# History of layout

Before we get started working on the topic of layout directly, it is useful to understand a bit of HTML and CSS history.

In the not-so-distant-past, most HTML documents were long-form prose interspersed with lists and sometimes tables of information. HTML was used to present technical documentation, corporate communication, instructions and manuals, lists of files, and occasionally emails or notices. The "layout" needs were minimal to non-existent.

But over time users began to prettify their documents by adjusting font sizes and font faces. And this was primarily done in HTML itself, which caused problems. Thus the first impetus for CSS was to separate any style information from the HTML document itself. But the use cases envisioned back then were all still primarily text based.  The goals of CSS were modeled after the "master sheets" that some word processors had back then.

Before the first specification for CSS had been agreed upon, Web developers began a transition to creating different types of documents. These documents were more like fancy magazine pages - images, not text, were the centerpiece. Decorative graphics abounded, advertisements showed up.  And even as CSS2 and later CSS3 were being written, Web development changed again - Web pages became more interactive, the term "Web application" was coined. Many Web sites bore far more similarity to the control panel of a microwave then to a magazine article, much less the page of book ;)  And finally along came smart phones and a whole new "mobile Web" focus for Web sites, Web pages and Web applications.

During its short lifetime, CSS has often played "catch up" especially in regards to layout. Here is a short list of techniques and CSS properties used historically for layout:

- tables and "slicing"
- absolute positioning

- floats and clear

- css columns

- css tables

- flexbox

Except for some basic required concepts, we are going to skip all of this and go straight to flexbox. After many stumbles, flexbox finally brings sanity to the much needed world of layout in CSS.