



## What's in a Theme – How to create a useful Theme?

Partially based on ['What's in a Theme/Template?'](#)

A Captivate **theme** provides almost all you need for design of a project. Beware : there are responsive and non-responsive themes. . Combined with the Preferences, and eventually Shared actions in an external library, this will be sufficient in most cases, no need for a Template file (cptl). Themes have more features and functionality than you are used to in most other applications (MS)..

Packaged with Captivate are some themes, all responsive. You can also use theme for a non-responsive project (Blank). However, would recommend to save an edited responsive theme with another name to avoid crippling the original theme for responsive projects. That is one of the reasons that you cannot save such an edited theme from the menu 'Themes' (dimmed).

The originele themes are located under Gallery\Layouts in the Captivate installation folder. You see there multiple language folders, corresponding with the possible Captivate languages.. During Captivate's installation a copy of the language folder you choose will be made to the Public Documents (Windows), in \Adobe\eLearning Assets\Layouts. When having multiple versions of Captivate, you'll see subfolders identified by the version number. For older versions and English installation, you'll see the 'en\_US' folder. More recent versions also show the subfolder '*ThemeColors*' (xml-format) for the Theme Color palettes. Version 11.5 has an extra subfolder '*Theme Fonts*' (ook xml).

Theme's are saved in a file **cptm**, which can be rather big if you have lot of master slides. You do not need to save a custom theme in the en\_US subfolder where you see the default themes. It is possible to save the theme in the dedicated project folder (my workflow). To manage themes, both a big button 'Themes' and a menu 'Themes' are available, you'll need both. Button 'Themes' opens a window filled with thumbnails, divided (in 11.5) in two parts: top part shows the Project Theme(s), below the horizontal divider you have more themes (mostly the default themes). Default theme has a check mark (bottom left). In the window at the bottom you find a hyperlink 'Browse'. Use it to find themes which do not have a thumbnail. In 11.5 a new button 'Theme Properties' has been added.

With each version you also got some *Sample projects* with their theme. Moreover 11.5 has the new '*Assets Panel*'. First asset group gives access to the **Quick Start Projects** and ready-to-go slides. Those projects exist in a responsive and a non-responsive type, each with a theme. You can always use and edit those themes as well..

Since 11.5 multiple themes can be used in one project. Not really appealing for consistent design, but indispensable if you want to add ready-to-go slides to a custom project. If that was not the case, the theme of the 'receiving' project (named **Destination theme**) would be applied to the inserted slide, which could lead to a real mess.

Find more information in:

[Embedding QSP-slides](#)

[Embedding responsive QSP-slides](#)



## Components of aTheme

Sequence of designing a custom theme is important, I'll list the components in a numbered list for that purpose. Steps 3-4 will probably be done in collaboration, it is difficult to define all styles before designing the master slides. Final goal of a theme is to save developing time, especially in the situations where someone (client, manager) asks for 'small' edits

1. **Theme Colors Palette.** You'll find more information about palettes under these older posts:  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/colorful-2015-with-adobe-captivate> en <http://blog.lilybiri.com/theme-colors>  
More recently, this blog with some ideas about using Adobe Color and Adobe Capture to design a color palette:  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/color-management-intro>
2. **Theme Fonts.** Recommended is to use only websafe fonts or Adobe fonts. Good design doesn't require a multitude of font families, for most projects 2-3 fonts are sufficient. In version 11.5 it has become very simple to replace a font in all related text styles. More details in:  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/fonts-in-captivate>
3. **Object styles** using the Object Style Manager and/or the hamburger menu in the Style part of the Properties panel. Make the most used styles default. When creating (master) slides avoid to override styles for objects. Tip: shapes and buttons have multiple 'InBuiltStates'. Three states are included in the object style (*Normal, Rollover, Down*). Fourth state 'Visited' is not included. More information about the Object Style Manager in:  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/object-styles-in-a-theme>  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/manage-the-object-style-manager>  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/responsive-projects-object-styles>
4. **Master slides:** each theme needs a minimum of 6 master slides besides the Main master slide Blank (used for PPT-import and Simulations/Video Demo), 4 Quiz master slides and the Score master slide. Main Master slide is only useful for projects which do not use Fluid Boxes. You can add content master slides.  
**Grid:** I always start designing content master slides by setting up a 'grid', which is essential when it is a Fluid Boxes project. Grid is set up using Guides, based on the rulers: See:  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/guides-rule>  
<http://blog.lilybiri.com/guides-and-fluid-boxes-best-buddies>  
Use the styles defined in step 3 to put placeholders on the content master slides. You can add shape buttons on master slides (navigation, toggle buttons for audio, CC, TOC). It is also possible to add advanced actions to events on the master slides..
5. **Skin:** has playbar, borders, and TOC. Although CC is using the skin, you cannot save its settings in a theme.
6. **Recording Defaults:** for creation of software simulations. More details in: <https://elearning.adobe.com/2019/11/software-simulations-1-preparation/>

More links, related to his topic:

- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/version-11-dot-5-released>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/using-copy-slash-paste-appearance-in-11-dot-5-0>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/themes-are-time-savers-what-is-new-in-11-dot-5>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/tips-for-using-quick-start-projects-11-dot-5>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/using-source-slash-destination-theme-switch>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/theme-mysteries>
- <http://blog.lilybiri.com/tips-for-fluid-quiz-slides>