

RICH ENTERPRISES

Small Business Series

Getting Started with HTML

SMALL BUSINESS SERIES

Getting Started With HTML

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Introduction to HTML and the Internet

Welcome to the World Wide Web.

The Internet has grown faster than any media industry in history. It is no wonder that every type of business imaginable can be found on the web. There were only colleges, government organizations and a few pioneers on the Internet just five short years ago, but what began as an information network and the realm of hobbyists has rapidly become an incredible collection of millions of sites selling books, merchandise and information.

Perhaps the key factor leading to such wide-spread use of the Internet is its simplicity. With the creation of Hypertext Markup Language, or HTML, users no longer had to create complicated programs or spend hours building menu pages for their bulletin board systems. HTML was designed to be nothing more than a text document with formatting information embedded in the document, much like the hidden text format tags in your favorite word processor. The difference between HTML and say Word Perfect is that you have total control of where and how these tags are used and they are universal, meaning that anyone can view your document without having to purchase the same word processing program you used to create it.

Certainly there are hundreds of programs on the market to help you create your web pages, and while they can make the task at hand go more quickly by adding drag-and-drop and what you see is what you get (WYSISYG) features, none is doing more than adding the appropriate tags to your document. In this course you will learn what those tags are and how to use them effectively. Why is learning HTML important since we have all of the editors at our disposal? Quite simply, by learning HTML you can exercise better control of the elements on your pages, even if you do choose to use a WYSIWYG editor for the rough layout.

How this Course is Structured	
<hr/> ICON KEY <hr/>	
 Valuable information	This course will run from the simplest concepts to the more complex and with like concepts grouped together. Throughout the lesson you will be building an HTML file of your own which will be just text at first, then will grow into a full-featured web page. At the end of each chapter you will also find a short test of you knowledge, intended to help you establish whether the information presented made sense, or if perhaps you should read through it again. Additionally, the course will provide you with useful tips and information as well as links to place on the Internet where you can find more information and tools.
 Test your knowledge	
 On the Web	
 Building your page	

After the main body of your web page is completed we will discuss features and services you can add to your pages, such as guest books, advertising banners, and visitor tracking. We will discuss where to find these services at a low cost, or more often, free. In the last chapter we will explore some of the advanced features of the Internet that you may wish to learn at a later date to further enhance your web site.

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Getting Started

In this chapter we will be looking at the simplest HTML tags, those for document and text formatting. We will begin by looking at the basic structure of a web page and then move to creating the actual HTML document.

 You may use any text editor that allows you to save a file as straight or ASCII text for the exercises in this course. While no other editors are required, you will need a web browser to view you file from time to time.

HTML Tags

An HTML tag is the portion of the document that provides the web browser software with information on the type of document and how to display it. Let's first look at the structure of a tag. Most consist of a pair of tags, the opening tag and the closing tag, both of which are enclosed in the less than < and greater than > signs, and with the closing tag containing a slash / after the less than sign.

The first tag is the one that tells the web browser which type of file it is dealing with, the <HTML> tag. All HTML documents begin with the <HTML> tag and end with </HTML>. Note that the tags are rendered in all caps in this example, they needn't be, though it is a bit easier to read a printout of the source code if it is done this way.

Between the HTML tags there are two main sections, the head and the body. The head of the document contains information for the browser software and comments that are otherwise invisible to the viewer of your page, and the body contains the text to be displayed. The head of the document begins with <HEAD> and ends with </HEAD>, and the body begins with <BODY> and ends with </BODY>, logically enough.

The Document Head

The head, as mentioned before tells the browser some of the basic characteristics of the document, the first of which is its title. The title of the document generally appears at the very top of the browser, above the navigational controls, and is static, or doesn't change until another page is loaded. The tag simply uses opening and closing TITLE tags with the name of the page between them, such as in the following example.

```
<TITLE>Welcome to Our Store</TITLE>
```

Another key set of tags you can use in the head of a document are the META tags. META tags were created to allow specific information to be provided to other sites that may link to your pages without displaying that information to general users. These are especially important for passing information about your page to search

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indexes. Have you ever wondered who wrote the site narratives that accompany the listings you see on a web search? Those are usually drawn directly from META tags in the head of your document, which is why you frequently see a named site with no description; the site creator simply didn't provide one. The syntax for this tag is `<META name="tag identifier" content="content text">`. For example, search indexes need to know what categories to and keywords to list your site by, and this information is provided like this:

```
<META name="keywords" content="manufacturing, widgets, wholesale, supply">
```

The search index takes these words and files them with the location and description of your site and when someone searches for one of the words or phrases you provide then your listing will be among those they see. The more keywords you can supply, and the more descriptive they are, the more often your site will appear in search results. Different indexes have different lengths that your keywords list can be, but a good rule of thumb is to make it about two and a half lines, or 250 to 300 characters.

The next META tag deals with the description we talked about above, and its syntax is:

```
<META name="description" content="Welcome to Inventions Plus, the designers of the  
ever popular Widget, Widget junior and the Widget Keeper.">
```

Because much of the process of indexing pages has been automated it also doesn't hurt to provide information for the "bots" or robots that search your page for information. Two very useful tags for this are `<META name="revisit-after" content="15 days">` and `<META name="ROBOTS" content="ALL">`, which tell the bot to come back every fifteen days (or whatever time you choose) and that all bots are welcome to wander around your page (some will not index your page without an invitation to do so).

You may also see a "Generator" META tag if you have used an HTML editor to create your document. This tag does nothing really, other than to advertise which editor you used to create your file, though no one is currently tracking or listing that information. Many HTML writer eliminate this tag in the interest of making their pages less cluttered.

META tags also exist for specifying special character sets or languages, to identify special types of advanced HTML documents, and a variety of rating services may ask you to place special META tags in your documents as well.

Other elements you may see in the head include style sheet information or script information required to initialize variables for a script run from within the body of the document, such as a Javascript, neither of which are covered in this course.

A sample head may look like this:

```
<HEAD>  
<META name="description" content="Welcome to Inventions Plus, the designers of the  
ever popular Widget, Widget junior and the Widget Keeper.">  
<META name="keywords" content="manufacturing, widgets, wholesale, supply">  
<META name="revisit-after" content="15 days">  
<META name="ROBOTS" content="ALL">
```

```
<TITLE>Welcome to Our Store</TITLE>  
</HEAD>
```

The Document Body

The body of the document is where the information to be displayed is placed. In this chapter we will talk about some of the basic elements for formatting text in the body of the document.

 In this section, as in any discussion on HTML design, we refer to the text font, which simply refers to the text style, size, and color.

Before we begin discussing options you can use to manipulate the fonts we need to discuss what not using them. If you do not designate font color, size or style for your text then it is left up to the browser to decide how it should be displayed, which in many cases is fine. It may be unnecessary to change the font in any way, especially if your purpose is to inform and your text is arranged in sentences and paragraphs with no other special considerations. There are times, however, where you want certain text to stand out or to be otherwise different than the text around it. Let's begin by discussing the simpler ways to make text "stand out."

Lets say you want a title at the top of your page that is bold and roughly three times the size of the rest of the page. You also want section titles that are bold and roughly twice the size of the normal text. This is accomplished easily through the "H" or header tags; there are five <H1>, <H2>, <H3>, <H4>, and <H5>, with each one having a companion close tag. <H1> is intended for use as a title tag and is the largest, <H5> is actually half the size of normal text, and of course the other tags fall in between these in size. Most often <H1> is used only for the main title and <H2> for the section headings.

Text formatted as <H1>Hello World</H1> would look like:

Hello World

The "H" tags actually do quite a lot to the font, including enlarging it, making it bold, but also setting it off from the rest of the text as its own paragraph. That's pretty powerful for a single letter and a number, wouldn't you say?

Next, we may want to change the way our font looks. Perhaps we want a section of the regular text to be bold, which can be accomplished by enclosing it in and markers, or if you want it double bold you can use and . For italics you use <I> and </I>, and <U> and </U> underlines the text.

More advanced font management is accomplished with the tag, which has several arguments. For example, let's say we want a document with a main title, but with the font as Arial, section heads, also Arial, and

in the paragraphs in between we want to use the Times New Roman font. We can do this with the font tag as follows:

```
<FONT face="arial"><H1>Welcome to Our Store</H1></FONT>
<FONT face="arial"><H2>What is a Widget?</H2></FONT>
<FONT face="times new roman">Widgets were invented in 1962 by Professor Feinstein in
response to what he saw as a need for a better way to clean hard to reach places. Due to
innovations in plastics the Professor saw an opportunity to create a product that would be
more versatile than pot scrubbers and other cleaning devices then on the market.</FONT>
```

Which would result in this:

Welcome to Our Store

What is a Widget?

Widgets were invented in 1962 by Professor Feinstein in response to what he saw as a need for a better way to clean hard to reach places. Due to innovations in plastics the Professor saw an opportunity to create a product that would be more versatile than pot scrubbers and other cleaning devices then on the market.

You can use any font face by simply referring to its name in the *face* argument of the *FONT* tag, but should keep in mind that not all visitors to your web site have all of the fonts installed on their systems that you do, so you should use the main fonts that come with your system, noting also that many of these are called by different names on other systems. It is often a good idea to use a few different faces in the *face* argument, separated by commas. For example `` would cover both Windows and Macintosh font sets.

To change the size of text we use the *size* argument. Font sizes can be designated in two different ways, in a relative scale from -5 to +5, or as in word processors in sizes such as 10, 12, 36, 72, etc. These are used as `` or ``, with the relative scale being the most common.

Color can be changed with the *color* argument. Font colors are represented in two ways, by name, as in "black" or by hexadecimal color codes (such as #FFFFFF for black). There are literally thousands of color names and hexadecimal color codes, but most browsers use the basic 256 colors recognized by Microsoft Windows. See the color safe palate in Appendix A for the hexadecimal codes for the 256 colors recognized by most browsers.

Finally, we will probably want to at some time or other control the placement of text on the page. Centering of text can be achieved through the `<CENTER>` and `</CENTER>` tags. You can keep text together as a paragraph with the `<P>` and `</P>` tags, and finally line breaks can be added with the `
` tag, for which there is no closing tag. You may also see the `<P>` tag being used as a double `
` tag because if the `<P>` tag is used by itself it basically puts a blank line after itself, plus a break on the line the tag occupies, just as it would if there were text embedded between the opening and closing `<P>` tags.

In his chapter we have seen how to begin building an HTML document, how to provide information for search indexes, how to put text into the document, and how to format that text. All there is left to do now is to practice this knowledge.



In the following exercise you will be creating your web page using the information given in this chapter. You should build this page as if you plan to use it for your own web site after completing this course. Do the following things:

1. Open a new document in your word processor and create `<head>` and `<body>` sections. Don't forget the opening and closing `<HTML>` tags. Don't forget to provide the pertinent keyword and description information.
2. In the body of the document, add a title, centered at the top of the page. Write an introduction to your site under the subheading of "About this site." This introduction should be a couple of paragraphs in length and should tell the visitor what he or she can expect to learn or what services they can expect from your site. The main text of the document can be any font you choose, but the title and headings should be in the font arial.

Hint: Many HTML writers use the first paragraph of their site in the description META tag. This adds a bit of uniformity between your site and the way it is listed in the search indexes. As in any business writing, the first paragraph should be a powerful call to action, enticing the visitor to stay and read more.

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