

InDesign CS 5 / 5.5 EPUB Support Matrix

By Paul Erdman. Unless otherwise noted, this information is based on my own testing and research.
CS 5.5 data is based on information released by Adobe through authorized channels as of 4/13/2011.

Issue in CS 5	Current CS 5 Workaround	Fixed in CS 5.5?
EPUB export offers little control over images; all images are downsized to fit on a small reader screen. Users cannot zoom in on images without seeing distortion, making rasterized content blurry.	Edit a copy of the original at your desired size and replace it in the EPUB contents / images folder.	YES. CS 5.5 offers export settings that can be applied to images, groups, or object styles. In addition, the export dialog now offers overall size and resolution control, and the option to preserve or override object-level settings.
Images all align to the left in the EPUB, even if they had object styles applied to center them in InDesign.	Edit the CSS to center the images (margin-left:auto; margin-right:auto; text-align: center;)	YES. CS5.5 allows you to control this in object level and general export options.
Vector content created in InDesign, including shapes, paragraph rules, and type converted to outlines, disappears during export to EPUB.	Cut the content, paste to Illustrator, save it as an AI file, and then place back into InDesign.	YES. CS 5.5's group export settings allow you to rasterize a group of objects, converting the entire group to an image.
Precise typography, such as mathematical equations, is not preserved due to limitations in XHTML/CSS, but no good solution for converting to an image is provided.	Use the above workaround.	YES. Since XHTML/CSS cannot preserve exact typography from InDesign, 5.5's ability to convert such content to images can be a viable option.
InDesign does not properly break long documents into smaller XHTML files to meet the 300KB requirement. The export features an option to break automatically at the top-level TOC style, but this option often results in extra blank XHTML pages for some reason.	Break the long document into smaller parts and use inDesign's book utility. Ensure that the exported XHTML files are all smaller than 300KB.	Possibly. Reports are that CS 5.5 "chunks" long XHTML files into smaller files automatically. In addition, it will be possible to break XHTML files at every instance of a paragraph style of your choice. Unknown if the blank pages issue has been resolved.
Cannot insert arbitrary page breaks into exported XHTML.	Break the InDesign file apart so that each page break is a new InDesign file and use the book utility.	Possibly. See above. page breaks are still style based. One workaround would be to make a non-printing style called "break" and place it on a page or within a story where a break is required.
Paragraph styles that create page breaks in InDesign (using "Keep options: start on next page") don't force page breaks in EPUB.	Locate the div or heading class for that style in one of the XHTML documents and then in the template.css file add the following rule: "page-break-before: always;""	Unknown.
The XHTML has unnecessarily bulky code, including unnecessary div tags and language declarations for every single paragraph.	Use Dreamweaver's find/change on all files in a folder to fix some of these issues; others must be fixed within each XHTML file.	YES? CS 5.5 creates cleaner XHTML code. The language is properly declared once in the page header, and there are reportedly other improvements.
Automatically generated Table of Contents text is omitted from the EPUB. Sometimes this isn't a problem, but it is if you use this to generate multiple lists or if you wish to have a hyperlinked TOC in the content of the document.	Copy the TOC to a new InDesign document, remove all page numbers, copy it. Then open the XHTML file that should contain the TOC in Dreamweaver and paste. Then manually create hyperlinks to the other pages as needed.	Unknown.

*This issue and solution was reported at http://www.pagetoscreen.net/journal/item/indesign_to_epub_problems/. I have not tested it myself.

Issue in CS 5	Current CS 5 Workaround	Fixed in CS 5.5?
Cross-document hyperlinks often do not work in EPUB.	Create or fix them in the XHTML files.	Unknown.
If a paragraph style specified in the TOC Style used to generate the TOC.NCX is in a style group (folder), then it will not appear in the TOC.NCX file.	Move all styles that are used to generate the TOC.NCX out of style groups.	Unknown.
The EPUB's toc.ncx file sometimes has duplicate entries.	I've not been able to figure out exactly why this happens. Editing the toc.ncx can be tedious and errors can break the EPUB.	Unknown. I would love it if someone would make an easy to use toc.ncx editor that automates the updating of the playOrder property! It must be consecutive.
Images and other content must be anchored to text appear in correct position relative to the story in EPUB. In order to anchor the image it must be cut out and pasted into the text using the type tool, then re-positioned using anchored object options.	This process is time consuming and requires advanced knowledge of InDesign.	Adobe has simplified the anchoring of images. Users can click and drag from a new area on any frame or group to set its anchor inside text, and the frame stays in the same place. Anchored object options are still available for those that wish to use them to fine-tune the object's positioning relative to the text.
It is difficult to control the order of elements when exported.	There are two ordering options in the CS 5 export dialog: <i>Base on Page Layout:</i> content will appear in the EPUB vertically in the same order as it is positioned in Indesign from left to right and top to bottom. Stories threaded through multiple frames are treated as single objects. <i>Use XML Structure:</i> Users can add XML structure to their documents using the structure panel and then use this to order the output.	In addition to the two options previously available, 5.5 offers a new "Articles" panel. Users can use this panel to order their content. If the panel is used, any content not contained in the panel will be omitted from the export. While this might work well for short documents composed of non-threaded text frames and non-anchored graphics, I don't believe it will work well for books and documents with long stories. It may be able to handle newsletters reasonably well, though.
Exported CSS includes formatting that does not work well or is not necessary for eBook readers. Each class is fully defined, even if it is almost identical to other classes. There is no user control of what tags and selectors will be created in export. Almost every paragraph style gets written as a "p.[classname]" in the exported CSS. Occasionally some styles will be exported as h1, h2, or other tags. Classes are always based on paragraph style name. Cell and table styles are mapped to td and table selectors, respectively. InDesign writes incorrect CSS. Just one example: paragraph styles for bulleted or numbered lists will incorrectly use the "p" selector in the CSS, although the XHTML will use tags, thus breaking the style.	I finally created my on template.css files in Dreamweaver, based on exported class names from InDesign, using this procedure:* 1. When exporting, use the option "generate CSS" with all the checkboxes turned off. The resulting CSS will have selectors and classes only, with no rules. 2. Remove the "p", "h1", "h2", "div", and other selectors from all classes unless they are really necessary. 3. Define default selectors, such as "body", "ul", "ol", "li", "table", "td", etc. at the top of the file, then define other classes as necessary and specify only properties that are different from the defaults. 4. Similar or identical classes can be defined simultaneously to reduce unnecessary bulk by separating the class names with a comma. 5. Once a good CSS file is written it can be used for all similar EPUBs -- just replace the exported template.css file with the hand written one.	Maybe. The new paragraph style dialog features the ability to map the style to specific tags and classes in the exported XHTML and CSS. It is unknown at this time if the CSS generated automatically works well for EPUBs or if it will still be necessary (or advisable) to write our own CSS files.
EPUB validators always consider files exported from CS 5 invalid because of a missing date field.	This doesn't seem to affect the ability of most eBook readers to use the files.	YES. 5.5 properly specifies the date, so we will be able to make officially valid EPUBs.

*Adam Cottam of www.gofishcreative.com helped me develop this procedure for writing a better CSS file.