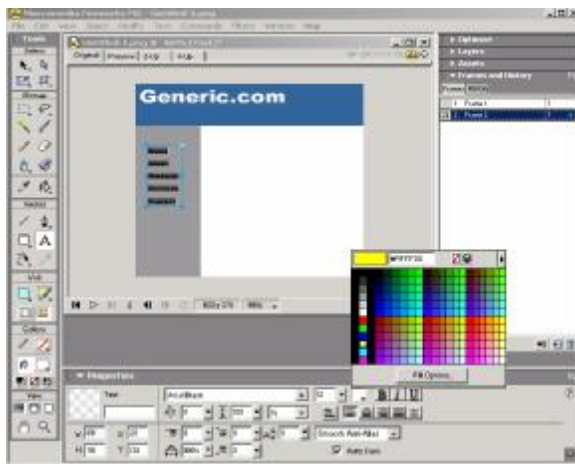
Next, change the **Fill** color to Grey and draw the sidebar rectangle, again using the figure as your model.

Select the **Text**  tool in the **Vectors** section of the **tool palette** and create the menu on the side. Finally, use the same tool to create the banner text.

You should have a simple page created at this point. Let's now set everything up to do simple button rollovers.

Click on the **Frames and History** tab. This will expand the list of **Frames**. We will need to make a new frame so that Fireworks can use it to make a rollover. The concept of a Fireworks Simple Rollover is quite simple. The graphic on Frame 1 is displayed until the user places the mouse over the section of the page. At that point, the graphic on frame 2 is substituted. This will become more apparent when we go through the process.

For now, simply duplicate **Frame 1** by dragging the name of the frame over the **New / Duplicate Frame** button. . This will create a copy of the frame that we can alter.




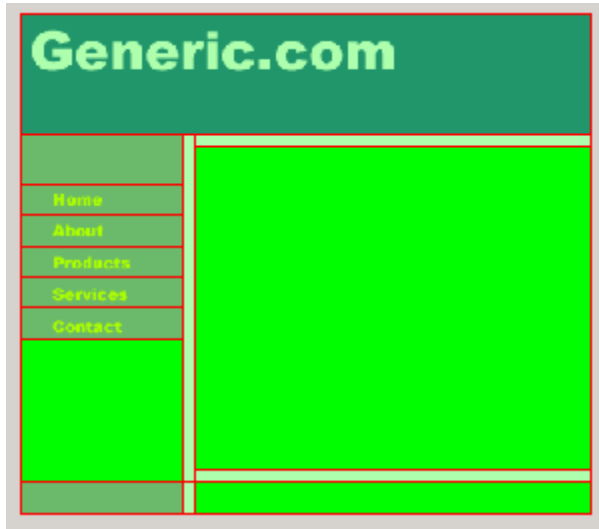
Now, select the menu item text area you created. Select all of the text in that area and change its color to a different color. I'll use yellow for my example.

We are now set up to begin converting these frames to an actual web page template, complete with rollovers.

Creating the Web Template – Slice and Dice

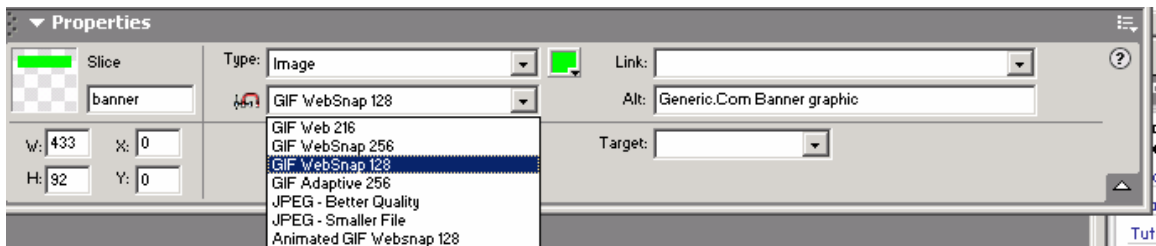
Macromedia Fireworks MX makes use of a concept often used by web designers called “Slice and Dice” where you take a template graphic and cut it up so that it loads faster or can be displayed along with HTML.

The tool palette contains a **Slice**  tool located in the **Web** section. Select this tool and begin slicing your page, using the example below as a guide.



You'll notice that some slices are light-green. These are HTML slices rather than Image slices. If you look at the properties inspector after you create each slice, you can see the options that determine the type of slice you create. If you choose an Image slice, you'll be presented with options for a hyperlink, an ALT tag, a name for your image, and the type of image optimization to use.

Below are the options for the first slice.



It's a good idea to name each of your slices. It's also good to enter in the ALT tag information too. When you've finished with the process of naming and optimizing your slices, it's time to apply the rollovers.

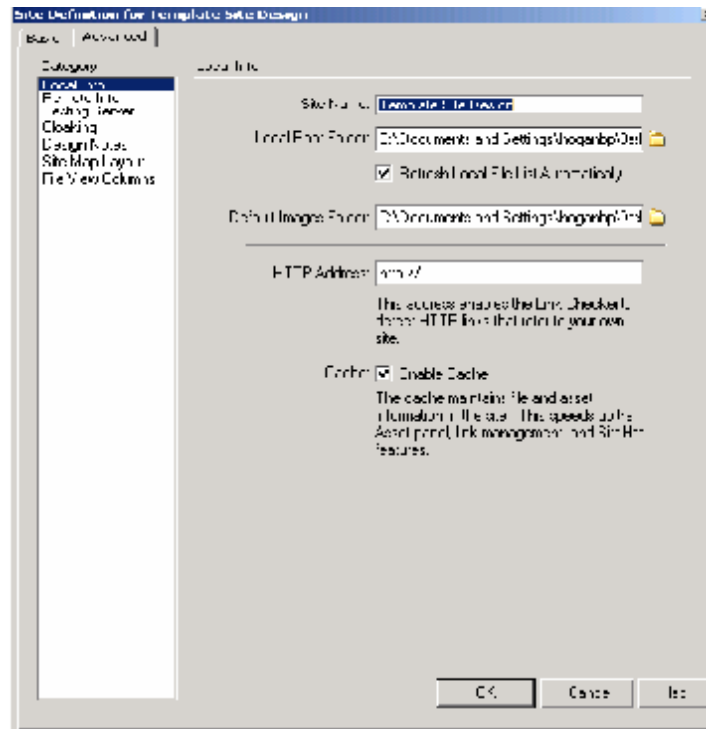
Right-click on the slice that contains the **HOME** menu item. Select **Add Simple Rollover**. The selection has now been converted to a rollover. Repeat this process for the other menu items.

When you are all done, you should save your Fireworks project by clicking **File** and choosing **Save**. **Remember where you saved this! You will need it later!**

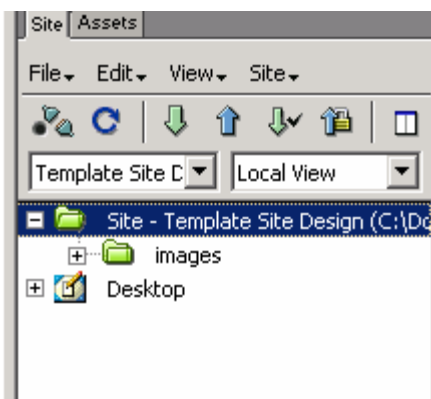
Setting up a Site in Dreamweaver

Before you can export your Fireworks page to Dreamweaver, you need to set up a site in Dreamweaver.

Click the **Site** menu and choose **New Site**. The following dialogue will appear. Give your site a name and then specify the location of the local folder where all of your files should be stored. You can also specify a default images folder, where all of your graphics files will be stored.




When you've entered your settings, click **OK**. It's important to allow the Design Notes to be turned on, otherwise the integration will not work.

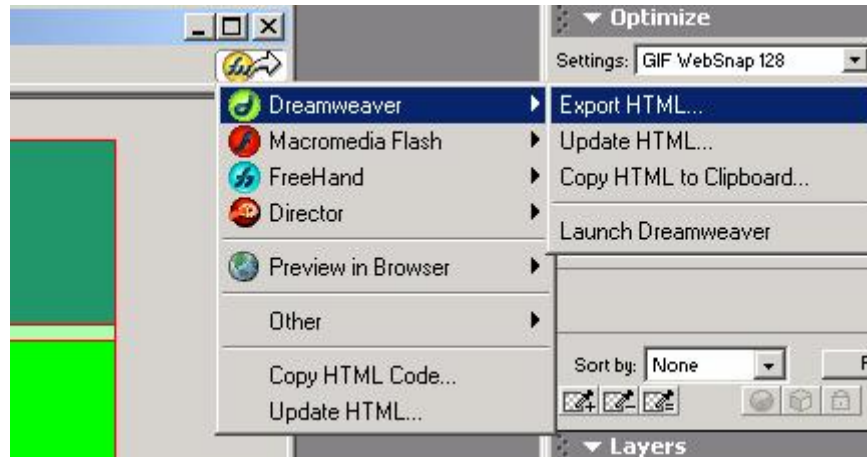


You will now see your site structure defined in the **Sites** palette within Dreamweaver.

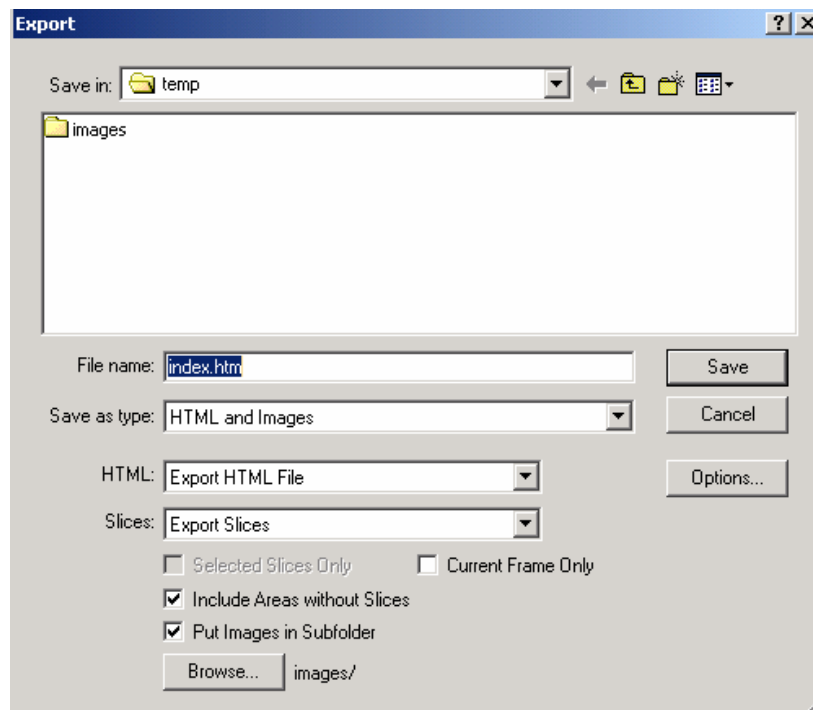
Now that your site is defined, it's time to export the Fireworks files to Dreamweaver HTML.

Exporting Your First Fireworks HTML file

In the upper right corner of your canvas in Fireworks, you will see the Fireworks Logo with an arrow . When you click this, it will bring up the options to export the files for use in other programs. Select the **Dreamweaver** menu and choose **Export HTML**.



Select a folder to save these files. It is not required that you save this to your Dreamweaver Site root folder. I suggest saving it to a temporary folder on your desktop.

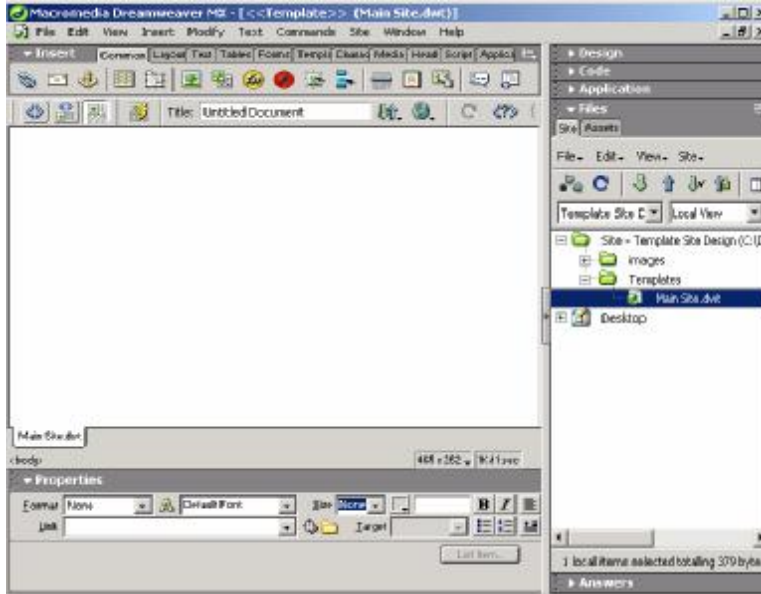


Select the options shown above and select the **Save** button. Close your Fireworks document and answer **Yes** if it asks you to save any changes.

It's now time to start working in Dreamweaver!

Creating the Web Template – Importing Fireworks

This step involves creating a template from a document in Dreamweaver that is connected to a Fireworks PNG project file. Dreamweaver will be able to manage all of the graphics within your site when you integrate the programs.



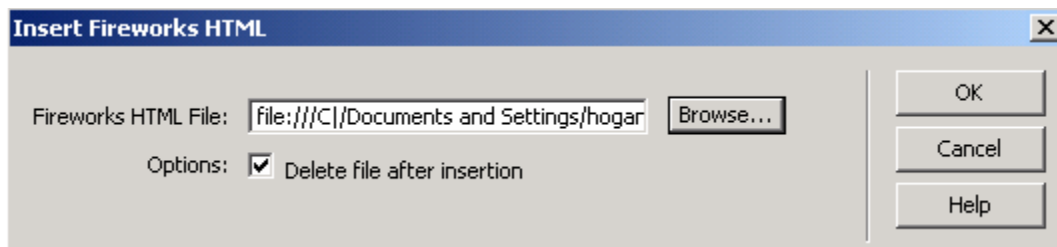
Create a new HTML document in Dreamweaver and make sure that the site you created is visible.

Save the document as a template by clicking **File** and selecting **Save as Template**.

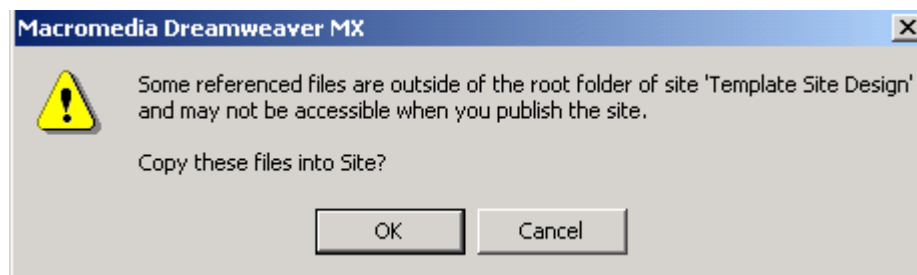
A new folder should appear in your site list, and your template should be within that folder.

On the **Common** tool palette, select the Fireworks button .

On the **Common** tool

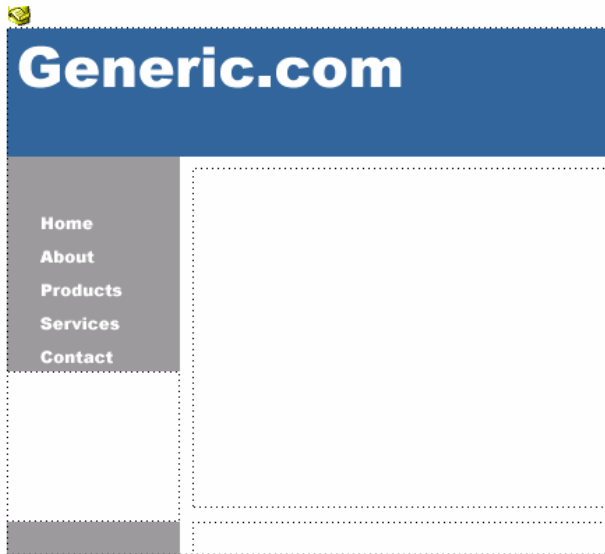


Use the **Browse** button to navigate to your exported Fireworks document. The option **Delete File after insertion** is up to you. I do it because I don't want any extra copies of my template around. When you're ready, click **OK**.




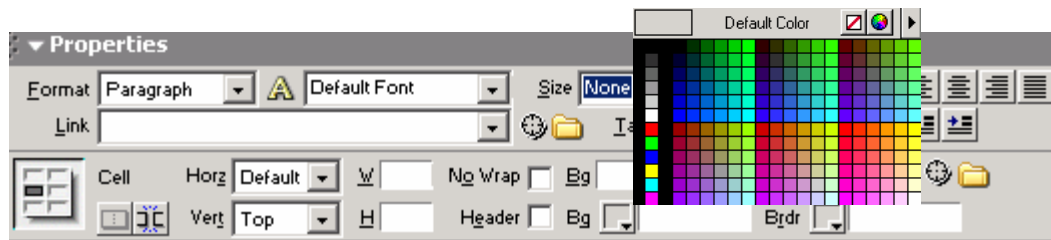
Dreamweaver is smart enough to realize that these image files and JavaScript resources are located elsewhere on your hard drive and so will offer you the chance to copy these files into your site root folder. You should definitely choose **OK** when you see

this prompt. When you click **OK** you will be prompted for a location to store your images in. For simplicity's sake, I chose my default images folder.



After confirming the images folder, the page should be imported into Dreamweaver!

However, you'll notice a few strange things that need to be addressed. First, there's one section of the page that isn't quite right. We'll fix that by selecting that table cell with our mouse and changing its background color to match the cell above it. We do this by clicking the **bg** button  and use the color-picker tool or the eyedropper that will appear when the color-picker is selected.



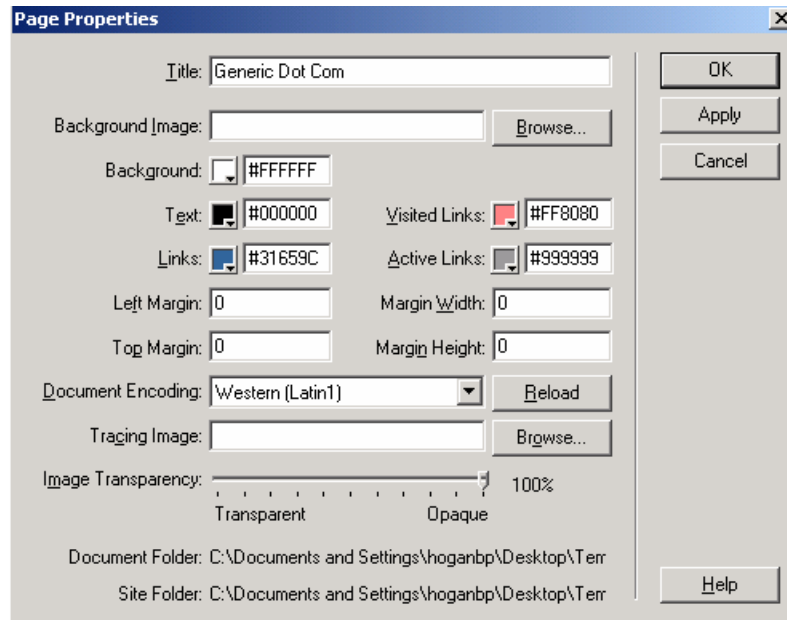
Once you've made the color adjustment, your page should now look complete. The best part is that the section you colored will be the section of the page that stretches as you add more content.



Now we need to define our editable regions so any pages made with this template can actually hold content!

Creating the Web Template – Making It Look Good.

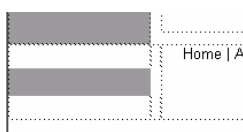
Go to the **Modify** menu in Dreamweaver and click on the **Page Properties** button. You will see the following dialog there.



This is where the main properties for the page are set. You can use whatever color settings you want, but I strongly suggest that you use the same values as above for the **Left Margin, Top Margin, Margin Width, and Margin Height**. Though these values are only supported in IE 4.0 and Netscape 4.0 and greater, it really makes a difference in the way your page looks and works, especially if you add a pop-up menu or are using other absolute-positioning features.

When you're done, click **OK** to save changes and return to the template.

Finally, let's add a separate navigation menu and a copyright notice to the bottom region of our site so that they will be available on all pages. This works great for creating page footers.

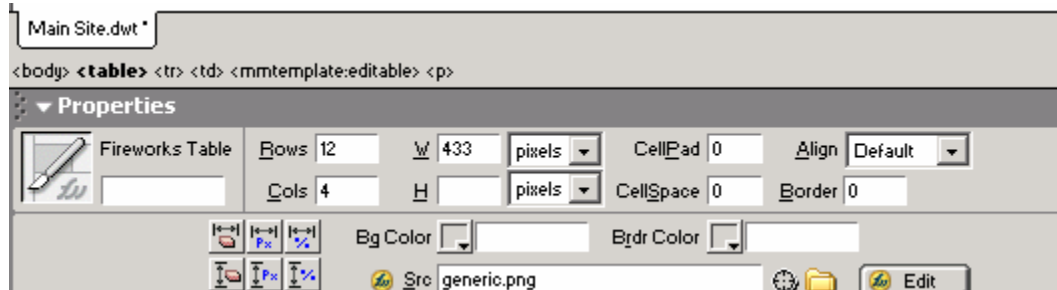


Uh oh! Something's wrong. You may notice that the bottom left corner of the page is now expanding. We'll fix this later.

Save your file to make sure none of your changes are lost.

Dreamweaver and Fireworks Integration

Now, after all of that work, it's time to start using these programs together. Right above the Dreamweaver properties palette, you'll see a horizontal hierarchy of the HTML tags that compose your page.



These are jump points. By clicking on any of these, Dreamweaver will automatically highlight that entire block of code, from the starting tag to the closing tag. This works great for the step we're about to do... editing our entire template from within Fireworks.

Select the first **<table>** tag in the list above the **Properties** palette. Your view should change to something similar to what is shown above. We are interested in the **Src** section of the above picture.



Notice the **Edit** button? That shows us that we can edit this table in Fireworks!. Click on the **Edit** button.

Whoops! It's telling us it can't find the PNG file! You'll have to locate it yourself. Click Browse and then point it to the location of your original PNG file that you saved from Fireworks. When you locate it and select it, Dreamweaver will actually pull it into your site root folder. Any edits on the PNG file will be saved there.



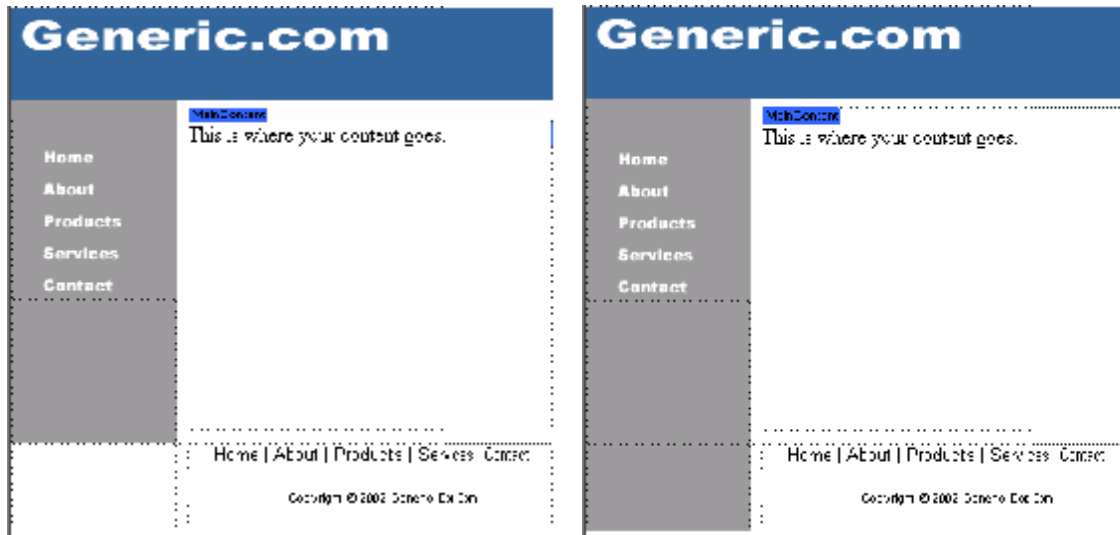
Here you can make any changes you want to your document and images and have them automatically imported into your Dreamweaver template. What's more, the changes should then filter down to any pages created **from** your Dreamweaver template!.

We need to fix one small problem with our template: we had that lower-left slice expanding too much.

Convert the lower-left slice from an image slice to an HTML slice by selecting the slice and changing the type from **Image** to **HTML** in the **Properties** palette.

Notice the **DONE** button above your canvas? This is how you transfer the changes. It will also save the PNG file in one simple step. Click **Done** and watch the changes occur. The lower-left corner image has been removed. You can now fill that table cell in with the background color to match the rest of the sidebar.

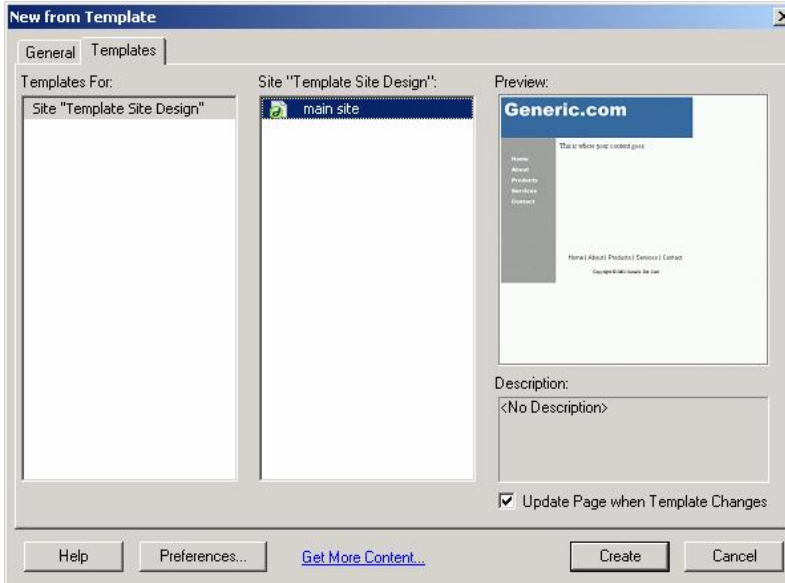
The template before changing the color (on the left) and after (on the right).



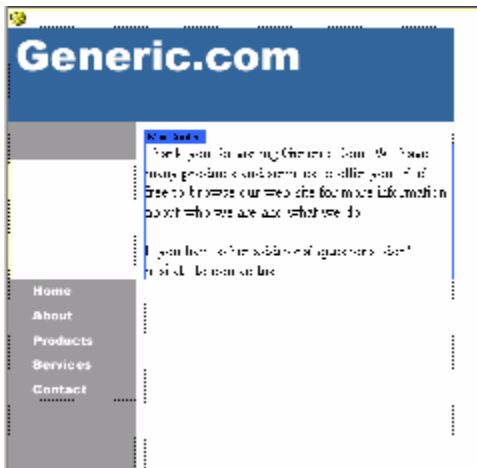
Now your template looks as expected. You can now save the template and begin to create pages from it.

Using the Template to Make Pages

Click **File** and choose **New**. The **New Document** window appears. Select the **Template** tab and you should now see your template as an option as shown in the screen below.

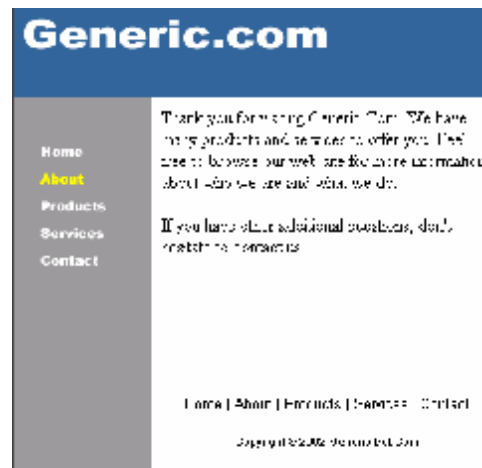


Make sure that the **Update Page when Template Changes** box is selected and press the **Create** button.



Your new page will appear. You'll be able to make changes only to the editable regions you defined. Everything else will be locked.

As you add content to the **MainContent** region, you may notice that the sidebar you created doesn't quite look right. This is a Dreamweaver issue and can be ignored. If you want to preview your work in the web browser to make sure that everything is working right, press the **F12** key. It will generate a temporary file so that you can see your work.



You'll see from the browser that everything is working the way it should.

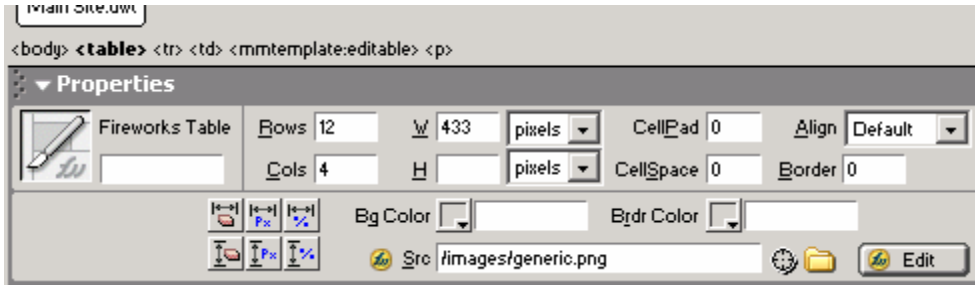
Save your file by going to **File** and selecting **Save**. The file should then be saved to your site. You can make additional files by repeating the same steps.

Using the Template to Affect All Pages – Adding a Pop-up menu

Now that you have a page linked to a template, you can alter your template and have those changes trickle down to any linked pages.

In this example we will alter our existing template to create a DHTML Pop-up menu using Fireworks.

Open your template file in Dreamweaver and select the main table from the tag list above the **Properties** palette.



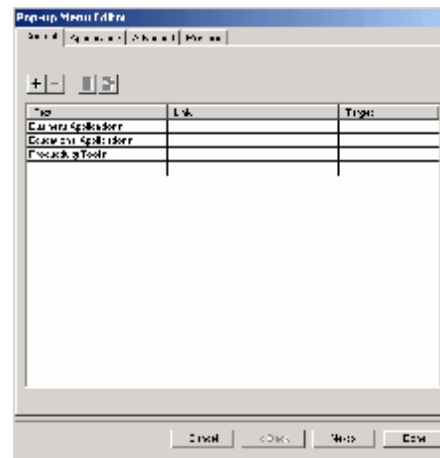
Click the **Edit** button next to the **Src** field on the **Properties** palette.



This will open the original Fireworks document and allow us to make our menu.

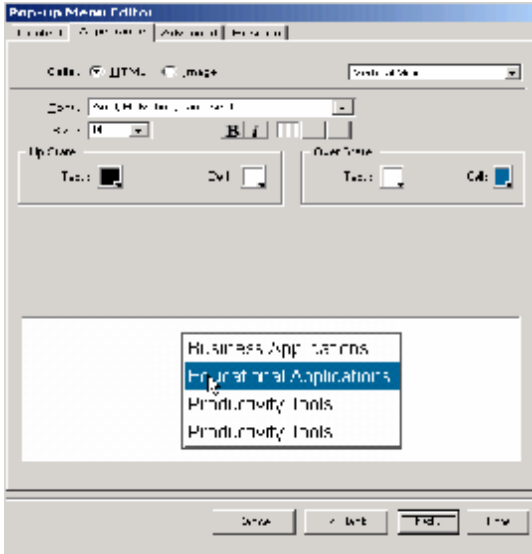


Right-click on the slice that contains the **Products** menu item and choose **Add Pop-up Menu**. The wizard will then appear.

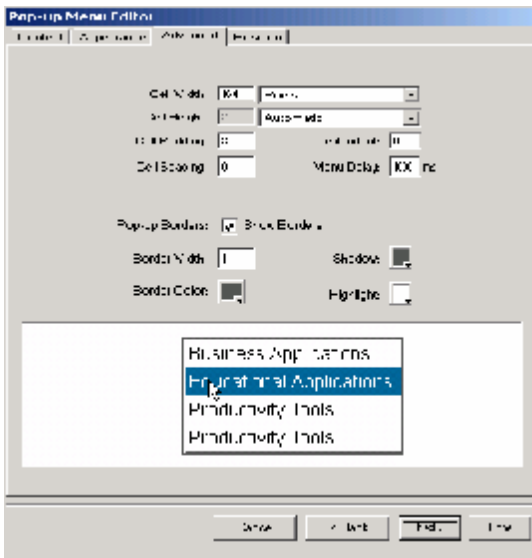


The first screen is where your menu items go. The first column holds the text descriptions and the second column is for the URLs you wish to associate with the descriptions. The third column lets you specify a target browser or frame.

After you have constructed your menu items and URLs, click the **Next** button.



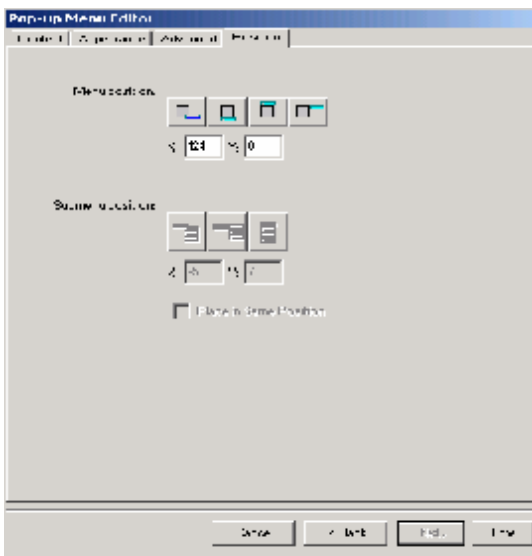
Now we can customize the appearance of the menu, by changing the colors, fonts, images, and font style. Configure your styles and click **Next** to work with some more advanced settings.



The **Advanced** tab allows you to specify the width and height of the menu items, the padding and spacing of the cells that make up each item, and other options such as tab spacing and the delay.

You also can turn off the menu borders here, or control the color of the shadow.

When you've customized your menu settings, press **Next** to position your menu on the page.



The **Position** tab lets you specify which direction the menu item flies out, and even how submenus fold out. You can also specify the exact X and Y positions of the menu.

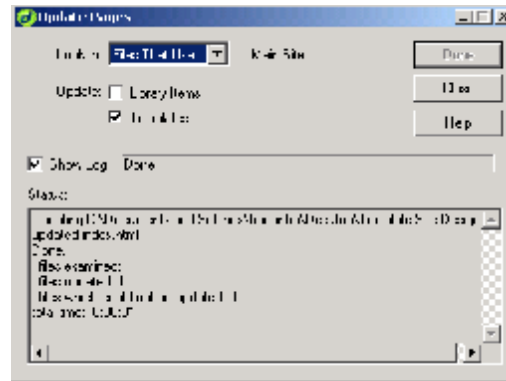
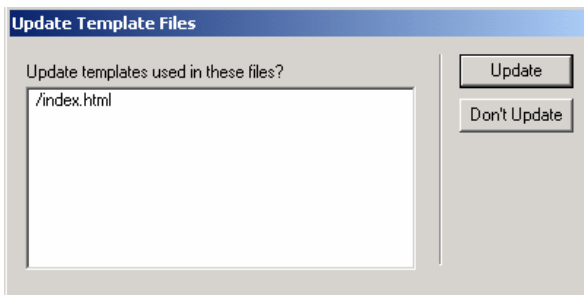
Keep in mind that using DHTML menus requires that your users have a browser that supports them. This means a JavaScript enabled browser version 4.0 and higher. It's good practice to create pages containing text versions of your menus that are then linked from the slice you've attached your DHTML menu to. That way, non-JavaScript browsers can still navigate your site.

Click **Done** to build the menu.



You should now see your menu attached to the slice. You can now click the **Done** button and the changes will be saved to the source document and placed into your template.

Now, go to the **File** menu and save your template. You will be prompted to update any other files that are linked to your template. Click **Update** to apply the changes. You will then be presented with a summary of the changes.



When you preview any of your pages in the browser, you will see your pages with all of the functionality we have added using Fireworks.

If you followed the tutorial exactly, your main home page should look similar to the example at the left.

Conclusion

You can use this method to maintain the entire website by only changing the one template. It allows you to easily manipulate or modify images, including compression types. You also have the ability to quickly make changes to links and navigation through your template.

I've only covered the very basics. You still have to make links to all of your pages in your site, and you still have lots of options to explore that we haven't even touched on.

It just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?