actionsworld

Joomla! Actions Suite
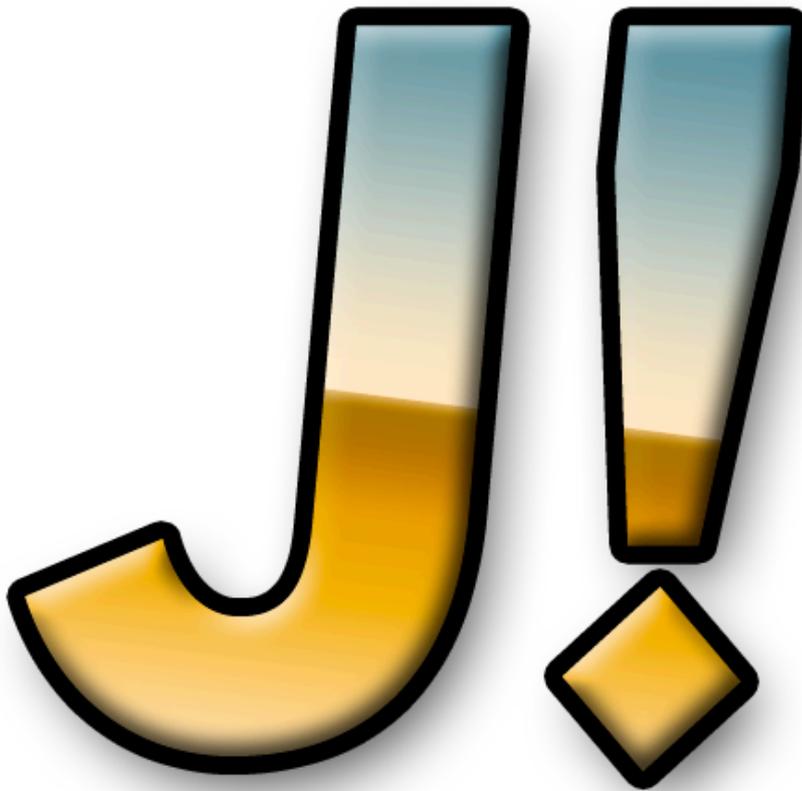
Joomla! and Freeway

What are these Actions?

The Actions you have bought are for the web design application, Freeway, published by Softpress - www.softpress.com. **These Actions are for Freeway Pro 5**.

What is Joomla!?

Joomla! is an open source Content Management System (CMS) for web sites. It typically runs on Apache servers running MySQL and PHP. A CMS allows the web site's content to be freely edited by one or more people, without disrupting the design of the site.

How does Joomla! work?

Joomla! works by storing the content of the site in a database. Users can access the database through directly editing content on a page or by using a backend system to edit and organise content. The visitor to the site will be shown these articles depending on what links have been clicked on. All administration functions are handled through an administration section of the web site, which is password protected.

How do I customise Joomla!'s appearance?

A Joomla! site's appearance is controlled by a template - that is a page of HTML, images and CSS (not to be confused with a Freeway template - I will be using this word in both contexts in this documentation). This template contains the necessary images, styling and layout to display the content. The Freeway Actions help to design the template file. The output from the Freeway file will be a series of slots into which Joomla! will pour content as the page is served up.

Manual Limitations

This manual assumes that you are familiar in part with Joomla! – it does not pretend to be a tutorial for creating templates for Joomla!, nor does it attempt to show you how Joomla! works. It is primarily concerned with documenting the Freeway Actions.

For more information on working with Joomla!, as including building templates, please visit www.Joomla.org.

This manual and the Actions assume you are using Joomla! 1.5 and upwards. The Actions may not work with Joomla! installs below this. You are advised to upgrade your Joomla! install when new updates are made available as these will fix any security problems which may arise .

Getting started

We have provided a suite of Actions as well as a ready to go Freeway template. The template has the most commonly used slots set up, and all you need to do is customise the appearance of the site. More advanced users may want to design their own Templates using Freeway. This will be covered later on in this manual.

Note that the Actions and Freeway will do their best to show you a preview. However, I recommend that you have an installation of Joomla! on your local machine and use that to preview your templates.

Notes on installing templates can be found in the Joomla! documentation. The Actions and Freeway will create all the necessary files in the Site Folder (next to your Freeway file) to allow your template to be installed into Joomla!. Copy the Site Folder to the /tmp folder of your Joomla! site and use Joomla! to install the template. It is recommended that you rename the Site Folder to match that of the template. Note that template names can not have spaces in them.

Internet Explorer 6 and the Continuing Headache

Internet Explorer 6 is well known amongst web designers for it's inability to render web pages correctly. Some of the Actions contain options to help Explorer 6 if there are any known problems than can be fixed. However, the Actions can not guess what you intend, so these options need to be manually switched on or off during testing.

It is recommended that you test your site in Internet Explorer 6 on a server, so you can see what happens when Joomla! modules are rendered (or not) as the site content dictates.

With any luck, these actions and Freeway's built in IE6 fixes should solve most problems. Be aware that fixing IE6 issues is not a priority.

Thankfully, this browser's popularity is waning.

Joomla! Concepts

In Freeway, you would normally draw a box on the page and then import or place content within it. The content you see on the page is pretty much what you get in the browser. Working with a CMS involves a different approach to your web design workflow.

Freeway and Joomla!

Joomla! works differently. A template will typically contain a mix of fixed content, and dynamic content. The fixed content can be created in the usual Freeway fashion.

The dynamic content is handled differently. In Freeway, you would create "slots" - essentially areas of the page reserved for Joomla! content. These slots are typically unstyled and will not contain Freeway generated content. Joomla! will, when building the page, create all the content required and place them in the slots. Content is created in Joomla! in the form of "modules", and when defining these modules, you will determine in which slot on the page they will be placed. It is possible for more than one module to display the same content, but in differing ways. It is also possible for a slot to display more than one module at any given time. Your design should anticipate this - either in Freeway, or in Joomla!'s administration interface.

As such, there is a disconnect between what Freeway shows you, and what you will see when the template is used on a Joomla! site. It is advisable to use a Joomla! install on your Mac, or server, to test templates as you are developing them in Freeway.

Some of the Actions display simulated content, especially those which handle styles as a guide for your design to save you unnecessary yo-yoing between your browser and Freeway.

It is also recommended that you work in one of the XHTML schemes in Freeway if you want your website to validate. Joomla! outputs XHTML when it is running.

Flexible Layout

Your Joomla! template will consist of one active page - index.php - which is used to display all content on the page. As such, your page needs to be flexible - that is the slots which are used to display Joomla! content will not be drawn when it has no content. This means that the page will appear to gain or lose slots as you navigate through the site. This is desirable as not all pages will need all the modules you have defined, and you will not want gaps where content should be.

This requires mastering a new discipline in Freeway - building web sites using inline items, floats and flexible widths.

The reasoning for this is two fold. Firstly, if your slots are inline and they are not drawn, the other items on the page will re-jig themselves automatically when the page is constructed. Content will expand or contract to fit.

Secondly, Joomla!'s template instructions recommend this way of working, Reading between the lines, it would appear that future Joomla! developments will favour this kind of site construction far more than the table based construction which Freeway users have come to know, love and rely on. It is well worth taking some time to experiment with inline content, and getting used to how floats do (and don't) work, as well as learning how to cope with some presentational anomalies in various browsers (NB - the Joomla! Actions attempt to resolve some of the more common problems encountered both in Explorer 6, and some quirks in Freeway's WYSIWYG layout).

That all said it's a pretty simple affair to set up a Joomla! template in Freeway. However, to help in getting you started, there is a **skeleton template** which should suffice for most Joomla! constructions. The template is fairly bare in content and appearance - it's up to you to work your magic to make it look lovely. The template takes care of some of the more pithy problems of inline layout, and has some predefined styles to get you started with Joomla! content.

Joomla! and Styles

The Actions suite contains Actions which create styled text. These Actions will generate CSS based on the Action settings, and will give you a decent spread of styles for your site. They will display sample text in the Freeway view so you can see what the design will look like before you are ready to publish.

It is also possible to design styles directly in Freeway itself. You may find that the Actions don't cover all the settings you want, especially for any third party modules that you may install.

I am hoping that a future version of the Action suite will be able to make defining styles more "Freeway-like".

The Actions

The Actions provided are designed to work with inline objects. Joomla!'s current template tutorials are emphasising heavily the use of inline structures for templates. This affords a greater degree of control when it comes to displaying content, as well as making for cleaner HTML. You are encouraged to use inline items when creating a Joomla! template.

Remember: you can insert inline items directly into the page by double clicking on it. This is the best way to start on your template design.

Joomla! Template Setup Action
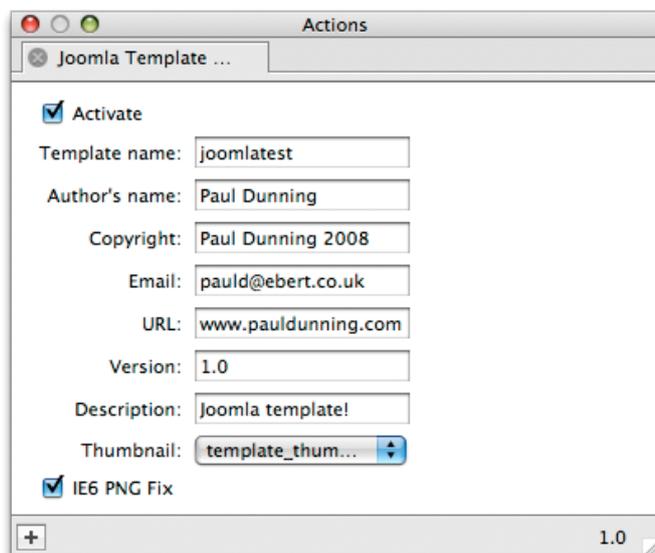
This Action sets up the page to be a Joomla! template. The page **must** have a file name of index.php

IE6 PNG Fix
Internet Explorer 6 is still out there and being used. If you are using PNG images with transparency in your site, then this option needs to be switched on. The built in Freeway PNG fix does not work with Joomla!. Note that any PNG fix is dependant on the client machine being able to display PNGs in the first place. Some versions of Windows will never be able to display PNGs correctly, regardless of how many fixes you apply.

There are some fields to fill in in this Action. These are necessary for the template to register correctly within the Joomla! administration interface.

Template Name
This is the name of the template as used by Joomla!. The name should ideally be lowercase, with no spaces or punctuation.

Author's Name, Copyright, Email, URL
These are hopefully self evident. These bits of information will appear in the Joomla! interface.
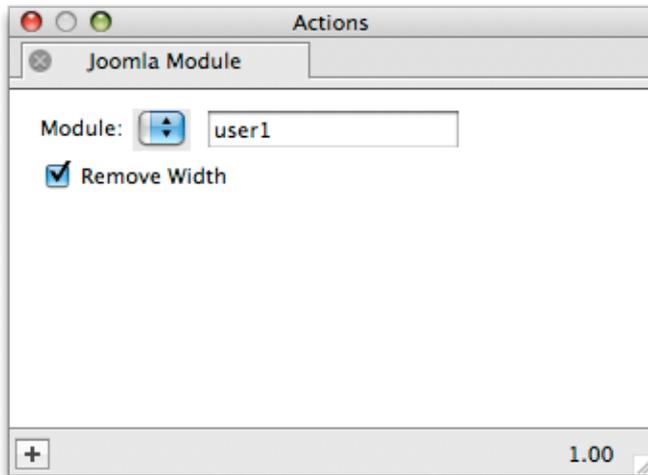
Version
The version number of the Template. If you make revisions, it is advisable to increase this number to help users keep track of what version is being used.

Thumbnail
It is a good idea to include a small thumbnail of the template's appearance to help in selection in the Joomla! interface. This should be a file called **template_thumbnail.png**

Joomla! Module Action

This Action is applied to an HTML box. The Action creates a specific area on the page for the selected module. Each item on a page - content, menus, adverts, navigation are handled by a module which is defined in the Joomla! administration area. Modules are assigned to areas on the page. This Action allows you to define these areas.
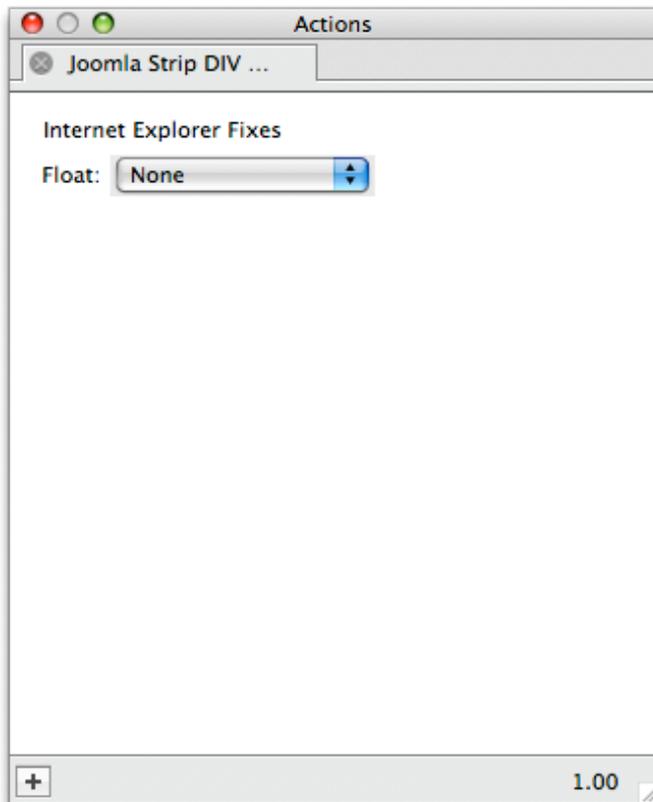
Module
The drop down lists the most common modules used by Joomla!, though you can add more if you need. Remember to keep the names consistent between Joomla! and Freeway.

Remove Width
There are times when Freeway can not draw the layout correctly if you remove the width of an item from an inline item. It may be desirable for the item to have no width when the site is published, but more desirable to have the item drawn in a sensible way in Freeway using an arbitrary width. If you find that using the Inspector Palette to publish no width causes you problems seeing the item in Freeway properly, use this checkbox in favour of the Inspector palette to set no width. In this case, you can see how the elements on a page are arranged, but get the HTML output as you need.

Joomla! Strip DIV Height Action

This is used to help control the height of an HTML item which contains items with the Joomla! Module Action applied. It removes the height of the item when the page is published. You can achieve this in Freeway using the Inspector Palette, but this makes it harder to see items on the page (the item will collapse to a line 1 pixel high - hardly useful in this situation for design work). Removing the height is very important as it helps the final layout work as you would expect.

Internet Explorer Fixes
Internet Explorer 6 for Windows is still used, and there are times when you need conditional CSS options which can not be set directly in Freeway. When the site is published, these options will be created solely for this browser.

It is important that you test your layouts in Explorer 6 through a server. Most browser render problems can be fixed with some conditional CSS which targets just that browser. If you examine other Joomla! templates, you will no doubt find that there are extra CSS files specifically for this browser.

Joomla! Menu Designer
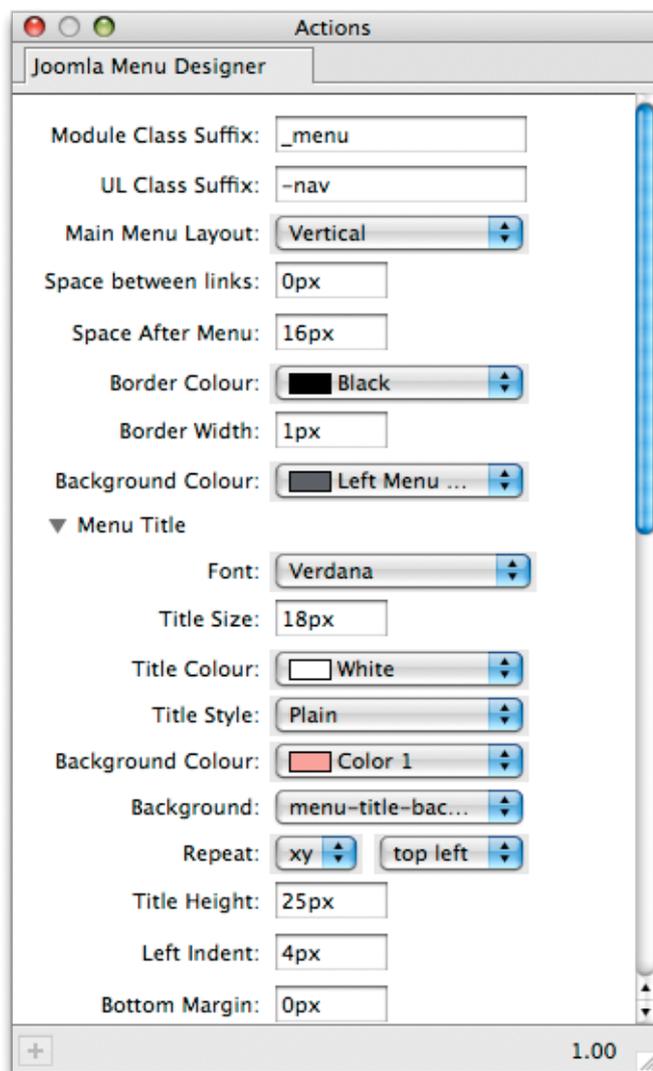
Some modules contain menus, and this Action is used specifically to design the look of a menu. Typically, menus in Joomla! are vertical and run down the side of a page. These menus are capable of displaying sub categories.

Note - in Joomla! you should set the menu type to be List. **Do not use any of the Legacy options for the menus in Joomla!**.

Horizontal Menus
You can also create horizontal menus with the Joomla! Menu Designer Action. However, these menus are best left to common links. If you have a standard Joomla! install on your server, and you have opted to install the default content, there will be a number of links across the top of the page. This is an example of a horizontal menu. Horizontal menus can not have sub-menus.

Joomla! menus are not dynamic in the way that the CSS Menu Action for Freeway is. Menus change and display sub items only when a link is clicked.

Applying the Action
Select the Joomla! Menu Designer Action using the Actions Tool in the tool bar, and draw the Action on the same page as your main design. It should be a layered object, and should not be parented with any other item. Click on the blue CSS button in the tools palette before drawing the Action on the page.
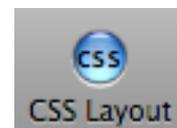
The Action will display a default menu. It will show the standard options form a default Joomla! install, and will have one item highlighted so you can see what the current page status will be like. This is for preview only. When you use Joomla! to display the template, it will show content from the CMS database.

Module Class Suffix
Most modules are identified by the `moduletable` class. Joomla! allows you to add a suffix to this so that your design can target just that item. By default, `_menu` is added to the `moduletable` name. You can design as many menus as you wish, and can use Joomla! to assign varying Module Class suffixes to the class name.
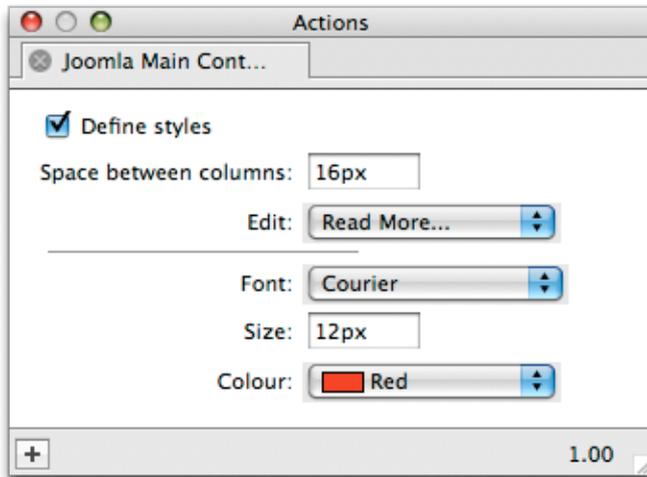
Menu Menu Layout
There are two options - horizontal and vertical. The default is vertical. Horizontal menus are more limited in how many items they can display.

Menu Title
This is available only for vertical menus. This section lets you choose the font, size and other attributes for the title of the menu.

Joomla! Main Content Action

This inserts the main content of the site on the page. The Action lets you control how much space there is between columns in blog module output.

The Action also displays simulated content. You can use this Action to control the appearance of text on the page.

Note that you can not directly select and style the text as you normally would in Freeway. Your styling needs to be done via the Action.

All the styles designed in this Action are output into a common css file.

Joomla! Module Style Designer
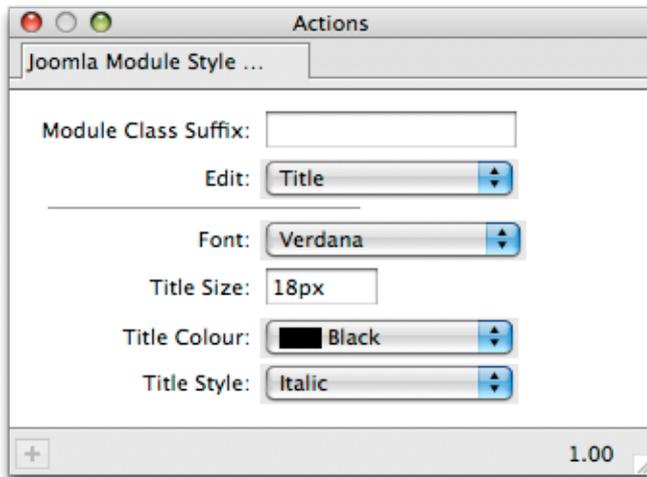
This Action lets you control the appearance of a specifically named module output by Joomla!. It displays simulated content to help you design your module's styles.

BY keeping the **Module Class Suffix** consistent between Joomla! and the Action, the site and Freeway's preview should be the same.

All the styles designed in this Action are output into a common CSS file.

Creating a Joomla! Site With Freeway

About the Template

The Action is supplied with a template which should get you started. Simply change images, styles and upload as a template file to the Joomla! server.

The template is designed using all inline content. This is the recommended way of working in Joomla!, as it allows content areas to grow/shrink depending on what is displayed. Take care not to move inline elements around too much, as this can cause layout issues in Joomla! and may also be problematic in Freeway.

Your own designs

The template is provided as a "leg-up" for those new to Joomla! or those who want to get a Joomla! site up and running quickly. You are, of course, welcome to design your own Joomla! template file and use those instead.

Working with inline content is currently a challenge in Freeway. It takes some practice and planning ahead. It is useful to rough out your design and checking it's behaviour in a browser before starting to use the Joomla! templates.

Installing your Template in Joomla!

When you are ready to install your template, you need to check the following things:

1 - The Site Folder you publish into (normally located next to the Freeway File) has the same name as that in the Joomla! Template Set Up Action

2 - The template name has no spaces in it

You can then take this folder and upload to your Joomla! install. Note that after the initial install, you can then use Freeway's own internal FTP upload functionality to upload further revisions to the template.

Using your own Styles

It is possible to add your own CSS to the file using Freeway's styles editor. Be sure to name your styles accurately in accordance with Joomla's style naming scheme. You can use a second page to carry these styles. Be sure to have External Style Sheets switched on in the File>Document Setup window.

It is planned that a future version of these Actions will be bale to access Freeway's styles more directly to allow for a more consistent styles definition across the Actions and Freeway itself.

Using other Actions

The Joomla! Actions rebuild a lot of Freeway's output, and they do so as carefully as possible so as not to alter the work of other Actions. However, we can not guarantee that all Actions will operate when the Joomla! Actions are in place. This is because for Joomla! to work properly, the location of all resources – images, CSS files, JavaScript files etc. need to be re-written so that they work correctly when run through Joomla!

Where do the Resources Go?

When you publish a site in Freeway, the resources will be placed in a folder next to the HTML file. When the site is viewed in the browser, those resources are found because the location is noted in the HTML file.

EG:

www.domain.com/index.php will be looking for resources at www.domain.com/Resources/

However, the REAL location of the Resources folder will be at:

www.domain.com/templates/templatename/Resources/

When you work on a CMS such as Joomla! all bets are off. In Joomla!, the template will will be typically in it's own folder in a folder named templates. When you view the page, however, the browser will be looking from the location of the index.php file, and link to any images, CSS files etc. will be broken.

The Actions resolve this issue and all should be well. However, be aware that Freeway has had to be coaxed and (at times) hectored into this. There are omissions which can not be catered for without causing severe damage to the internal tag stream of Freeway, which will cause many Actions to fail completely.

Rollover and other Actions

While these Actions should work, it is likely that they will not produce fully functional code, due to the location of published resources. The Joomla! Actions can not directly influence or instruct other Actions in this way. It is up to the the writers of Actions to do this if they so choose.

As an example, I have edited the Rollover Action, renamed Rollover J, which works with the Joomla! suite. If you want to use rollovers, use this Action in preference to the Softpress supplied Action (the modified Action is based on the Softpress Action - search for "Paul" in the file and you'll see what changes are needed - this Action is unencoded).

Action Writers
If you want your Action to play nicely with the Joomla! suite, you will need to alter the path to resources. You can obtain this very easily by using the fwPage["joomlaPath"] variable. The variable is created at fwBeforeStartBody.

For example, you will find this in the Rollover J Action:

fwPage.fwLoad[image] = fwQuote(fwPage["joomlaPath"] + image);

This will create the correct path reference for the image and place it in the fwLoad function.

Note that this contains PHP, so your output should be contained within a PHP file.

You also need to use this small function to add your resources to a list. This is output to an XML file which Joomla! uses when installing templates. If the file is not there, Joomla! may not copy the file.

function addResourceFileName(resource,resourceType)

{

```
        if (!fwPage.fwResourcesUsed)

                fwPage.fwResourcesUsed = new Array();

        if (!fwPage.fwResourcesUsed[resource])

        {

                fwPage.fwResourcesUsed[resource] = resourceType;

        }

}
```

Where:

resource is a **string** containing the file name of the resource (nb do **NOT** add the fwQuote (fwPage["joomlaPath"] variable to it). eg Resources/sharing.jpeg

resourceType is a **string** containing the type of resource you are adding. These values are:

image (use for images)

css (use for css files)

file (use for misc files)

IMPORTANT: This must be set up in fwBeforeEndHTML AT THE LATEST! The Joomla Suite compiles the list of resources at this point. Anything done after this step will be ignored.

Acknowledgements

Joomla! is a trademark of Open Source Matters. These Actions developed independently and are not part of the Joomla! project.

http://www.joomla.org/