# Advanced Whiteboarding 3: Introduction to Properties

## *The Property Browser*

The Property Browser gives you access to the nuts and bolts of ActivInspire objects.

While many of the things you can accomplish with the Property Browser can also be done in other ways, there are two main advantages in using the browser:

- **Finer Control** – you can often be far more precise with properties than with other methods. *For example, while you can use the Rotate marquee handle to turn an object with the mouse, the Position: Angle property allows you to enter a specific angle.*
- **More Options** – properties can offer a greater variety of options for some tasks, while some tasks can only be achieved by accessing properties. *For example, while you can change the interior colour of a shape using the Fill tool, you can only give it a gradient fill using properties.*

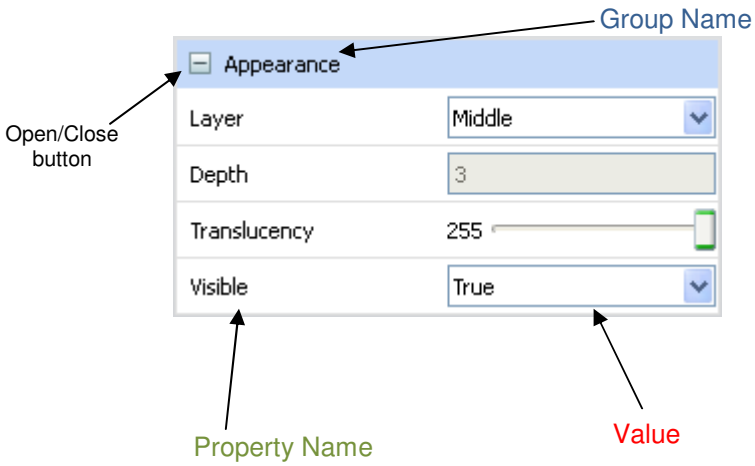
## *Properties*

The properties of an object appear in the browser when the object is selected. If no object is selected, the Page properties will appear instead.

Properties are arranged into Groups. These groups can be opened and closed to make it easier to focus on the properties you want – just click on the tiny plus or minus next to the group name.

On the left side is the Name of the property, which is a (sometimes vague) description of the property.

The current Value is shown on the right. This might be shown as a simple textbox, a slider, dropdown box, colour box, or other some other control. Use the control to change the value, whether it's a number, word, colour or other setting.



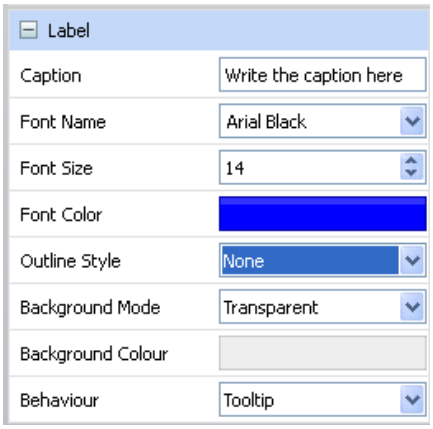
## *Useful Properties*

While many of the properties will be familiar to you from their counterparts in the marquee handles, menu icons, toolbox, etc., there are a few that offer unique features and are worth exploring in more detail, namely: Label, Page, Tools, Grid, Container, Rotate and Restrictors.

*(Container, Rotate and Restrictors are covered in the final session's notes.)*

### Label

The Label property creates a caption that is permanently attached to the selected object.



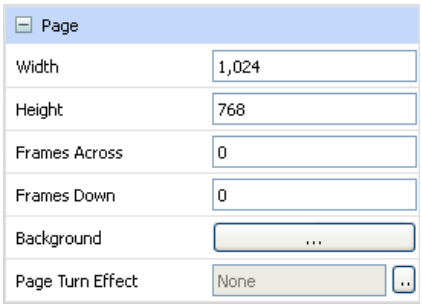

You can adjust the position of the label by dragging it (though there is a restriction on how far it can be moved from the object).

There is no way to make the text run onto more than one line, so beware of writing long captions.

By setting the Behaviour to Tooltip, the caption will only appear when the mouse hovers over the object (or over the area where the caption will appear).

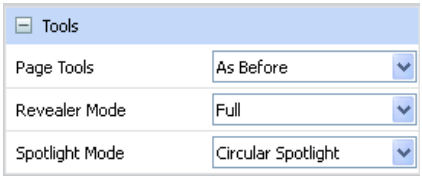
### Page

The Page property controls the background area of the flipchart. It only appears when no object on the page is selected. The Frames Across and Frames Down properties divide the page into rectangular areas. Unlike the Grid property (see below), this is purely cosmetic, but can be useful for creating a simple table or used as an alignment guide when building a complex page.




### Tools

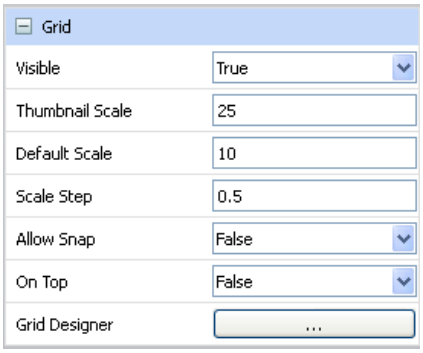
The Tools property, like the Page property above, only appears when the page is selected (i.e. no other object is selected). Its main use is for situations where you need a particular page to start with the Revealer  or Spotlight  tools switched on.




Without this property, you would have to remember to switch the tool on prior to moving to that page. By setting the Page Tools property to the required tool, it will automatically switch on when the page is viewed.

***Hint**: If you use this, set the Page Tools value for the pages either side to Tools Off. Otherwise, after you move off this page, either forwards or backwards, the tool might still be active (the default value is As Before).*

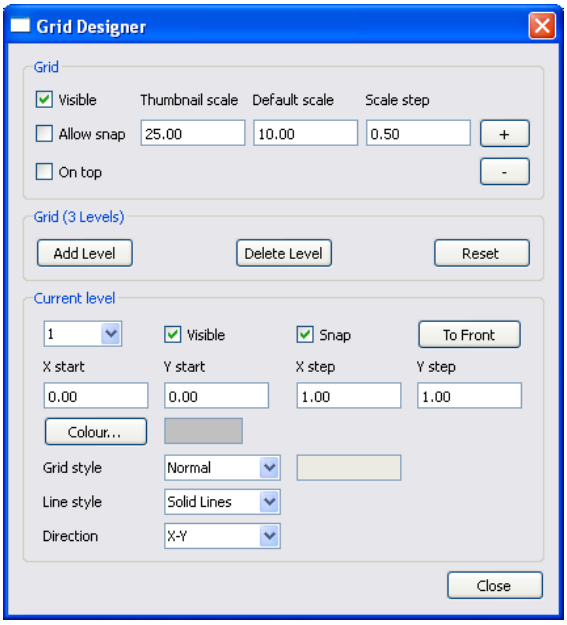
## Grid




The Grid property itself is not particularly useful, but it does give you access to the Grid Designer, which is, as it allows you to create a grid.

A grid's main purpose is to turn the page into graph paper, either for visual purposes, or to control the positioning of objects (if Allow Snap is switched on).

The grid sits behind objects on the Background layer, though in front of a background colour or image. It can be saved to the Resource Library the same way backgrounds can (right-click on the page, select **Add to Resource Library** > **Add Grid to Resource Library**).




Press the button next to the Grid Designer property to open the Grid Designer window.

The first thing to notice is that the Grid properties are identical to the top section of the Grid Designer window, so you can change these settings in either place.

Here's what the top controls do:

- **Visible** – switches the grid on and off. However, even if it's off, it can still cause objects to "snap" if Allow Snap is on.
- **Allow Snap** – if on, objects will "snap" or "jump" to the nearest grid point. You can control how individual objects snap (or stop them snapping altogether) by setting their Restrictors properties. By default, objects snap to their bottom left corner; if you want to place Xs or circles onto grid points, change Restrictors: Snap To to Centre.
- **On top** – if switched on, the gridlines will be displayed on top of everything, not just the background colour or image. Not a lot of use.
- **Thumbnail scale** – the only thing this affects is how the grid appears in the Page Browser. Because a grid is a load of lines packed together, an accurate thumbnail image looks a mess. By increasing the thumbnail scale of the grid, you can get a better idea of what the grid looks like.
- **Default scale** – this controls the overall size of the grid. The size of the grid squares set for each **Level** (see below) is multiplied by this value. Once you have a grid you like, change this setting to make the entire grid bigger or smaller.
- **Scale step** – this controls how much the Default scale is changed when you click on the +/- buttons.

The rest of the Grid Designer window sets the appearance of the grid. A grid can be made of several **Levels**, with size, colour, snapping, etc., set differently for each level.

The middle section of the Grid Designer window simply adds or deletes levels. The Reset button will wipe the grid completely, returning it to its default settings.

The **Current Level** section of the Grid Designer window allows you to edit each level of your grid. Set the level you wish to edit using the dropdown box, then change the other settings:

- **Visible** - you can switch levels on and off individually.
- **Snap** - a level set to snap will control the position of objects, otherwise the lines can be just for show.
- **To Front** - press this to change the order of the levels (moves the current level to position 1). Useful if using different colours for each level.
- **X start** - determines where on the page this level starts. Greater than zero moves the grid from the left side. The values are linked to the **Default Scale** of the grid.
- **Y start** - same as X start, but re-positions from the top of the page.
- **X step** & **Y step** - these determine the size of the grid squares (or rectangles, if X and Y step are different). These values are multiplied by the **Default Scale** to determine the final size of each grid square.
- **Colour** - select the colour of the gridlines for this level.
- **Grid style** - you can change the grid from vertical and horizontal lines to lines at a particular angle, but this does interfere with the next two settings.
- **Line style** - Change from Solid Lines to dots, crosses, etc. *Doesn't work too well with a Grid style other than Normal.*
- **Direction** - You can switch off the lines in either the X or Y direction.

## Example Grid Settings

Here are some settings to create some standard graph paper (leave other settings on their defaults):

**Default Scale:** 10.00 **Allow Snap:** On

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1: | **Snap:** On, | **X & Y Step:** 1.00, | **Colour:** Light grey |
| Level 2: | **Snap:** Off, | **X & Y Step:** 5.00, | **Colour:** Dark grey |
| Level 3: | **Snap:** Off, | **X & Y Step:** 10.00, | **Colour:** Black |

***Hints:***

- *Use the Action Browser's "Snap to Grid" button*  *for a quick way to switch a grid's snap setting.*
- *With snap on, use the Shape's Straight Line tool to draw straight lines on the grid.*
- *Also with snap on, use the Line-Chain shape to join up points and create filled polygons.*
- *The Curve-Chain shape, at a push, can be used to draw simple curves on a grid. It's not perfect, but for pre-prepared materials can be quite useful.*