Web Standards & Best Practices :: SLICING / OPTIMIZING

Last Modified by: Nedi Gavriliu

Change Record

Rev	Date	Responsible Person	Description of Change
A	February 25, 2002	Nedi Gavriliu	Initial Release

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THE SLICING PROCESS

Slicing is, basically, the process of dividing / cutting an initial image in order to assign different functionalities to different areas of it, treating it as separate graphic items, turning the image into an interactive object, a web or interactive CD-Rom interface respectively.
Hotspots ("sensitive" / clickable spots on an image in a web page) and slices are areas created by the user to mark a region within the artwork to apply browser interactivity.
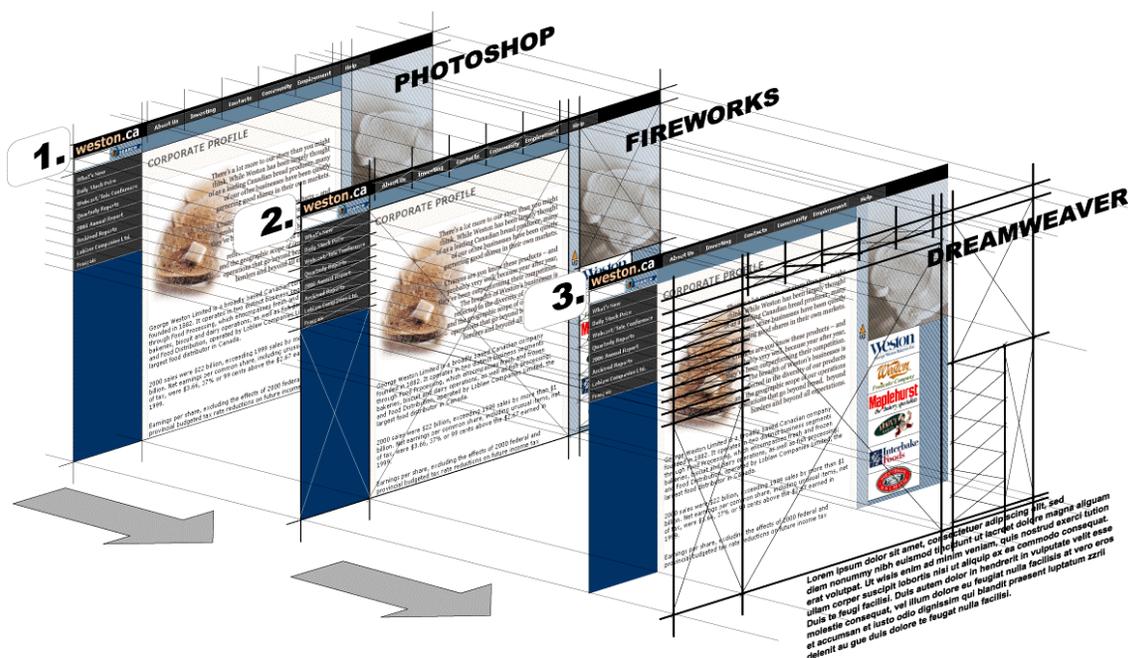

IMAGE :: SLICING / OPTIMIZING / WEB-ING / WEB-EDITING

FIREWORKS :: An Overview

Macromedia Fireworks is a fast, flexible image editor designed for the unique needs of Web graphics. Fireworks combines bitmap- and vector-graphics tools with HTML-generation features that make short work of complex rollovers and image slicing. Fireworks automation tools take the drudgery out of repetitive production chores, and its GIF and JPEG export modules ensure the best image quality at the smallest file sizes. At Fireworks Focus Day, the hottest Fireworks artists share their secrets and show how to maximize this versatile program. Learn the best design and workflow techniques, and see how Fireworks can set your Web graphics ablaze.
Fireworks is a powerful program for building navigation bars, buttons, and other essential user interface elements.

THE PROCESS'S STEPS ::

DATA INPUT :: The type of information that Fireworks has to get before starting the slicing / optimization process has to be, typically, the most "fidel" copy of the original file, containing the maximum level of visual information. That would be a flat *.PSD file, at high resolution (300 dpi), containing at a maximum of sharpness all the details of the original image of the interface.

Because we use Fireworks, beside slicing, to create "visual behaviors" for a part of the interface's elements (such as rollovers, for instance) we need to import all the "versions" of the interface: the "normal state" (rollout) version, the "rollover" version (containing the rollover states for all the elements which have that) and other different states of the interface, if the case (for instance, we want to display in a spot of the interface 2, 3 or more different things – such as explanations, for instance, or section descriptions – on rolling-over on different buttons: that means we'll need a couple of different states of our interface, displayig all the different states of the respective spot).

Basically, in the simpliest of the cases (slicing and simple rollovers) we need to have and import in Fireworks two versions of the interface, let's say "interface_00.psd" (the flat *.psd file containing the "normal" state of the interface) and "interface_on.psd" (the flat *.psd file containing the "rollover" state of the interface).

IMPORT :: Fireworks treats different states of an interface as different frames of an animation; unlike Photoshop, Fireworks has two "physical dimensions" : layers and frames, - the development in space and the development in time. Hence, the two states of the interface should be imported and placed on two different frames of the Fireworks file, since they represent two different moments of our interface's behavior:
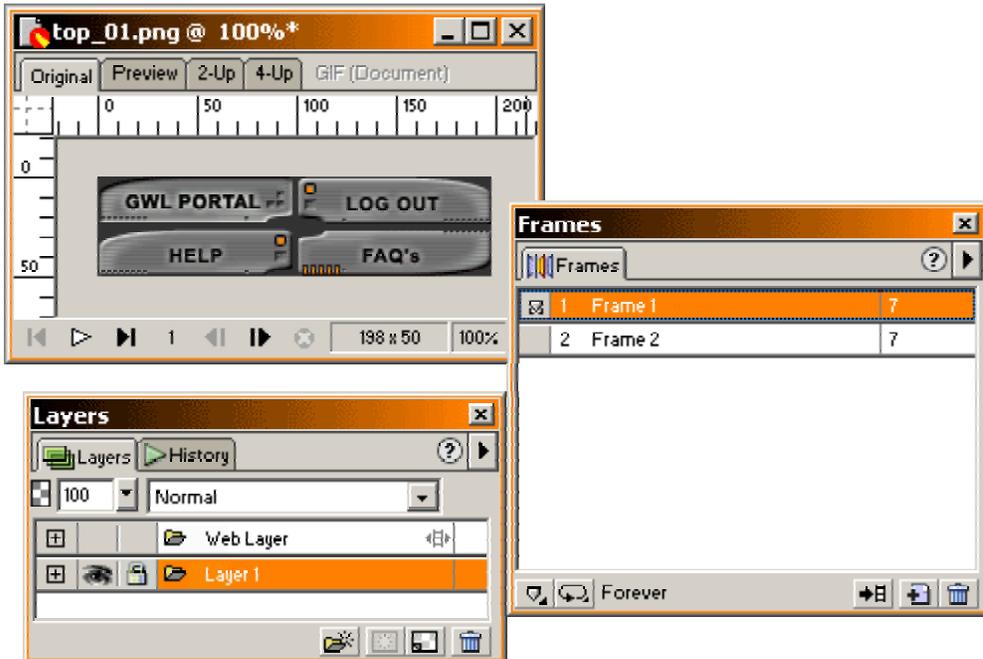
:: **frame 1 ::** the "rollout" state of the interface on Layer 1.
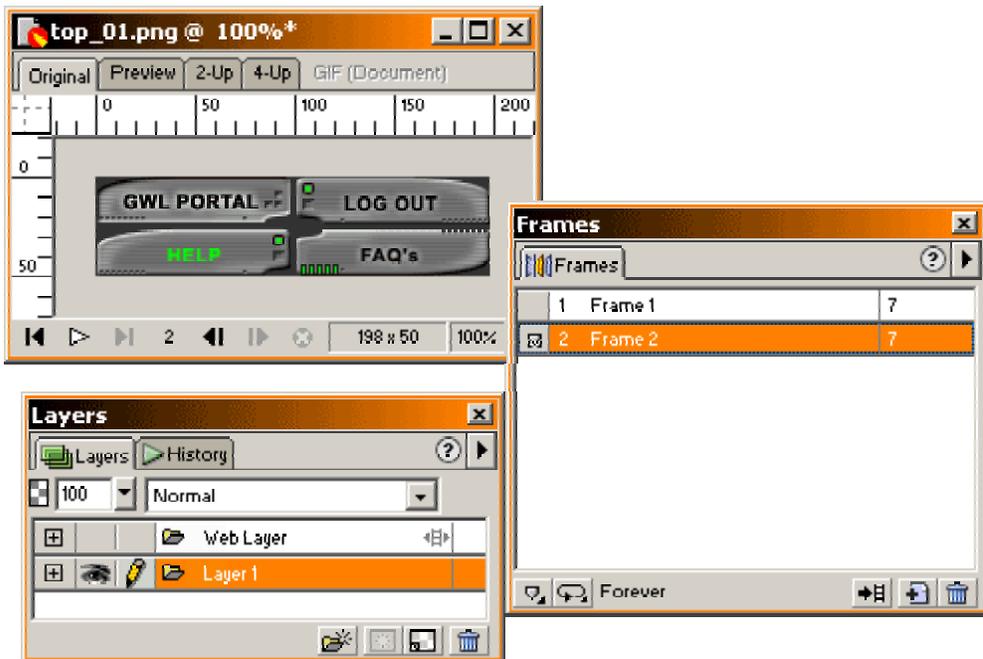
:: **frame 2 :: the "rollover" state of the interface on Layer 1.**

>> COMMANDS:
   1.- select the layer where you decide your image file should be;
    - select the frame corresponding to the state that the image will represent (for the first state, frame 1)
    - File > Import [Ctrl + R] ::
         > the IMPORT window will open, allowing you to browse on your hard drive; browse to find your "interface_00.psd" - the first state of your interface. Select it. Click "Open".
         > you'll notice that the mouse pointer becomes a "top-left corner" sign; once you click with it wherever on your file's area, the imported file will "come" – will display with its top-left corner in the point where you just clicked.
The Info panel will help you to check whether your imported image is in the right position (if the Fireworks file has the same dimensions as the imported image – which is our case now – the top-left corner of your imported image should have the coordinates x:0, respectively y:0).
   2.– select the next frame (in our case, frame 2)
    - import the second-state image ("interface_on.psd") repeating the same steps in frame number 2.
    - you can check whether your importing process was correct selecting successively the frame 1 and the frame 2 : what you have to see, is the actual behavior of your interface (obviously, at this stage all the elements change in the same time)

SLICING :: Once we have all the necessary data in our file, we can start the actual slicing process.
The slicing and the optimization process are, actually, two "parallel" processes. Once we create a slice, we can setup the optimization parameters for it; this way, we don't risk to omit any of them.
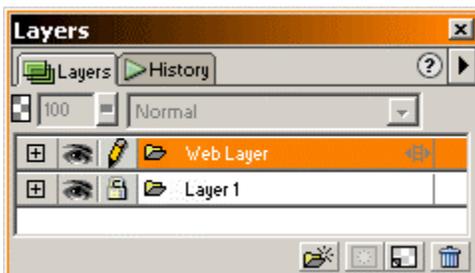
: : **the Fireworks' ToolBox :: the Slicing Tool.**

>> COMMANDS:

  1.- first step is to make your life easier by dragging guides wherever you want to "cut" your image.

     - make sure that your slicing maneuvers will snap to your guides :

      > View > Guides > [check] Snap to Guides

     - make sure that you're operating on the **web layer** (the slicing process belongs, actually, to the **web** settings of your Fireworks file - it will generate, eventually, the html layout of the interface and the behaviors' JavaScripts, respectively).

   - just in case, is recommended to lock the rest of the layers:

2.- to create a slice, select from the ToolBox the Slicing Tool.
 - usually the slices are rectangular shapes; so, choose the point (top-left corner, let's say) where you want your slice to begin.
 - with the slicing tool, drag onto your image, till you rich the end point (the bottom-right corner) of your slice::
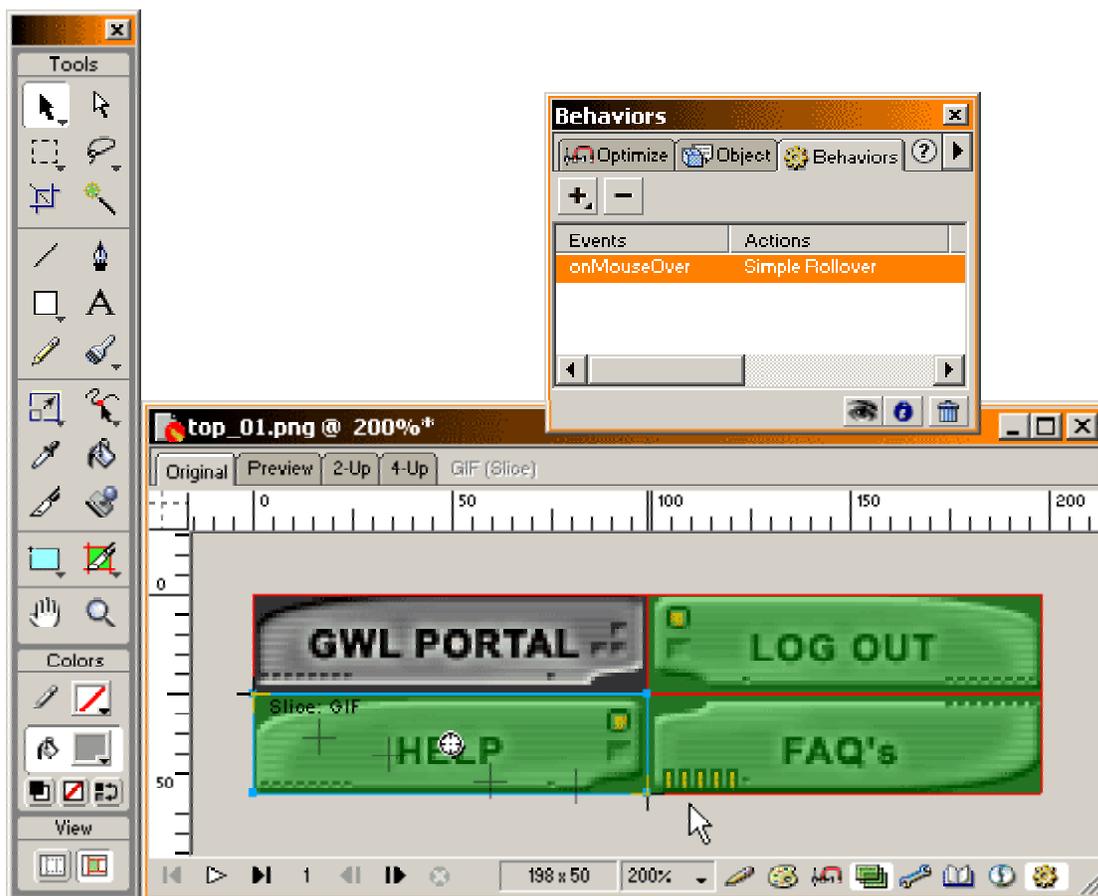
 - Save.
 - now you have your first slice, - you can optimize it:

3.- having the slice selected (you can use the arrow tool in the ToolBox to select it, - just like any object) go to the Optimization panel and choose the parameters for your slice (which will be a graphic item within an html table): for vector-oriented images is recommended the *.gif format, for photo-oriented, *.jpg format:
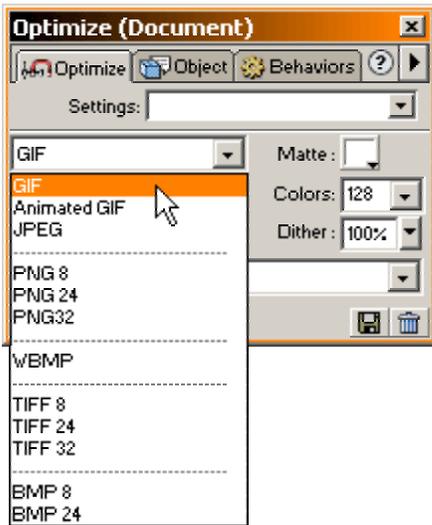
- Save.

4.- if the slice you just created is a rollover button, after creating the slice and optimizing it, you can assign a behavior to it, using the Behaviors Panel:
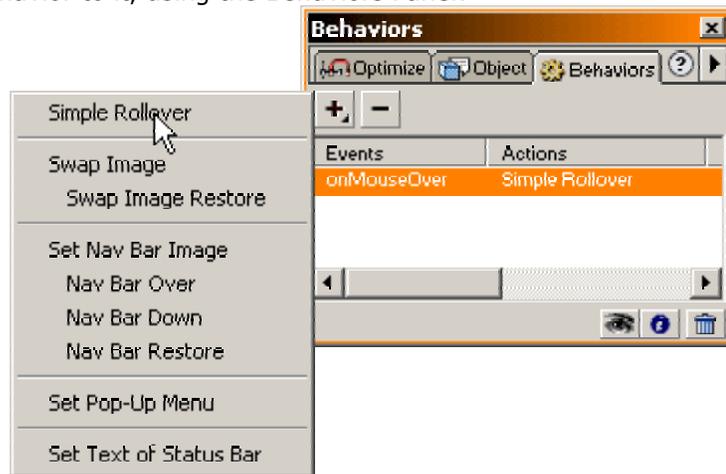
- Repeat the same steps for all the slices, assigning behaviors only if the case.

PREVIEW CHECK :: Fireworks is designed to give us the chance to preview and check, respectively, the correctitude of our interface's layout, functionality and behavior(s).
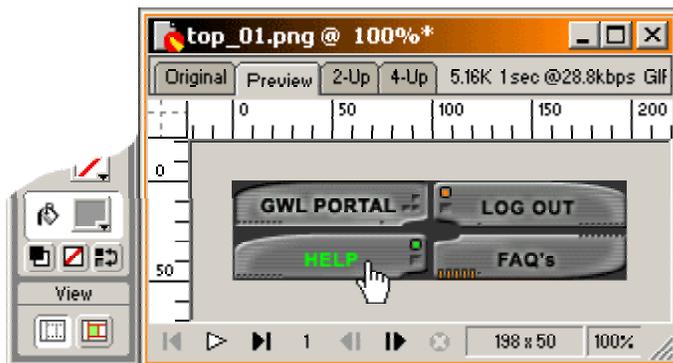
:: **Interface Preview**.

(make sure that your preview does not happen in the "slicing mode" – in this case, your

sliced areas will look bloory; if the case, jump to the normal view mode – the selected left-side layout icon at the bottom of the ToolBox)

DATA OUTPUT / EXPORT :: Fireworks is designed to generate the following categories of data:

- the "Fireworks Object" :: an html file containing a table (or two or more levels of nested tables) – the interactive object that our image was converted to; (the Fireworks Object is entirely importable in Dreamweaver to become a part or the entire content of an html web page; the html and JavaScript codes generated by Fireworks are perfectly compatible with the Dreamweavers' codes and with all the requirements of the browsers);
- an "images" folder :: a folder containing all the graphic items loading in the html Fireworks Object.

Once the optimization settings are done, the **export process** can start :

>> COMMANDS:

 1.- File > Export Wizard :: the Export Wizard window will appear; we'll have to go, step by step, through all the Export setting process:
    - Select an Export Format > JavaScript Rollover > Continue > the Export Window appears : setup all the details and preferences for your file > OK. (Fireworks will keep in its memory all the settings you've done for your file).

 2.- File > Export ::
   - choose a name for your html Fireworks Object; this name will become, by default, the root of the graphic items' names, naming them according to their position in the html tabel's layout (row and column, respectively : e.g. :: "top_o1_r1_c1.gif" :: "file **top_o1.htm**, row number 1, column number 1"); you can change the default and choose any different naming rules in the Options menu.
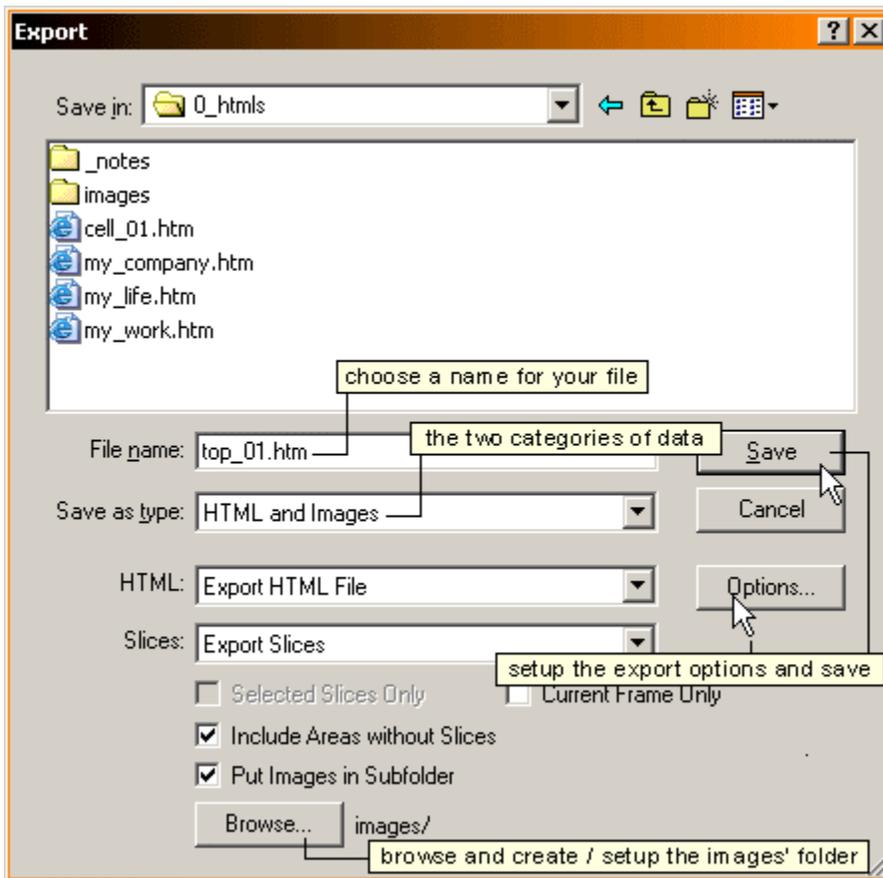
- in the same time, choosing the name you'll have to choose and/or create a folder where to store your html Fireworks Objects; in this case, the folder "0_htmls", which is not, actually, one of the website's folder (it won't go online) – it'll be only a storage place for your Fireworks files, where you can import them from, when you edit the actual website's pages in Dreamweaver.

- the next step > choosing the file type; Fireworks is, actually, able to generate a wide range of formats, for many kind of applications;because your file will be used as an web object, you'll have to choose the two categories of data that you'll need for editing your actual page(s): HTML and Images :
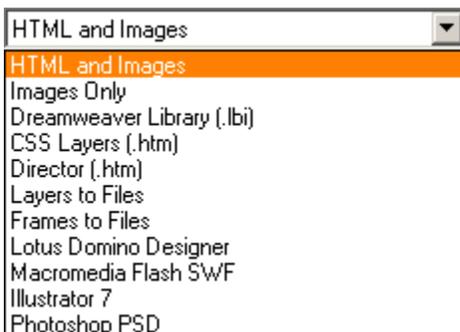
 : : **Choosing formats**.

- next, you'll have choose between saving / storing your html file in a folder and temporary storing it on the clipboard, where you can take it from ONLY ONES to use it in
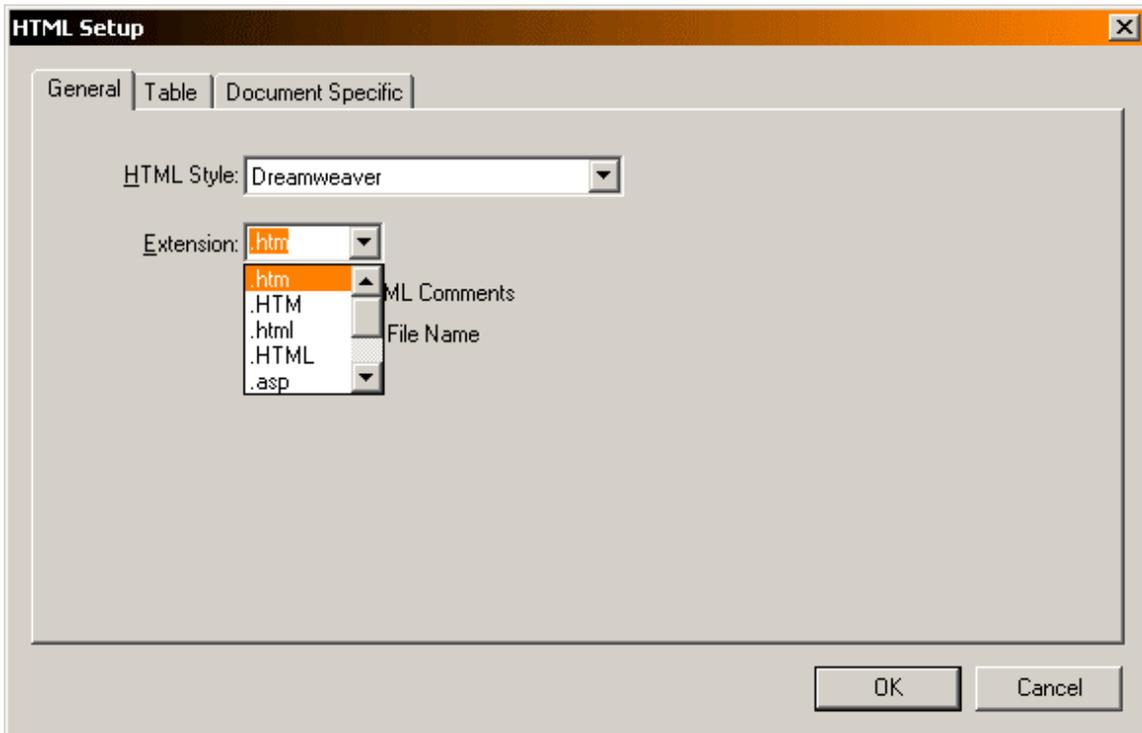
editing the actual web page :: the recommended way is to store it in a folder as html file (in our case, in the folder "0_html").

   - if your image is not supposed to become a table (it won't be "cutted" in separate pieces, - you use, let's say, Fireworks only for its optimization tools) you can choose a none-sliced format; or, if you don't need any special settings for your slicing and any line described by a guide could be used as a slicing line into your html Fireworks Object, you can tell Fireworks to just turn the guides into slices (which means, you'll be using the default optimization – without a "custom made" slicing you don't have the chance to apply a "custom-made" optimization !) :
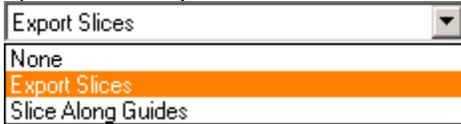
 Choosing slicing.

   3.- Options : Fireworks has a couple of different ways to create a table or a number of nested tables levels, so your html layout will remain a very stable one. The Options Menu gives us the chance to choose one of them, as well as the naming rules of the graohic items:

HTML Setup

General | Table | Document Specific

Space with: Nested Tables - No Spacers ▼

| Nested Tables - No Spacers |
Single Table - No Spacers
1-Pixel Transparent Spacer

Empty Cells:

Cell Color:

Contents: Spacer Image ▼

OK   Cancel

HTML Setup

General | Table | Document Specific

File Names:

Slices:

doc.name ▼ + Underscore ▼ + row/column (r3_c2, r4_c7. ▼ +

None ▼ + None ▼ + +

Frames: Underscore ▼ + P

Example: top_01_r1_c2_f2.gif

None
doc.name
"slice"
Slice # (1, 2, 3...)
Slice # (01, 02, 03...)
Slice # (A, B, C...)
Slice # (a, b, c...)
----
row/column (r3_c2, r4_c7...)
Underscore
Period
Space
Hyphen

Alternate Image Description:

☐ Multiple Nav Bar HTML Pages
   Exports multiple HTML files for use in HTML documents without frames

☑ Include Areas without Slices   ults

OK   Cancel

USING FIREWORKS GENERATED FILES IN WEB EDITING :: DREAMWEAVER

IMPORTING FIREWORKS OBJECTS IN DREAMWEAVER::