

Lesson 8

Automating tasks with buttons and scripts

FileMaker Pro lets you automate many database tasks with buttons and scripts. These powerful features can save you a lot of time by performing a series of actions with a single click.

In this lesson you will:

- make and use a button to perform a task
- create and run a simple script to perform a multi-step task
- use a button to perform a script

Perform a task using a button

Look at a sample button

A *button* is an object on a layout that you can click to perform many FileMaker Pro commands. You can use a button to switch layouts in your database.

1. Open the Tutorial folder in the FileMaker Pro 5 Trial folder.
2. Open the Sample Files folder.


You should be here: FileMaker Pro 5 Trial\Tutorial\Sample Files.

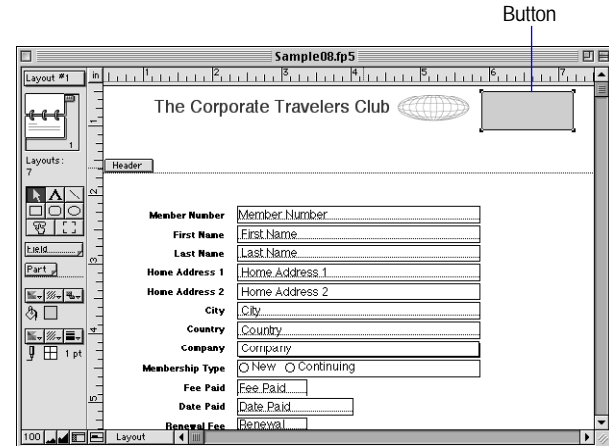
3. Open Sample08.fp5.
4. Locate the button labeled Go to List of Members at the top of Layout #1.
5. Click the button. You should now be viewing the List of Members layout (as indicated by the layout pop-up menu).

Create the button

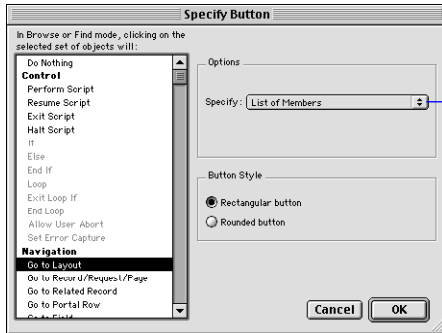
1. Open the Tutorial folder in the FileMaker Pro folder.
2. Open the Working Files folder.

You should be here: FileMaker Pro\Tutorial\Working Files.

3. Open MyFile08.fp5.
4. Choose Layout #1 from the layout pop-up menu if it is not already selected.
5. Select View menu > Layout Mode to switch to layout mode.
6. Click the button tool .
7. Draw the button at the top of the layout.



8. In the Specify Button dialog box, select the Go to Layout command from the list.
9. In the Options area, select the List of Members layout.



Specify the List of Members layout

10. Click OK.

11. Notice that the insertion point is now in the center of your button. Type Go to List of Members in your button to identify it.

12. Click outside the button.

If you need to move the button, select it and drag it to the desired location, as with any other layout element.

To test your button, go to Browse mode and click it. The button takes you to the List of Members layout.

Perform a series of tasks using a script

As you have just seen, you can use a button to perform a single command. To make FileMaker Pro perform a sequence of commands, use a script.

Run a script in the sample file

1. Choose Window menu > Sample08.fp5.
2. Choose Scripts menu > Preview Labels Layout.

You should now see the Labels layout, in Preview mode. This script lets you preview labels before you print.

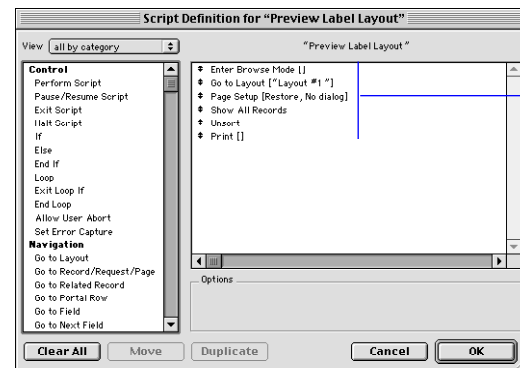
About scripts

A *script* lets you construct a series of instructions for FileMaker Pro to perform. Like buttons, scripts allow you to automate most of the FileMaker Pro menu commands, as well as activate some commands not found in the FileMaker Pro menu structure (such as Send Mail and Dial Phone). Simple scripts can perform a single task, while complex scripts might combine elements (such as user feedback and control) with programming techniques (such as branching and looping) to make powerful, dynamic instruction sets.

Create a script to preview the Labels Layout

1. Choose Window menu > MyFile08.fp5.
2. Choose Scripts menu > ScriptMaker.
3. In the Script Name text box, type Preview Labels Layout.
4. Click Create.

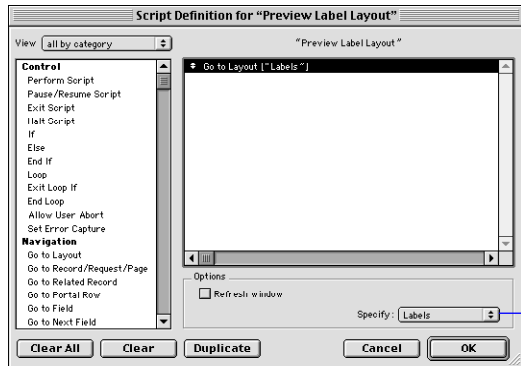
In the resulting Script Definition dialog box, notice that a script has been created, and that it includes some default script steps. All FileMaker Pro scripts are created with these same default script steps present. You will clear these default steps before adding your own steps to the script.



Delete these default script steps

5. Click Clear All.

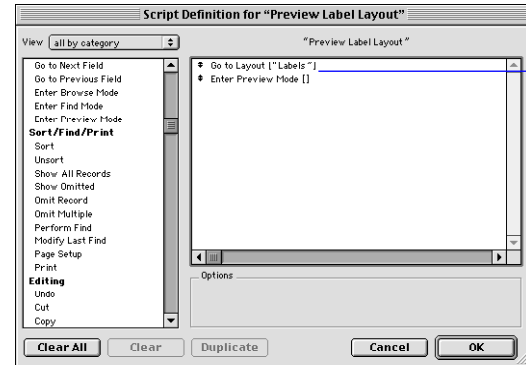
6. Select the Go to Layout script step and click the Move button. (You can also select and move script steps by double-clicking them.)
7. In the Options area, select the Labels layout from the list of available layouts.



Specify the layout you want the script to go to

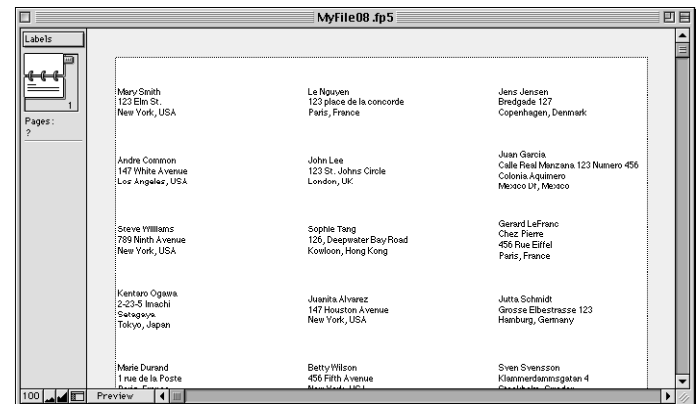
8. From the list on the left, scroll down and select the Enter Preview Mode script step, and move it over to your script.
9. With this script step selected, deselect the Pause checkbox in the Options area.

When you use a script to change modes, FileMaker Pro gives you the option of pausing the script. This can be useful if you require some input before continuing the script. In this instance, Enter Preview Mode is the last step of the script, so no user input is necessary.



The finished script

10. Click OK, then click Done.
11. To run the script you have just created, choose Scripts menu > Preview Labels Layout. FileMaker Pro displays the Labels layout and switches to Preview mode.



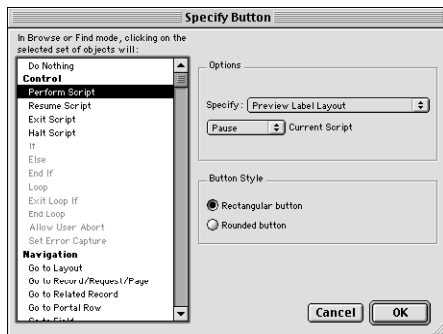
Assign a script to a button

While buttons are generally more convenient for users, scripts are a more powerful feature, allowing you to combine many menu commands into a single executable action. Using a button to run a script gives you the best of both features.

To assign the script you just created to a button:

1. In MyFile.08.fp5, choose Layout #1 from the layout pop-up menu.
2. Choose View menu > Layout Mode.
3. Double-click the button you created earlier in this lesson.
4. In the Specify Button dialog box, select the Perform Script script step from the top of the list on the left.
5. In the Options area, select Preview Labels Layout from the list of available scripts. Leave the rest of the default settings as they are.

If you have not already created this script, follow the steps described in “Create a script to preview the Labels Layout” on page 8-2.



6. Click OK to save this button.

Rename the button

1. Click the text tool **A**.
2. Click the button once. The text insertion point appears in the button.
3. Type `Preview Labels Layout` to rename this button.

Test the button

1. In Browse mode, test the button by clicking it.

Clicking this button performs the script, which displays the Labels layout and switches to Preview mode.

2. When you are finished with this lesson, close each open file by choosing File menu > Close.