Introduction to the Box Model

When you start working with CSS or are talking about spacing for HTML elements, you will need to understand the jargon for the different parts or *areas* that make up each element. For that, you will need to understand the CSS box model.

The image below shows each area of a generic HTML element. The margin, border, and padding can be set per side (**top**, **right**, **bottom**, **left**).
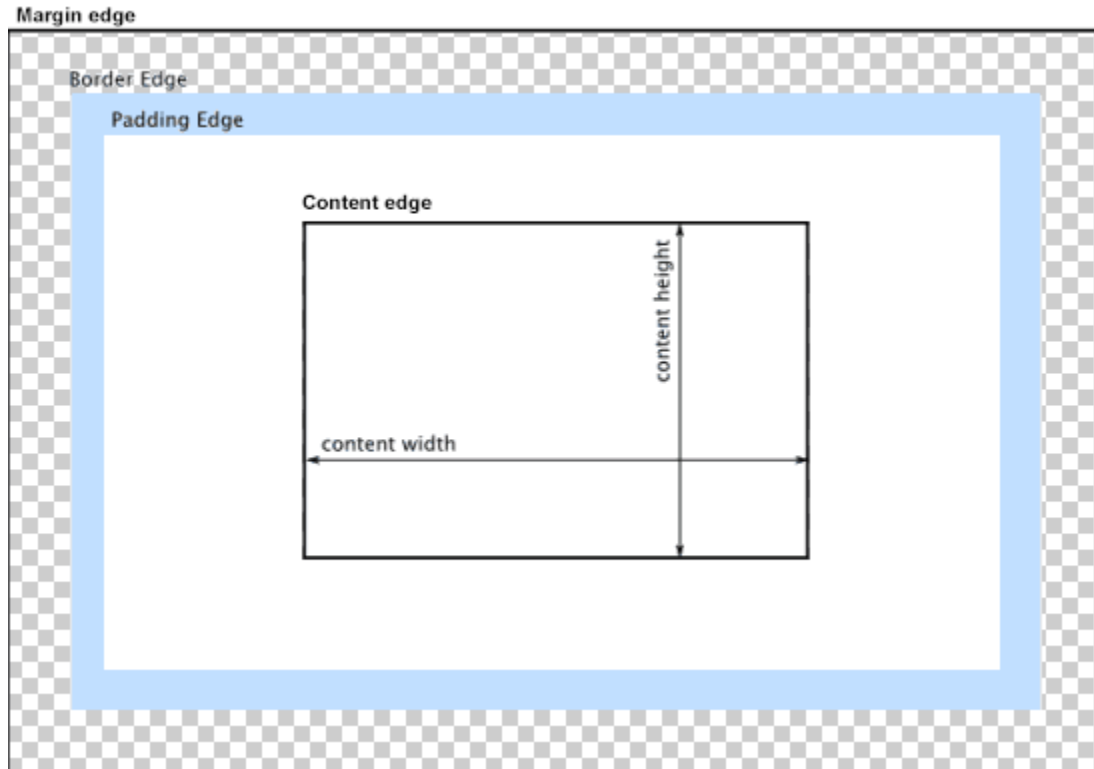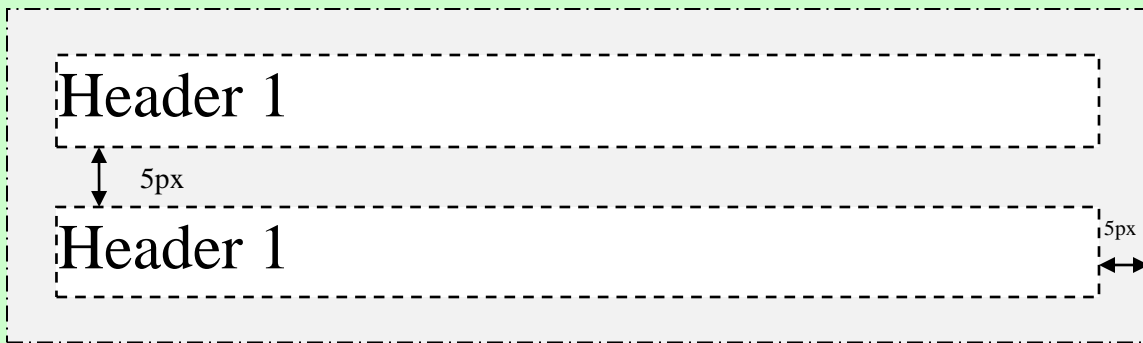

Figure 1. Box model illustration from the Mozilla Developer Network.

(https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/CSS_Box_Model/Introduction_to_the_CSS_box_model)
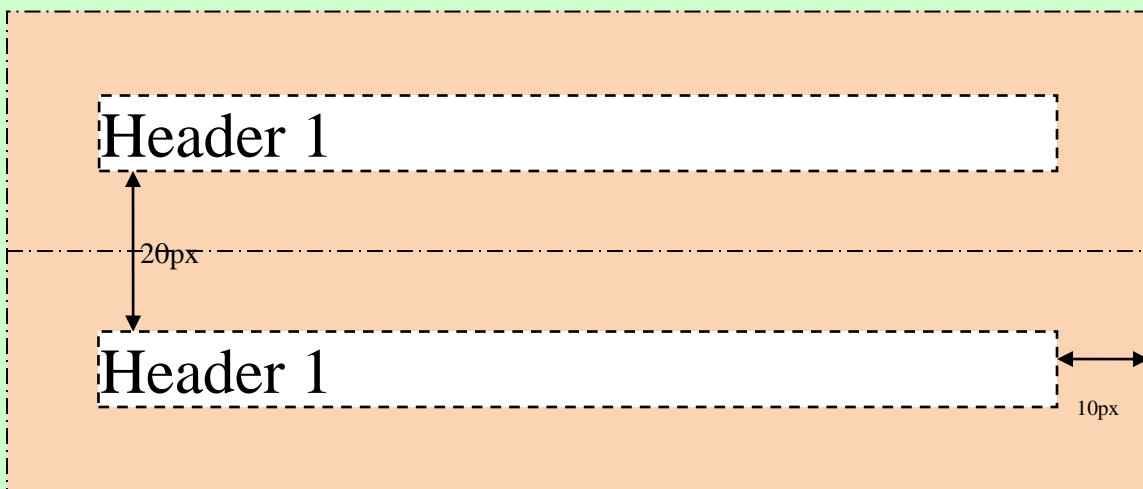
The actual element "stuff" is referred to as the **content**. For example, in an H1 header, the **content** is the H1 text itself. The next area of "space" is the **padding**. This **padding** is within any border the HTML element may or may not have. (Even if there is no border, there is still an *edge* that is defined the **border edge** where, if a border is specified, the border will lie within.) The area beyond the **border edge** is the **margin**. The **margin edge** defines where the margin space ends.
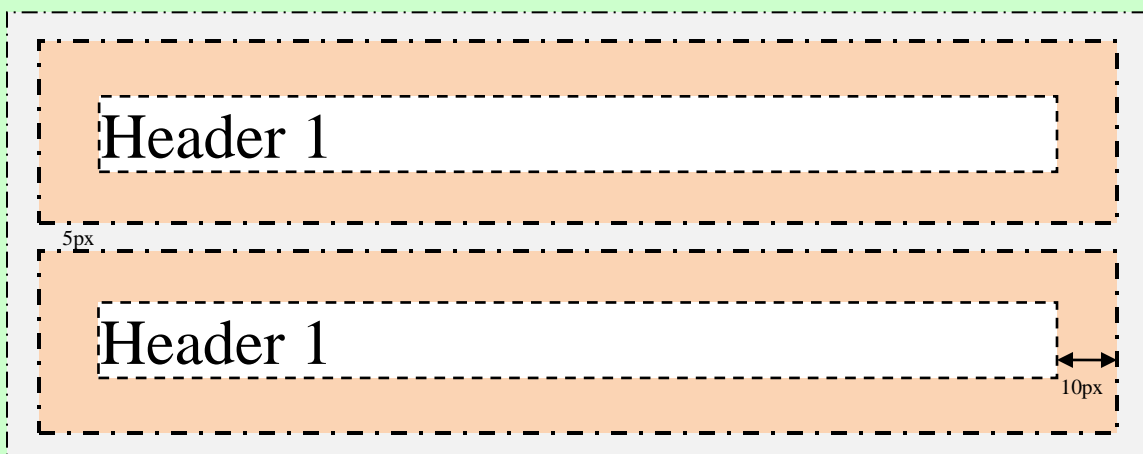

Important!

Margin edges are shared amongst adjacent HTML elements but padding edges are **NOT** shared. This means that if two adjacent headers have a margin of 5px but no padding, the spacing would look like the below image.

Header 1

5px

Header 1

5px

If two adjacent headers (with no borders) have a padding of 10px but no margin, the spacing would look like the below:

Header 1

20px

Header 1

10px

If two adjacent headers (with no borders) have a margin of 5px but a padding of 10px, the spacing would look like the below:

Header 1

5px

Header 1

10px

Understanding the differences between margin and padding is important so that you understand the terms when describing a design.

In the standard box model the **width** and **height** of the element include <u>only</u> the **content** and exclude the padding, border, and margin. Under IE's implementation, the **width** and **height** of the element <u>includes the content, padding, and border</u> **but not the margin**. When we build a layout, we will address this issue and how to get around it.