31 Document Appearance

**Document Appearance**

Each web browser (whether Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari) has preferences which may be set by the user to control default appearance for HTML pages. The original default browser preferences (preferences preset by the manufacturer) used to be somewhat consistent cross-browser and cross-platform, but this consistency has begun to decay in recent years. Generally, however, default browser appearance settings are as follows:

Light Gray page background color (or White)  
Black text  
Blue Link color  
Purple Visited Link color  
Red Active Link color (the color the link turns while being clicked)  
Links are underlined

Proportional Font: Times or Times New Roman, 12pt.  
Monospace Font: Courier or Courier New, 10pt.

If no appearance information is set in the code for an HTML page, the browser default preferences will apply to that HTML page.

As I mentioned earlier, web browser default settings have begun to deviate from the traditional standards stated above. Some browsers are attempting to correct for differences between Mac and PC font-sizes automatically, which was supposed to make our lives easier, but instead made creating consistent-looking, cross-platform, backward-compatible, general-purpose, professional-quality HTML pages WITHOUT CSS almost impossible.

Because of changes to the web browsers, and because users can change their web browser default settings to suit their every whim anyway, it is more important than ever to learn to control HTML tag appearance using CSS if you want to achieve true consistency of HTML appearance. We will discuss CSS, in brief, in a later module.

**What is the difference between the Proportional and Monospace Fonts?**

Proportional fonts, such as Times, Times New Roman, Arial, and Helvetica, use different sized spaces for the width of each letter. An "i", for instance, isn't as wide as an "M", and a space character may be of several different sizes. Proportional fonts are used for laying out most ordinary body text, whether for publishing on the Web or for print purposes. Most text within the BODY of an HTML document is laid out using the browser's default proportional font.

Monospace fonts, such as Courier and Courier New, have characters which are all identical in width. A space character is as wide as an "M", which is as wide as an "i"; all characters in a monospace font are the same width. This characteristic of monospace fonts makes them ideal for use in programming, where all code is written in text-only documents with no formatting, where space-character indenting is common. Web browsers use the default monospace font setting to display text which lies within the CODE, TT, or PRE tags (among others).

The default font SIZES for an HTML page are particularly tricky. Macintosh and Windows PC machines will display 12 point text in a browser window at different sizes (PC fonts display substantially larger in a web browser window than Macintosh fonts, even if both platforms are using the exact same font). It is impossible to create HTML pages which display with identical font sizes cross-platform without the use of CSS. Without CSS, in fact, it is impossible to be certain of the font size under any circumstances, since users may reset browser default font sizes at will.

When designing pages for the Web, you will do so with default browser fonts in mind, but your designs must be flexible.

By the end of this class, you will have received a basic introduction to Cascading Style Sheet technology (CSS). When working professionally, however, you are likely to encounter older HTML means for controlling document appearance, using tags and attributes which have been deprecated (retired). We'll talk about CSS in a later module; we'll talk about these deprecated tags and attributes now.

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **BGCOLOR**  
Value: any named color or hexadecimal color code  
Description: Use BGCOLOR to set the background color for an HTML page.  
Example: **<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">**

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **BACKGROUND**  
Value: a URL (relative or absolute) for a GIF or JPEG file  
Description: Sets the background image for an entire HTML page. This image will tile (repeat horizontally and vertically to fill the entire browser window), so make certain that your image is appropriate for tiling. Background images should not be more than 10K in file size; some browsers will not display foreground content until the entire background image has been downloaded.

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **TEXT**  
Value: any named color or hexadecimal color code  
Description: Use TEXT to set the primary text color for an HTML page.  
Example: **<body text="#000000">**

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **LINK**  
Value: any named color or hexadecimal color code  
Description: use LINK to set the color for unvisited hyper-links.  
Example: **<body link="#0000FF">**

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **VLINK**  
Value: any named color or hexadecimal color code  
Description: use VLINK to set the color for visited hyper-links.  
Example: **<body vlink="#FF00FF">**

Tag: **BODY**  
Attribute: **ALINK**  
Value: any named color or hexadecimal color code  
Description: use ALINK to set the color for active hyper-links (links currently being clicked on)  
Example: **<body alink="#FF0000">**

Example HTML page using all of these properties:

<html>

<head>

<title>Silly Demo Page</title>

</head>

<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF" background="./graphics/bgrdLeaves.gif"

text="#000000" link="#0000FF" vlink="#FF00FF" alink="#FF0000">

<p>Some content... Here's a <a href="#">hyper-reference</a>. </p>

</body>

</html>

**Note:** You may set both the BGCOLOR and the BACKGROUND attributes for the BODY tag; as the background image is loading, the foreground content will be displayed on a background the color of BGCOLOR.

**Remember:** all of the above attributes have been replaced by CSS properties. They are still legal to use, however.

Before CSS, there was the FONT tag, which allowed HTML programmers to set a font's color, size, and face (the FACE attribute sets the name of the font that you wish to use). The FONT tag should NOT be used; it has been completely replaced with CSS.

**Screen resolution:** I will be viewing your webpages with a screen resolution of 1280X800 or higher.