

What is CSS?

Instructor: So what is CSS? CSS is the language used to style an HTML document. CSS is a separate language from HTML. It is a rule-based language with its own syntax or way of typing the code. It describes how the HTML should be displayed. It's what will make our web pages more attractive. Remember, HTML is about structure and what element is used for what content. And CSS is all about presentation, and how the elements on the page will look and how they will be laid out on the page. A great example to see the power of CSS is on csszengarden.com. Every page featured uses the exact same HTML, but with different CSS applied to it.

[Different pages of the website are shown. They all have the same content, but they are all displayed vastly differently.]

CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets. The term cascading refers to the fact that one style rule can be set up for multiple elements and even work on multiple pages of your website. This makes it very efficient and requires less coding to style your pages. Cascading can also refer to the hierarchical order in which different styles interact with elements. More on this later. Here's a page or rendering with just HTML. There's no CSS.

[A website is shown. Everything is on the left side and they are all displayed vertically above and below each other.]

Here is the same page with CSS applied to it.

[The same website is shown, but everything is centered and some items share the same line.]

There are a few different ways we can use CSS with HTML. The first is with inline CSS. This is not the preferred way because it takes out the benefit of reusing our CSS styles in many different areas, and it can be hard to edit later.

[An image of an HTML file is shown. A highlighted line says "<body style='background-color: lightblue'>".]

For example, if I wanted to make the background of my entire page a light blue, I would go into the body's element opening tag and add style as an attribute, as is shown here.

[The instructor shows a website twice that is about Star Trek. The first version has a white background color, while the second version has a light blue background. An HTML file is shown saying, "<body style='background-color: lightblue'>".]

This is referred to as inline CSS. But I would avoid using inline CSS if possible. Another way to apply CSS to your HTML is to embed the CSS in the head section of your HTML page inside of style tags.

[An HTML file is shown. Inside the <head> tags is a tag that says <style>. Inside the style tags, some CSS is shown.]

Again, this is not the preferred way because you can't reuse your CSS on multiple pages of your website. The best way to apply CSS to our HTML is in a separate CSS file.

[An image showing a file just for CSS is shown.]

You should always keep your HTML and CSS separate, if possible. They both have different purposes and it's best to keep them in separate files. Also, other advantages of having a separate CSS file is so that different webpages can share the same style sheet, then the same code wouldn't have to be repeated on every page. It makes less code and faster load times. Also, if you have a style change to make on several pages, the CSS would only have to be changed in one place. The HTML link element is used to tell our HTML page which CSS file is used to style our page.

[The text "<link rel='stylesheet' href='stles.css'" is shown inside the head elements of an HTML file. There is no closing tag for the link element.]

You can have multiple CSS files affecting one HTML page, but our site will be simple enough for just one CSS file. Notice the link element has no closing tag. Everything it needs is inside the tag. The link element is placed inside the head section of our page. It has two required attributes that show the relationship of the linked file and the hypertext reference of what CSS file we'll be using. Now we can type all of our CSS in the external file, and it will apply to the HTML.

[End of video]