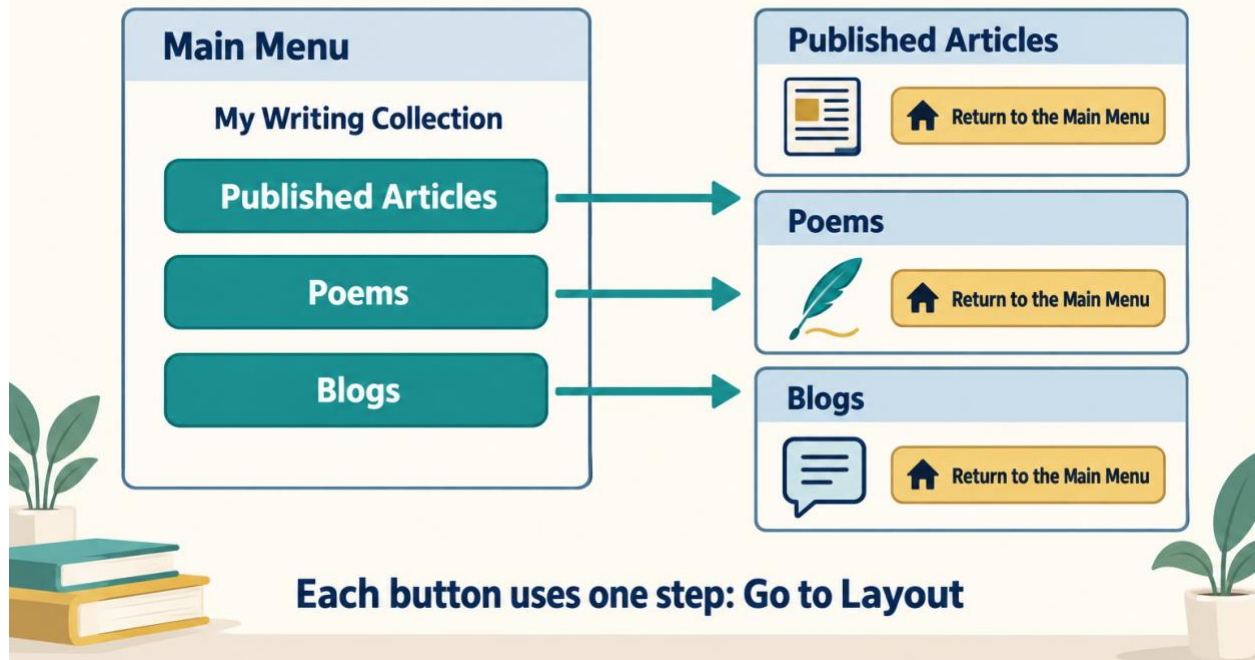


Making a FileMaker Switchboard

Four pages. Simple navigation.



Each button uses one step: Go to Layout

Making a FileMaker Switchboard

Create a main menu with simple buttons that connect your pages.

In “FileMaker Scripting Made Easy,” we explored how buttons can run instructions in FileMaker. Now let’s put that idea to work by creating a **switchboard**—a main menu that helps users move around a database.

Our example is a writer’s database with four pages:

1 **Main Menu**

2 **Published Articles**

3 **Poems**

4 **Blogs**

The Main Menu will have three buttons, one for each writing category. Each category page will have a **Return to the Main Menu** button.

Every button will use a **single step**. That is all we need for this first version.

Pages, layouts, and tables

In FileMaker, the pages you see on screen are called **layouts**. We will create four layouts, one for each page.

Layouts display information; tables store it. To keep this exercise simple, all four layouts can use the same starting table. For now, we are building the navigation. Adding and organizing the writing itself can come later.

Start a separate database

Create a new file so you can follow along without changing an existing database.

- 1 Choose **File > Create New**.
- 2 Select **Blank**, then click **Create**.
- 3 Name the file **My Writing Collection** and save it.
- 4 When **Manage Database** opens, leave the starting table and any default fields in place.
- 5 Click **OK**.

You now have a separate FileMaker file in which to build your switchboard. [Clariss: Creating a FileMaker Pro file](#)

Make the Main Menu page

We will use the starting layout as our main menu.

- 1 Choose **View > Layout Mode**.
- 2 Open **Layouts > Layout Setup**.
- 3 Change the layout name to **Main Menu** and click **OK**.
- 4 If fields appear on the layout, select their field boxes and labels and remove them from the layout. This does not delete the underlying fields or data.
- 5 Use the **Text tool** to add the heading **My Writing Collection**.
- 6 Beneath it, add a short instruction: **Choose a section below**.

Leave space for three buttons: Published Articles, Poems, and Blogs.

Create the other three pages

While still in Layout mode:

- 1 Click **New Layout/Report**.

- 2 Name the layout **Published Articles**.
- 3 Under **Show records from**, choose the same starting table used by Main Menu.
- 4 Choose **Computer**, then **Form**, and finish the assistant.
- 5 Leave the layout free of data fields and add a text heading: **Published Articles**.

Repeat those steps to create **Poems** and **Blogs**, giving each its own heading.

You now have four layouts. You can move between them using FileMaker's Layout pop-up menu while you build the buttons. [Claris: Creating a layout](#)

Add the first Main Menu button

Open **Main Menu** in Layout mode.

- 1 Select the **Button tool** and draw a button.
- 2 In **Button Setup**, give it the label **Published Articles**.
- 3 For **Action**, choose **Single Step**.
- 4 Select the script step **Go to Layout**.
- 5 In that step's options, choose the **Published Articles** layout.
- 6 Click **OK** to confirm the action.

That button now has one instruction: open Published Articles.

Return to **Browse mode**, saving the layout if prompted, and click the button to try it. Buttons perform their actions in Browse mode; Layout mode is where you design them. [Claris: Defining or changing a button](#)

Add the other Main Menu buttons

Go back to Main Menu using the Layout pop-up menu, then enter Layout mode.

Create two more buttons using the same process:

Button label	Single-step action	Destination layout
Published Articles	Go to Layout	Published Articles
Poems	Go to Layout	Poems
Blogs	Go to Layout	Blogs

Arrange the three buttons in a simple column or row. Make them large enough to read and leave some space between them.

You can duplicate your first button to save time, but remember to change **both its label and its destination**. Renaming a button does not change its action.

Add “Return to the Main Menu”

Now give each writing page a way home.

- 1 Open **Published Articles** in Layout mode.
- 2 Draw a button and label it **Return to the Main Menu**.
- 3 Choose **Single Step** for its action.
- 4 Select **Go to Layout**.
- 5 Choose **Main Menu** as the destination and confirm.

Add the same button to **Poems** and **Blogs**. You can copy and paste the finished return button onto those layouts because its destination is the same on all three.

Place it in the same location on each page. A consistent position makes navigation easier to learn.

Your navigation now works like this:

Starting page	Button	Opens
Main Menu	Published Articles	Published Articles
Main Menu	Poems	Poems
Main Menu	Blogs	Blogs
Published Articles	Return to the Main Menu	Main Menu
Poems	Return to the Main Menu	Main Menu
Blogs	Return to the Main Menu	Main Menu

Make Main Menu appear first

The final step is to have FileMaker display your switchboard whenever the database opens.

- 1 Choose **File > File Options**.
- 2 Select the **Open** tab.
- 3 Select **Switch to layout**.
- 4 Choose **Main Menu**, using **Specify** if needed.

5 Click **OK**.

You need Full Access privileges to change this setting, which you normally have in a new file you created yourself. [Claris: Setting file options](#)

Close the database and reopen it. Main Menu should be the first page you see.

Take a quick trip through your database

In Browse mode, test each route:

- Click **Published Articles**, then **Return to the Main Menu**.
- Click **Poems**, then **Return to the Main Menu**.
- Click **Blogs**, then **Return to the Main Menu**.

If a button opens the wrong page, return to Layout mode, double-click the button, and check the destination in its Go to Layout step.

A first step toward your own application

You now have a database with a clear starting point and buttons that connect its four pages. You have also used a FileMaker script step without needing to create a saved script.

As your database grows, buttons can do more—add an article, find a poem, or prepare a blog entry for printing. For now, a working Main Menu and a reliable way home give your application a useful foundation.