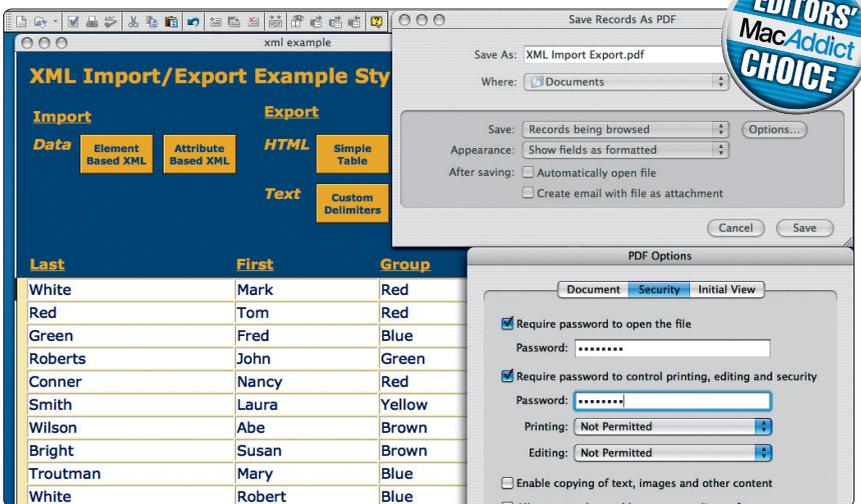


FileMaker Pro 8 Advanced

SOLID UPGRADE TO A GREAT DATABASE



FileMaker Pro 8 Advanced's PDF exporter includes security features for restricting access.

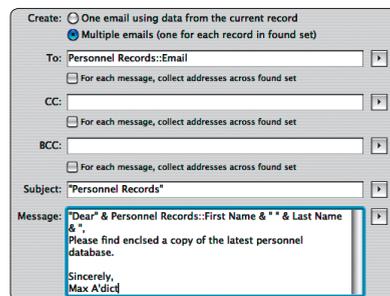
The newest version of the perennial FileMaker Pro database has few headline features, but lots of little improvements here and there combine to make your database-driven life easier.

Previous versions of FileMaker Pro have lacked sensible data-export options, so FileMaker's new ability to export directly to Microsoft Excel is a godsend. Excel's analysis and presentation functions are better—and easier to use—than FileMaker's. In the past, exporting FileMaker data into a CSV (comma-separated values) file for use in Excel was often the first port of call for anyone wanting to dig deep into data. But CSV exports are often inaccurate; with FileMaker's new direct-to-Excel export, you don't have to venture into CSV's dismal and accident-prone world.

Version 8 includes a powerful PDF generator. While you can generate PDFs using OS X's Print To PDF function, that method lacks many useful functions and is useless when developing a cross-platform database. With FileMaker's PDF generator, you can add metadata (such as

Title and Author) and specify passwords for opening, editing, and printing PDFs.

FileMaker Pro 8 also adds an email-merge function that saves trips to the Scripts menu and prevents cross-platform pondering. You can now create one or multiple emails using database fields, and even add an attachment if you like. Finally, an importer lets you bring data into your database,



You can use all of FileMaker's powerful calculation tools to create email merges.

creating a new table of fields on the fly—a considerable timesaver over the previous manual process for bringing in a complicated existing database.

FileMaker Pro 8 Advanced (formerly called FileMaker Pro Developer) has a

few extra bells and whistles to make developers' lives easier. A data viewer lets you monitor variables so you can see how your development changes affect them. You can disable script steps, which helps in pinning down the source of a bug, particularly in combination with the improved Script Debugger, which lets you step through scripts line by line to find the cause of your problems. Finally, the oft-wished-for table importer is here, making it easy to duplicate existing table schemas and combine several FileMaker files into a single database. The table importer isn't perfect (particularly if there are many relationships among the files), but it's a good start.

Finer details. FileMaker Pro 8's biggest strengths are in the fine details: calendar pop-ups for entering dates more easily, tool tips to explain features of layouts, script variables so you don't have to define global fields every time you store an intermediate value, an instant Find function to find records whose values match the currently selected field, layout-alignment tools for making fields the same length, tabbed layouts, auto-complete, and a Word-like spelling checker that underlines mistakes. Taken separately, no single improvement is killer. Together, however, they make FileMaker Pro 8 a worthwhile upgrade.

There are a few minor issues, many of which are leftovers from version 7. Small fonts still render poorly, particularly when right-aligned. Using FileMaker layouts as the basis for electronic forms is still a trial-and-error affair, since what you see is not always what you get when printed. Also, changes have apparently been made to the layout engine, as some of our previously pixel-accurate layouts now appear disjointed. Check your old layouts closely, just to make sure nothing's slipped.

The bottom line. Despite the layout problems, FileMaker Pro 8 is an excellent, worthy upgrade.—*Rob Buckley*



COMPANY: FileMaker
CONTACT: 408-987-7000 or
 800-725-2747, www.filemaker.com
PRICE: \$499 (full), \$299 (upgrade)

REQUIREMENTS: G3, Mac OS
 10.3.9 or later, 256MB RAM

GOOD NEWS: Integrated PDF production. Excel export. Dozens of usability improvements. Better development tools.
BAD NEWS: Problematic table-import tool. Some layout bugs still not fixed.

