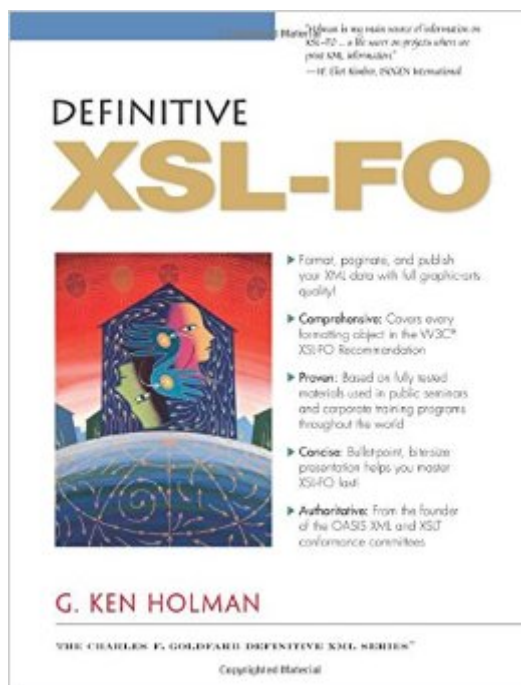


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# Definitive XSL-FO



## Synopsis

In *Definitive XSL-FO*, one of the world's leading XML experts shows how XSL-FO revolutionizes the publishing of graphic-arts quality print and electronic documents. The book offers concise, authoritative guidance for using every formatting object in the W3C® XSL-FO recommendation. Coverage includes objectives, semantics, vocabulary, key concepts, practical techniques, examples, and much more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm surprised so many people have given this book a good review. I went with this book after the O'Reilly book was back ordered. What a mistake. The book might cover every formatting object in the W3C XSL-FO recommendation, but it's more like reading just that, the recommendation (which can be found online). It's a bulleting of objects with minimal examples and sometimes difficult to understand explanations. I'm giving it two stars only because it serves as a useful quick formatting object reference to me at this point. Avoid this book if you're new to XSL-FO. Otherwise, if you're looking for a reference guide, this might fit what you need.

I bought this book almost two years ago. Everytime I need to do something in XSL-FO I reach for this book. And almost everytime, I am frustrated and disappointed. When originally learning XSL-FO, I bought this book because there were not too many options on the market and still aren't many. I felt like it made the learning process way more difficult than was necessary. I read two or three

technical books per month and can usually absorb them pretty quick. This book does such a poor job of explaining concepts I struggled for a long time. I am really good with HTML, XML, XPATH and XSLT. I also have a pretty good grasp of print layout concepts and terminology. So I believe my struggle was by no means a technical or conceptual struggle. It was simply a problem of deciphering the author's language and presentation style. As a reference, this book is even worse! It is just a bulleted list of tags and properties. Most are not defined. Two sentences and simple example of each would have made it useful, but that does not exist. The one thing that could have saved this book would have been the index. But unfortunately, it's pretty bad also. You can't look up things by concept. You have to know what tag or property you are looking for. That's not of much use. For example, you will not find concepts such as bold, italic, underline or capitalization in the index. So if you don't know what tag or property controls those things you're out of luck. And since the author did such a bad job of teaching you're totally SOL. I have learned XSL-FO through my own trial and error. I've done a lot of XSL-FO work and feel I have a decent understanding of the subject. Looking back on this book one last time, I can say this is one of the worst technical books I've ever bought.

Minimal examples, very little "big picture" orientation, long reference-style lists with minimal explanation of terms if any, and gives short shrift to how XSL:FO works with XSLT. The omission of fo: prefixes in examples is a an auctorial preference I find particularly annoying. Unfortunately it appears to be difficult to locate alternative books.

Bought this book a couple hours ago. I'm up to page 53 and so far all I've learned is that the author can talk and talk and talk and not say anything useful. This book is extremely painful and I'm not sure there will be any reward at the end. Unfortunately the O'Reilly book on the subject is out of print and this is about all there is ... nothing would almost be better.

You have undoubtedly heard much of XML, but that deals with the storage and transmission of data, and not with its presentation in a human readable form. And you have dealt with HTML. But that is strictly for Web pages, and deals best only with the presentation of data. While for the printed page, you may have worked with TeX or Postscript/PDF. But is there a way to go from data in XML to its display on the web or on a page? And is this possible using a consistent syntax for both cases? More ambitiously, can we handle any human language, where the order of reading a page will vary? At the broadest level, this is where XSL-FO fits in. It is an intermediary language that does

this translation. This book, by an expert in the field, actually emphasises the many variants of a printed page that cause a lot of the language's complexity. Not too surprising. Printing incorporates conventions accrued over the centuries, from many different cultures. Devising a language rich enough to merge all of the possible variations is not simple. (A bottoms-up problem, if you will.) Plus, printing onto pages is much trickier than printed onto a browser. In the latter, you can have an infinitely long page, and you can hyperlink to anywhere. Real pages have finite length, and hence you get grubby little details like widows and orphans and footnotes that have to be handled carefully. So be warned. The subject is far harder than HTML. This book is well suited for someone who has some prior experience in printed typography. Experience with TeX, troff or some of the Adobe page layout packages will be highly useful. It is all a little ironic. XSL-FO is a computer language. But if we all read solely from computer displays, then much of the rationale for it would vanish. However, that day is the day of the paperless office. And until we gain those sunlit uplands, there is a need for XSL-FO and for an authoritative book to describe it, like this one.

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