



Custom branding Acrobat X Pro's PDF Portfolios using Adobe CS5

How to redesign the new Flash-based PDF Portfolio themes in Adobe Acrobat X Pro without even having to know how to use Flash.

Portfolios in Adobe Acrobat 9 and X Pro are packaged collections of media files, sitting together in a single PDF container. This makes them simple to transport and distribute, and, unlike .zip and .sit files, they provide a friendly browsing interface for viewing the documents inside, complete with thumbnails, full previews and easy single-item extraction.

A PDF Portfolio can contain and preview not just PDFs and images but Microsoft Office documents, Flash animations and both audio and video media files, too.

With Acrobat X Pro, Adobe provides a choice of slick animated layouts for your Portfolios. The good news is that you can customise the appearance of these layouts by importing your own 'themes' (interface

'skins', if you like) that you can create using Adobe Flash. Well, that's great for Flash aficionados, but what about the Flash-illiterate Creative Suite users? We know you exist, so you may as well own up.

Luckily for you, there's a tidy workaround that lets anyone with some basic Adobe Illustrator skills get in on the act. And while you'll still need Flash to publish the final SWF file, you'll be able to do it even if you have never run the program before in your life.

As for all you Flashmen, just follow this tutorial using Flash from start to finish, creating named instances of objects on the stage instead of Illustrator Symbols. One way or another, an hour spent in Adobe's CS5 is enough to give custom branding to your organisation's PDF Portfolios.



Alistair Dabbs is a freelance journalist, editorial trainer and Adobe Certified Instructor specialising in print and digital media publishing. The black belt in karate comes in handy, too.

Kit required

Acrobat X Pro, Flash CS5, Illustrator CS5

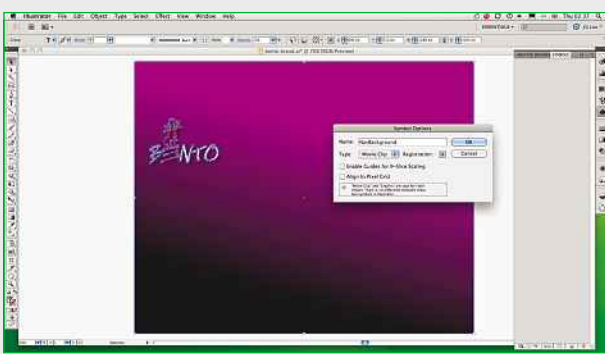


KEY FEATURES

The screenshot shows the Adobe Acrobat X Pro interface with a PDF Portfolio open. The interface is annotated with green callouts pointing to various components:

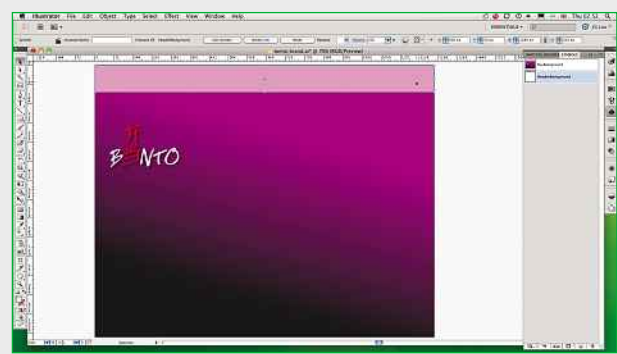
- Header**: Points to the top bar of the portfolio.
- CardTitleBar**: Points to the title bar of the document preview card.
- Header text goes here**: Points to the text area within the header.
- NavBackground**: Points to the background of the navigation area.
- Previous Button**: Points to the left navigation arrow.
- MiniNavSlammer Background**: Points to the background of the mini-navigator at the bottom.
- MiniNavSlammer icon**: Points to the icon of the mini-navigator.
- Mini Navigator**: Points to the mini-navigator itself.
- Local Mutual NDA.docx**: Points to the document title in the preview card.
- Infolcon**: Points to the information icon on the preview card.
- ExtractIcon**: Points to the extract icon on the preview card.
- NavCard**: Points to the preview card itself.
- Next Button**: Points to the right navigation arrow.
- Mini NavBackground**: Points to the background of the mini-navigator.
- MiniNavCard**: Points to the mini-navigator card.
- You will import your custom theme here**: Points to the 'Import Custom Theme...' option in the right-hand panel.

The right-hand panel shows the 'Visual Themes' section with options like Clean, Spring, Tech Office, Modern, Translucent, Custom, and Import Custom Theme... The 'Portfolio Properties' section shows the font set to Myriad Pro and the 'Embed fonts' checkbox checked.



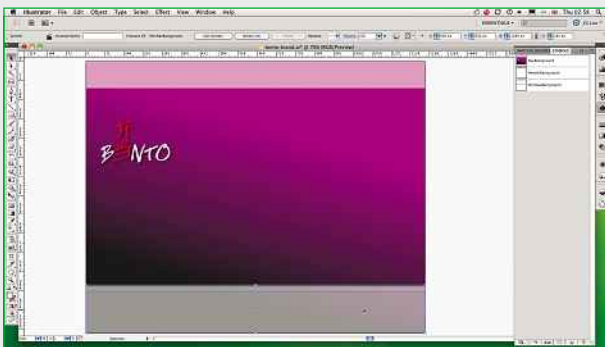
1. Design a background

Create a new Illustrator document for your intended PDF Portfolio interface. We recommend a single artboard of 1280 x 1024 pixels in RGB colour mode and a default screen of 72ppi. Fill the artboard with whatever you want to use as the Portfolio background, including company logos and other artwork. Group the objects. From the Symbols panel, create a New Symbol from the selected group, naming it 'NavBackground'.



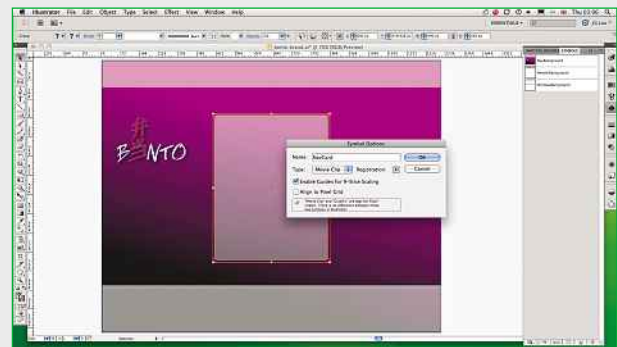
2. Add a header bar

Draw a rectangle across the full width of the artboard, snapping it to the top edge. It should be 100 pixels tall. This will act as the Portfolio's optional header bar, which only appears if you add titles later on in Acrobat. Again using the Symbols panel, create a New Symbol from the rectangle and name it 'HeaderBackground'. Here, we filled it with white and set its opacity to 50%. Your own header bar can be more elaborate.



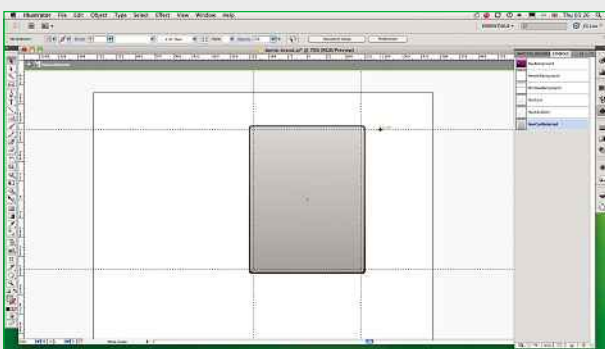
3. Draw the mini navigator

Some Portfolio layouts can call up a row of file thumbnails along the bottom of the window, so you should design a background for this 'mini navigator' bar. We suggest making it no deeper than 185 pixels. Here, we made it slightly transparent and added a shadow effect along the top: select the object (or group) and add it as a New Symbol, this time naming it 'MiniNavBackground'.



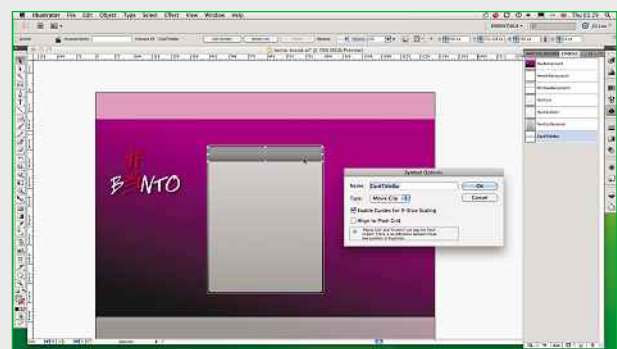
4. Design the thumbnail frames

Each file thumbnail in a Portfolio is presented in a rectangular frame, so design one. Make two duplicates and edit the background fills to look slightly different. Add these three objects (or groups) as New Symbols called 'NavCard', 'NavCardOver' and 'NavCardSelected' respectively. This time, however, tick the 'Enable Guides for 9-Slice Scaling' option before clicking on OK. The Over and Selected variants will later respond to mouse actions in the Portfolio.



5. Set 9-Slice Scaling

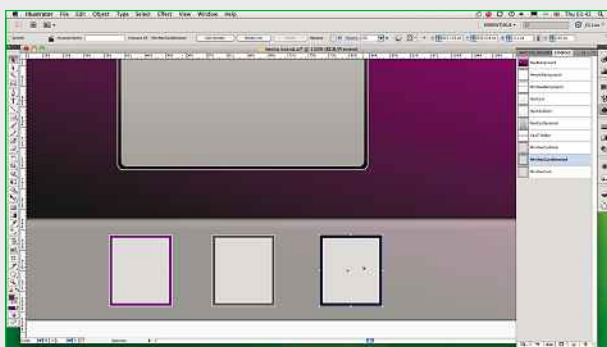
Double-click on NavCard in the Symbols panel in order to edit it in isolation. Drag on the four dashed slice guides so they're close to but not touching the frame edges of the NavCard. This will ensure the card resizes and reshapes itself in the Portfolio to suit the thumbnail it contains without distorting the frame edges. Exit Isolation Mode and repeat with the other two NavCards.



6. Create a title bar

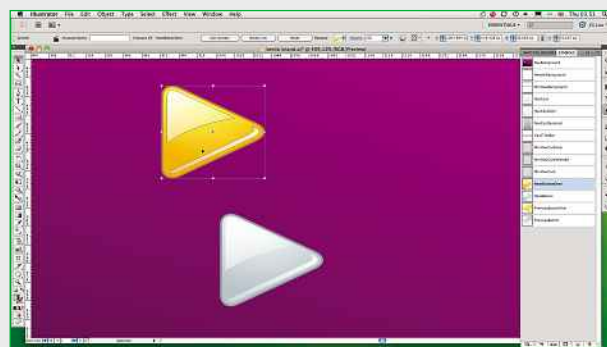
Each thumbnail in the Portfolio needs a title bar for its filename, so create a bar shape to fit neatly at the top of the NavCard. Add it as a New Symbol called 'CardTitleBar' and enable 9-Slice Scaling, remembering to adjust the slice guides afterwards. Even though we've overlaid all three NavCards on top of each other, this isn't necessary: the symbols can be positioned anywhere on the artboard.





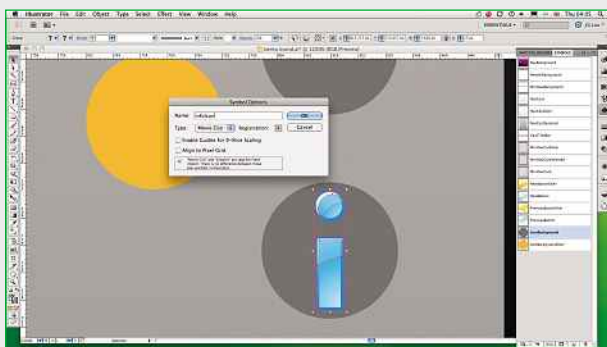
7. Add navigator frames

Design smaller versions of the NavCards to fit in the mini navigator bar at the bottom. Again, you'll need three versions with slightly different appearances to respond to mouse actions: name them 'MiniNavCard', 'MiniNavCardOver' and 'MiniNavCardSelected' respectively. As mentioned earlier, you don't have to align them: here, we've put them side by side so we can see how they look. Each should be set up for 9-Slice Scaling.



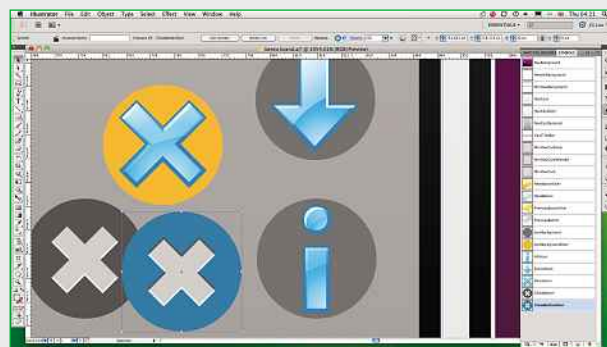
8. Go forward and back

Create a pair of left/right directional buttons that will be used to control the scrolling of the thumbnails in the Portfolio. Add them as New Symbols using the names 'PreviousButton' and 'NextButton'. You'll also need mouse-over versions that look slightly different, naming these symbols as 'PreviousButtonOver' and 'NextButtonOver'. All four buttons should be 50 x 50 pixels in size.



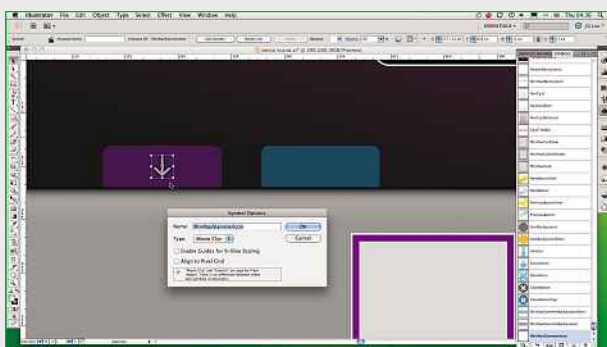
9. Make the little buttons...

Your Portfolio provides little buttons for calling up file information and for extracting the selected file from the Portfolio, so let's draw their backgrounds. Create two small shapes 30 x 30 pixels in size, colour them differently and add them as New Symbols named 'IconBackground' and 'IconBackgroundOver'. While you're at it, design an information button logo (we used an 'i') and add it as a New Symbol with the name 'Infolcon'.



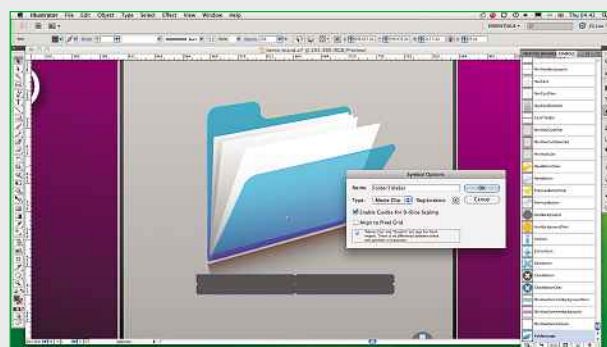
10. ...and yet more buttons

Create an extract button (we used a downwards-pointing arrow) and a delete button (we used a cross) and add them as New Symbols named 'ExtractIcon' and 'DeleteIcon'. You can also create a pair of 'close' buttons for closing the file information window in the Portfolio: these buttons can include their own backgrounds and should be symbols with the names 'CloseButton' and 'CloseButtonOver'. All the buttons should be no bigger than 30 x 30 pixels.



11. Create open/close tab-style button

The mini navigator bar needs an open/close tab-style button. Draw two different versions at 80 x 28 pixels and add them as New Symbols named 'MiniNavSlammerBackground' and 'MiniNavSlammerBackgroundOver'. Add a small icon for the tab, make it a symbol and call it 'MiniNavSlammerIcon'. This will rotate 180°, depending on whether the navigator is open or closed.



12. Design some folders

Finally, if you want a custom look to any folders shown in the Portfolio, add them in three sizes of symbol, named 'FolderSmall', 'FolderMedium' and 'FolderLarge'. The latter can be 285 x 360 pixels in size. Further, create a small title bar for folder names, adding it as a symbol called 'FolderTitleBar'.

Here's a rundown of all the objects you need to create for your custom Portfolio theme. Remember to add each item as a symbol using the precise object names given.

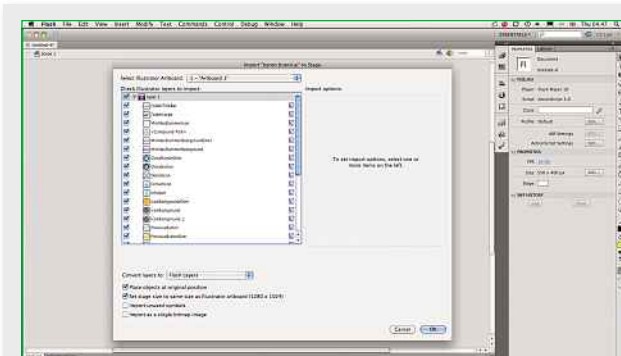
| CARDS | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Object name | Description |
| IconBackground | Background image for all icons that appear on the card. Infolcon, ExtractIcon and Deletelcon appear on top of this object. Size: 30 x 30 pixels |
| IconBackgroundOver | MouseOver state for the IconBackground. Size: 30 x 30 pixels |
| Infolcon | Icon to show metadata. Not present in all layouts. Size: 30 x 30 pixels |
| ExtractIcon | Icon to extract file. Not present in edit mode. Size: 30 x 30 pixels |
| Deletelcon | Icon to delete file. Size: 30 x 30 pixels |
| NavCard | Background image for the card. Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| NavCardOver | MouseOver state for the NavCard. Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| NavCardSelected | Selected state for the NavCard Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| CardTitleBar | Background image for the card title area. Size: 54 pixels high Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| FolderTitleBar | Background image for the folder title area (appears below the folder icon). Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| CloseButton | Close button on flip size of card. Not present in all layouts |
| CloseButtonOver | Over state for CloseButton. Not present in all layouts |

| FOLDER ICONS | |
|---------------------|--|
| Object name | Description |
| FolderSmall | Image used to represent a folder in the MiniNav area |
| FolderMedium | Image used to represent a folder in the FreeForm layout medium card |
| FolderLarge | Image used to represent a folder on most cards. Optimum size: 285 x 360 pixels |

| BACKGROUND IMAGES | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Object name | Description |
| NavBackground | Background image for the Portfolio. Note: When part of a theme, the image will always stretch to fill the available space. Doesn't use 9-Slice Scaling |
| HeaderBackground | Background image for the header area. Note: In Adobe default layouts, only appears if there is content in the header. Size: 100 pixels high |
| MiniNavBackground | Background image for the MiniNav |

| FILE NAVIGATION BUTTONS | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Object name | Description |
| NextButton | Image for the next file button. Size: 50 x 50 pixels |
| NextButtonOver | MouseOver state for the NextButton |
| PreviousButton | Image for the previous file button. Size: 50 x 50 pixels |
| PreviousButtonOver | MouseOver state for the PreviousButton |

| MININAVIGATOR | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Object name | Description |
| MiniNavSlammerBackground | Background image for the 'Slammer' button, the button that opens/closes the MiniNav. Size: 80 x 28 pixels |
| MiniNavSlammerBackgroundOver | MouseOver state for MiniNavSlammerBackground. Size: 80 x 28 pixels |
| MiniNavSlammerIcon | Icon for the Slammer button. Note: This icon will rotate 180° when the MiniNav is toggled. Design this icon for the MiniNav open state |
| MiniNavCard | Card for the MiniNav. Use 9-Slice Scaling |
| MiniNavCardOver | MouseOver state for the MiniNavCard |
| MiniNavCardSelected | Selected state for the MiniNavCard |



13. Process with Flash

Save and close your Illustrator document. Launch Flash and create a new blank file. Go to File > Import > Import To Stage and choose your Illustrator document. In the Import dialog, tick all the symbols you created and deselect the option to 'Import as a single bitmap image'. Save the Flash file, then choose File > Publish Settings, make sure 'Flash (.swf)' is ticked, and click Publish.



14. Import into Acrobat

Open or create a PDF Portfolio in Acrobat X Pro. If necessary, take the Portfolio into editing mode by clicking on the Edit button in the tool bar at the top of the program window. In the Layout panel on the right, scroll down to Visual Themes, click on Import Custom Theme and choose the SWF file you published in step 13. Save the PDF to embed your new theme.