Section 4.6 describes empty elements. These tags do not contain any other text or tags. They tend to work by themselves. An example of an empty element is the break tag. You simply place it wherever a line break is needed. The syntax for these tags is as follows: <br />. The space is needed to distinguish the tag from XML. Many validators for XHTML will not accept <br/>.

XHTML was created by the W3C in order to clean up HTML documents. They took XML and combined it with HTML to create XHTML. This meant that many of the syntax rules from XML now applied to HTML. XML requires a very strict adherence to syntax and applying this to HTML would clean up some of terribly written HTML documents that were giving browser developers a hard time. For example uppercase tags and unclosed tags are not permitted in XHTML. W3C would go on to create XHTML 1.1 with even more rules from XML applied. This didn’t catch on as the W3C had hoped.

HTML 5 was created by the WHATWG group after getting frustrated with the W3C and their development of XHTML. HTML 5 was designed to be backwards compatible and use both the loose and strict syntax. Several tags have been added to HTML 5 that allow it to catch up to where Flash is. The <canvas> tag allows for drawing and animation on the webpage. The <video> tag allows video content to be embedded into the page itself. The ruby tag adds ruby annotation for East-Asian languages like furigana in Japanese.