**Introduction to Tables**

Tables used to be the backbone of current web design. Although originally intended as a simple spreadsheet-like grid for scientific, technical, or monetary data, tables became the primary means of laying out complex, multi-column web pages. Up until quite recently, every major website used tables in some capacity for page layout. Although the introduction of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) technology allows designers to create absolutely positioned elements on web pages, reducing the need for 100% table-based layout, the utility and backward-compatibility of tables will ensure their continued importance in web design.

Tables are still an important item in the Web designer's toolbox. With the advent of mobile devices, the web page designing trend has veered away from tables and more toward a layered design using CSS. For a designer, a programmer, or a content-developer, tables will still be a part of your bread-and-butter work, whether you're creating your own tables, reworking a design into a tables-suitable composition, or debugging someone else's lousy code (which usually entails rewriting the code from scratch).

The principles governing table construction are fairly simple, and it is not difficult to learn the basics. Creating cross-browser, cross-platform compatible code, however, is a restrictive and occasionally frustrating experience. Most tables-based layout uses tables of mind-numbing complexity, which require special handling and careful commenting to make them functional as well as reasonable to edit and maintain. Some contemporary coding practices (including code generated by WYSIWYG editors such as Dreamweaver and GoLive) produce tables which are unstable across browsers and platforms.

Here are examples of [simple tables](http://fog.ccsf.edu/~srubin/tablex.html).

NOTE: Technologies as CSS and XML, are making tables used as multi-column layout devices obsolete. Tables are currently reverting back to their original purpose, which is the construction of spreadsheet-like data grids.