

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS



Client Solutions and Training
A Division of KU Information Technology

www.technology.ku.edu

Abstract: This document covers the basics of using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) in Dreamweaver, including selectors and properties, style sheet linking and embedding, and layout methods using CSS.

Contents

Introduction	3
Objectives	3
Prerequisites	3
Related Training Available from Information Technology	3
What are Cascading Stylesheets?	3
Embedded vs. Linked Stylesheets	4
How Does Dreamweaver Fit In?	4
Testing Your CSS	4

Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

Quick Method of Creating Page-Based Styles..... 5

Creating a New CSS Style 7

Editing and Adding to Existing Styles..... 9

Reusing CSS..... 10

 Exporting Styles 10

 Applying a Stylesheet to a Page 12

 Deleting or Removing Styles from a Page 13

Making Exceptions 13

 CSS Classes 13

 Context-specific Styles 16

Controlling the Layout Using CSS..... 17

 Fixed Layout..... 17

 Flexible and Combination Layouts 20

 Using Float 22

Getting Additional Help 22

Introduction

Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS, are analogous to “styles” that can be set within documents created by desktop publishing programs. In such programs, styles are assigned to selected characters or text, and the assigned style contains formatting such as font, typeface, style and position information. Editing the style affects all the text assigned that style, so that the designer doesn’t have to go through the document and edit the layout of individual items. CSS works exactly the same way. It is a new set of rules and codes, separate from HTML, that can be linked with and embedded within an HTML document, and used to control the layout of elements of the document. CSS can also be used to control where elements appear on a page.

Just as web authors use Dreamweaver to write the underlying HTML code for pages they create, they can also use it to create CSS for their sites. HTML provides the **structure** of a page; CSS provides the **presentation** (the formatting and layout).

Objectives

Participants will create, use, and publish embedded and linked stylesheets in Dreamweaver using several methods. These stylesheets will control the appearance and placement of elements on web pages (such as headings, links, images, navigation bars, and so on).

Participants will also learn to link an existing stylesheet to a web page, and apply styles from it to different elements on the page.

Prerequisites

Dreamweaver: Getting Started

Dreamweaver: Creating Web Pages

Related Training Available from Information Technology

All workshops offered by Information Technology are free to KU students, staff, faculty, and [approved affiliates](#).

To learn more about or register for workshops, receive automatic announcements of upcoming workshops, and track workshops you’ve registered for and have attended, visit www.lib.ku.edu/instruction/workshops. For further workshop related questions, please email training@ku.edu.

What are Cascading Stylesheets?

Cascading Stylesheets (CSS) is a set of rules that govern how web browsers present page content. The examples in this handout deal with visual presentation, but CSS can also be used to control other kinds of presentation (how a web page would be read aloud in a text-to-speech browser, for instance, or how a web page would be printed as opposed to displayed onscreen).

Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

These rules were developed as specifications by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). There are three sets of specifications, 1 and 2 (currently released), and 3 (currently under development). You can read them here: www.w3.org/Style/CSS/#specs.

With CSS, you can set

- margins, borders, alignment, and placement of elements on the page
- fonts and other text properties
- colors, background colors, and image properties (including setting background images or images as bullets for unordered lists)
- appearance of hyperlinks
- special instances of elements, such as hyperlinks in navigation bars (which you may want to look different than hyperlinks in the rest of the document), and more.

To set these rules, you use special codes that can be inserted in the head of a web page or saved as a separate text file and applied to multiple web pages.

Embedded vs. Linked Stylesheets

An **embedded stylesheet** is a set of styles (written in CSS code) that is **inserted within the code of the web page itself**. Embedded stylesheets are **page-specific**; they can be applied only to the specific page in which they are embedded.

A **linked stylesheet** is a **separate text file** (written in CSS code, with a .css file extension) that contains a set of styles. Linked stylesheets are **global**; they can be **applied to many web pages at the same time**, within your web site or any other site. Changing the stylesheet will immediately change the way all of the pages that use that stylesheet are displayed.

If you link a stylesheet to a page, that stylesheet will be a **dependent file** for that web page; this means that the stylesheet file must be published in order for that page to be displayed correctly.

How Does Dreamweaver Fit In?

Dreamweaver provides a convenient way of creating and applying CSS, because it can write these special CSS codes for you as you format elements on a page or as you select formatting items from a list of choices. Dreamweaver also gives you menu and toolbar options for linking and editing stylesheets. For the advanced web designer, Dreamweaver lets you edit the CSS code directly, just as you can edit the HTML code directly, in the Code View.

Testing Your CSS

Although the W3C made the rules, it's the programmers who develop web browsers who have to carry them out, and the browsers don't display all the styles in exactly the same way. Therefore, it's important to **test your CSS using a variety of browsers and**

Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

platforms. This is especially important when using CSS to lay out web pages, or using it for other more complex visual design tasks.

Which browsers and which platforms should you use for your tests? Here's a good starting point...

- Internet Explorer (current release) for Windows
- Firefox (current release) for Windows
- Internet Explorer (current release) for Mac
- Firefox (current release) for Mac
- Safari (current release) for Mac

If you have a Mac but not a Windows PC (or vice versa), KU's public computing labs have both Windows and Mac computers with the latest releases of those browsers (you'll need to log in using your KU online ID and password). See www.computerlabs.ku.edu and click "Lab Locations" for details.

Quick Method of Creating Page-Based Styles

The most basic way to get started using CSS in Dreamweaver is with the Page Properties button. This will create a set of styles **for the current page only**. If you want to reuse these styles on other pages, you can export them (discussed later in this handout).

Pros

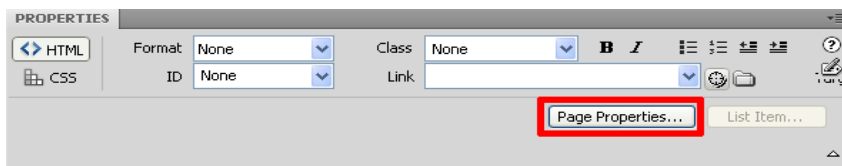
Quick to learn, easy to use

Cons

Limited functionality; you don't have access to all the CSS settings or all the page elements

Will only create embedded styles; if you want to use these styles in another page, you will need to **export** them.

To get started, click the **Page Properties** button, as shown:



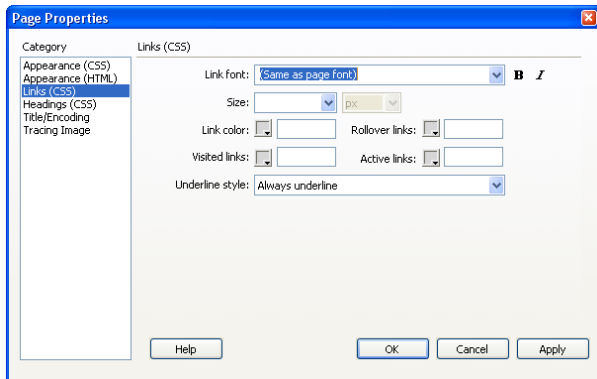
Under **Appearance**, you can set styles for the entire web page as a whole, such as page font, font size, text color, background color, and background image, as well as the margins for the entire page, as shown:

Under **Links**, you can control how hyperlinks appear on the page. You can even set a rollover effect by choosing a different color for "Rollover links" (as shown below). You can also choose

Information Technology

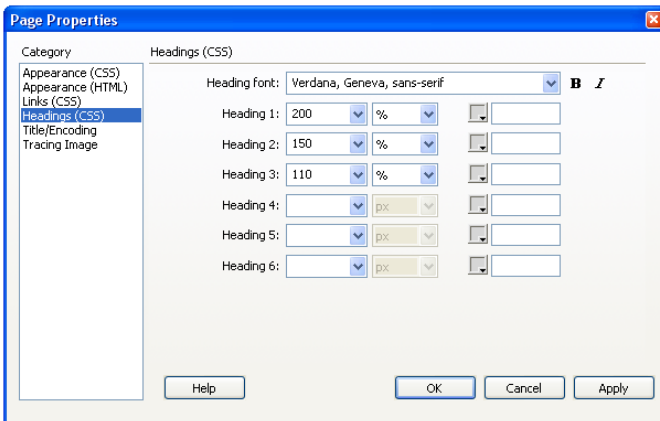
Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

whether hyperlinks will be underlined or not. In the settings in this screenshot, the underline would only appear when someone rolls their mouse over a hyperlink:



Under **Headings**, you can set the font to be used for all headings on a page, and also set how big those headings will be. In this example, relative measurements—percent values—are used, so Heading 1 will be sized at 200% of whatever the body text size is. If the body text is sized at 14 pixels, Heading 1 will be 28 pixels, Heading 2 will be 21 pixels, and Heading 3 will be 15 pixels (rounded from 15.4).

In addition to relative measurements, such as percentages or ems,¹ you can also use specific pixel or point counts. The benefit of using percentages or ems is that when users resize text in their browser, the headings will get proportionally larger or smaller with the text.



¹ One em is roughly equal to 100%; it's literally the height of a capital M in the default font and font size.

Information Technology

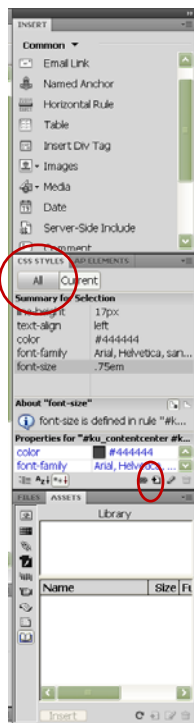
Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

At any point, you can click **Apply** and see how the page will be affected by the settings you've created.

When you're done and click **OK**, Dreamweaver writes the CSS code for the settings and embeds it in the page you're designing. You can go back and modify these settings at any time by clicking the **Page Properties** button.

Creating a New CSS Style

1. Highlight the content you want to change.
2. Click the CSS tab on the CSS/APA panel.

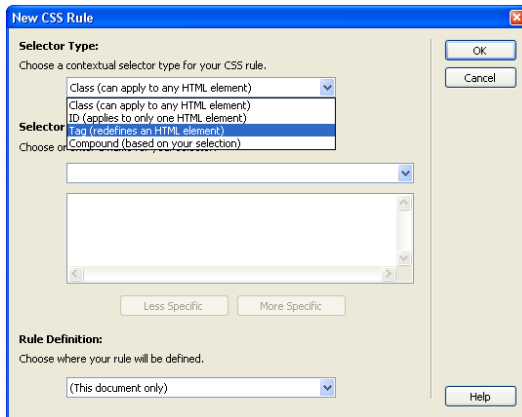


- 3.
4. Choose what kind of style you want to create, and give your style a name:
 - a. **Class** – a style you'll sometimes, but not for every paragraph, every hyperlink, and so on. Class names must begin with a period (.), like **.quotation** or **.buttonlink**.

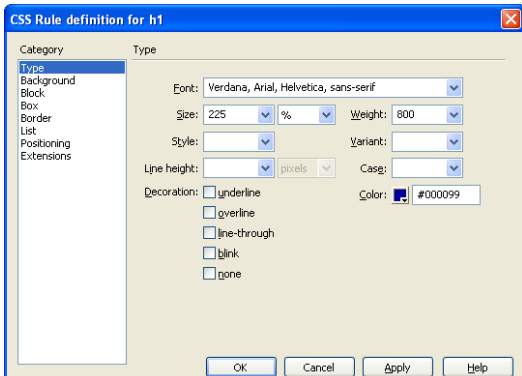
Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

- b. **Tag** – a style that will set the look for all objects of a given type – all level 1 headings (H1), all paragraphs (P), all hyperlinks (A), and so on. Tag names use the HTML tag as the name, such as H1, P, or A.
- c. **Advanced** – used for specialty items, like context-specific styles (only hyperlinks that occur within tables, for example), “pseudo-classes” (like a:link, a:hover, a:active, and a:visited), or IDs (such as footer or sidebar). If you are creating an ID style, put a pound sign (#) in front of the style name: **#footer** or **#sidebar**.



- d. **IMPORTANT:** Choose whether your style will be used in **This document only** (embedded), or if it will be defined in a separate stylesheet file (linked). If you choose **This document only**, you will not be able to use this style on other pages in your site.
- e. Click OK. The the CSS Rule Definition dialog will be displayed:

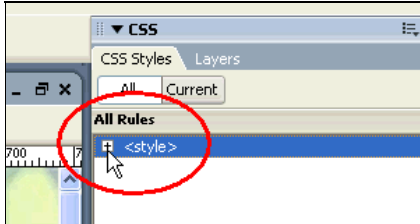


- f. Select the settings you want to apply to this style, and click OK when you are finished. In the example above, the style will cause all level 1 headings (H1) to display in Verdana font, at 225% of the size of normal text on the page, in extra bold (800 weight), dark blue (#000099) type.

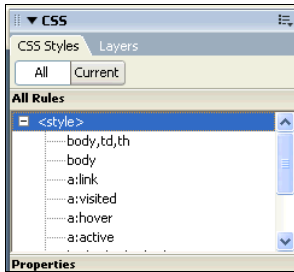
Editing and Adding to Existing Styles

If you have already created or linked a stylesheet, you can add more styles to that stylesheet, or edit the styles you've already created. To do this,

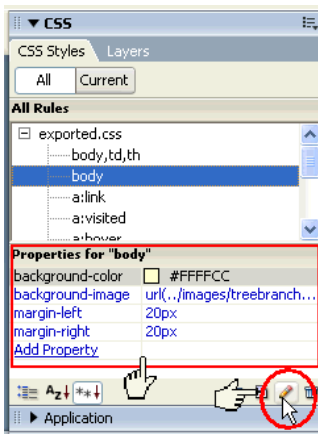
1. Find the CSS panel in the top left corner of Dreamweaver.
2. Click the plus sign to the left of <style>, as shown:



3. The individual styles will be displayed.



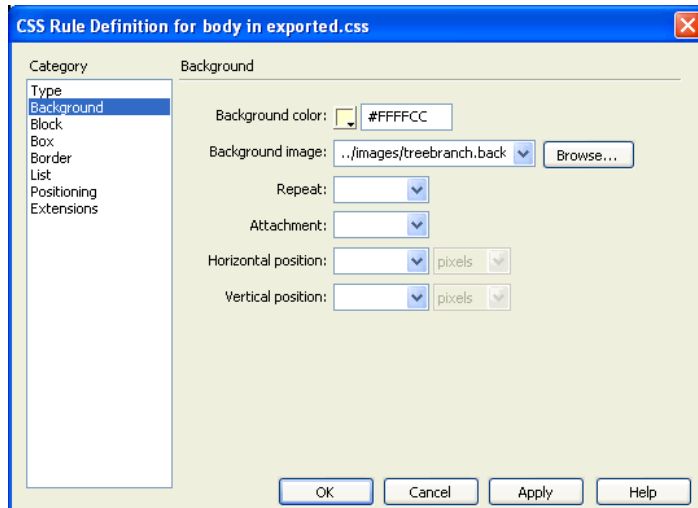
4. Click the name of the style you want to edit. You will see the current settings for that style, and can either edit them directly (in the blue text) or click the Edit (pencil) button, as shown:



Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

5. If you click the Edit button, you will be returned to the dialog box you originally used to set up the style. When you're finished editing the style, click **OK**.



Reusing CSS

One of the advantages of using CSS is that, if you set up your styles in a linked stylesheet file and publish it, you can use them for any or all other pages on your site (or any other pages on the web, for that matter).

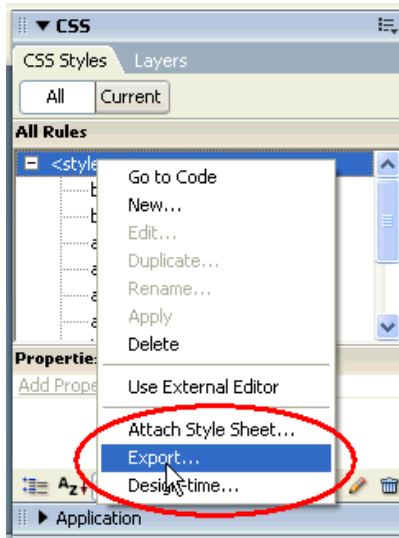
Exporting Styles

If you created your styles within a web page (as **embedded** styles), then decide you want to reuse them, you can export them to a new stylesheet file. To do this,

Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

1. In the CSS panel in the top left corner of the Dreamweaver window, **right-click** the <style> tag.
2. In the right-click menu, choose **Export...**, as shown:



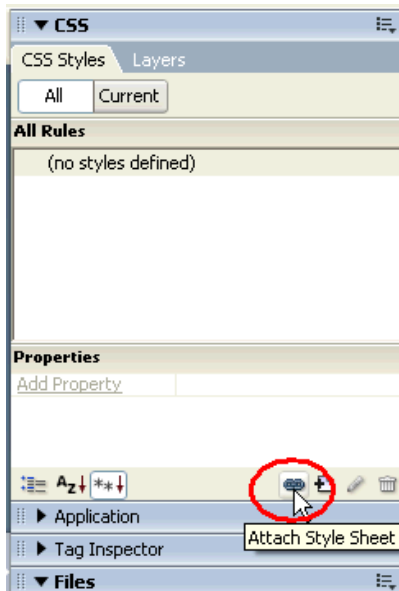
Comment [h1]: Is this renamed to "move to external style sheet"? it seems to do the same.

3. In the dialog box labeled **Export Styles as CSS File**, give the stylesheet file a name and save it within your site folder (if you are using several stylesheets, you may want to create a "CSS" or "stylesheets" subfolder). **The file name should have a .css file extension, and cannot contain any spaces.** (For instance, "my_styles.css" is fine, but "my styles.css" or "my_styles.txt" would not work).

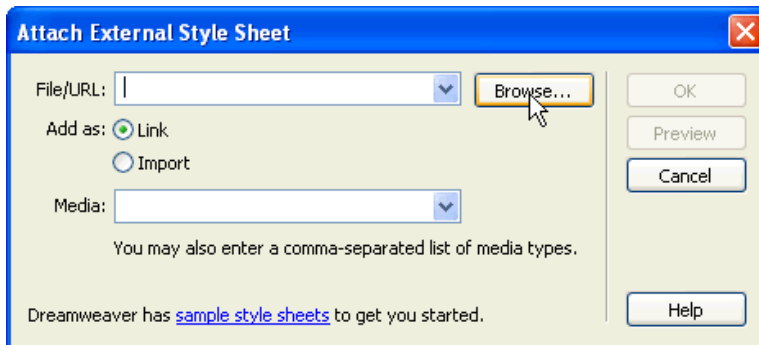
Applying a Stylesheet to a Page

To apply an existing stylesheet to a web page,

1. Click the Attach Style Sheet (link) button, as shown:



2. In the dialog box, click Browse to locate and select the stylesheet you want to apply to the page.



3. Click OK to apply the stylesheet.

Once you've applied the stylesheet to a page, you can edit styles within it or add new styles to it.

Deleting or Removing Styles from a Page

To delete a single style,


Locate it in under **<style>** in the CSS box in the top right corner of the Dreamweaver window.

Right-click on the name of the style you wish to delete, and choose **Delete**.

To delete all styles from the current web page,

Right-click **<style>** in the CSS box in the top right corner of the Dreamweaver window, and choose **Delete**.

Note: If the stylesheet is **embedded** in the current page, this action will permanently delete the styles.

If the stylesheet is a separate, external CSS file that is **linked/attached** (using the attach button, ) to the web page, the stylesheet will be detached from the page. This means that the styles will no longer be applied to the page, but the stylesheet will still exist and can be used with other pages.

Making Exceptions

CSS Classes

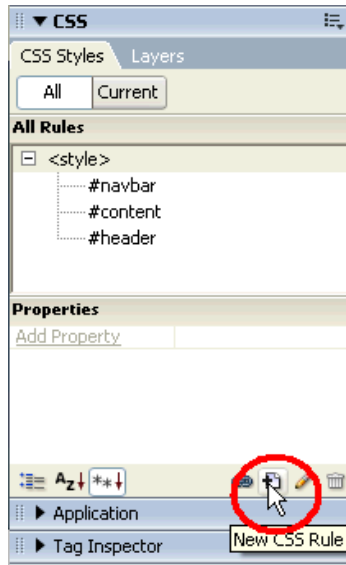
Classes are styles that can be used for special instances of a given item. For example, you may use quotations throughout your site, which may be formatted as paragraphs, headings, blockquotes, or other HTML elements. You can create a special quotation class that you can apply to each quotation, thus applying the same style to each quotation.

IMPORTANT: Class names must start with a period (.) and may not contain any spaces.

Creating a Class

To create a class,

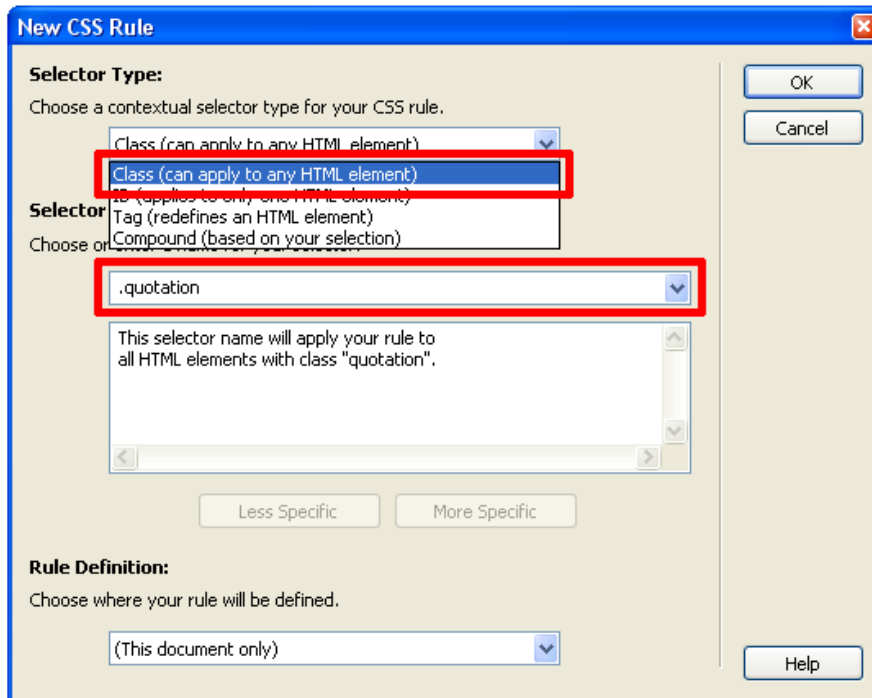
1. Click the New CSS Rule (plus and page icon) button, as shown:



Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

2. In the New CSS Rule dialog box, choose **Class** as the Selector Type, then type in a unique name for your class. This name can be whatever you choose, but it must begin with a period (.) and have no spaces. In the example below, we're creating a new class called **.quotation**, located in this document only (which means it will be an **embedded style**):



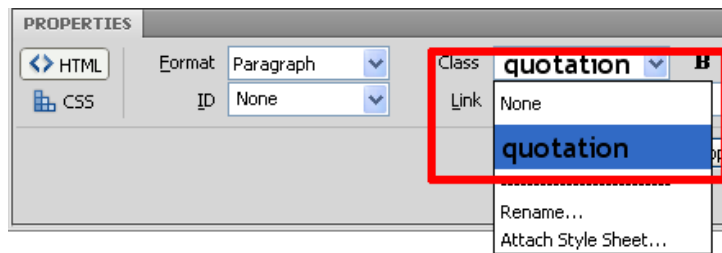
3. Click **OK**.
4. In the CSS Rule Definition dialog box, set the styles you want to apply to items in this class.

Applying a Class

Once you've created a class, you can apply it within the page you're working on (if you've made it an embedded style), or anywhere in your site (if it's in a linked stylesheet).

To apply a class:

1. Highlight the piece of text or item you want to apply the class to.
2. In the **Properties** at the bottom of the Dreamweaver window, click the **Class** dropdown, and select the class you wish to apply to the selected item (in the example below, the quotation style is being selected).



If the class you want to use is not shown in the drop-down box, choose **Attach Style Sheet**, then browse and select the stylesheet that contains the class you've created.

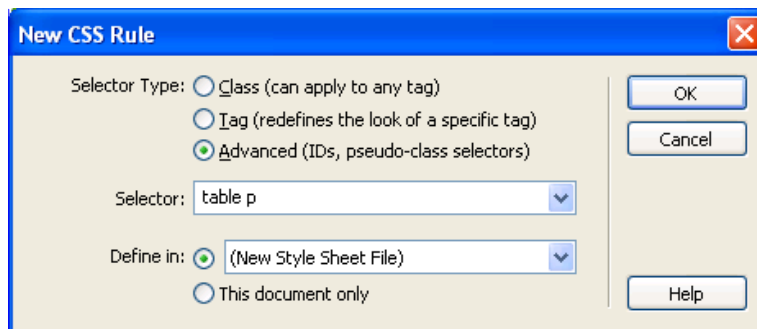
Context-specific Styles

You can also set up styles so that an HTML element is displayed differently in different contexts. For instance, you might want paragraphs that occur inside tables to use a smaller font size than other paragraphs.

Context-specific styles are especially handy when used in conjunction with DIVs and IDs (so you can create different styles for hyperlinks within a navigation bar, for instance, as opposed to hyperlinks that occur elsewhere on the page).

To set up a context-specific style,

1. Click your cursor on the item you wish to style.
2. Click the New CSS Rule (the plus and page) button.
3. Choose Selector Type: Advanced, and type in the context-specific selector. In the example below, the style will affect only paragraphs that occur within tables.



Hints: Look in the lower left of the design window, above the Properties, to see the HTML tags used to format the item. Type in the selectors with the containing selector on the left; for example, to style images that are contained within paragraphs <p>, type **p img**.

Comment [h2]: What is this in cs4?

Controlling the Layout Using CSS

Dreamweaver and CSS enable you to lay out web pages using either a fixed layout, a flexible layout, or a combination of the two.

Fixed Layout

In a fixed layout, each element is given a specific place and amount of space on the page; for instance, the main heading might be placed in a box that's 750 pixels wide and 200 pixels high, located at the top left of the window. The navigation bar might be placed along the left side beneath the heading, in a box that's 150 pixels wide by 400 pixels tall.

Here's a sample fixed layout, based on a browser window that is **760 by 420** pixels (that's the maximized browser size on an **800 by 600** pixel monitor display):

Main Heading area – width: 760px, height: 150px	
Navigation Bar width: 200px height: 270px	Content Area width: 560px height: 270px

Another common fixed layout size is based on dimensions **955 by 600** pixels, which is the maximized browser size on a **1024 by 768** pixel monitor display.

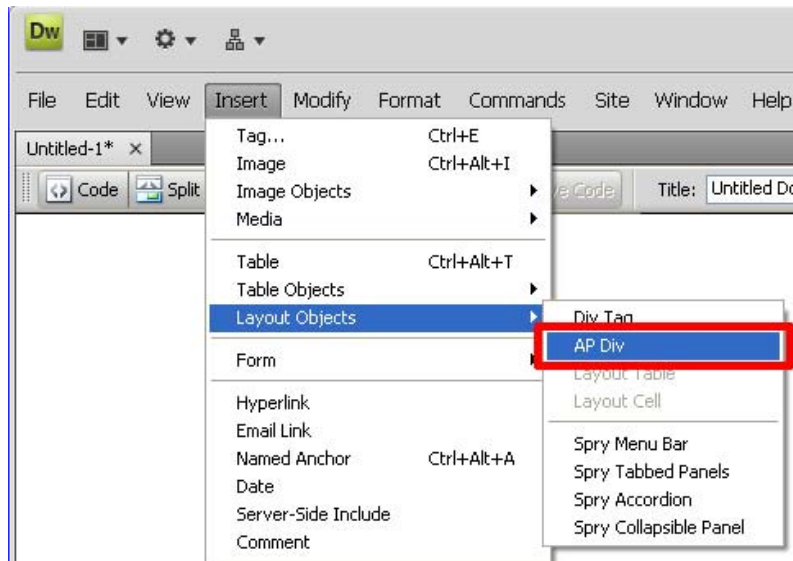
IMPORTANT: If you are designing a fixed layout for your pages, you need to consider the **smallest display size** that people will be likely to use when viewing your site. If your layout is wider than your visitors' monitor displays, the content will appear to run off the right edge of the page, and require users to scroll much more frequently.

Many laptops and notebooks have displays of at least 1024 by 768 pixels, but other devices (especially data projectors), might be limited to a smaller display, like 800 by 600.

To create a fixed layout page,

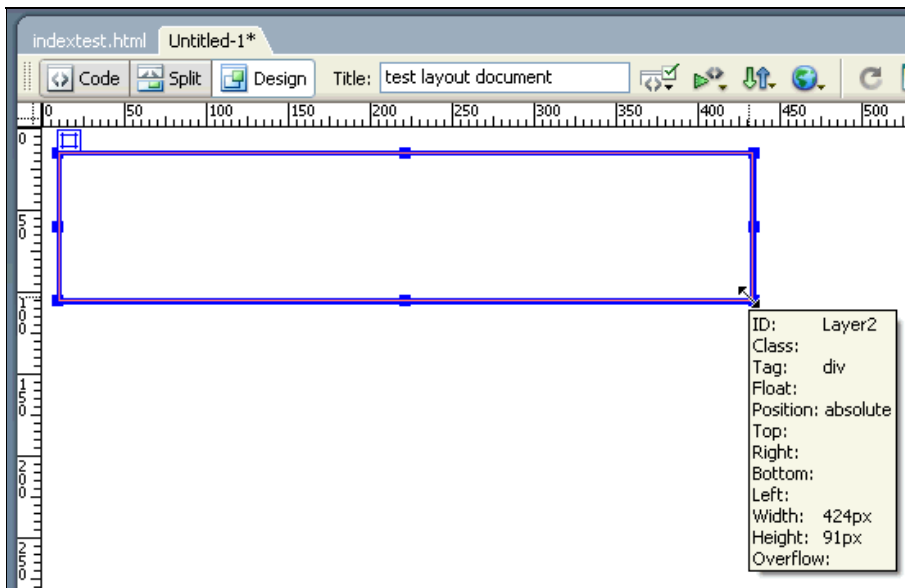
1. Start with a new, blank HTML page.
2. Click the **Insert** menu, click **Layout Objects**, and choose **Layer**, as shown:

Information Technology
Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS



Comment [h3]: Is this the same as layer?

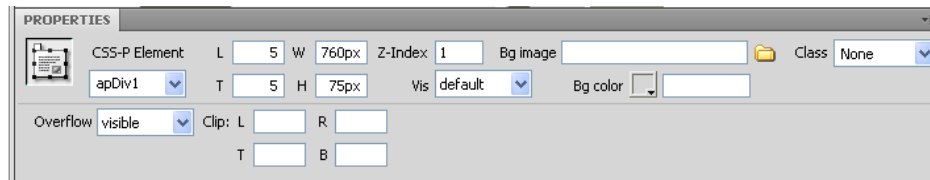
3. Draw a box where you want the first content area (layer) to appear on the page.



4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for all the content areas on the page.

Setting Layer Properties

To change the appearance and other settings of a layer you've drawn, click the edge of its border (you can also click inside the layer box, then click `<div#layername>` in the status bar directly above the Properties inspector). Here's an example of a layer named *header*:



Layer Properties:

Layer ID – the unique name given to this layer. If you don't name your layers, Dreamweaver will name them Layer1, Layer2, and so on. You can rename a layer by selecting it, then typing the name you want to use in this box.

Z-Index – this number indicates the stacking order of the layers. A layer with a z-index of 1 will appear to be behind everything else on the page, a layer with a z-index of 2 will appear to be in front of or overlapping the layer 1, and so on.

L – sets where the layer appears in the browser window, in pixels, from the left. In the example above, the layer will start 5 pixels from the left edge of the browser window.

T – sets where the layer appears in the browser window, in pixels, from the top. In the example above, the layer will start 5 pixels from the top edge of the browser window.

W – sets the width of the layer, in pixels. In the example above, the layer will be 760 pixels wide.

H – sets the height of the layer, in pixels. In the example above, the layer will be 75 pixels wide.

Vis – sets whether the layer is visible in the web browser window or not. Web designers use visibility for advanced techniques such as using CSS to create drop-down menus, or creating print-friendly versions of pages (that do not print the navigation bar or ads, for instance).

Bg image – sets the background image of the layer, using a URL.

Bg color – sets the background color of the layer, using either an official color name (blue, red, navy, green, etc.) or an RGB hexadecimal value (such as #FFFFFF for white, for instance). Clicking the swatch box to the right will give you a palette from which to choose the color you want.

Class – allows you to apply a class (a reusable set of styles) to the layer.

Overflow – **IMPORTANT!** This setting determines what the browser will do if the content of the layer is larger than the dimensions you've set for it. In the example above, overflow is set to **visible**, which will allow overflowing content to continue down the page. **Hidden** cuts off the content, **scroll** allows scroll bars to appear if needed, and (auto) or a blank allows the browser default.

Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

Clip: L, R, T, B – used for more advanced design features, usually in conjunction with Javascript.

Note: Once you've set up the layers you want for a page, you can save and export the styles for those layers, and reuse them for the rest of your site.

Flexible and Combination Layouts

Sites that have a lot of content per page or sites that will be visited by users with a wide variety of displays (desktops, laptops, PDAs, cell phones, etc.) often benefit from a more flexible layout.

A combination layout simply combines some fixed and some flexible elements on the page.

Using DIVs and IDs for Flexible Layout

DIVs are HTML tags that allow you to group elements together and treat them as a single item.

For instance, in an online catalog, you might use DIVs to create catalog items that each contain a heading, a photo, a description paragraph, and an “add to cart” button. Those catalog items could then be styled with a CSS class that set a border, margin, special colors and background colors, sizing, and so on.

DIVs can also be used for unique items on the page, such as a page footer, or a sidebar. If a DIV is unique on the page, give it an ID, rather than a class.

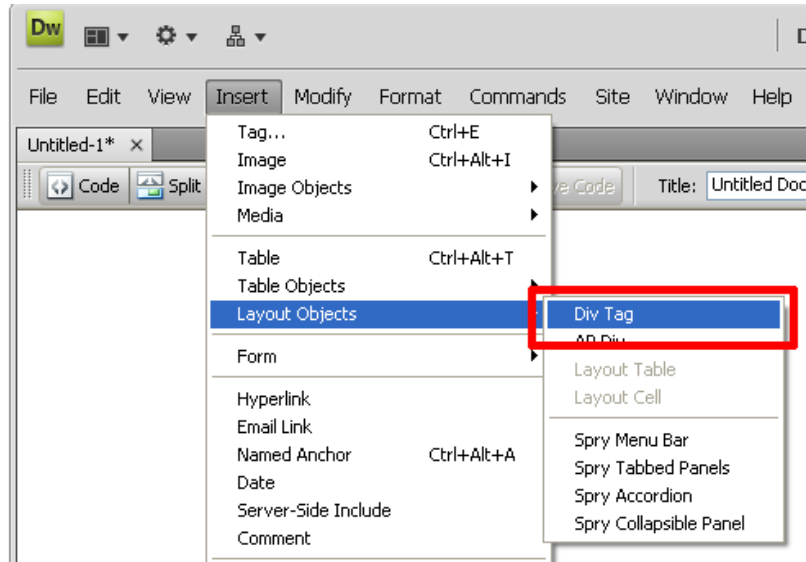
In the workshop example site, a sidebar appears on some pages, but not all—and it only appears once per page. We'll use a DIV with an ID of “sidebar” to control how and where it should appear on the page.

Creating a DIV on an Existing Page

To create a DIV,

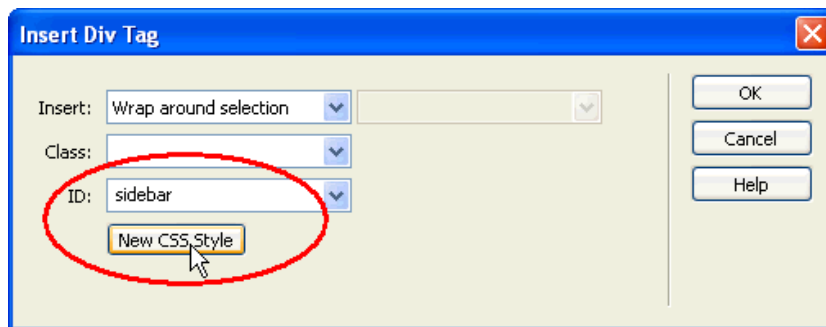
1. Click and drag to highlight the content that you want to turn into a DIV.

2. Then click **Insert**, select **Layout Objects**, and select **Div Tag**, as shown:



You will see an Insert Div Tag dialog box, as shown below. Type the name of the DIV into the **ID:** box.

IMPORTANT: If you wish to create a new set of CSS styles for that ID, click **New CSS Style**; otherwise, click **OK**.

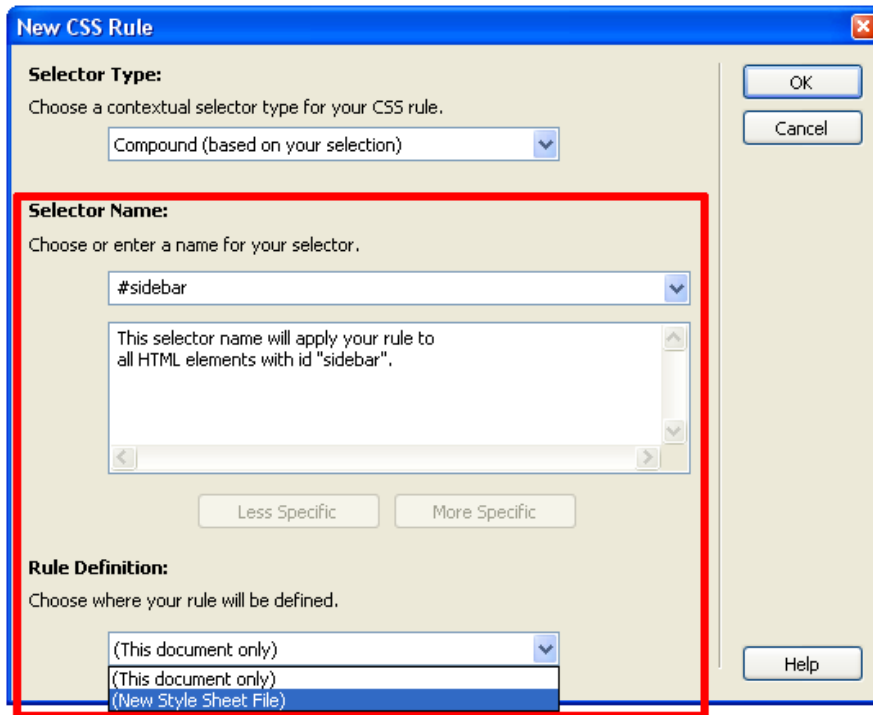


Information Technology

Dreamweaver: Visual Design using CSS

If you clicked New CSS Style, you'll see a New CSS Rule dialog box. In the **Selector** box, type `#DivIDName` and choose whether to include the style in the current web page only (embedded) or in a new style sheet file (linked). You may also get the option to define the style in a stylesheet file that you've already created.

In the example below, the web designer is creating styles for the **sidebar** DIV, so she typed in `#sidebar`. Click OK when you've made your selections.



Using Float

The Float property causes an element (such as DIV) to float within a larger element, allowing the rest of the content within the larger element to flow around it.

Getting Additional Help

The Help Desk provides consulting and Q&A help in a variety of ways:

785/864-0200

question@ku.edu

www.ku.edu/~helpdesk

Last Update: 03/22/2010