Dreamweaver for Designers

HTML AND CSS BASICS

HTML Basics: What is HTML? HTML is short for Hyper Text Markup Language. HTML is a formatting text-based language that tells a web-browser how to structure and display a web page. The documents themselves are plain text files (ASCII) with special "tags" or codes that a web browser knows how to interpret and display on your screen. It is used in the creation of documents for the World Wide Web. Originally, internet communication was text-based designed to send academic data such as thesis papers from University to University or reports from military base to military base. This meant that you could only see letters, numbers, and other similar characters.

With the emergence of HTML, we can now communicate with colors, graphics, and hyperlinks. It is important to remember, however, that graphic images are not imbedded in the code, but are rather linked in the document and stored separately. Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS, is a way keeping your formatting separate from your structure and content. HTML is best used to structure a page and add content, and CSS is best used to format the way it is seen by browsers. For this reason, it is important for Web designers to be aware of both HTML and CSS.

Today, we will discuss some very basic information on how images can be formatted and hotlinked in an HTML document. So, what does HTML code look like? First, remember that HTML is actually all text. All Web Pages start with a Tag which lets the browser know that the following document is a web page <html>. This is often followed by other tags, but the only one that is actually needed is the Body Tag which lets your browser know to start displaying contents <body>. Also remember that in HTML, what is turned on with a tag gets turned off with a tag, so we need a Body-Off Tag </body> and finally an HTML-Off Tag </html>. So the very simplest web page, without any content looks like this (and would produce a blank white page):

```
<html>
<body>
</body>
</html>
```

Pretty boring…
What you would see in a page like that described above is a big, blank, white screen. All visible information on your web page would go between the body tags. This same page with an image in it might look like the code below. In HTML, all images and media files are linked rather than imbedded in the code. This means your HTML page tells your browser where to find the image or media and where to display it in the page.

```
<html>
<body>
<img src="fruit.jpg">
</body>
</html>
```

If you would like to see what the HTML code looks like a web page on your browser, look for the "View > Source" command in your browser. The code should appear as a text document.

**TABLES AND CELLS:** Tables are simply a box not unlike a bounding box. Their size can be defined in number of pixels or in percentage of screen width. The HTML table model allows authors to arrange data -- text, preformatted text, images, links, forms, form fields, other tables, etc. -- into rows and columns of CELLS. Cells can fall across multiple rows and columns. Tables and cells can be given individual attributes or PROPERTIES such as background color, image data or hotlinks. This is a simple example of a table. It is formatted to show up as 75% of the display width, centered upon the screen, with a two pixel borderline and one pixel cellpadding. It is composed of two columns and two rows which define four cells, each given a different background color.

This is the HTML "code" which defines this table:

```
<table width="75%" border="2" align="center" cellpadding="1" >
<tr>
<td bgcolor="red">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="green">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td bgcolor="blue">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#yellow">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```
Below, I modified this same table to combine the two rows in column one, and put an image in it. Notice that the height and width of the cells compensated for the size of the image. Then I added text and a hotlink to the "green cell" in column two:

![Return to Top of Page](fruit.jpg)

This is the HTML "code" which defines this table. The code, `<img src="fruit.jpg">` tells your browser where to find the image "shell.jpg" and `<a href="#top>` describes the hyperlink:

```html
<table width="75%" border="2" align="center" cellpadding="1">
<tr>
<td rowspan="2"><img src="fruit.jpg"></td>
<td bgcolor="green"><div align="center"><a href="#top"><font color="#FFFFFF">Return to Top of Page</font></a></div></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td bgcolor="yellow">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

For more detailed information on creating HTML tables, you might want to look at W3.org's site at: [http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-html40/struct/tables.html#h-11.1](http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-html40/struct/tables.html#h-11.1)

So far, the structure and code is pretty easy. But as you add complexity and number of pages, the difficulty keeping structure, content, layout and display organized becomes increasingly important and increasingly difficult. Many Websites have been made using the keyboard alone without the use of an HTML editor. It helps if you have a head and a liking for code. We, however are designers, and we want to make functional and beautiful webpages without worrying too much about the intricacies of code. Fortunately for us we have Dreamweaver.

**Dreamweaver CS4:**

1. **Writes Content:**
   HTML can be cumbersome. Dreamweaver writes (for the most part) good, valid HTML using an easy point-and-click interface.

2. **Manages Files:**
   Managing a large site with many pages and files can quickly become a mess. Dreamweaver has built-in tracking that will automatically manage your files and will update your pages accordingly. Many people use Dreamweaver just for its built-in synchronization tool.
3. **Creates Preliminary Page Layout:**

Dreamweaver has good tools to assist you in laying out your site. There are also a lot of “pre-fab” layouts and templates available as starting points in Dreamweaver CS4.

Just a note, some people think that you can use Dreamweaver without knowing anything about HTML code, or Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). It is not entirely true. Dreamweaver will write a lot of code for you. It makes the design of Web pages and Web sites much simpler. However, sometimes it takes a little knowledge of the underlying HTML code or CSS code to understand what is actually happening in your site so you can get just the look and functionality you want. As the semester progresses, we will be looking at both design code.

There is another group of people which try to create Web Sites and Web Pages with programs which really are not up to the task. An example is MS Word or MS Publisher (or, in my opinion, Microsoft anything). They create messy and ugly code and pages which can be nearly impossible to edit.

**Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)**

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a simple mechanism for adding style (e.g. fonts, colors, spacing) to Web documents. Cascading Style Sheets or CSS allow you to control the layout and look of your page easily. CSS tags or properties are easy to use and affect the look and feel or style of your pages.

HTML tags were originally designed to define the content of a document. They were supposed to say "This is a header", "This is a paragraph", "This is a table", by using tags like `<h1>`, `<p>`, `<table>`, and so on. The layout of the document was supposed to be taken care of by the browser, without using any formatting tags. As the Web got more sophisticated, designers wanted more control of the look of a page than HTML was capable of. Thus CSS was developed.

Styles sheets define HOW HTML elements are to be displayed, just like the font tag and the color attribute in HTML 3.2. Styles are normally saved in external .css files. External style sheets enable you to change the appearance and layout of all the pages in your Web, just by editing one single CSS document!

CSS was a breakthrough in Web design because it allows designers to control the style and layout of multiple Web pages all at once. As a Web developer you can define a style for each HTML element and apply it to as many Web pages as you want. To make a global change, simply change the style, and all elements in the Web are updated automatically.

Dreamweaver has both HTML and CSS tools, as well as site management and file management tools which give us the tools to concentrate on design.