



Capstone Courseware, LLC

33 Boylston Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

877-227-2477
capstonecourseware.com

XSLFO

Will Provost

Instructor's Guide

Revision 1.0.2



Revision Notes

Revision 1.0.2 is the initial public revision.





Course Overview and Philosophy

This course is designed to give a quick introduction to XSLFO and to give students a sense of what it is, what it can do, and generally how it works. It does not explore every nook of the specification. It will suit very well an audience with a primary interest in XML and XSLT but who have some need for print production from their XML data. For those who really must roll up their sleeves and produce polished print or screen pieces using XSLFO, this course should provide an excellent start, but several days' more study and workshop would be indicated.

We keep the lab work fairly light, especially because it's possible that the students won't have very deep XSLT backgrounds. The early labs don't use XSLT at all, just have students hand-write their FO documents, and then when we move to generated FO we try to focus on the FO and not the XSLT techniques. There are a few tips dropped in regarding best practices in using XSLT to generate FO documents.

Timeline

Day 1 – Morning

Chapter 1	Getting Started
Chapter 2	Page Masters

Day 1 – Afternoon

Chapter 3	Formatting
Chapter 4	Links and Citations

Chapters 1 and 2 are more lecture-heavy, and Chapter 3 delivers almost half of the total lab work. Getting a start on Chapter 3 before a midday break is a good idea, but Chapter 4 is quite short, so don't worry too much if that early jump on 3 isn't possible.





Chapter 1:

This chapter explains the role of XSLFO and the typical process in which it is used. An early example and lab get participants comfortable with the overall structure of FO documents, and with a simple change-and-test cycle using FOP's AWT-preview mode.

Chapter 2:

Page masters are not sexy. Still, it's important to understand that top-level page geometry, or the formatting work (which is where most people want to go, right away) will give confusing results. We try to keep it simple and quick but still give the essentials of page masters and some exposure to the power of conditional page masters.

This is also when we switch to primarily XSLT-generated FO, and it may be necessary to spend some time highlighting the close interworking of the two namespaces (often along with a third, application-specific namespace for the source XML) in the transform documents.

Chapter 3:

This is the tipping point past which most of the big concepts have been learned and we're just cruising through formatting techniques. This chapter explains blocks and inlines in detail, and for most people this is easy stuff. A lab in simple formatting, a lab in lists and one in tables, and people should be getting the hang of FO pretty well. It's worthwhile to highlight how detailed the list and table models are, though, and especially how some processors (FOP included) are lax about some grammar rules while some are strict. (For instance it's pretty common to see FO that works perfectly in FOP flunk out on another processor.)

Chapter 4:

This chapter adds just a few techniques, but these seem to round out an introductory-level understanding of FO. Internal links, page references, and tables of contents tie documents together nicely and similarly students should leave off after this chapter feeling that they can go and create some simple, but complete, PDFs for practical purposes using XSLFO.





Feedback

We truly do welcome feedback, both of a specific nature (pointing out mistakes) and general suggestions. For the former sending email with a numbered list of corrections would be most helpful.

Please send feedback to:

Will Provost
Capstone Courseware
<mailto:provost@capstonecourseware.com>
www.capstonecourseware.com

