

Adam Nathan



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ISBN-13: 978-0-672-33836-6

ISBN-10: 0-672-33836-X

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014931708

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing June 2014

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About the Author

Adam Nathan is a principal software architect for Microsoft and a best-selling technical author. He introduced XAML to countless developers through his books on a variety of Microsoft technologies. Currently a part of the Windows division, Adam has previously worked on Visual Studio and the Common Language Runtime. He was the founding developer and architect of Popfly, Microsoft's first Silverlight-based product, named by *PCWorld* as one of its year's most innovative products. He is also the founder of PINVOKE.NET, the online resource for .NET developers who need to access Win32. His apps have been featured on Lifehacker, Gizmodo, ZDNet, ParentMap, and other enthusiast sites.

Adam's books are considered required reading by many inside Microsoft and throughout the industry. Adam is the author of *Windows 8.1 Apps with XAML and C# Unleashed* (Sams, 2013), *101 Windows Phone 7 Apps* (Sams, 2011), *Silverlight 1.0 Unleashed* (Sams, 2008), *WPF Unleashed* (Sams, 2006), *WPF 4 Unleashed* (Sams, 2010), *WPF 4.5 Unleashed* (Sams, 2013), and *.NET and COM: The Complete Interoperability Guide* (Sams, 2002); a coauthor of *ASP.NET: Tips, Tutorials, and Code* (Sams, 2001); and a contributor to books including *.NET Framework Standard Library Annotated Reference, Volume 2* (Addison-Wesley, 2005) and *Windows Developer Power Tools* (O'Reilly, 2006). You can find Adam online at www.adamnathan.net, or @adamnathan on Twitter.

Dedication

To Rose Rudberg.

Acknowledgments

First, I thank Eileen Chan for the encouragement and patience that enabled me to complete this book. I'd also like to give special thanks to J. Boyd Nolan, Ashish Shetty, Tim Heuer, Mark Rideout, Jonathan Russ, Joe Duffy, Chris Brumme, Eric Rudder, Loretta Yates, Neil Rowe, Betsy Gratner, Ginny Munroe, Bill Chiles, and Valery Sarkisov. As always, I thank my parents for having the foresight to introduce me to Basic programming on our IBM PCjr when I was in elementary school.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Hoshino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Hoshino" clearly distinguishable.

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Introduction

If you ask me, it has never been a better time to be a software developer. Not only are programmers in high demand—due in part to an astonishingly low number of computer science graduates each year—but app stores make it easier than ever to broadly distribute your own software and even make money from it!

When I was in junior high school, I released a few shareware games and asked for \$5 donations. I earned \$15 total. One of the three donations was from my grandmother, who didn't even own a computer! These days, of course, adults and kids alike can make money on simple apps and games without relying on kind and generous individuals going to the trouble of mailing a check!

The Windows Store is an app store like no other, and it keeps getting better. When you consider the number of people who use Windows 8.1 (and Windows RT) compared to the number of people who use any other operating system on the planet, you realize what a unique and enormous opportunity the Windows Store provides. That's one of the reasons that the Windows Store is the fastest-growing app store in history.

When you write a Windows Store app, you have three main choices for programming language and UI framework pairings:

- ▶ JavaScript with an HTML user interface
- ▶ C#, Visual Basic, or C++ with a XAML user interface
- ▶ C++ with a DirectX user interface

You can also leverage a number of features and componentization techniques to mix and match these languages and UI frameworks within the same app.

C# and XAML has been a very popular choice for writing Windows Store apps. It is the choice for apps such as Netflix, Hulu Plus, Fresh Paint, SkyDrive, Evernote Touch, Reader, Alarms, Movie Moments, Maps, OneNote, Lync, and many, many more. It is also the implementation choice for many core experiences in Windows, such as the PC Settings app, the Search app, and Contact/Calendar functionality in Windows 8.1. The XAML team has stated that their goal is to be the high fidelity, high performance framework for *any* scenario.

Then why does Microsoft provide so many choices? The idea is to enable you to work with whatever is most comfortable for you, or whatever best leverages your existing assets, or whatever most naturally consumes the third-party SDK you must use.

Your choice can have other benefits. HTML tends to be the best choice if you need to support versions of your app on non-Microsoft platforms or a website. XAML is best at interoperability, as it's easy to mix both HTML and DirectX content in a XAML app. DirectX, the best choice for hardcore games, provides the most potential for getting the highest performance.

Although your choice of language is generally dictated by your choice of UI Framework, each language has its strengths. JavaScript benefits from a large community that produces interesting libraries. C# has the best features for writing concise asynchronous code. C++ can provide high performance.

The key to the multiple language support is the Windows Runtime, or WinRT for short. WinRT APIs are automatically *projected* into the programming language you use, so they look natural for that language. Projections are more than just exposing the raw APIs, however. Core WinRT data types such as `String`, collection types, and a few others are mapped to appropriate data types for the target environment. For C# or other .NET languages, this means exposing them as `System.String`, `System.Collections.Generic.IList<T>`, and so on. To match conventions, member names are even morphed to be Camel-cased for JavaScript and Pascal-cased for other languages, which makes the MSDN reference documentation occasionally look goofy.

In the set of APIs exposed by Windows:

- ▶ Everything under the `Windows.UI.Xaml` namespace is XAML-specific.
- ▶ Everything under the `Windows.UI.WebUI` namespace is for HTML apps.
- ▶ Everything under `System` is .NET-specific.
- ▶ Everything else (which is under `Windows`) is general-purpose WinRT functionality.

As you dig into the framework, you notice that the XAML-specific and .NET-specific APIs are indeed the most natural to use from C# and XAML.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is for software developers who are interested in creating apps for the Windows Store, whether they are for tablets, laptops, or desktops. It does not teach you how to program, nor does it teach the basics of the C# language. However, it is designed to be understandable even for folks who are new to .NET, and does not require previous experience with XAML.

HOUR 3

Arranging UI Elements

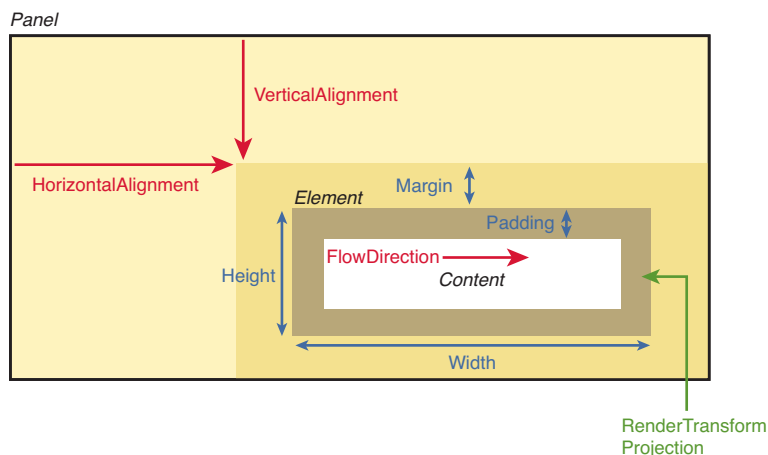
What You'll Learn in This Hour:

- ▶ The basics of layout
- ▶ How to customize an element's size
- ▶ How to customize an element's position
- ▶ Rotating, scaling, and skewing elements with 2D and 3D Transforms

When building an app, one of the first things you must do is arrange a bunch of elements in its window. This sizing and positioning of elements is called *layout*. XAML apps are provided a feature-rich layout system that covers everything from placing elements at exact coordinates to building experiences that scale and rearrange across a wide range of screen resolutions and aspect ratios. This is essential for handling the diversity of Windows devices, as well as intelligently handling when your app isn't the only one on the screen.

In XAML apps, layout boils down to interactions between parent elements and their child elements. Parents and their children work together to determine their final sizes and positions. Parent elements that support the arrangement of multiple children are known as *panels*, and they derive from a class called `Panel`. All the elements involved in the layout process (both parents and children) derive from `UIElement`.

Because layout is such an important topic, the next two hours are dedicated to it. This hour focuses on the children, examining the common ways that you can control layout on a child-by-child basis. Several properties control these aspects, most of which are summarized in Figure 3.1 for an arbitrary element inside an arbitrary panel. Size-related properties are shown in blue, and position-related properties are shown in red. In addition, elements can have transforms applied to them (shown in green) that can affect both size and position.

**FIGURE 3.1**

The main child layout properties examined in this hour

The next hour continues the layout story by examining the variety of built-in parent panels, each of which arranges its children in unique ways.

Controlling Size

Every time layout occurs, such as when an app's window is resized or the screen is rotated, child elements tell their parent panel their desired size. Elements tend to *size to their content*, meaning that they try to be large enough to fit their content and no larger. This size can be influenced on individual instances of children via several straightforward properties.

Height and Width

All `FrameworkElements` have simple `Height` and `Width` properties (of type `double`), and they also have `MinHeight`, `MaxHeight`, `MinWidth`, and `MaxWidth` properties that can be used to specify a range of acceptable values. Any or all of these can be easily set on elements in C# or in XAML.

An element naturally stays as small as possible, so if you use `MinHeight` or `MinWidth`, it is rendered at that height/width unless its content forces it to grow. In addition, that growth can be limited by using `MaxHeight` and `MaxWidth`—as long as these values are larger than their `Min` counterparts. When using an explicit `Height` and `Width` at the same time as their `Min` and `Max` counterparts, `Height` and `Width` take precedence as long as they are in the range from `Min` to `Max`. The default value of `MinHeight` and `MinWidth` is 0, and the default value of

`MaxHeight` and `MaxWidth` is `Double.PositiveInfinity` (which can be set in XAML as simply `"Infinity"`).

CAUTION

Avoid setting explicit sizes!

Giving controls explicit sizes makes it difficult to adapt to different screen sizes and orientations, and could cause text to be cut off if you ever translate it into other languages, as demonstrated in the preceding hour. Therefore, you should avoid setting explicit sizes unless absolutely necessary. Fortunately, setting explicit sizes is rarely necessary, thanks to the panels described in the next hour.

Unlike the six properties that are *input* to the layout process, `FrameworkElement` exposes read-only `ActualHeight` and `ActualWidth` properties representing *output* from the layout process: the final size of the element after layout is complete. That's right—whether an element specified an explicit size, specified a range of acceptable sizes, or didn't specify anything at all, the behavior of the parent can alter an element's final size on the screen. These properties are, therefore, useful for advanced scenarios in which you need to programmatically act on an element's size. The values of the other size-related properties, on the other hand, aren't very interesting to base logic on. For example, when not set explicitly, the value of `Height` and `Width` are `Double.NaN`, regardless of the element's true size.

CAUTION

Be careful when writing code that uses `ActualHeight` and `ActualWidth`!

Every time the layout process occurs, it updates the values of each element's `ActualHeight` and `ActualWidth`. However, you can't rely on the values of these properties at all times. It's safe to rely on their values within an event handler for the `LayoutUpdated` event defined on `FrameworkElement`. At the same time, you must not alter layout from within a `LayoutUpdated` handler. If you do, an exception will be thrown pointing out that you introduced a cycle.

`UIElement` defines an `UpdateLayout` method to force any pending layout updates to occur, but you should avoid using this method. Besides the fact that frequent calls to `UpdateLayout` can harm performance because of the excess layout processing, there's no guarantee that the elements you're using properly handle the potential reentrancy in their layout-related methods.

Margin and Padding

`Margin` and `Padding` are two similar properties that are also related to an element's size. All `FrameworkElements` have a `Margin` property, and all `Controls` (plus many other elements) have a `Padding` property. Their only difference is that `Margin` controls how much extra space gets placed around the *outside* edges of the element, whereas `Padding` controls how much extra space gets placed around the *inside* edges of the element.

Both `Margin` and `Padding` are of type `Thickness`, an interesting class that can represent one, two, or four double values. Here is how the values are interpreted when set in XAML:

- ▶ When set to a list of **four values**, the numbers represent the left, top, right, and bottom edges, respectively.
- ▶ When set to a list of **two values**, the first number is used for the left and right edges and the second number is used for the top and bottom edges. So `"12, 24"` is a shortcut for `"12, 24, 12, 24"`.
- ▶ When set to a **single value**, it is used for all four sides. So `"12"` is a shortcut for `"12, 12"`, which is a shortcut for `"12, 12, 12, 12"`.
- ▶ Negative values may be used for margins (and often are), but are not allowed for padding.
- ▶ The commas are optional. You can use spaces instead of, or in addition to, commas. `"12, 24"` is the same as `"12 24"` and `"12, 24"`.

When creating a `Thickness` in C#, you can use its constructor that accepts either a single value or all four values:

```
this.TextBox.Margin = new Thickness(12);           // Margin="12" in XAML
this.TextBox.Margin = new Thickness(12,24,12,24); // Margin="12,24" in XAML
```

Note that the handy two-number syntax is a shortcut only available through XAML. `Thickness` does not have a two-parameter constructor.

Controlling Position

This section doesn't discuss positioning elements with (X,Y) coordinates, as you might expect. Parent panels define their own unique mechanisms for enabling children to position themselves, and those are discussed in the next hour. A few mechanisms are common to all `FrameworkElement` children, however, and that's what this section examines. These mechanisms are related to alignment and a concept called *flow direction*.

Alignment

The `HorizontalAlignment` and `VerticalAlignment` properties enable an element to control what it does with any extra space that its parent panel gives it. Each property has a corresponding enumeration with the same name, giving the following options:

- ▶ **HorizontalAlignment**—Left, Center, Right, and Stretch
- ▶ **VerticalAlignment**—Top, Center, Bottom, and Stretch

Stretch is the default value for both properties, although various controls override the setting. The effects of `HorizontalAlignment` can easily be seen by placing a few Buttons in a `StackPanel` (a panel described further in the next hour) and marking them with each value from the enumeration:

```
<StackPanel>
  <Button HorizontalAlignment="Left" Content="Left" Background="Red"/>
  <Button HorizontalAlignment="Center" Content="Center" Background="Orange"/>
  <Button HorizontalAlignment="Right" Content="Right" Background="Green"/>
  <Button HorizontalAlignment="Stretch" Content="Stretch" Background="Blue"/>
</StackPanel>
```

Notice that an enumeration value such as `HorizontalAlignment.Left` is able to be specified in XAML as simply `Left`. This is thanks to a type converter that is able to handle any enumeration. The rendered result appears in Figure 3.2.

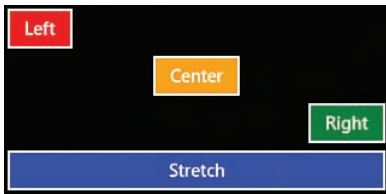


FIGURE 3.2

The effects of `HorizontalAlignment` on Buttons in a `StackPanel`

These two properties are useful only when a parent panel gives the child element more space than it needs. For example, adding `VerticalAlignment` values to elements in the `StackPanel` used in Figure 3.2 would make no difference, because each element is already given the exact amount of height it needs (no more, no less).

NOTE

When an element uses `Stretch` alignment (horizontally or vertically), an explicit `Height` or `Width` setting still takes precedence. `MaxHeight` and `MaxWidth` also take precedence, but only when their values are smaller than the natural stretched size. Similarly, `MinHeight` and `MinWidth` take precedence only when their values are *larger* than the natural stretched size. When `Stretch` is used in a context that constrains the element's size, it acts like an alignment of `Center` (or `Left` if the element is too large to be centered in its parent).

Content Alignment

In addition to `HorizontalAlignment` and `VerticalAlignment` properties, the `Control` class also has `HorizontalContentAlignment` and `VerticalContentAlignment` properties. These

properties determine how a control's *content* fills the space *within* the control. (Therefore, the relationship between alignment and content alignment is somewhat like the relationship between Margin and Padding.)

The content alignment properties are of the same enumeration types as the corresponding alignment properties, so they provide the same options. However, the default value for `HorizontalContentAlignment` is `Left`, and the default value for `VerticalContentAlignment` is `Top`. Some elements implicitly choose different defaults. Buttons, for example, center their content in both dimensions by default.

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the effects of `HorizontalContentAlignment`, simply by taking the previous XAML snippet and changing the property name as follows:

```
<StackPanel>
  <Button HorizontalContentAlignment="Left" HorizontalAlignment="Stretch"
    Content="Left" Background="Red"/>
  <Button HorizontalContentAlignment="Center" HorizontalAlignment="Stretch"
    Content="Center" Background="Orange"/>
  <Button HorizontalContentAlignment="Right" HorizontalAlignment="Stretch"
    Content="Right" Background="Green"/>
  <Button HorizontalContentAlignment="Stretch" HorizontalAlignment="Stretch"
    Content="Stretch" Background="Blue"/>
</StackPanel>
```

Each Button also has its `HorizontalAlignment` set to `Stretch` rather than its default of `Left` so the differences in `HorizontalContentAlignment` are visible. Without this, each Button would auto-size to its content and there would be no extra space for the content to move within.



FIGURE 3.3

The effects of `HorizontalContentAlignment` on Buttons in a `StackPanel`

In Figure 3.3, the Button with `HorizontalContentAlignment="Stretch"` might not appear as you expected. Its inner `TextBlock` is technically stretched, but it's meaningless because `TextBlock` (which is not a Control) doesn't have the same notion for stretching its inner text. For other types of content, `Stretch` can indeed have the intended effect.

FlowDirection

`FlowDirection` is a property on `FrameworkElement` (and several other classes) that can reverse the way an element's inner content flows. It applies to some panels and their arrangement of children, and it also applies to the way content is aligned inside child controls. The property is of type `FlowDirection`, with two values: `LeftToRight` (`FrameworkElement`'s default) and `RightToLeft`.

The idea of `FlowDirection` is that it should be set to `RightToLeft` when the current culture corresponds to a language that is read from right to left. This reverses the meaning of left and right for settings such as content alignment. The following XAML demonstrates this, with Buttons that force their content alignment to `Top` and `Left` but then apply each of the two `FlowDirection` values:

```
<StackPanel>
  <Button FlowDirection="LeftToRight"
    HorizontalContentAlignment="Left" Width="320"
    Background="Red">LeftToRight</Button>
  <Button FlowDirection="RightToLeft"
    HorizontalContentAlignment="Left" Width="320"
    Background="Orange">RightToLeft</Button>
</StackPanel>
```

The result is shown in Figure 3.4.



FIGURE 3.4

The effects of `FlowDirection` on Buttons with `Left` content alignment

Notice that `FlowDirection` does not affect the flow of letters within these Buttons. English letters always flow left to right, and Arabic letters always flow right to left, for example. But `FlowDirection` reverses the notion of left and right for other pieces of the user interface, which typically need to match the flow direction of letters.

You must explicitly set `FlowDirection` to match the current culture, but fortunately you can do this on a single, top-level element. Windows doesn't automatically change `FlowDirection` on your behalf in order for the behavior to be predictable and easily testable. The idea is that you should specify `FlowDirection` appropriately inside the `.resw` file for each distinct culture you support. For example, if you include a resource with the name `Root.FlowDirection`, then you can mark a Page's root element with `x:Uid="Root"` to control `FlowDirection` on a per-culture basis. The resource just needs to be given the value of `LeftToRight` or `RightToLeft`.

Applying 2D Transforms

The XAML UI Framework contains a handful of built-in two-dimensional transform classes (derived from `Transform`) that enable you to change the size and position of elements independently from the previously discussed properties. Some also enable you to alter elements in more exotic ways, such as by rotating or skewing them.

All `UIElements` have a `RenderTransform` property that can be set to any `Transform` in order to change its appearance *after* the layout process has finished (immediately before the element is rendered). They also have a handy `RenderTransformOrigin` property that represents the starting point of the transform (the point that remains stationary). Figure 3.5 demonstrates the impact of setting `RenderTransformOrigin` to five different (x,y) values when used with one of the `Transform` objects that performs rotation.

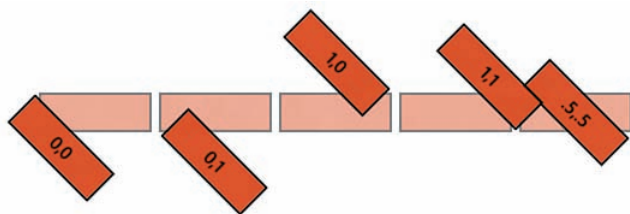


FIGURE 3.5

Five common `RenderTransformOrigins` used on rotated `Buttons` rendered on top of unrotated `Buttons`

`RenderTransformOrigin` can be set to a `Windows.Foundation.Point`, with (0,0) being the default value. This represents the top-left corner, shown by the first button in Figure 3.5. An origin of (0,1) represents the bottom-left corner, (1,0) is the top-right corner, and (1,1) is the bottom-right corner. You can use numbers greater than 1 to set the origin to a point outside the bounds of an element, and you can use fractional values. Therefore, (.5,.5) represents the middle of the object. The reason the corner-pivoting appears slightly off in Figure 3.5 is an artifact of the default appearance of `Buttons`. They have an invisible three-pixel-wide region around their visible rectangle. If you imagine each button extending three pixels in each direction, the pivoting of the first four buttons would be exactly on each corner.

The value for `RenderTransformOrigin` can be specified in XAML with two comma-delimited numbers (and no parentheses). For example, a `Button` rotated around its center, like the one at the far right of Figure 3.5, can be created as follows:

```
<Button RenderTransformOrigin=".5,.5">
  <Button.RenderTransform>
    <RotateTransform Angle="45"/>
  </Button.RenderTransform>
</Button>
```

This section looks at all the built-in 2D transforms, all in the `Windows.UI.Xaml.Media` namespace:

- ▶ `RotateTransform`
- ▶ `ScaleTransform`
- ▶ `SkewTransform`
- ▶ `TranslateTransform`
- ▶ `CompositeTransform`
- ▶ `TransformGroup`
- ▶ `MatrixTransform`

RotateTransform

`RotateTransform`, which was just demonstrated, rotates an element according to the values of three double properties:

- ▶ **Angle**—Angle of rotation, specified in degrees (default value = 0)
- ▶ **CenterX**—Horizontal center of rotation (default value = 0)
- ▶ **CenterY**—Vertical center of rotation (default value = 0)

The default (`CenterX`,`CenterY`) point of (0,0) represents the top-left corner.

Whereas Figure 3.5 shows rotated Buttons, Figure 3.6 demonstrates what happens when `RotateTransform` is applied *to the inner content* of a Button. To achieve this, the simple string that typically appears inside a Button is replaced with an explicit `TextBlock` as follows:

```
<Button Background="Orange">
  <TextBlock RenderTransformOrigin=".5,.5">
    <TextBlock.RenderTransform>
      <RotateTransform Angle="45"/>
    </TextBlock.RenderTransform>
    45°
  </TextBlock>
</Button>
```



FIGURE 3.6

Using `RotateTransform` on the content of a Button

ScaleTransform

ScaleTransform enlarges or shrinks an element horizontally, vertically, or in both directions. This transform has four straightforward double properties:

- ▶ **ScaleX**—Multiplier for the element's width (default value = 1)
- ▶ **ScaleY**—Multiplier for the element's height (default value = 1)
- ▶ **CenterX**—Origin for horizontal scaling (default value = 0)
- ▶ **CenterY**—Origin for vertical scaling (default value = 0)

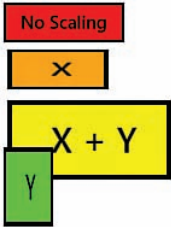
A ScaleX value of 0.5 shrinks an element's rendered width in half, whereas a ScaleX value of 2 doubles the width. CenterX and CenterY work the same way as with RotateTransform.

Listing 3.1 applies ScaleTransform to three Buttons in a StackPanel, demonstrating the ability to stretch them independently in height or in width. Figure 3.7 shows the result.

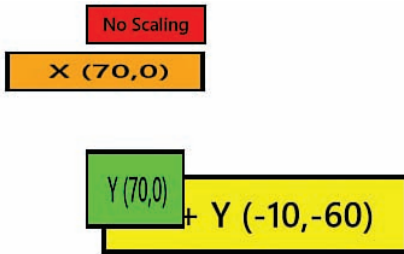
LISTING 3.1 Applying ScaleTransform to Buttons in a StackPanel

```
<StackPanel Width="200">
  <Button Background="Red">No Scaling</Button>
  <Button Background="Orange">
    <Button.RenderTransform>
      <ScaleTransform ScaleX="2"/>
    </Button.RenderTransform>
    X</Button>
  <Button Background="Yellow">
    <Button.RenderTransform>
      <ScaleTransform ScaleX="2" ScaleY="2"/>
    </Button.RenderTransform>
    X + Y</Button>
  <Button Background="Lime">
    <Button.RenderTransform>
      <ScaleTransform ScaleY="2"/>
    </Button.RenderTransform>
    Y</Button>
</StackPanel>
```

Figure 3.8 displays the same Buttons from Listing 3.1 (and Figure 3.7) but with explicit CenterX and CenterY values set. The point represented by each pair of these values is displayed in each Button's text. Notice that the lime Button isn't moved to the left like the orange Button, despite being marked with the same CenterX of 70. That's because CenterX is relevant only when ScaleX is a value other than 1, and CenterY is relevant only when ScaleY is a value other than 1.

**FIGURE 3.7**

The scaled Buttons from Listing 3.1

**FIGURE 3.8**

The Buttons from Listing 3.1 but with explicit scaling centers

SkewTransform

`SkewTransform` slants an element according to the values of four double properties:

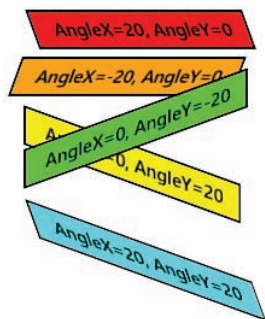
- ▶ **AngleX**—Amount of horizontal skew (default value = 0)
- ▶ **AngleY**—Amount of vertical skew (default value = 0)
- ▶ **CenterX**—Origin for horizontal skew (default value = 0)
- ▶ **CenterY**—Origin for vertical skew (default value = 0)

These properties behave much like the properties of the previous transforms. Figure 3.9 demonstrates `SkewTransform` applied as a `RenderTransform` on several Buttons, using the default center of the top-left corner.

TranslateTransform

`TranslateTransform` simply moves an element according to two double properties:

- ▶ **x**—Amount to move horizontally (default value = 0)
- ▶ **y**—Amount to move vertically (default value = 0)

**FIGURE 3.9**

SkewTransform applied to Buttons in a StackPanel

TranslateTransform is an easy way to “nudge” elements one way or another. Most likely, you’d do this dynamically based on user actions (and perhaps in an animation). With all the panels described in the next hour, it’s unlikely that you’d need to use TranslateTransform to arrange a static user interface.

Combining Transforms

If you want to transform an element multiple ways simultaneously, such as rotate *and* scale it, a few different options are available:

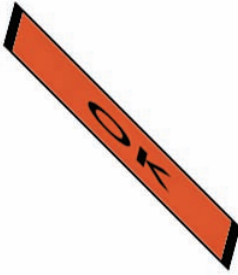
- ▶ CompositeTransform
- ▶ TransformGroup
- ▶ MatrixTransform

CompositeTransform

The CompositeTransform class is the easiest way to combine transforms. It has all the properties of the previous four transforms, although some have slightly different names: Rotation, ScaleX, ScaleY, SkewX, SkewY, TranslateX, TranslateY, CenterX, and CenterY.

Figure 3.10 shows several transforms being applied to a single Button as follows:

```
<Button Background="Orange">
  <Button.RenderTransform>
    <!-- The composite transform order is always
         scale, then skew, then rotate, then translate -->
    <CompositeTransform Rotation="45" ScaleX="5" ScaleY="1" SkewX="30"/>
  </Button.RenderTransform>
  OK
</Button>
```

**FIGURE 3.10**

A Button scaled, skewed, and rotated with a single `CompositeTransform`

It can be handy to always use `CompositeTransform` instead of the previous transforms, even if you're only performing one type of transform.

TransformGroup

`CompositeTransform` always applies its transforms in the same order: scale, skew, rotate, and then translate. If you require a nonstandard order, you can use a `TransformGroup` instead then put its child transforms in any order. For example, the following XAML looks like it might have the same effect as the previous XAML, but Figure 3.11 shows that the result is much different:

```
<Button Background="Orange">
  <Button.RenderTransform>
    <TransformGroup>
      <!-- First rotate, then scale, then skew! -->
      <RotateTransform Angle="45"/>
      <ScaleTransform ScaleX="5" ScaleY="1"/>
      <SkewTransform AngleX="30"/>
    </TransformGroup>
  </Button.RenderTransform>
  OK
</Button>
```

**FIGURE 3.11**

This time, the Button is rotated, scaled, and then skewed.

`TransformGroup` is just another `Transform`-derived class, so it can be used wherever any transform is used.

For maximum performance, the system calculates a combined transform out of a `TransformGroup`'s children and applies it as a single transform, much as if you had used `CompositeTransform`. Note that you can apply multiple instances of the same transform to a `TransformGroup`. For example, applying two separate 45° `RotateTransform`s would result in a 90° rotation.

MatrixTransform

`MatrixTransform` is a low-level mechanism that can be used to represent all combinations of rotation, scaling, skewing, and translating. `MatrixTransform` has a single `Matrix` property (of type `Matrix`) representing a 3x3 affine transformation matrix. (*Affine* means that straight lines remain straight.) Its `Matrix` property has the following subproperties representing 6 values in a 3x3 matrix:

M11	M12	0
M21	M22	0
OffsetX	OffsetY	1

The final column's values cannot be changed.

NOTE

`MatrixTransform` is the only transform that can be specified as a simple string in XAML. For example, you can translate a `Button` 10 units to the right and 20 units down with the following syntax:

```
<Button RenderTransform="1,0,0,1,10,20"/>
```

The comma-delimited list represents the M11, M12, M21, M22, OffsetX, and OffsetY values, respectively. The values 1, 0, 0, 1, 0, 0 give you the identity matrix (meaning no transform is done), so making `MatrixTransform` act like `TranslateTransform` is as simple as starting with the identity matrix and then using OffsetX and OffsetY as `TranslateTransform`'s X and Y values. Scaling can be done by treating the first and fourth values (the 1s in the identity matrix) as `ScaleX` and `ScaleY`, respectively. Rotation and skewing are more complicated because they involve `sin`, `cos`, and angles specified in radians.

If you're comfortable with the matrix notation, representing transforms with this concise (and less-readable) syntax can be a time saver when you're writing XAML by hand.

Applying 3D Transforms

Although you can integrate DirectX into a XAML app to work with a full 3D graphics engine, the XAML UI Framework does not directly expose full 3D capabilities. It does, however, enable you to perform the most common 3D effects with *perspective transforms*. These transforms escape

the limitations of the 2D transforms by enabling you to rotate and translate an element in any or all of the three dimensions.

Perspective transforms are normally done with a class called `PlaneProjection`, which defines `RotationX`, `RotationY`, and `RotationZ` properties. The X and Y dimensions are defined as usual, and the Z dimension extends into and out of the screen, as illustrated in Figure 3.12. X increases from left-to-right, Y increases from top-to-bottom, and Z increases from back-to-front.

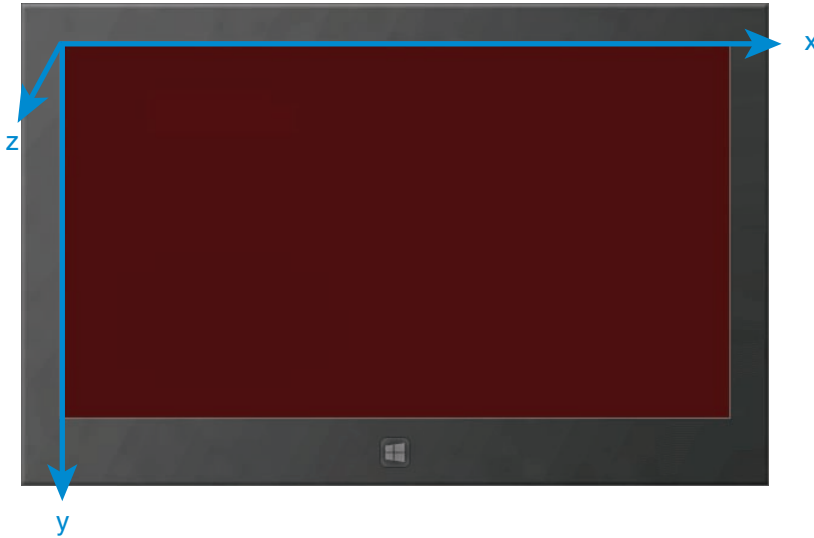


FIGURE 3.12

The three dimensions, relative to the screen

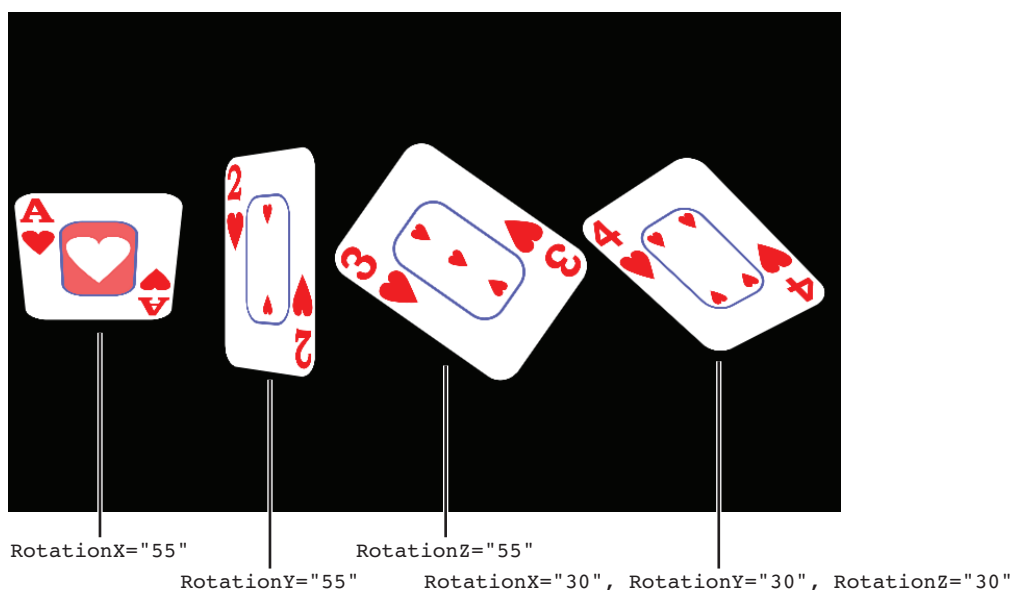
Although plane projections act like transforms, they derive from a class called `Projection` rather than `Transform`. Therefore, one cannot be assigned to an element via its `RenderTransform` property, but rather a separate property called `Projection`. The following plane projections are marked on playing card images, producing the result in Figure 3.13:

```
<StackPanel Orientation="Horizontal">
  <Image Source="Images/CardHA.png" Width="150" Margin="12">
    <Image.Projection>
      <PlaneProjection RotationX="55"/>
    </Image.Projection>
  </Image>
  <Image Source="Images/CardH2.png" Width="150">
    <Image.Projection>
      <PlaneProjection RotationY="55"/>
    </Image.Projection>
  </Image>
  <Image Source="Images/CardH3.png" Width="150" Margin="36">
```

```

<Image.Projection>
  <PlaneProjection RotationZ="55"/>
</Image.Projection>
</Image>
<Image Source="Images/CardH4.png" Width="150" Margin="48">
  <Image.Projection>
    <PlaneProjection RotationX="30" RotationY="30" RotationZ="30"/>
  </Image.Projection>
</Image>
</StackPanel>

```

**FIGURE 3.13**

Using a plane projection to rotate the card around the X, Y, and Z axes, then all three axes

Notice that rotating around only the Z axis is like using a 2D `RotateTransform`, although the direction is reversed.

Much like the 2D transform classes, `PlaneProjection` defines additional properties for changing the center of rotation: `CenterOfRotationX`, `CenterOfRotationY`, and `CenterOfRotationZ`. The first two properties are relative to the size of the element, on a scale from 0 to 1. The `CenterOfRotationZ` property is always in terms of absolute pixels, as elements never have any size in the Z dimension to enable a relative specification.

`PlaneProjection` defines six properties for translating an element in any or all dimensions. `GlobalOffsetX`, `GlobalOffsetY`, and `GlobalOffsetZ` apply the translation after

the rotation, so the offsets are relative to the global screen coordinates. `LocalOffsetX`, `LocalOffsetY`, and `LocalOffsetZ` apply the translation before the rotation, causing the rotation to be relative to the rotated coordinate space.

NOTE

One other type of projection exists that can be assigned to an element's `Projection` property: `Matrix3DProjection`, which also derives from the `Projection` base class. This is a low-level construct that enables you to specify the projection as a 4x4 3D transformation matrix. This can be handy if you are already working with 3D transformation matrices, otherwise the simpler `PlaneProjection` is all you need to use.

Further Exploration

Probably the best way to get a feel for the various layout properties is to experiment with them in the Visual Studio XAML designer. You can create a simple `StackPanel` with `Buttons`, such as the ones shown in this hour, then watch how things change as you experiment with different properties and values. This can be especially helpful for understanding complicated properties such as `RenderTransform` and `Projection`.

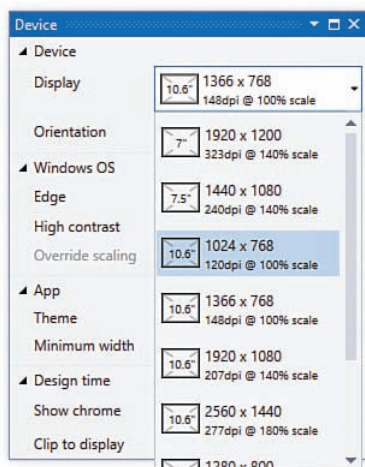
Summary

That concludes our tour of the layout properties that child elements can use to influence the way they appear on the screen. The most important part of layout, however, is the parent panels. This hour repeatedly uses a simple `StackPanel` for simplicity, but the next hour formally introduces this panel and all the other panels as well.

Q&A

Q. What unit of measurement is used by XAML?

A. The various length properties use units of pixels, although they are considered *logical pixels* because they do not always map directly to physical pixels on the screen. Windows automatically scales your app content to either 100%, 140%, or 180% of its natural size based on the size and resolution (and therefore dots-per-inch, or DPI) of the screen. This is why Visual Studio provides different screen size options for the same resolutions in both the simulator and the designer. The latter can be controlled via the Device tool window shown in Figure 3.14.

**FIGURE 3.14**

Size matters when it comes to the device's screen, due to the automatic scaling called out in the "Display" dropdown.

The effect of this scaling can be easily seen with the following XAML placed in a `Page`:

```
<StackPanel HorizontalAlignment="Left">
    <Rectangle Fill="Red" Height="100" Width="1000"/>
    <TextBlock Name="textBlock" FontSize="40"/>
</StackPanel>
```

with code-behind that sets the `TextBlock`'s `Text` to the `Page`'s current dimensions as reported by the XAML UI Framework:

```
this.textBlock.Text = "Page size: " + this.ActualWidth + "x" +
    this.ActualHeight;
```

Figure 3.15 shows the result on two different simulator settings. In both cases, the red `Rectangle` is 1,000 units long as far as your code is concerned. However, it gets scaled larger on the smaller screen (and the `Page`'s reported bounds are now smaller than the true resolution). Depending on the screen, a user can also bump up the scale from 100% to 140% or 140% to 180% by selecting the "Change the size of apps on the displays that can support it" option in the "Display" section of the PC Settings app.

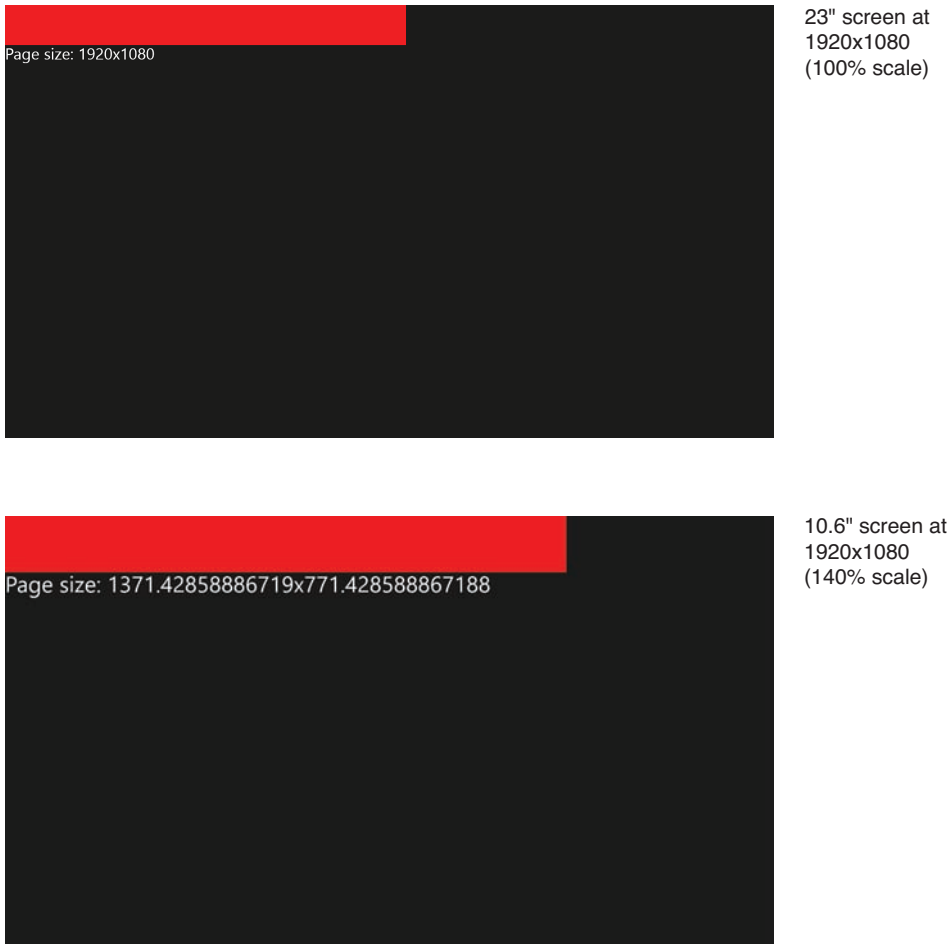


FIGURE 3.15

The same page at the same resolution, but under two different simulator screen sizes

- Q.** What's the difference between using the `CenterX` and `CenterY` properties on transforms such as `RotateTransform` versus using the `RenderTransformOrigin` property on `UIElement`?
- A.** When a transform is applied to a `UIElement`, the `CenterX` and `CenterY` properties at first appear to be redundant with `RenderTransformOrigin`. Both mechanisms control the origin of the transform.

However, `CenterX` and `CenterY` enable absolute positioning of the origin rather than the relative positioning of `RenderTransformOrigin`. Their values are specified as logical pixels, so the top-right corner of an element with a `Width` of 20 would be specified with `CenterX` set to 20 and `CenterY` set to 0 rather than the point (1,0). Also, when multiple

RenderTransforms are grouped together (described later in this hour), CenterX and CenterY on individual transforms enable more fine-grained control.

That said, RenderTransformOrigin is generally more useful than CenterX and CenterY. For the common case of transforming an element around its middle, the relative (.5,.5) RenderTransformOrigin is easy to specify in XAML, whereas accomplishing the same thing with CenterX and CenterY would require writing some C# code to calculate the absolute offsets.

Note that you can use RenderTransformOrigin on an element simultaneously with using CenterX and CenterY on its transform. In this case, the two X values and two Y values are combined to calculate the final origin point.

Q. How do transforms such as ScaleTransform affect FrameworkElement's ActualHeight and ActualWidth properties?

A. Applying a transform to FrameworkElement never changes the values of these properties. Therefore, because of transforms, these properties can “lie” about the size of an element on the screen. For example, all the Buttons in Figures 3.9 and 3.10 have the same ActualHeight and ActualWidth.

Such “lies” might surprise you, but they’re usually for the best. The point of transforms is to alter an element’s appearance without the element’s knowledge. Giving elements the illusion that they are being rendered normally enables arbitrary controls to be plugged in and transformed without special handling.

Q. How does ScaleTransform affect Margin and Padding?

A. Padding is scaled along with the rest of the content (because Padding is internal to the element), but Margin does not get scaled. As with ActualHeight and ActualWidth, the numeric Padding property value does not change, despite the visual scaling.

Q. Given the impact of transforms, how can I easily get the true position and size of an element?

A. Sometimes you do really need to know an element’s final position and size, taking into account the effects from transforms. For example, several Windows Runtime APIs require the position or bounds of an on-screen element so Windows can display system UI in the right spot.

You can get a window-relative position that accounts for all transforms as follows:

```
static Point GetPositionInWindow(FrameworkElement element)
{
    GeneralTransform transform = element.TransformToVisual(null);
    return transform.TransformPoint(new Point() /* Represents 0,0 */);
}
```

You can get the bounding rectangle as follows:

```
static Rect GetBoundsInWindow(FrameworkElement element)
{
    GeneralTransform transform = element.TransformToVisual(null);
    return transform.TransformBounds(
        new Rect(0, 0, element.ActualWidth, element.ActualHeight));
}
```

Workshop

Quiz

1. What event on `FrameworkElement` is raised its layout has been triggered?
2. When specifying four values for a `Thickness` value such as `Margin`, what is the meaning of each value, in order?
3. What property can be set on an element to reverse its notion of left and right?

Answers

1. `LayoutUpdated`.
2. Left, Top, Right, and then Bottom.
3. `FlowDirection`.

Exercises

1. Place a `Button` within a `Page` and choose a `Margin` for the `Button`. Then try to produce the same result by replacing the `Margin` with a `TranslateTransform` instead. Then try to produce the same result by replacing the `TranslateTransform` with a `MatrixTransform`.
2. Visualize a playing card positioned in 3D space. Then take the playing card example from Figure 3.13, and try to update one of the card's `PlaneProjections` to match the angle you're picturing.

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