New Features in FrontPage 2003

For a comprehensive User's Guide to FrontPage 2003, click here.
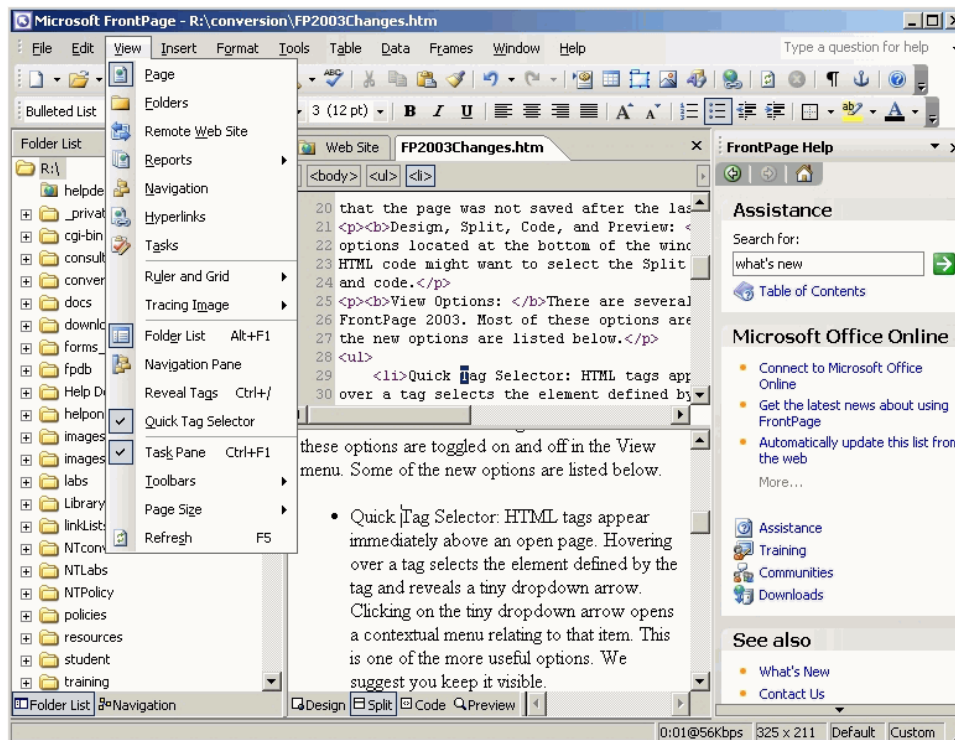
Changes to the design window layout.

Pages are indicated with tabs. Open pages in FrontPage are indicated with tabs immediately above the page and just below the toolbars. An *asterisk indicates that the page was not saved after the last changes were made to the file.

Design, Split, Code, and Preview: A new option was added to the View options list located at the bottom of the window. Web developers experienced with HTML code might want to select the Split view so they can work with both content and code.

View Options: There are several options the user can set to customize FrontPage 2003. Most of these options are toggled on and off in the View menu. Some of the new options are listed below.

- *Quick Tag Selector*: HTML tags appear immediately above an open page. Hovering over a tag selects the element defined by the tag and reveals a tiny dropdown arrow. Clicking on the dropdown arrow opens a contextual menu relating to that item.

- *Task Pane*: The Task Pane appears at the right of the page. A dropdown arrow allows you to switch between Task Panes. These Panes include: FrontPage Help, Getting Started, New, Tables and Layouts, Clipboard, and others.

- *Reveal Tags*: Reveal Tags displays HTML tags in the webpage itself. Most HTML tags come in pairs: a starting tag and matching ending tag. Clicking on either tag selects both tags and everything in between.

The image included below shows the Quick Tag Selector at the top (showing the <body>, <p>, and <li> tags), Task Pane at the right (showing FrontPage Help), and Split view (note the code window above the design window). The Folder List is visible at the left. The View pull-down menu is visible indicating where these items are toggled on and off.

Changes in functionality

Some functionality from FrontPage 2002 is now available in more powerful methodologies. Examples are listed below.

Shared Borders and Templates:

Shared borders created in FrontPage 2002 will continue to function in FrontPage 2003. You will still be able to edit and change shared borders in FrontPage 2003, but if you did not use shared borders in FrontPage 2002 you will not be able to start using them in FrontPage 2003. FrontPage 2003 has a much more powerful option - the Dynamic Web Template (DWT) - that replaces the earlier shared borders technology. A FrontPage web can have several of these DWTs which can each be applied to selected pages. DWTs are also more effective at locking down page areas so they cannot be inadvertently changed. We suggest that web developers using shared borders move to replacing them with DWTs instead. For more information, go to Help and search for "About Dynamic Web Templates."

FrontPage Themes:

Themes created in FrontPage 2003 use cascading style sheets (css) rather than the HTML code that was used in FrontPage 2002. Themes created in FrontPage 2002 will not automatically upgrade to use css. Web developers interested in using FrontPage 2003 themes will have to remove the old theme and apply a new one. For more information, go to Help and search for "about themes." Note: Themes are difficult to undo. Always make a backup of your site before applying a theme. Also, we do not usually recommend FrontPage themes as there are better ways to accomplish a consistent look and feel for a web site.
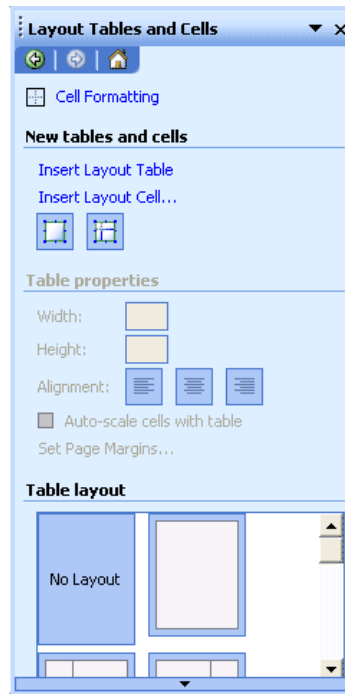
Forms and Access Databases:

Online forms created in FrontPage that send data to Access databases will continue to work, but it's always a good idea to check them for confirmation. Online forms that use FrontPage connections, rather than custom-built scripts, use FrontPage server extensions, which were upgraded earlier this year.

Additional Features:

FrontPage 2003 also includes browser compatibility testing, support for layers and layout tables, image tracing for webpage layout, easier access to css, an improved Find and Replace, Optimized HTML code functionality, wizards for Access database/web processes, ASP.NET integrations, and much more. The easiest way to find some of this functionality is to look at the menu options and then search the Help files for information. For example, if you want information on css, search for "about css."

New and enhanced design features

Perhaps the biggest change is the inclusion of task panes—it's another Office-familiar feature that's working its way into all the Office applications. In particular, the Layout Tables And Cells task pane, as shown below, takes tables and formatting to a point-and-click level not seen before.

The Layout Tables And Cells task pane is new to FrontPage 2003.

A number of new tools make layout easier than ever. These include:

- Pixel-precision control.
- Autostretch, which prevents browser distortion.
- A variety of layout templates that take a lot of the grunt work out of the process of creating a Web page.
- Design-time support, which makes it easier to work with multiple pieces of content that share the same space.
- Image tracing, which allows you to work from a background picture to build content.
- Default behaviors, which make it easier to work with foreign graphics.
- The ability to drag and drop Macromedia Flash content into your work area.
- The ability to reconcile multiple browser conflicts so you can see how your site will look in various browsers and resolutions—and correct problems before going live.

For more information on using Layout Tables and Cells, click here to see the "FrontPage 2003: Using Layout Tables & Cells" handout.