

HTML

MANUAL OF STYLE



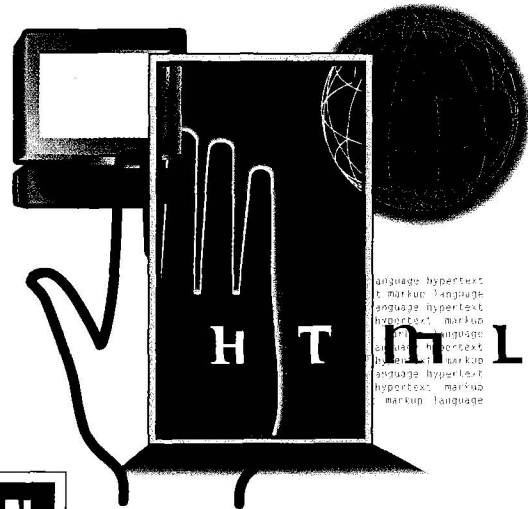
Clear, concise reference for **hypertext markup language (HTML)**



- ◆ For anyone who wants to make information available to users of **Mosaic** or other **World Wide Web** browser programs

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- ◆ Features annotated illustrations of **HTML** techniques



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Writing HTML Documents

GENERAL HTML PRINCIPLES

GOOD HTML STYLE

CREATING A HOME PAGE

CONVERTING AN EXISTING DOCUMENT TO
HTML

Chapter

3

HTML is so easy that it's tempting to jump right in and starting writing text with markup tags, checking the files with Mosaic or one of the other graphical browsers and making corrections as you go. You can put information on the World Wide Web very quickly. In a day or two, you can create an HTML hypertext work that will establish a solid presence on the Web for you or your organization. However, it's just as easy to create a sloppy hypertext work as it is to create a neat one. In this chapter you'll find a discussion of the principles of writing good World Wide Web pages, plus step-by-step walkthroughs of two kinds of Web applications—building a personal home page and converting an existing document to hypertext.

Of course, all of this is rapidly growing and changing. Perhaps the most widely observed convention found in Web documents is the inclusion of the phrase "Under Construction." You can write a home page in a few hours, but you'll never be finished with it—it will grow as you do. This is one reason observing a few principles of good design can be so important. The creation of a personal home page, in particular, is an act of creative expression in a brand new medium. It is the setting up of your booth in Cyberspace to provide information, goods, and services, and to define who you are to the Global Electronic Village.

GENERAL HTML PRINCIPLES

Another reason good design is so important with Web applications is that you have no control over the context from which people will establish links to your Web pages. Think of your Web application as a house in Cyberspace; the door

is always open. Each HTML page is a room in this house. Most people will enter via your home page. A good home page takes care to properly welcome its visitors and let them know where they are and what interesting resources are to be found inside. The navigation controls of their browser will let the reader exit the way they came in; still, it's nice when the home page provides suggestions and links to other places in Cyberspace to visit.

Not everybody will enter your Web application through its home page. Some people will come in through the windows of other rooms in your Cyberspace house. There are a number of automated programs that continually explore the World Wide Web, building databases of titles, headings, and URLs as they link from one Web server to another. These are sometimes called *robots*, *spiders*, *worms*, or *web walkers*. There is a page on the Web with information on known robots at <http://web.nexor.co.uk/mak/doc/robots/robots.html>. You could ask the World Wide Web Worm, for example, to provide a list of all Web pages that have the word *fractal* in their title. Such links are independent of the structure the authors of those pages intended. The point is that readers will find ways you didn't anticipate to enter your hypertext work. Help these people out; at a minimum, provide a link back to your home page from every other page you put on the Web. Don't leave lost readers feeling more lost than when they entered.

Remember also that your HTML documents—the source code of your Web application—are readily available to anyone who can access the Web. Other HTML authors may copy elements of your pages and incorporate them into their Web applications. Hypertext works on the World Wide Web are living, growing structures. If you keep this in mind, with a little preparation, practice, and planning, your hypertext works can grow and evolve as smoothly as the Web does.

Probably the best preparation for writing HTML documents for the World Wide Web is reading World Wide Web HTML documents. Get a feel for what other authors have put on the Web and the approaches they've taken in organizing and formatting their work. You'll need a graphical browser to fully appreciate what others have done with HTML. You should at least have NCSA Mosaic. Other browsers may have more features than Mosaic; however, most of the documents currently on the Web have been written with Mosaic in mind. Mosaic is great software. It comes in versions for Microsoft Windows, Apple Macintosh, and Unix X/Windows, and it's free—a heck of a deal.

The home page for all three versions of Mosaic, <http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/Mosaic>, is a good place to start your study of Web pages. Another good place is NCSA's What's New page on the same server, <http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/Mosaic/Docs/whats-new.html>. This page is updated every two weeks with links to Web pages that have just been created.

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