

HEAVENLY STEPS to SOME > QUICK HOWTO

USE THIS DESIGN TEMPLATE FOR YOUR HOWTO DOCS

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Text is not just text, it is also design, seen as ink-shapes on paper. As texture on emptiness. This is called Typography. The typography in this document is pretty simple. Each paragraph is made of a few lines. Make sure you have atleast 5 to 7 paragraphs per page. If you have a long, verbose paragraph, break it up immediately. Each paragraph starts with a 'drop-word' that grabs the reader's attention. Just select and replace with your own text. Ditto for the body text.

Main paragraphs are clear because they have a bigger type-size. Their child paragraphs have smaller type-sizes for the 'drop-word' at the beginning. All these paragraphs were created in OpenOffice as follows: The left-hanging paragraphs just have a 3 cm indent for the right-side of the para. The right-hanging paragraphs have a 3 cm indent for the left-side of the para. Check it out in the Format menu > Paragraph. Click on 'Indents & Spacing.' To get the 'drop-word' in the same dialog-box, click on 'Drop Caps' and check out the settings.

Remember to keep a 'Main' paragraph to the left, and the child paragraphs to the right. This creates a visual structure and hierarchy to your documents. Press return twice between paras to get some juicy space. Start typing, and the new para will automatically have your drop words and indents. Use the return key thrice between the end of child para, and the beginning of a new 'main' paragraph. Do also remember to change the footer to reflect the title of your document. Just select and change the footer text on the front page, and every page reflects the new text.

Screenshots or images are easy to use. Just goto Insert menu, choose graphics, and choose the appropriate file or source. Place the screenshot either to the left or to the right, using the same alignment techniques of paragraphs. You could also embed spreadsheet tables, charts, drawings, clickable hyperlinks, and everything you can throw into an OpenOffice document.

Output your file to various file-formats from within OpenOffice.org. Start with the native fileformat, which is *.sxw. Read on to find out other fileformats that you must publish from within OpenOffice.

PDF files can be created under OpenOffice.org. Just issue the 'Print' command from the File menu, and select the pop-up 'PDF Converter'. Do remember to 'Print to File.' It's that simple. That's how this document has been created. The newer versions of OpenOffice from 1.1 and above, have a simple PDF logo on the taskbar. Click it and you get an instant PDF.

HTML files can be generated by choosing Save As, and selecting 'web page' as your option. You may want to clean up the layout in another html-editor or add metatags and stuff.

Release your document. I assume you wanted to use this design template for a HowTO which you wish to share with the GnuLinux community, much like the '7StepsToSoftwareSamadhi' document available at linux-delhi.org, in the 'downloads' section. So go to this 'downloads' page, log in using a username and password, (or first create a linux-delhi account if youdon't have one. Its free) and then upload your PDF and your original *.sxw document to the downloads section. That's it, you're done. You could upload the HTML to your site or to any other site, or request the linux-delhi moderators to publish it on the linux-delhi site.

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Update your document when the time is appropriate, and increment the version number. Leave the first version out there if it also has some value. You can even let others maintain the document. Do give credit to all the people who offered further suggestions for your document.

Beyond such documents, you may want to explore publishing a technical, focussed how-to on GnuLinux, at the tldp.org site, which is The Linux Documentation Project site. Creating documentation and manuals for software is quite a specialised field, but easily do-able too. Do a search on 'techinfo', 'latex', 'doxygen' and of course, 'sgml'. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Most mainstream distributions of GnuLinux offer several tools for creating HowTos, guides, info pages, man pages, and similar documentation. Find out more at tldp.org, and even at yolinux.com.

Dtp under GnuLinux is possible, if you wish to use a proper, page-layout tool. Use DTP software such as scribus, or passepourt. Even Kile and Lyx do a good job. For illustrations and graphics, sodipodi, sketch, inkscape, and for photo-manipulation use gimp, imagemagick, though I prefer cinepaint.

CMS is Content Management System, though I dislike the term 'content' for work you author. Several CMS tools are available to author stuff quickly. My favourite is plone, but you could use PHP-based engines such as PHP Nuke, and find dozens more at sourceforge.net, and freshmeat.net, and savannah.gnu.org. You could use Wiki, or blogs, or even publicly-archived mailing lists, plus FAQ engines to create FAQ documents on-the-fly.

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