Centering in HTML5 and CSS

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The HTML Center Element

The current standard for centering techniques is that they are done in CSS. In the past, Center was an HTML element.

Prior to the development of CSS, items were centered within HTML. Coders used design *elements* to change the visuals of their webpages. These elements were inserted into lines of HTML. For example, if you wanted to center a line of text, you would surround it with the bracketed element Center. Web browsers would--and the older versions still do--read these *inline* design elements and center the line of text accordingly.

The image that follows shows how the Center element was originally used in HTML.

While inline elements do still exist, elements related to visual style such as Center have been moved into CSS. CSS allows these elements more customization, and HTML code is cleaner and easier to read and write when it is not filled with scattered design-related elements.

Building Blocks of Code

There are a number of pieces that go into building code in HTML and CSS. Elements, attributes, and values are the main ones that you may run across.

Elements

Elements are the largest unit of the three, and are also known as tags. They can appear in both HTML and CSS. Each element describes a specific group or type of item, such as:

- Body
- Images (img)
- Paragraphs (p)
- Headings (h1, h2, h3, etc.)
- Div

Center and other design functions used to be HTML elements, but now they reside in CSS.

Attributes

An *attribute* is a building block of code that accompanies an element and modifies the way it is being used. Some familiar attributes include:

- align
- background-color/bgcolor
- charset
- class
- color
- height
- id
- width

Values

Values are found most often in CSS are born of necessity from attributes. While attributes adjust how an element is working, the value, which follows the attribute, tell the element how much or which way to alter itself. As a result, values can vary immensely based upon the goal of a designer or the function of an element or webpage.

While *inline design elements* in HTML often served as both element and attribute and did not have much room for values, CSS offers greater customization opportunities. Attributes like alignment, for example, can take on multiple values, like left-align, center, and right-align, whereas previously in HTML each of those values were their own element and had to be used individually--which made coding more complicated and disorderly.

Uses for Center

The element Center has multiple uses. Currently, most of them can be carried out in CSS.

HTML

Now deprecated, Center was an element in CSS that worked within a line. Using the bracketed Center, a coder could adjust the alignment of images, text, and other block or line-level items. The element was simply placed around the item that the coder wanted to center. The HTML design element Center was convenient for centering a single word or line of text instead of a full paragraph.

CSS

Using CSS, designers are able to work with the alignment of block-level items. Here are some things that the *center value of an alignment attribute* can be used for in CSS:

- *Centering text horizontally*
- *Centering images horizontally* and vertically
- *Centering an entire div block,* either as a block or within another div
- Centering other types of blocks elements of set or flexible width