

Important Pre Course Reading - Dreamweaver Essentials

At City Desktop Training, we know that when you come to a training course you want an expert trainer with industry experience. One who can provide you with not just the basics but also lots of tips, tricks and helpful hints and who can share with you best workflow practices.

We also know that at the end of training, you want to feel confident that you can implement what you have learnt and can produce web sites in the most efficient manner possible.

Ensuring you meet the course pre-requisites and have read through the required reading material PRIOR to course commencement, helps us to deliver these outcomes and allows you and your fellow course participants to get the maximum benefit from your training experience.

Web Design Overview

What is a Web Page?

A web page is simply a text file 'marked up' with (X)HTML code. (X)HTML forms the basis of all web pages and provides structure and content information to a browser i.e. it tells the browser where to place headings, body text, images etc.

Web pages are styled using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). Interactivity and effects (behaviours) can be created with JavaScript. Dreamweaver automatically writes (X)HTML, CSS and JavaScript code for you when working inside a web page.

Content vs. Styling

Content refers to the structural elements placed in a page. Examples:

- `<h1> level one heading </h1>`
- `<p> paragraph text </p>`
- `<table> table </table>`

Style refers to the way those elements are formatted and to the page layout itself. Examples:

- `h1 {font-size:2em; color:#333;}`
- `p {line-height:1.3em; padding-top:12px;}`
- `table {border:solid 1px #000;}`

Content, styling and behaviour code should be defined in separate files. The (X)HTML file references the CSS and JavaScript files so the browser knows where to find them.

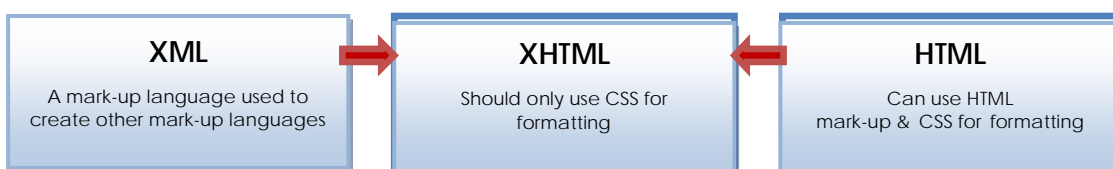
Common Web Languages

Web Mark-up Languages

HTML is the original web mark-up language. It has traditionally been used to describe the content and formatting of web pages.

XML is a stricter but much more powerful language which can be used to create other mark-up languages and program interfaces. XML coding is beyond the scope of this course. What is important to note, is that XHTML (the current specification of HTML) follows the rules of XML.

XHTML is a combination of the above 2 mark-up languages HTML and XML. It combines HTML tags with XML's structure and rules. It is the current standard for defining content in web pages. XHTML provides the power of XML with the flexibility of HTML and produces cleaner code that renders more reliably and faster in browsers.



What is CSS?

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) are used to style the content of web pages. CSS is a completely different language to (X)HTML and has its own rules, syntax (structure) and terminology.

In the past, CSS was used only to format individual page elements e.g. paragraph text headings etc. However, in the last few years it has come to be used not only for styling individual page elements, but also to lay out entire pages.

As all the pages in a site can be linked to one external style sheet file, changes made in a style sheet can affect the entire site. This is in contrast to HTML formatting which styles individual instances of elements in individual pages.

CSS allows greater formatting precision and design flexibility than HTML formatting. Web pages styled with CSS are quicker to update and load more quickly.

What is JavaScript?

JavaScript is a scripting language that is used to create interactivity on a page e.g. rollover buttons, pop up windows, drop down menus etc. It should not be confused with Java or JScript which are different languages again.

Code Versions

There is considerable overlap between the technologies including different versions of the languages as well as variations or 'flavours' within those versions.

XHTML 1.1 is the latest content specification. The latest release of CSS is CSS3. HTML5 is currently in beta. It's wide spread use and support by browsers is not expected for at least 5 years.

HTML 4 is still being used to create email newsletters (EDM's).

What is the W3C?

The W3C is the organisation responsible for defining the specifications for *non-proprietary web code, including those mentioned above.

** Non-proprietary: not protected by trademark or patent or copyright; non proprietary products are in the public domain and anyone can produce or distribute them*

Viewing Code in a Browser

The XHTML code for any web page can be viewed within a web browser.

1. Launch a web browser such as Internet Explorer or Firefox.
2. Navigate to a page.
3. Select View menu > Source / Page Source.

Creating a Website - Process Overview

Planning and Site Considerations

Consider the scope of the site and your target audience. Items to consider include:

Number of Pages

Approximately how many pages will the site contain? The number of pages in a site can affect the choice of navigation.

- Sites with fewer pages usually work best with horizontal navigation.
- Sites with many pages usually work best with vertical navigation.
- Very large sites usually work best with a horizontal main menu outlining the site sections in conjunction with a section specific vertical navigation.

Grouping of Pages

How will you group the pages in the site? This determines folder structure and often affects navigation. A basic sitemap can help you determine the main categories / sections of the site and how pages are going to link together.

Target Audience

Ask yourself the following questions regarding the sites target audience:

- How computer literate are they? The site must be easy to navigate and use.
- What technologies are they likely to use?
Are they likely to have plug-ins installed like Flash Player (for viewing Flash Content) and Acrobat Reader (for reading PDF's)?
- Are they more likely to use higher or lower screen resolutions?
Affects the width of layouts.

Organising the Files

- Have a naming convention in place for easier file retrieval.
- Best practice dictates placing images for each section of the site in separate image sub-folders.
Also, create an image folder directly under the root directory for all site-wide or general site images e.g. page background images and company logos.
- Some files must be placed in the top level directory / folder e.g. index.html and favicon.ico.
- Plan how you will group the pages in the site.
- Create an 'admin', 'assets' or 'source' folder (directly under the root folder).

This should contain all the raw un-optimised images, original Flash files, Word documents, text files etc. that will need to be modified in some way before they can be added to the sites pages.

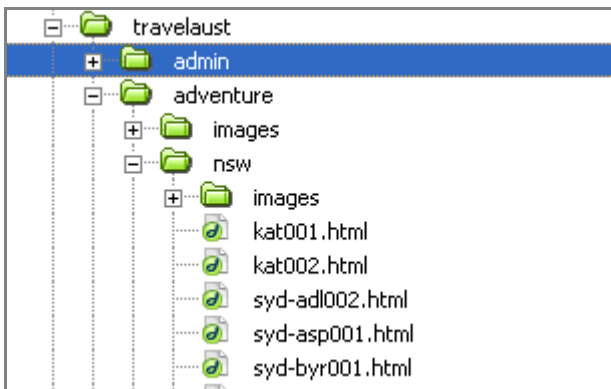


Figure: Example site structure.

The Design Process

Get Some Design Ideas

Think about how you want the site to look. Template sites such as Template Monster and Dream Template can be useful as a starting point, when determining your design preferences. Be sure to consider the results from the planning phase of your project. For design inspiration, you may find the following sites useful.

- www.csszengarden.com
- www.coolhomepages.com
- www.bestwebgallery.com
- www.thebestdesigns.com
- www.webdesignerwall.com
- www.dreamtemplate.com
- www.templatemonster.com

Creating the Mock-Up

Once you have an idea of how you want your site to look, create a mock-up in a design program such as Adobe Photoshop or Fireworks. The mock-up should define the design at the same width as intended width of your final web page.

When designing fixed width designs, bear in mind standard screen resolutions. Currently, 1024px X 768px is considered the lowest common screen resolution and should be the resolution you design for.

A minimum of 20 pixels should be subtracted from the standard screen resolution you are designing for. This allows space for the standard objects occupying space on the screen, such as the browser window edges and the vertical scroll bar. Allowing for these objects prevents the site visitor needing to scroll horizontally to view the entire width of the design.

This means that when designing for a screen resolution of 1024 x 768, the maximum width of your mock-up and layout in Dreamweaver should be 1004 pixels.

You can also create designs with widths that are relative to the browser window, by specifying the measurement of outer design container using percentages not pixels.



Figure. Mock up of web site.

Preparing the Images

After the initial mock-up has been created in a graphics program, slice up the individual sections and images (using the Slice tool) and optimise each slice to reduce its files size. This ensures a faster download time when the page is viewed across an internet connection.

TIP: Make sure you save a copy of the original psd or png image file. If changes to an image are required, it is best to work from an original file.

Export the sliced and optimised images to an images folder located within the root directory of the web site.

Create your Layout in Dreamweaver

Open Dreamweaver, define a site then create and style your 1st page. Position the optimised images in your layout, add text and other page content then style.

Once you are happy with the look of your first page, save the file as a template then create new pages based off the template.

Testing Web Pages

Same Page Different 'Look'

Browsers render web pages differently depending on:

- screen resolution
- fonts installed
- images enabled/disabled
- browser brand & version
- OS - Mac/Windows
- connection speed

Cater as best you can for the above factors but accept that you don't have total control. Pages need to render well on all commonly used browsers and platforms.

Test often. At a minimum, it is advisable to test your pages in the following browsers. These browsers must be downloaded and installed prior to testing.

- Internet Explorer 6.0, 7.0, 8.0 and newer when available
- Firefox from 3.0, 3.5, 3.6 and newer when available
- Google Chrome 5.0 and newer when available
- Safari from 4.0 and newer when available
- Opera 10.0 and newer when available

Information on browser market share can be found at: <http://www.netmarketshare.com/browser-market-share.aspx?qprid=2#>

Utilise Dreamweaver's new Browser Lab tool (CS5 only). Browsers do not need to be installed to use this tool but you will require a free Adobe user account.

You can test pages in various versions of Internet Explorer at: <http://ipinfo.info/netrenderer>. Internet Explorer does not need to be installed on your computer to use this tool.

The Firefox Web Developer Toolbar

The free Firefox Web Developer toolbar contains handy tools for testing and analysing pages including:

- Viewing a page at various screen resolutions.
- Examining CSS for a web.
- Examining images and form elements.
- Checking whether a page is displaying in 'Standards' or 'Quirks' mode.
- Disabling JavaScript actions.

It must be downloaded and installed from the Firefox browser and is available from: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/60>. To install, click the [Install] button and follow the instructions.

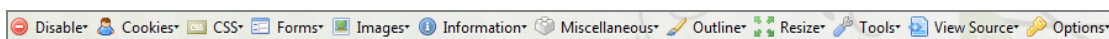


Figure: Firefox Web Developer toolbar.

Common (X)HTML Tags and Attributes

If you have limited (X)HTML experience and you have not completed the recommended HTML / web foundations course, **please review the common (X)HTML tags below.**

Head Tags

```
<title>Dog and puppy training and behaviour information</title>
```

The content of the title tag appears in the title bar of the browser window and is the clickable text that appears in the search results.

```
<meta name="Description" content="Professional advice on dog training, puppy training and managing the behaviour and temperament of your dog" />
```

The content of the Description tag appears beneath the clickable text (title text) in the search results.

Defining Text

```
<p> paragraph text </p>
<strong> bolded text on your page </strong>
<em> italicised text on your page </em>
```

Defining Headings

Headings tags describe the hierarchy of information on a page.

```
<h1> heading one text here </h1>
<h2> heading two text here </h2>
<h3> heading three text here </h3>
<h4> heading four text here </h4>
<h5> heading five text here </h5>
<h6> heading six text here </h6>
```

Defining Images

```

```

- The 'src' attribute defines the location of the image file.
- The 'alt' attribute specifies a text description of an image to screen readers and search engines.

Defining Links

```
<a href="dog-collars.html">Huge range of dog collars</a>
```

- The text 'Huge range of dog collars' would be the text that the site visitor clicks on to go to the page: dog-collars.html.