

# Horizontal centering

Now that we've covered inline versus block display, we can intelligently discuss centering. Let's start with inline elements.

## inline

How do you center an inline element? As we recall, inline elements are positioned along the baseline, in the natural flow of the text or content. So for any individual inline element, there is *no CSS property* you can apply directly to it to cause it to center. You can maybe apply some padding evenly or unevenly to position its own content relative to its own box. But that's not centering the element itself.

To center an inline element, we leverage the `text-align` property of its parent.

```
p { text-align: center; } /* the text and any inline children
of this element will be centered */
```

If this isn't satisfactory, consider changing the element to be inline-block or block.

## block

How do you center a block level element? First, you may recall that block level elements default to take the width of their parent. That precludes the whole question. If the element is the same width as its parent, it is already centered. So the first step is to limit the width of the element. Setting the width property directly is not generally a good practice, but we'll discuss sizing at length later and just do that.

```
div { width: 200px; }
```

Now that we've sized the element, how to center it?

## margin magic

If set to `auto`, then the left and right margins will center the element. This is the simplest and best way of centering a block level element. So the full solution is to set the width

and apply **auto** to the left and right margins (or to all margins).

```
div { width: 200px; margin: auto; }
```

## HORIZONTAL CENTERING - A BETTER WAY

Do auto margins seem spooky to you? There is a better way to achieve centering and its name is *flexbox*. We'll read more about it later.

## Vertical centering

### **inline**

inline elements respect the vertical-align property. This determines how the inline element is aligned relative the baseline it is being laid upon. This may or may not solve your vertical centering conundrum.

### **block**

There is no `margin:auto` approach to vertical centering. There are some complicated systems that folk have developed, but the shortest and best answer to vertical centering: use flexbox.