19 Relative URLs

**Relative URLs**

A relative URL is essentially a set of directions to a resource from your current location, like directions to the corner store given from your home or office. A relative URL is usually given in terms of the current location of an HTML page, whether it be on the Internet or elsewhere.

Relative URLs are, essentially, paths from the current HTML page location to the desired resource. These paths require special prefixes in order to operate correctly, as well as to maneuver through the server's directory structure.

There are three prefixes for relative URLs:

./

../

/

**Definitions:**

**Prefix One:**

**./**  
(pronounced "dot-slash")  
Conservative syntax for plain relative URL; it means "look for the resource in the same directory."

Example:

I am currently on index.html. There is a resource called page2.html in the same directory.

Relative URL from index.html to page2.html:

./page2.html

Hyper-reference on index.html using this URL:

<a href="./page2.html">Link to Page 2</a>

(NOTE: In most cases the ./ can be omitted and so the above example is virtually the same as)

<a href="page2.html">Link to Page 2</a>

**Prefix Two:**

**../**  
(pronounced "dot-dot-slash")  
This means: "go up one directory level and start looking for the resource."  
If you need to go up more than one directory level, add one **"../"** for each directory level you need to ascend.  
To go up two directory levels and then start looking for the resource:  
**../../**  
To go up three directory levels and then start looking for the resource:  
**../../../**  
(and so on...)

Example (try drawing this out on a piece of paper):

I am currently on index.html, which is located in folder "gertrude". "gertrude" is located inside a folder called "harry". "fred" is another folder inside "harry"; thus, fred and gertrude are sibling folders inside the parent, harry. "fred" contains an HTML page called page5.html.

Relative URL from index.html to page5.html:

../fred/page5.html

Hyper-reference on index.html using this URL:

<a href="../fred/page5.html">Link to Page 5</a>

**Prefix Three:**

**/**  
(pronounced "slash")

This means: "go to the root directory for the web server and start looking for the resource." A root directory for a web server is the single folder which has been assigned as the "public" web folder; any resource inside this "root directory" may be served to the outside world via the Web; no resources OUTSIDE this root directory may be served via the Web. For instance, the default HTML page in the root directory of Yahoo is invoked when I use the absolute URL, "http://www.yahoo.com/"; on Yahoo's "www" server, the root directory contains everything on the "www" part of the domain.