

File Types

HTML and XHTML:

HTML is the acronym for HyperText Markup Language, the basis of all web pages. If you have a webpage loaded in your browser, you can right click on the page and View Source. At that point you are looking at the HTML code. This is also why webpages have a file extension of .htm or .html. In 2001 it was decided to discontinue HTML and replace it with XHTML (Extensible HyperText Markup Language). While there are many underlying differences, there are only a handful that will effect us.

XHTML puts stricter rules on how its code is written (its syntax), with the goal of making webpages more universally compatible with different browsers and devices. In many ways it looks like a cleaned-up version of HTML. Both HTML and XHTML work equally well in Dreamweaver, so you won't notice much of a difference. In fact, Dreamweaver CS3 bases its code on XHTML. For the time being this really isn't a concern because we'll be relying on Dreamweaver to do our coding, but in the future you'll probably want to learn more XHTML because there are times that it is just easier and faster to go make edits to the code.

For a nice summary of the coding differences between HTML and XHTML check http://www.w3schools.com/xhtml/xhtml_html.asp

There has been quite the debate on HTML v. XHTML and when you should switch, or if you should switch. If you want to know more about that check out: Surfin' Safari: <http://webkit.org/blog/68/understanding-html-xml-and-xhtml/> or The Web Standards Project—HTML v. XHTML: <http://www.webstandards.org/learn/articles/askw3c/oct2003/>

More than you've ever wanted to know about XHTML: <http://www.w3.org/MarkUp/> (if you just have time to kill)

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets):

Provides an easy way to control the appearance of a page or multiple pages by using style sheets instead of formatting each individual piece of text, etc. Once a style is created you just apply it to each element that you want to format. It is also a great time saver if you need to make a change to a style. You only have to update the style sheet and it updates every occurrence throughout your site (i.e. changing the font, type size and/or color of the body copy throughout your site). Entire pages can also be laid out utilizing CSS. In fact, its primary purpose is to separate the content or structure of a page from its presentation. For instance a H1 tag designates a piece of type as a header (its structure), but the actual words displayed on the page is the presentation (its size, color, font, etc.). A great example of what can be accomplished through CSS can be seen at <http://csszengarden.com/> You can select a design from the column on the right—all of the changes you see are done through CSS (all of the content is the same). CSS is Dreamweaver's default method of setting up page properties. We'll get much deeper into this later.

Long definition and history of CSS: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascading_Style_Sheets

XML (Extensible Markup Language):

A set of guidelines for marking up text through a system of tags so that it can be read by any device that is capable of reading text files. There are two primary benefits. First, through the use of XML data can easily be moved between two different systems, allowing them to communicate where they might not otherwise be able to. It does this through a clearly defined set of standards. This makes it valuable for eCommerce systems and moving data in and out of databases. Secondly, because of these standards, one set of data can easily be formatted and distributed to multiple channels (i.e. webpage, text file, print). While Dreamweaver CS3 has very capable features to import and export XML, we'll not really get into that in this class. However, XHTML is actually a cross between HTML and XML, though you don't really need to get into those details.

Extensive information/tutorial on XML: <http://www.w3schools.com/xml/>

Background and practical uses of XML: <http://alistapart.com/stories/usingxml>

More than you've ever wanted to know about XML: <http://www.w3.org/XML/>

DHTML (Dynamic HTML):

A collection of different technologies which can include XHTML, Javascript, CSS and DOM (Document Object Model). Combining these can give you more dynamic content than basic HTML or XHTML can provide (i.e. dragging page items, animating objects). All of this can be coded directly by Dreamweaver CS3. However, DHTML effects are supported very differently across platforms and browsers, so you can end up with very different outcomes.

For more details: http://www.dhtmlcentral.com/tutorials/tutorials_1.php
<http://www.daaq.net/old/javascript/index.php?page=basic+dhtml>

JavaScript:

A scripting language developed by Netscape in 1995 which has become very popular and useful on the web. It interacts with XHTML and allows you to add dynamic content to your webpages (i.e. rollover buttons, checking browser version, etc.). Javascript is much more complicated to write than XHTML, but you don't need to know how to write it with Dreamweaver. Dreamweaver has built in "Behaviors" (pieces of Javascript code) for you to use and you can find more on the internet and install them in DW. We'll cover more on this later in the class. Also, don't confuse Javascript with Java (Java is a high-level programming language developed by Sun Microsystems).

For more details: <http://www.yourhtmlsource.com/javascript/basicjavascript.html>

File Naming Conventions:

Your website consists of individual files which are your pages and images that are all linked together. Naming these files appropriately is important and will help you throughout the process, especially if you later need to come back and make changes. Here are some basic rules to follow:

- **Don't use spaces in your filenames:** while many browsers usually work it out, it's better to take the spaces out or replace them with a dash or underscore. You can recognize these in web addresses because each space shows up as "%20". Not only are these ugly, but make for difficult to read addresses (i.e. www.mysite.com/try%20to%20read%20this.htm, instead of www.mysite.com/try_to_read_this.htm).
- **Use shorter file names** as opposed to longer (i.e. www.mysite.com/readthis.htm): again, it is a big help when you are referring people to a page (you want them to type it correctly and find it).
- **Avoid using capital letters:** most servers will do fine with this, but some unix servers are case sensitive and you would have to remember if the letters were upper or lower case.
- **Don't use special characters other than dash or underscore:** avoid these characters . " , ! ? / \ ~ * & % \$ # @ () : ; Some of these characters have special uses (dots and slashes) and others just won't work. Basically, just stick with letters, numbers, dashes and underscores.
- **Either .htm or .html are fine for file extensions on the web:** initially .htm was used because some servers wouldn't work with four character file extensions. The main thing is to pick one and be consistent.