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5 Essential CSS Interview Questions *

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Explain the CSS “box model” and the layout components that it consists of.

Provide some usage examples.

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The CSS box model is a rectangular layout paradigm for HTML elements that consists of the following:

- **Content** - The content of the box, where text and images appear
- **Padding** - A transparent area surrounding the content (i.e., the amount of space between the border and the content)
- **Border** - A border surrounding the padding (if any) and content
- **Margin** - A transparent area surrounding the border (i.e., the amount of space between the border and any neighboring elements)

Each of these properties can be specified independently for each side of the element (i.e., top, right, bottom, left) or fewer values can be specified to apply to multiple sides. For example:

```
/*      top    right  bottom left */
padding: 25px 50px 75px 100px;

/* same padding on all 4 sides: */
padding: 25px;

/* top/bottom padding 25px; right/left padding 50px */
padding: 25px 50px;

/* top padding 25px; right/left padding 50px; bottom padding 75px */
padding: 25px 50px 75px;
```



Explain what elements will match each of the following CSS selectors:

1. `div, p`
2. `div p`
3. `div > p`
4. `div + p`
5. `div ~ p`

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1. `div, p` - Selects all `<div>` elements and all `<p>` elements
2. `div p` - Selects all `<p>` elements that are anywhere inside a `<div>` element
3. `div > p` - Selects all `<p>` elements where the immediate parent is a `<div>` element
4. `div + p` - Selects all `<p>` elements that are placed immediately after a `<div>` element
5. `div ~ p` - Selects all `<p>` elements that are anywhere preceded by a `<div>` element



Explain the meaning of each of these CSS units for expressing length:

- `cm`
- `em`
- `in`
- `mm`
- `pc`
- `pt`
- `px`

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- `cm` - centimeters
- `em` - elements (i.e., relative to the font-size of the element; e.g., 2 `em` means 2 times the current font size)
- `in` - inches
- `mm` - millimeters
- `pc` - picas (1 `pc` = 12 `pt` = 1/6th of an inch)
- `pt` - points (1 `pt` = 1/72nd of an inch)
- `px` - pixels (1 `px` = 1/96th of an inch)

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In CSS3, how would you select:

- Every <a> element whose href attribute value begins with “https”.
- Every <a> element whose href attribute value ends with “.pdf”.
- Every <a> element whose href attribute value contains the substring “css”.

View the answer → Hide answer



Select every <a> element whose href attribute value begins with “https”:

```
a[href^="https"]
```

Select every <a> element whose href attribute value ends with “.pdf”:

```
a[href$=".pdf"]
```

Select every <a> element whose href attribute value contains the substring “css”:

```
a[href*="css"]
```



Given the following HTML:

```
<div id="page">
  <h1>Heading Title</h1>
  <h2>Subheading Title</h2>
  <h2>Subheading Title</h2>
  <h1>Heading Title</h1>
  <h2>Subheading Title</h2>
  <h1>Heading Title</h1>
</div>
```

How could you use CSS to achieve the following automatic numbering:

1) Heading Title

- 1.1) Subheading Title
- 1.2) Subheading Title

2) Heading Title

- 2.1) Subheading Title

3) Heading Title

View the answer → Hide answer



The following CSS will achieve this type of automatic numbering:

```
#page {
  counter-reset: heading;
}

h1:before {
  content: counter(heading) " ";
}
```

```
counter-increment: heading;
}

h1 {
  counter-reset: subheading;
}

h2:before {
  content: counter(heading) "." counter(subheading) " ";
  counter-increment: subheading;
}
```

* There is more to interviewing than tricky technical questions, so these are intended merely as a guide. Not every “A” candidate worth hiring will be able to answer them all, nor does answering them all guarantee an “A” candidate. At the end of the day, [hiring remains an art, a science — and a lot of work](#).
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[Mikael Kessler](#)

United States

Mikael is a detail-oriented front-end engineer that uses technologies like HTML5, CSS3, and jQuery to deliver high quality, standard-compliant builds. He has extensive experience and proficiency with Ruby on Rails, MySQL, and Heroku, among other server-side technologies and app deployment platforms.

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[Gleb Polushkin](#)

Russia

Gleb is a front-end developer with over a decade of experience developing for browsers and Flash and nearly as much with Photoshop and graphic design. He is very skilled with responsive web design. He is a relaxed but careful communicator, equally comfortable in leadership and collaborative roles, and works well in diverse teams.

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[View full profile »](#)[Piotr Gawle](#)

Poland

Piotr is a software engineer with fifteen years of experience developing web applications. He specializes in crafting efficient, graphics-heavy, and fast mobile and desktop JavaScript, HTML, and CSS products. He understands full-stack development and has a background in PHP, Java EE, and MySQL. He has worked in various environments from corporations to startups. He is an Agile practitioner and Scrum Master with extensive management experience

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