**2 HTML and Tags**

HTML and Tags

HTML is stored in text-only documents. These documents do not contain any built-in formatting or styles for the text (as you might see in a Microsoft Word document), nor do they contain any actual pictures or other multimedia files. They are just text.

Although HTML is text-only, it can contain references to many different kinds of files and multimedia elements; you will see more about how this works as we go along.

Above all else, HTML is a text-formatting language. So, how does HTML format text?

HTML formats text (and everything else, as well) using something called a TAG. Tags can either mark the beginning and ending of some bit of formatting (such as the start and the end points of a paragraph), or the insertion point for some element (such as a picture, or a line break).

Because formatting in an HTML document cannot be stored implicitly in the text itself (as you might find in Microsoft Word), every piece of formatting (bolding, italicization, line breaks, paragraphs, images, multimedia elements, etc) must be marked explicitly using tags.

Tags are indicated by the use of the less-than (<) and greater-than (>) signs on your keyboard. The P (paragraph) tag, which marks the beginning and ending of a paragraph of text, looks like this:

<p>Here is a paragraph of text.</p>

Here is what that code looks like when loaded into your web browser window:

Here is a paragraph of text.

Opening tags (which mark the beginning of a piece of formatting) use less-than (<) and greater-than (>) symbols, called "brackets", around the tagname. Closing tags (which mark the end of a piece of formatting) are identical to opening tags, with the addition of a forward-slash (/) character just before the tagname. The generic syntax, then, could be expressed in the following manner:

<tagname>Content</tagname>

Not all tags have to open and close in this manner, surrounding content. Some tags simply insert formatting information into the flow of HTML text. For instance, in the BR (break) tag inserts a carriage return or line break into text without requiring a closing tag, as in the following example:

<p>Here is a paragraph of text.<br /> Notice how the line break occurs just there?</p>

(Note that the above coding is the same for XHTML and HTML5, although <br> is

acceptable in HTML5)

Displayed:

Here is a paragraph of text.  
Notice how the line break occurs just there?

Here is the same code without the BR tag:

<p>Here is a paragraph of text. Notice how the line break occurs just anywhere, if at all.</p>

Displayed:

Here is a paragraph of text. Notice how the line break occurs just anywhere, if at all.