skillcrush

THE QUICK & EASY GUIDE TO HTML BEST PRACTICES

INTRO

Luckily there are some things you can do to help keep those mistakes at bay, and to help you find mistakes when they happen. Because let's face it, they totally will.

It all boils down to making sure you go through a checklist of **5 key principles:**

- ❏ Keep Your Code Neat & Tidy
- ❏ Mind Your Syntax
- ❏ Get to Know (and Love!) Online Resources
- ❏ Validate, Validate, Validate
- ❏ Comment Your Code

Let's talk through these one by one.

1. KEEP YOUR CODE NEAT & TIDY

Before you do anything else, indent! Yes, you absolutely, must indent those nested elements.

Seriously, if you can't read your code, you can't find your mistakes. Because usually, those mistakes will be something really small: a missing tag here, a misspelling there.

Let’s take a quick look for comparison, what's easier to read?:

```
<div><img src="/kitteh.jpg" alt="this is my cat Muffins"><h1>Welcome to my website!</h1><p>Isn't it great? It's where I put all my stuff about me like:<ul><li>pics of my cats</li><li>blog posts about cats</li><li>links to my favorite cat resources</li></ul></p></div>
```

Or this:

```
<div>
    <img src="img/kitteh.jpg" alt="this is my cat Muffins">
    <h1>Welcome to my Website!</h1>
    <p>
    Isn't this great? It's where I put all my stuff about me like:
       <ul>
          <li>pic of my cats</li>
          <li>blog posts about cats</li>
          <li>links to my favorite cat resources</li>
       </ul>
    </p>
</div>
```

2. MIND YOUR SYNTAX

HTML is like a language, and like a language, it has rules. But unlike learning a new verbal language – like Spanish – if you get a little tiny thing wrong with HTML, things just start breaking.

There's no Spanglish for code. You have to make it 100% right for the computer to understand.

Incorrectly closed tags, misspellings, and missing quotation marks are some of the most common beginner mistakes. So when's something's not working, check for those first!

There's lots of tags, and lots of nit-picky rules. Don’t worry, you’ll get to know them with time.

Here are a few things to look for if your page is looking wonky, but you’re *sure* your code is totally clean - don’t worry, we’ve all been there:

- ❏ Your tag hasn’t been closed
- ❏ Your tag has been closed with an opening tag!
- ❏ You used an apostrophe instead of quotation marks

This is just to get you started, but soon enough you’ll be a pro at looking for these common mistakes.

3. GET TO KNOW (AND LOVE!) ONLINE RESOURCES

Remember how we said that people don't usually memorize their meta tags? Well, the same is true for pretty much *all code.*The more often you use HTML, the more second nature some of it will become. But even once it does, there'll be other things you just won't know or remember. And that's ok! Because the internet is FULL of resources designed to help you.

Here are some of the best resources (in addition to your Skillcrush materials, of course!) to get you started:

- Mozilla Developer Network

If you've got some code that's not working, look it up on these sites to find help code snippets or solutions, then, compare your code to theirs. Or better yet, copy their code and edit it to work for you! It's not cheating...it's what coders do.

4. VALIDATE, VALIDATE, VALIDATE

So you're looking a chunk of code. Something's wrong...but you don't know what, no matter HOW many resources you look at!

Well there's one more resource that will help you: an HTML Validator. That's right! There's a tool that can help you find errors in your code.

Bookmark this one, it will be one of your greatest allies!

W3C Validator - https://validator.w3.org/

W3C, an organization devoted to developing web protocols and guidelines, has developed an HTML validator that's free to use. You can validate by entering a URL, by uploading a file, or by copying and pasting your code. It will highlight all your errors, so you don't have to spend time playing a guessing game. Thanks, HTML Validator!

And, don't forget! If you use a validator, be sure to include meta tags like:

- `<!doctype>`
- `<html>`
- `<head>`
- `<body>`

or, you'll get errors for missing those too!

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5. COMMENT YOUR CODE

Commenting is just what it sounds like: writing comments in your code. In HTML, comments look like this:

```
<!-- Hey! I'm a comment :) -->
```

Or, if you need to write many lines of comments, they look like this:

```
<!--

Hey! I'm a comment section :)

1. The first thing I need to say.

2. The second thing I need to say.

Yup. I've said everything I need to say here.


-->
```

At first, this might not seem like a big deal. But soon – when you're working on a really long document, or when you're sharing code with a team of people – comments will be your BFF.

REMINDER!

Following these guidelines will help you avoid mistakes...and figure out just what they are when they happen.