

Browser Developer Tools are a great way to inspect elements of a web page. Each browser has their own developer tools, but I will be describing and showing the Chrome developer tool.

If you are having a hard time understanding why a certain element is not doing what you'd expected, try right clicking it and select Inspect from the pop-up menu.

A panel will open that shows the HTML, styles and box-model for that element. This tool is powerful and can do many things. We will look at just a small number of things.

Notice in the HTML the element you were on when you clicked Inspect will be highlighted. You can click and expand and contract any of the code to look at other elements too.

The styles or CSS that effects that element will also show below the HTML. It will show if it's a style you added to the css file and even shows what line the selector is on in your CSS file. And it might show the user agent styles or browser default styling.

I can also uncheck boxes next to the styles to turn on and off that particular declaration and the page will show the results. For example, here, I could see what it looks like if I turn off the box-sizing. Or I could see what it would look like if I changed a width or even make a new declaration for that selector, perhaps I want my text color to be a dark olive green. I can even click the color square to open a color picker and make it darker or choose a different color. These changes are not permanent, it is not actually changing your CSS file, it's just the browser showing us what it would look like. As soon as we refresh the page, it will go back to what is actually in the CSS file.

If you see declarations that are crossed out it might be because they have been overridden by more specific rules or in my case it's because I have them commented out in my CSS code.

Also notice as I rest my mouse pointer over the code, I will see colors surrounding my element. They represent parts of the box model. If you scroll down, you can also see a graphic of a box model with the actual numbers of pixels for padding, border, and margin. As I rest my mouse pointer over each part, I can see the colors in my browser. Notice they are all in pixels even though I might have used a different type of measurement in my CSS. The auto in this case is showing as pixels and as I resize the page they will change.

Just a few more things, if you want to see pseudo selectors, for example the CSS for a hover effect, I can click here and play around with it. I don't happen to have any hover effects but that's where you'd find it.

Also, at the very top there is a toggle device icon. It's the second one. It lets me choose different devices to show me how my page would look on a certain type of phone. There are lots to choose from. Or maybe even enter a pixel size to represent a really big monitor. I'm going to toggle that back off.

One more thing, notice as I resize the width of my page, I can see the pixel width of my page in the top right. This comes in handy when setting media queries that we will touch on later. Lots of very cool helps with developer tools.