The CSS language

CSS STANDS FOR 'CASCADING STYLE SHEETS'. FOR NOW, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT WHAT THE 'CASCADING' PART MEANS AND JUST FOCUS ON THE 'STYLE SHEETS'.

Using CSS we can determine the visual appearance of our HTML elements independent of the HTML itself.

Recall the metaphor we used for HTML with the journalist and the publisher. Where HTML represents the author's work, CSS corresponds to the work the designer does: deciding how things look.

In the early days, there was no CSS, so any control over what the page looked like was done with tags that controlled the form of the Web page. Tags like 'font' to choose a font, 'b' for bold, 'i' for italic were added to have some control, lest your page be at the mercy of whatever browser the reader was using. There are several problems with this approach. First, it violates our paradigm of HTML containing only content. Second, and more practically, the tags only applied where they were used.

For instance, if you originally wrote your document with all of the paragraphs indented a certain amount and then later you were decided to change the indentation then you would have to modify every single paragraph in your document. It would be nice if there were a central way to set such rules, i.e. one place that said "I want all my paragraphs to be indented this much", much like master sheets in a word processor. CSS helps to solve this problem.