

The Table Subtle

Breaking out of the Rows & Columns mold

By **DIANE BURNS**

Any of us who have used InDesign's table features know that they can make working with data in rows and columns a downright pleasant experience. With alternating fills and strokes, the ability to import Microsoft Word tables or Excel spreadsheets, and a host of other well-designed features, InDesign's table features allow a creative touch to be added to the most mundane data or worksheet (**Figure 1**).

But in addition to achieving dazzling displays of rows and columns, there are other ways in which

Magnum's 6-Month Harvest Win-Win CD vs. the Competition's 6-Month CD		
Magnum	2.61%	APY
Wells County Bank	1.15%	APY
Bank of the City	1.60%	APY
LukkiBank	1.60%	APY
Bank Mutual	1.75%	APY

FIGURE 1: A typical table formatted with InDesign's Table Option for Alternating Fills. Rounded corners are achieved by copying the table and using the Paste Into command to position it within a frame with rounded corners.

InDesign's table features can be used to great advantage. To make the most of the power and flexibility of the table feature, it's important to understand some of its basic characteristics. First, a table is always contained inside a text frame. A table is always edited with the Type tool. And a table is actually an inline frame. Further, a table is unique in that a table cell is the only type of frame in InDesign that grows as you type or add text to it!

These capabilities can be used in ways that aren't always obvious in rows and columns. Because cells can be so easily split or merged, almost any text in any kind of grid pattern within a layout can be incorporated into a table. And it may seem obvious, but tables don't

have to use any strokes between the cells, or any fill, for that matter, so they can be useful for text or graphic objects that are just visually in alignment but not necessarily lined up in uniform rows and columns. Because table cells are so easy to select, they are especially useful for text that gets changed frequently. One common example is the slug information used at the bottom of advertisements and other layouts. Slug information is changed almost every time it's used, and tables make it much easier to edit than simply using a series of text frames or worse, falling to the ills of using a complicated tabbing scheme to achieve the same look (**Figure 2**).

Tables don't even have to be made of multiple cells; a single table cell is still a table.

In fact, because of their ability to "grow" as text is typed or added, one-cell tables can be the perfect solution for layouts that require text to appear in boxes that are shaded or stroked. Text in a table can be formatted just like any other text, including applying Paragraph or Character styles, and controls in the **Table > Cell Options > Text** dialog box allow you adjust text insets, vertical alignment, and the first baseline position, similar to the Text Frame Options dialog box. With this flexibility, the possibilities are endless!

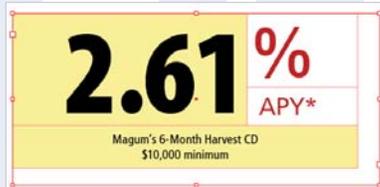
The following recipes illustrate some of the ways in which tables can expand your repertoire of InDesign dishes.

GRANGER Creative Services	product no: 10090 dash code: 34007 CS no: 3081
	file name: 10090JA_ACRG_SGm4.indd
art dept #: 810-1172-A	4 color, CMYK
art dept part #: 607-1011-A	
flat art size" 30.25 x 7.25	<small>Fonts: Condensed Bold, Futura Condensed Light, Citi Sans, GillSans@Com, Helvetica, Helvetica Rounded, Helvetica Bold, Helvetica Rounded Bold, Helvetica Rounded Black, Futura, Futura Medium, Futura@L, Helvetica Rounded Light, Meta, Mountain@Light, Times Rounded Thin</small>
finished-folded size" 5.125 width	
7.25 height	
bleed size" .125	Created at: 100%
if applicable: live" XX.XX x XX.XX	Output at: 100%
	trim" XX.XX x XX.XX
Production Notes: Fold lines do not print Fold is accordion fold	GV/MDP/TA
	m4

FIGURE 2: A slug that might be used by an advertising agency. All the information that has to be input (boldface) sits in its own cell, so it's easy to select and edit.



By placing this text in a table, you make the values that change frequently easy to update.



The table cells revealed: The yellow tint highlights table cells that were merged to create one cell.

line of text. Select the entire table, and remove all strokes: Using the **Cell Options > Strokes and Fills** command, set the weight of the strokes to 0. Format the text, using Paragraph or Character styles, if desired. For a finishing touch, create a frame with rounded corners. Tables themselves can't have rounded corners, but there's an easy workaround: Draw a frame with rounded corners and then Copy or Cut the table and use the Paste Into command to position it inside the rounded-corner frame.

Take the tedium out of a once-tedious task!

Table for One, Please!

Ingredients

Layout with paragraphs that require a tinted box or other special treatment

Table features

DIRECTIONS: This is a great way to quickly highlight special paragraphs in your layout by applying a tinted background or drawing a stroke around them. First, select the paragraph or paragraphs you wish to give the highlight treatment. Do not select the last paragraph's ending paragraph symbol. Use the **Table > Convert Text to Table** command to surround the paragraphs with a table. Each paragraph will convert to a table cell, producing a one-column-wide table. You can then use **Table > Cell Options > Stroke and Fill** settings to give the cells a background or a stroke around the edges. If you are highlighting multiple paragraphs, select the cells containing each paragraph and use the **Table > Merge Cells** command to create one table cell before you begin formatting. If you selected the last paragraph symbol, you'll end up with an extra row. Simply use the **Table > Delete > Row** command to remove it.

Table for one has never been so much fun!

DIANE BURNS is a pioneer in electronic publishing, founding *TechArt International* in 1984 as one of the first Macintosh-based design firms in the country. She has authored several books on graphics software, including *QuarkXPress* and *Illustrator*. She loves to cook.

The Grid Hid

Ingredients

Text or title that falls in a visual grid

Table features

A frame with rounded corners (optional)

DIRECTIONS: Anytime you have text that visually falls in a grid, you can use a table. Formatting text using a table is especially useful when you edit the text frequently, as in our example involving interest rates. Start with the **Table > Insert Table** command, and create a table that is 2 columns by 3 rows. In the first column, merge the cells in Row 1 and 2. That cell holds the interest rate ("2.61" in our example). Next merge both cells in Row 3, which holds the last



The highlighted paragraphs are single-cell tables.