Adobe

Tips
Tricks
Techniques

Adobe InDesign CS2

By Tim Cole

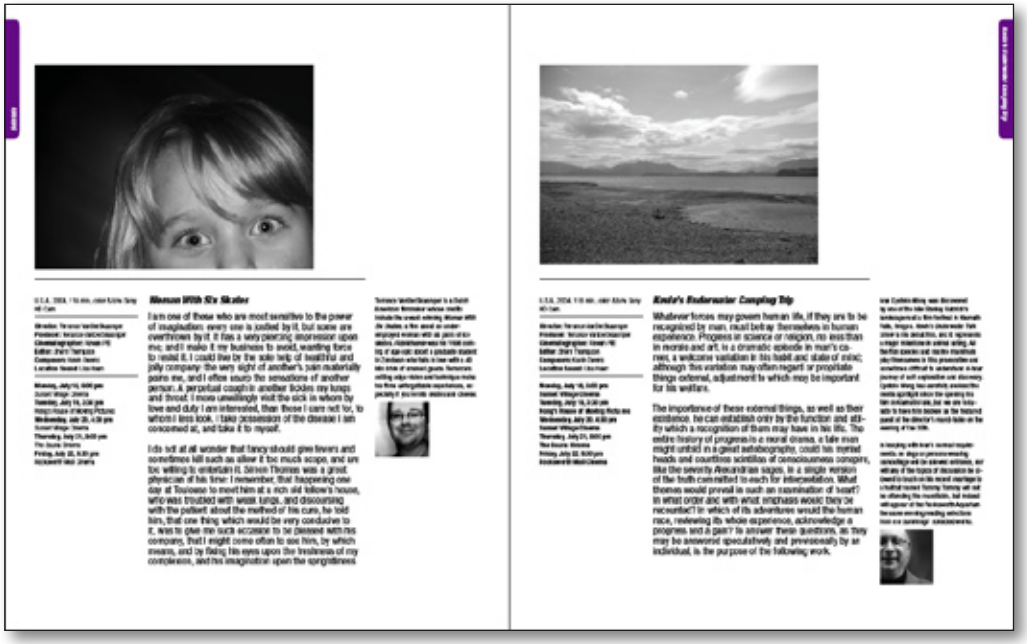
understanding frame grids

Ever needed multiple baseline grids in a document? You can only specify one document grid in InDesign's preferences, but the frame grid feature enables you to use multiple baseline grids on your pages.

Baseline grids are an indispensable part of professional page layout. Baselines of like text in columns should normally be aligned, and a document baseline grid enables you to do exactly that in an accurate and automated fashion.

But, what happens when you've got mixed point sizes and leadings interacting in a layout? What happens if you've got sidebars, articles, captions, etc., that sized differently than your body copy, and yet require their baselines to align with other baselines either in the same frame or in another frame on the page? In the past you've had to manually adjust and eye-ball any text that couldn't be snapped to your document baseline grid.

InDesign CS2 added an extremely useful feature called **frame grids** that enables you to create baseline grids that live **within text frames** and **function independently** from the document baseline grid.



This example spread contains text that needs to be set on two different baseline grids. The main body copy is on one grid, and the marginal material is on another—because we want like baselines to always align

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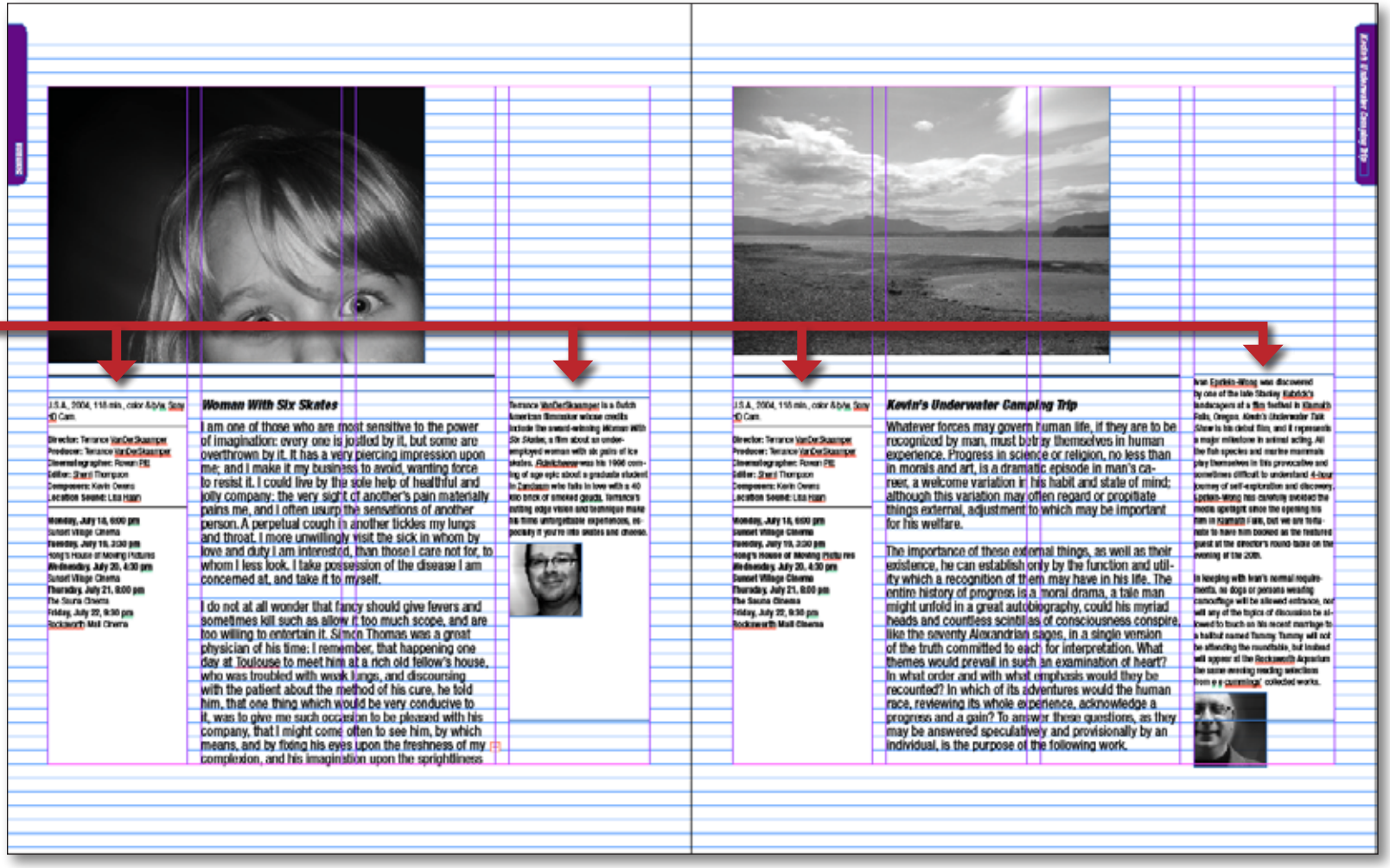

The baselines in these marginal frames need to align with each other, and the text in question is a different point size and leading value than that of the document's body text. The body text is snapped to a document baseline grid, but the marginal material needs a separate grid of its own.

In this example the body copy is snapped to the document baseline grid, but we also need the baselines of the marginal text to align as well. If you're using the same leading value for all the text in the frame, it's not difficult to make the baselines align. But what if you're not? What if the location of the top of the text frames varies? Introducing these kinds of variables into the job complicates the task of making sure that your baselines align from column to column and page to page.

This is a situation in which you'd want to take advantage of frame grids and object styles in order to quickly guarantee that your baselines will arrange themselves in a professional and orderly fashion.

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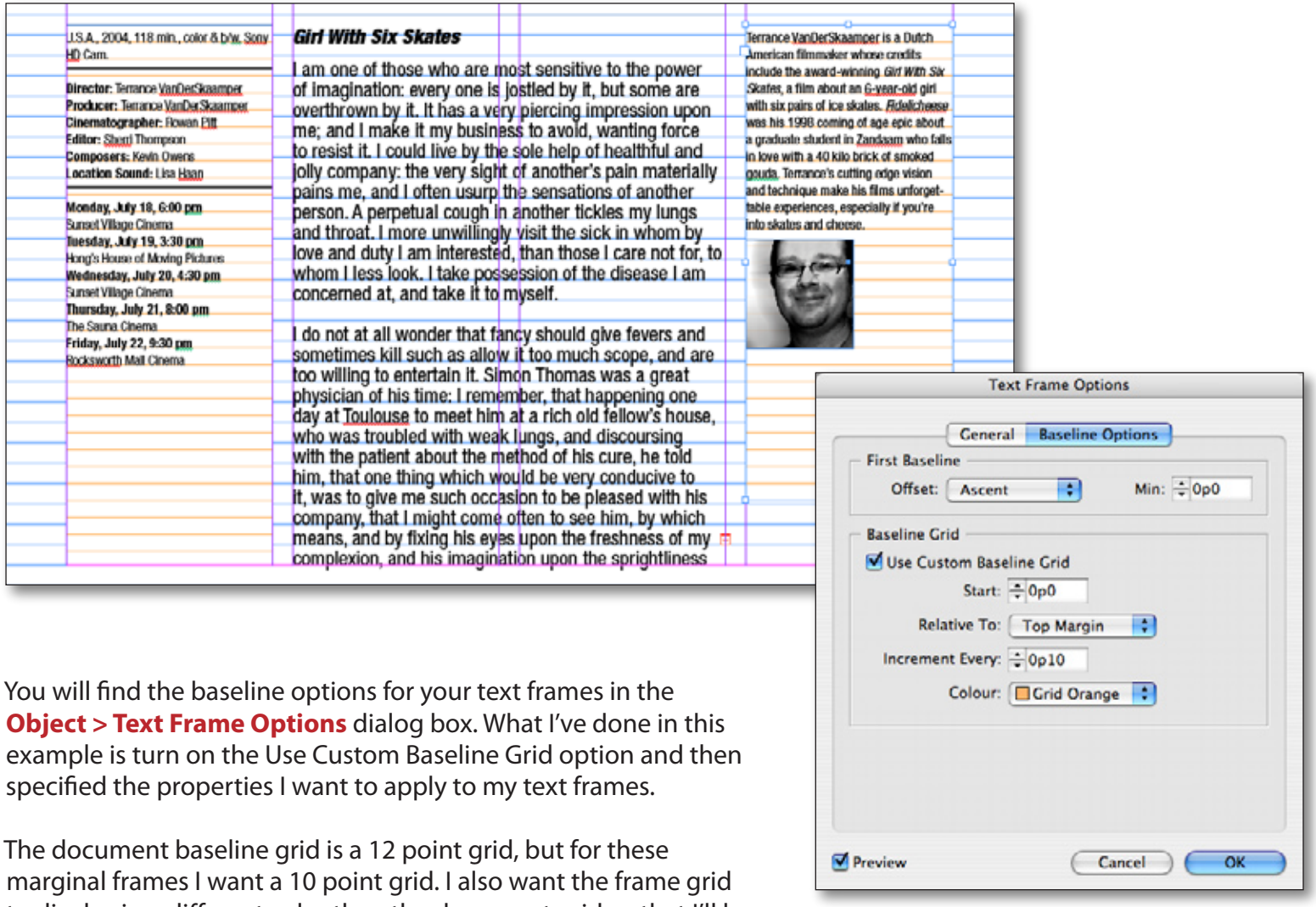

You will find the baseline options for your text frames in the **Object > Text Frame Options** dialog box. What I've done in this example is turn on the Use Custom Baseline Grid option and then specified the properties I want to apply to my text frames.

The document baseline grid is a 12 point grid, but for these marginal frames I want a 10 point grid. I also want the frame grid to display in a different color than the document grid so that I'll be able to spot frames using custom grids easily when I'm displaying my baseline grids. I've chosen an orange color for that purpose.

The **Start** and **Relative To** options merit more detailed explanation, because of the different uses for the different options.

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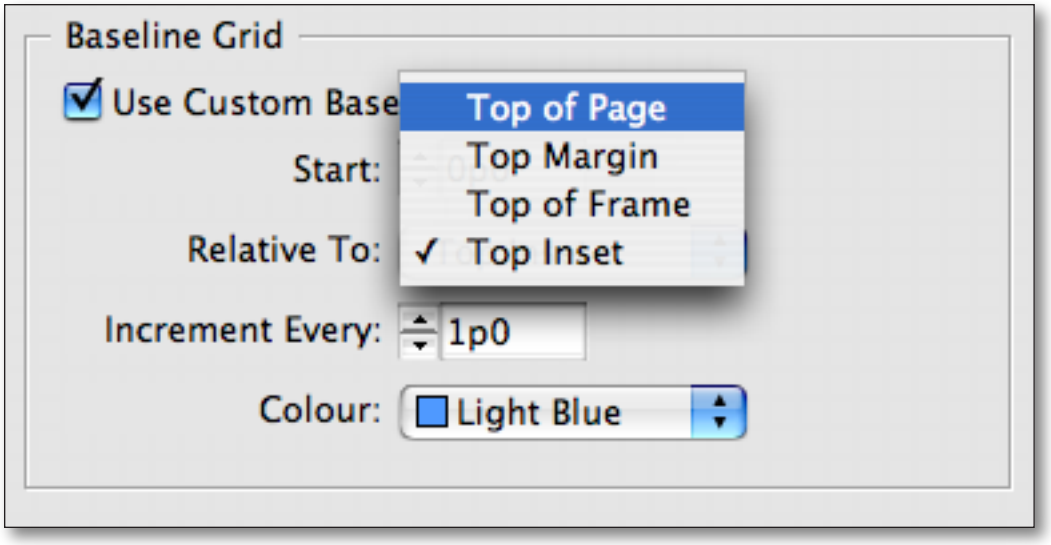


The text in the frame won't move unless and until and entire new line of type will fit in the frame.

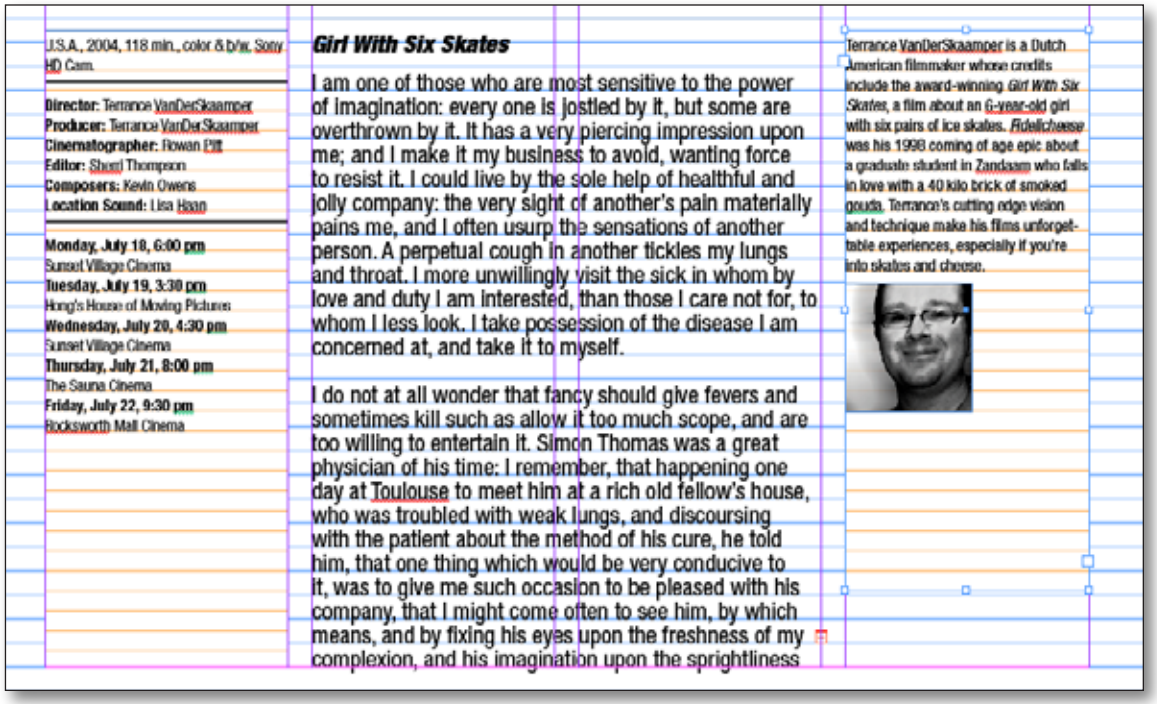
These page-relative settings should be used for situations in which you've got multiple frames on your spread in which the baselines of the type should align.

The **Start** option enables you to offset the first baseline a user-determined distance from any of the locations chosen in the **Relative To** list. Think of this option as being similar to the offset feature for adjusting the position of a paragraph rule.

The **Relative To** option enables you to create what are, essentially, two different kinds of baseline grids within a given text frame. You have a choice between making your baseline grid **frame-relative**, or **page-relative**, and the difference is significant.

In our current example, I've got multiple text frames that need to be on the same baseline grid. In this case I would set the frame grids to be relative to either the **Top of Page** or the **Top Margin**. These **page-relative** options measure the frame grid **from an objective location outside of the frame itself**.

Using an external point of origin for the frame grid means that no matter where I move these frames, their internal grid is being measured from the same, fixed, external location. **The effect is to give me an additional baseline grid for my page to which I can snap whatever text I wish**. It also means that if I move or nudge my text frames up and down, the position of the first baseline relative to the top of the frame will change.



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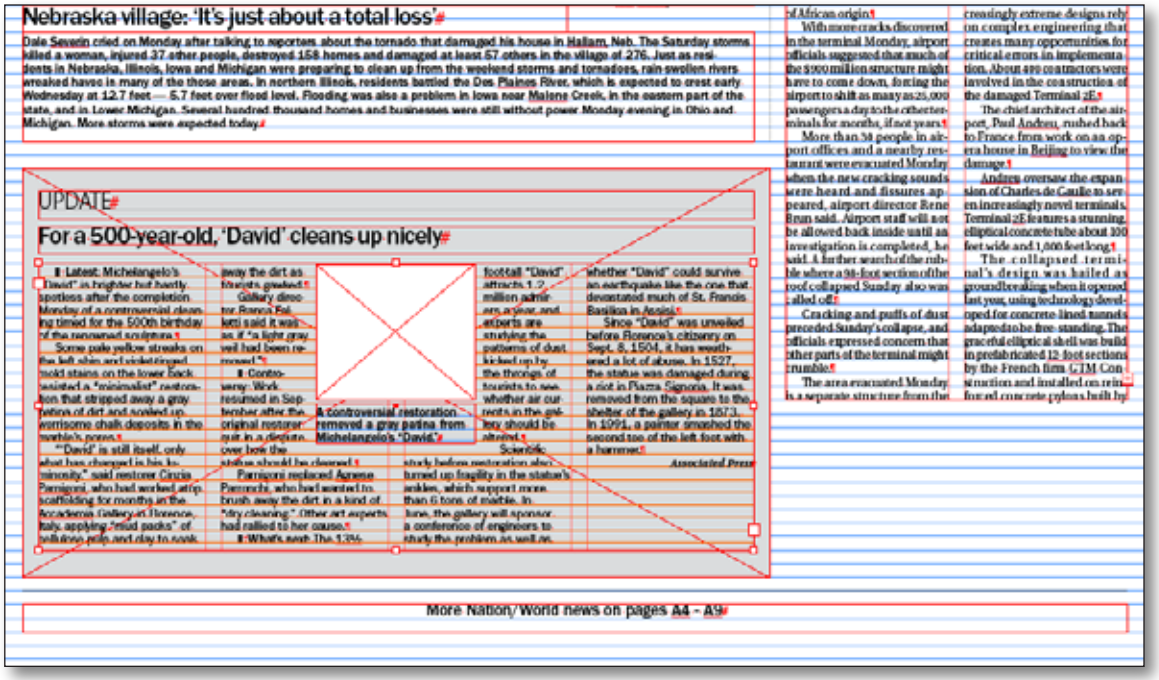
When would I use a **frame relative** baseline grid? I would use **Top of Frame** or **Top Inset** **when I don't need the baselines in the frame to align with baselines in another frame somewhere in the spread.**

Example: if you've got a newspaper or magazine story or side bar that needs its own baseline grid, making the grid relative to the frame means you can pick it up, move it around, nudge it, etc., and the relationship of your baselines to the frame will not change. It's a self-contained package of orderly baseline behavior.



In addition to the benefits I've described thus far, frame grids can also be very useful in another situation. The magazine spread on the left contains a layout that has been rotated 90°. Just like a normal spread, it's got multiple columns of type that require aligned baselines. What happens in InDesign and other applications when you snap text to a document baseline grid, but then rotate the text frames? The snap to grid feature is rendered useless, because the document baseline grid doesn't rotate with the text frame—it's attached to the document, not the frame. The result is that you lose your baseline alignment, and the problem is complicated by the fact that you've got to deal with the problem manually while looking at the text at a 90° angle. Great.

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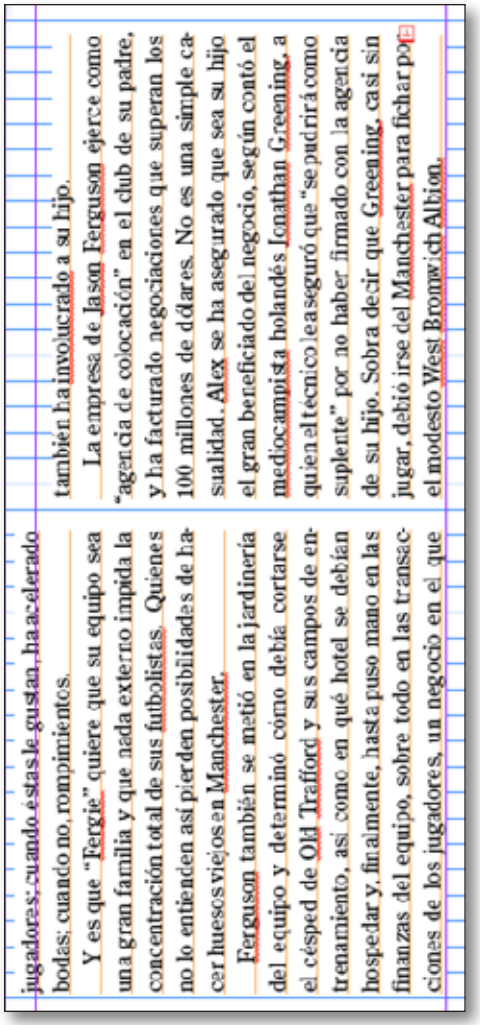
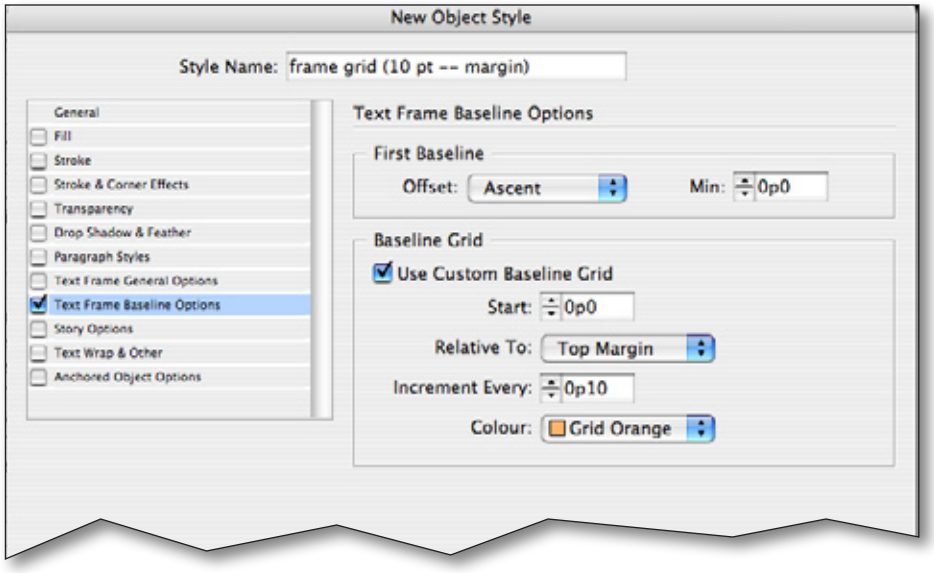
Fortunately, a frame grid will solve this problem. **Because the grid lives inside the frame, whatever you to do to rotate, skew or otherwise transform the frame, the grid goes along for the ride.** So now, in InDesign CS2, it doesn't matter if your frames are rotated 90°, 15°, or whatever—your text will stay snapped to that grid.





Finally, remember that these **frame grid settings can be saved as part of an object stye.** If you're using the same frame grids over and over in your documents, create an object style to apply to text frames. That way you're guaranteed consistency and accuracy when you apply the frame grids, and if you ever need to modify those grids you can do that easily by just modifying the grid specs in the object style.

Using frame grids can be of great help in making varying styles of type behave desirably on your page. They give you greater control and accuracy, and at the same time can spare you much manual adjustment pain if you want to get a little creative in the way you arrange your frames on a page.

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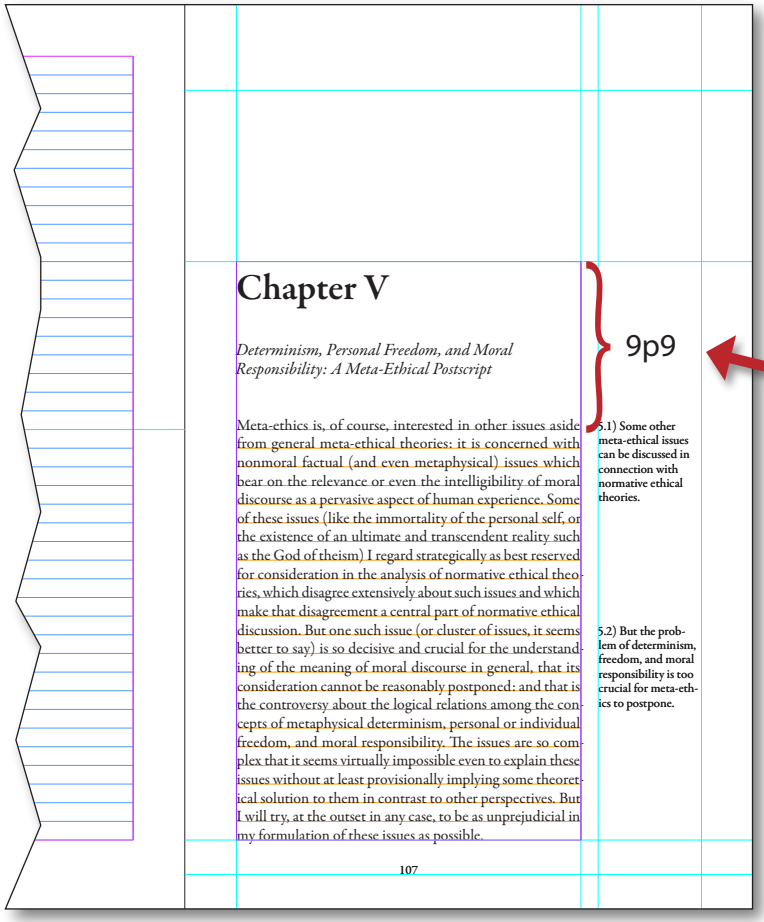
understanding frame grids (special Euro-Bonus tip)

Italian designer, trainer and consultant **Rufus Deuchler** shared another productivity-enhancing tip for using frame grids.



In this layout, the first baseline of the body copy always needs to fall 9p9 from the top of the frame, irrespective of what's going on in the head or subhead. In this book, the subhead can contain one or two lines, and if I'm doing my formatting manually, it means I'll have to manually adjust my space before setting for the body text in order to make sure the first baseline is in the correct location.

Suppose you have a situation similar to spread illustrated here. You've got a title page that contains a head, subhead and body copy. The subhead in this design might be one line or two, but the body copy needs to begin at the same Y coordinate each time. The layout needs to accommodate the possible variation in the number of lines in the subhead. This can be easily done manually, but suppose you're trying to automate the production of this book as much as possible. Wouldn't it be better if the template would enable you to flow in the text for the book and handle the variable number of lines in the subhead automatically? (**Hint:** the answer to this question is "yes.")

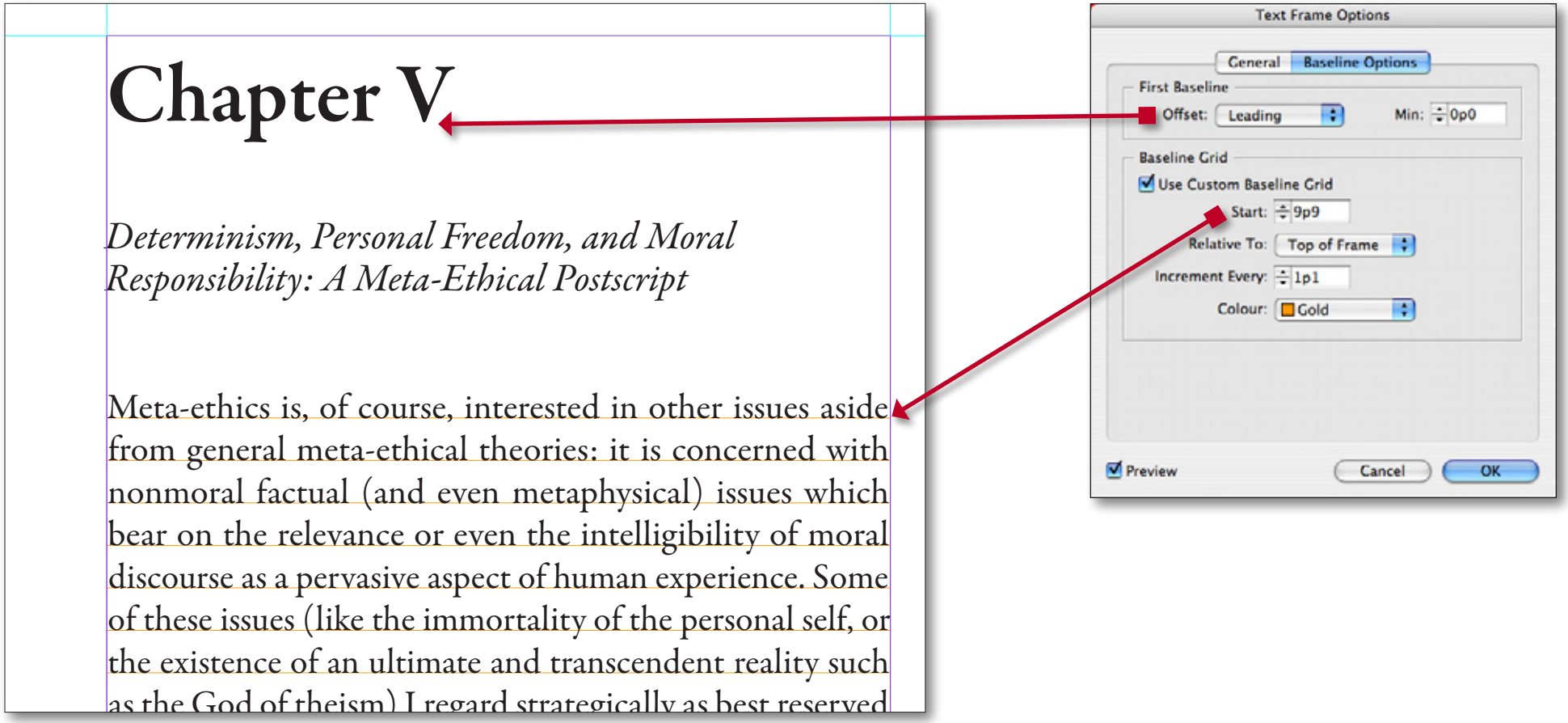
Using a frame grid can enable you to create a template smart enough to flow the text correctly without requiring any manual intervention or adjustment to accommodate the varying number of lines in the subhead. Here's how to set it up.

What I need to do is create a situation in which the body copy is going to snap to the correct location regardless of whether the subhead has one or two lines.

The best way to do this is to define the head and subhead styles so that they don't snap to a grid, but instead calculate my **leading** and **space before** and **space after** values so that they both sit where I want them. I want the first body copy paragraph to be the first paragraph to snap to a grid.

If I create a frame grid in which the first grid line sits at an inset of 9p9, then the first paragraph that snaps to a baseline grid will snap to that location, irrespective of what's going on in the text above it. This will enable me to automate the production of this book more effectively, because the text will flow correctly irrespective of how whether the subhead contains one or two lines.

understanding frame grids (special Euro-Bonus tip)



Here's how I set this up in my **Text Frame Options** dialog box:

First Baseline Offset: Leading

This enables me to control the baseline position of the chapter head and place it on my document baseline grid.

Start: 9p9

This sets the first line of the baseline grid to my desired setting.

Relative to: Top of Frame

This measures the 9p9 inset from the top of the text frame.

Increment Every: 1p1

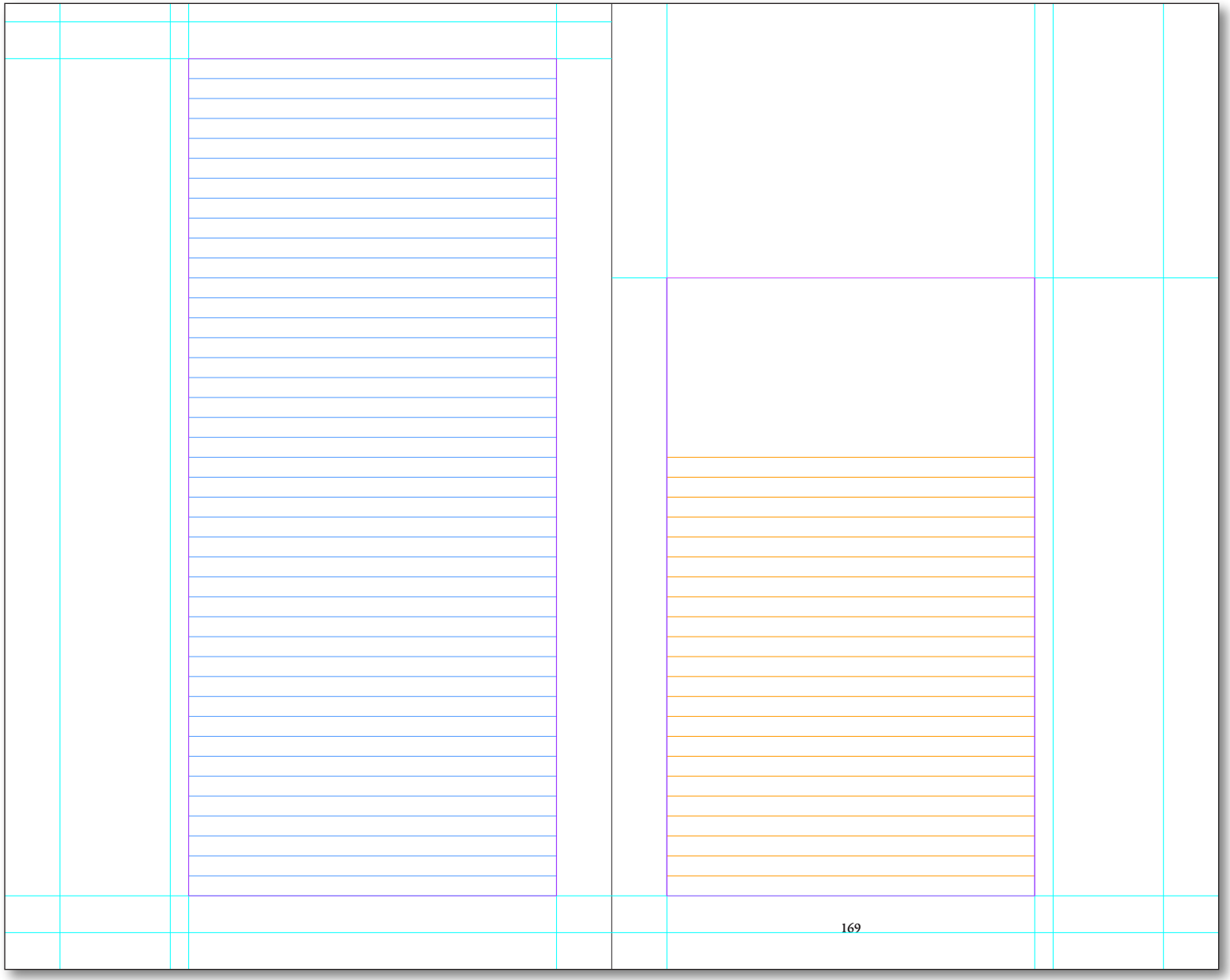
That's my baseline grid size.

Color: Gold

I choose a color that's different from my document baseline grid so that I can recognize it as a frame grid easily.

Align to baseline grid is now turned off for both the chapter head style and the first subhead style, but turned on for my first body text style. Now when I flow the text into my template, the head and subhead will stay where they are supposed to go, and the first body paragraph will jump and snap to the first baseline grid line in the frame, located 9p9 from the top of the frame.

understanding frame grids (special Euro-Bonus tip)



My master page now looks like this. I've created an object style for the text frame on the master that applies all the settings for the frame grid. The master is now ready to be applied to document pages at any time, and will enable me to flow the text into the book in an intelligent way that will eliminate manual intervention and enable automation of the process.