



# PROJECT: Creating a Personal Home Page

“*Creation is a better means of self-expression than possession; it is through creating, not possessing, that life is revealed.* —Vida Dutton Scudder



## This chapter covers

- Planning and sketching your personal home page
- Choosing typefaces for your page
- Adding the header and navigation links
- Adding the body text

With four chapters under your belt, it's time to put your newfound HTML and CSS knowledge to work by building something substantial. Specifically, this chapter takes you through the process of putting together a simple personal home page. *Simple* is the operative word here because you don't yet know enough HTML tags and CSS properties to construct anything complex. Fortunately, you know more than enough to create a great-looking home page for yourself. You know about headings and paragraphs; you know how to create sections by using the `<div>` and `<span>` tags; you know how to create bulleted and numbered lists; you know how to create links; you know how to add typographic touches such as bold and italics; and you know how to apply colors to the background and to the text. As you see in this chapter, all that is more than enough to create a home page to be proud of.



## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

### What You'll Be Building

This project is a basic "Look, Ma, I'm on the web!" home page that enables you to take the tools and techniques you learned in this book's first four chapters and apply them in the virtual world of the web. The result is a simple but beautiful page that enables you to stake out a bit of online turf. To what end? That depends on you, but most personal home pages serve as an introduction to anyone who comes surfing by: who you are, what you like (and even what you dislike), what you've done in the past, what you're doing now, and what you'd like to do in the future. As I go along, I'll show you an example based on my information, but naturally, you'll want to replace my text with your own. Your web page is your house, and you can fill it with whatever you want.

### Sketching the Layout

All your web projects should begin with a pen or pencil and a cocktail napkin or other handy writing surface. Creating a web page is first and foremost a *design* process, so before you start slinging code, you need to have a decent idea of what you're building. Sure, you can construct a mental image of the page, but it's better to begin with the more tactile approach afforded by pen and paper.

As you can see in Figure 5.1, this sketch doesn't have to be detailed. Lay out the main sections of the page with a phrase or sentence that describes the content of each section.

#### ► Figure 5.1

Before starting to code your HTML and CSS, use a pen or pencil to work up a quick sketch of the page layout and content.

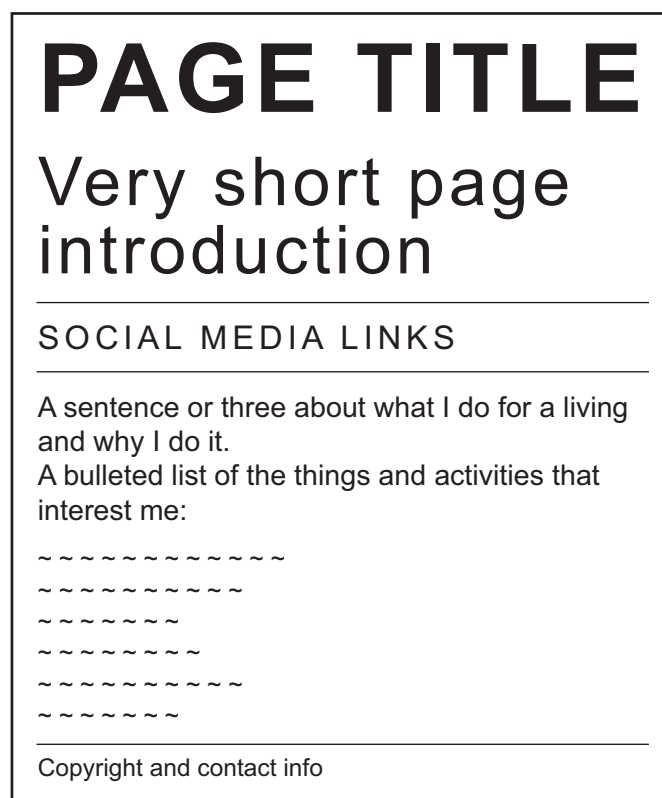




Figure 5.1 shows the layout of a page with the following six sections:

- The title of the page
- A short introduction to the page
- Links to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter
- Text about what I do for a living
- Text and a bulleted list of things that interest me
- The page footer with a copyright notice and contact info

Your next page-planning task is deciding which typefaces you want to use for your page.

## Choosing Typefaces

Because I haven't discussed images yet in this book, this first version of your personal home page is dominated by text, particularly what's known as *body text*—the large blocks of nonheading text that comprise the bulk of your page. Because a good chunk of your audience will be reading your page on devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones, it's important to take a bit of time up front to choose typefaces that will be legible and readable on these smaller screens.

You could build your page with a single typeface, but mixing two typefaces—one for headings and the other for body text—adds dynamism and contrast to the page. My preferred use is a sans-serif typeface for headings and a serif typeface for body text, but feel free to reverse them or to use two serifs or sans serifs. The only criterion to look for is two typefaces that work in harmony.

For this project, I'm going to use two perennial web favorites: the sans-serif typeface Verdana for the headings and the serif typeface Georgia for the body text. In my CSS, I'll use the following rules to specify these families:

```
font-family: Georgia, serif;  
font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;
```

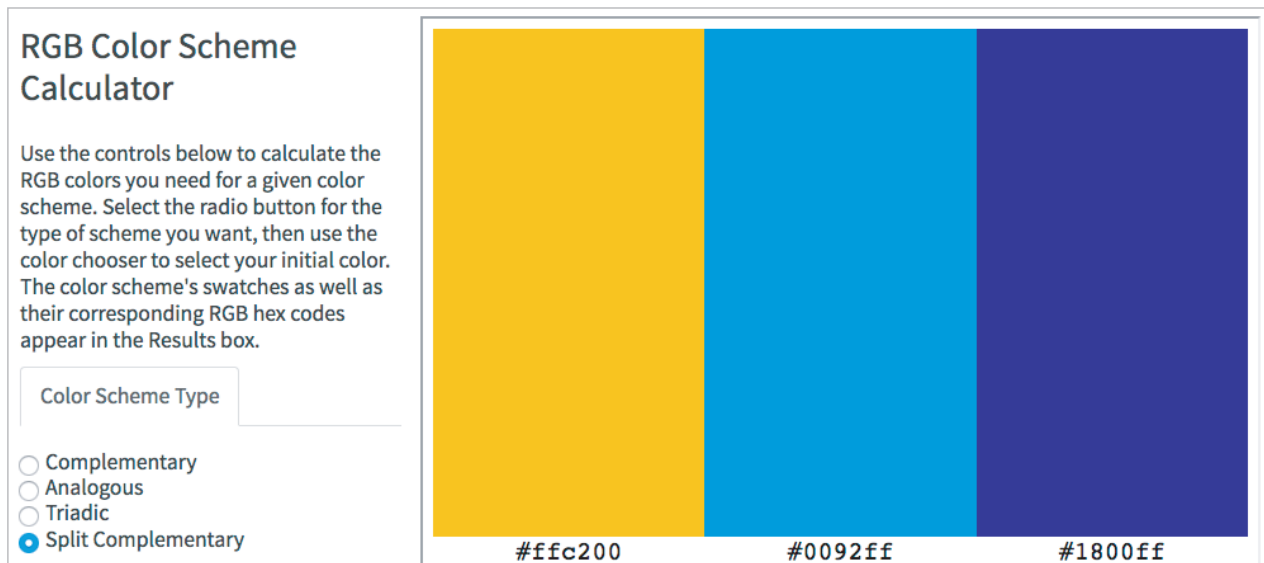
With the page layout in place and your typefaces chosen, the next step is to pick out a color scheme.

## Choosing a Color Scheme

In this simple page, colors won't play a huge role, but you'll want to inject some color to avoid the monotony of all black text on a white background. You can add a background color or even a gradient by using the Web Design Playground's Gradient Construction Kit (see [wdpg.io/kits/gradient](http://wdpg.io/kits/gradient)). I prefer a simple white background for this project, so my own colors focus on the text. Using the Web Design Playground's RGB Color Scheme Calculator (see [wdpg.io/colorcalc](http://wdpg.io/colorcalc)), I chose a color scheme based on the color value #ffc200, as shown in Figure 5.2. You, of course, should choose a color scheme that suits your style.



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► **Figure 5.2** A split complementary color scheme based on the hex color value `#ffc200`

With the page layout in place and your colors chosen, it's time to translate this rough sketch into precise HTML and CSS code.

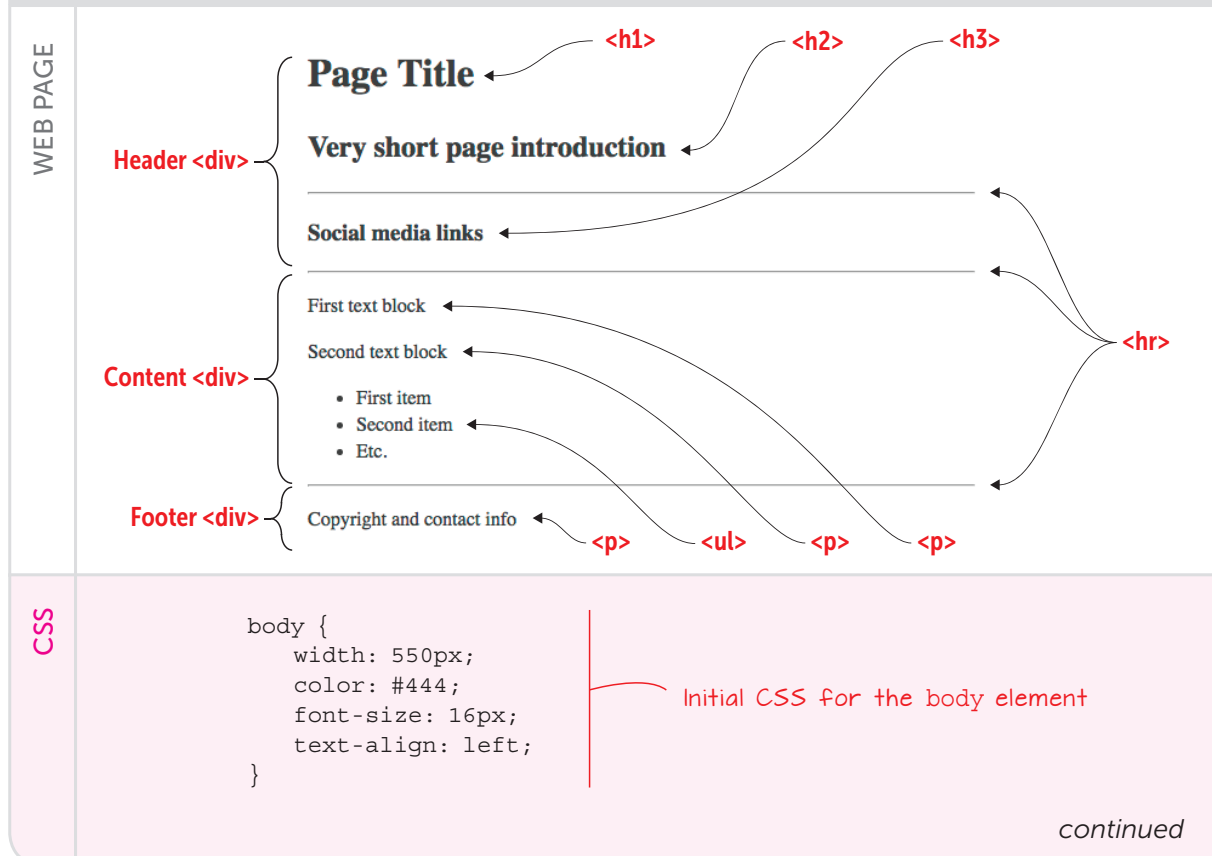
### Building the Page

To build your personal home page, you'll start with the skeleton code that I introduced you to in Chapter 2. From there, you'll go section by section, adding text, HTML tags, and CSS properties.

#### *The Initial Structure*

To start, take the basic page structure from Chapter 2 and add the tags and some placeholder text for each of the page's six sections. Here's a summary of those tags:

- The page title is an `h1` heading element.
- The page introduction is an `h2` heading element.
- The social media links are within an `h3` heading element.
- The first text block is a `div` element.
- The second text block is another `div` element, which is followed by a `ul` element for the bulleted list.
- The page footer is another `div` element.

**► Try This****⇒ Online:** [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/1](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/1)*Here are the elements that make up the personal home page's initial structure.*



## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

HTML

```
<!--START OF HEADER-->
<div>
  <h1>Page Title</h1>
  <h2>Very short page introduction</h2>
  <hr>
  <h3>Social media links</h3>
  <hr>
</div>
<!--END OF HEADER-->
<!--START OF CONTENT-->
<div>
  <p>
    First text block
  </p>
  <p>
    Second text block
  </p>
  <ul>
    <li>First item</li>
    <li>Second item</li>
    <li>Etc.</li>
  </ul>
</div>
<!--END OF CONTENT-->
<!--START OF FOOTER-->
<div>
  <hr>
  <p>
    Copyright and contact info
  </p>
</div>
<!--END OF FOOTER-->
```

Comments denote the beginning and end of each section.

The header section

The content section (two paragraphs and a bulleted list)

The footer section

### PLAY

*I've left-aligned everything in the page to get a nice clean line down the left side of the page. There's no reason why you couldn't mess with the alignment, however. Try centering the three page header elements (title, introduction, and social media links). ➡ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/2](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/2)*

Notice that the initial structure also includes a few CSS properties applied to the body element. These global properties set the width of the page and the default values for the text color, font size, and alignment. The most surprising might be the width value of 550px. Why restrict the width at all, and why use such a relatively small value? One key element in good web typography is line length. If your lines are too long, they become hard to scan, and if they're too short, the text becomes choppy. In both cases, the resulting text is difficult to read. For screen text, the optimum line length is between 65 and 75 characters, so you need to set the width so that all or most of the lines in your body text fit within that range.



Here are a few other things to note about the HTML tags used in the initial structure:

- The page is divided into three sections: a header, the content, and a footer.
- Each section is embedded within a `<div></div>` block. This block organizes the structure and enables you to apply a style (such as a font family) to everything within a particular section.
- Each section of the page is surrounded by special tags called *comments* that mark the beginning (e.g., `<!--START OF HEADER-->`) and the end (e.g., `<!--END OF HEADER-->`) of the section. I use all-uppercase characters to help the comments stand out from the regular code, but that practice is optional. See Chapter 16 to learn more about using comments in your code.

## The Page Title

Not surprisingly, you want your page title to be more prominent than the rest of the page text. Setting the text within an `h1` element is a good start, but you'll likely need to style the text even more to get the effect you want. Here are some ideas:

- *Apply a different color.* If you make the color unique, the title will stand out from the rest of the text.
- *Apply a larger font size.* Because your page title may be something as simple as your name, a larger size makes it pop.

In the following example, I used my name as the title, but feel free to use whatever text you prefer. I applied the sans-serif system font Verdana to the header section's `div` element (which means that this font is also applied to the rest of the headings). I've also styled the page title (the `h1` element) with one of the colors from my color scheme (`#1800ff`) and a 52px font size.

## FAQ

*Why didn't you use #000 or black as the default text color? With a white page background, pure black text can be difficult to read because of the extreme contrast between the two colors. Backing off the text color to #444 or #333 makes it easier to read.*

## PLAY

*To help you get a feel for the ideal line lengths for onscreen reading, I've set up an exercise on the Web Design Playground. Given a paragraph of text, adjust the body element's width property to bring the line lengths into the ideal 65- to 75-character range. Try changing the font-size property to see what effect that change has on line length. ➡ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/3](https://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/3)*

## REMEMBER

*Don't be shy about adding comments to your code. Comments help you keep track of the page structure, and they're often indispensable when someone else needs to read your code or when you haven't looked at your page code for a few months.*


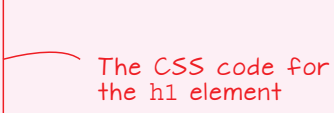
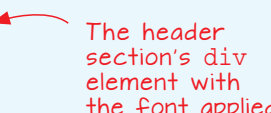



## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

### ► Try This

⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/4](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/4)

This example styles the personal home page title with a color, font, and larger font size.

WEB PAGE	<h1>PAUL MCFEDRIES</h1> 
CSS	<pre>h1 {   color: #1800ff;   font-size: 52px; }</pre> 
HTML	<pre>&lt;div style="font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;"&gt;   &lt;h1&gt;PAUL MCFEDRIES&lt;/h1&gt; &lt;/div&gt;</pre>  

### PLAY

If your page title is long, it will likely wrap to a second line. That's fine, but you'll want to reduce the line height to bring the two lines closer together. For the `h1` element, try setting the `line-height` property to a value below 1 (such as 0.8 or 0.9). ⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/5](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/5)

### The Page Introduction

The page introduction acts as a kind of subtitle. It should be a brief snippet of text that introduces you to the reader. Because the text is a subtitle, the font size should be smaller than the title text but larger than the body text. Again, setting the text within an `h2` element should do the job, but you'll want to set the size yourself, depending on what you used for the title.

In the following example, I styled my page introduction with gray text (#666) and a 22px font size. I also used an inline `<span>` tag to style a key phrase—*technical writer*—with another color from my color scheme (#ffc200). Note as well that this `h2` element inherits the font that I applied to the header's `<div>` tag in the preceding section.





### ► Try This

⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/6](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/6)

This example styles the personal home page introduction with a color and a larger font size. Within the text, a `<span>` tag applies a different color to the key phrase technical writer.

WEB PAGE	<p><b>I'm a technical writer specializing in HTML, CSS, web design, and web typography</b></p> <p>← <code>&lt;h2&gt;</code></p>
CSS	<pre>h2 {   color: #666;   font-size: 22px; }</pre> <p>The CSS code for the h2 element</p>
HTML	<p>An inline span element applies a different color to the enclosed phrase.</p> <pre>&lt;h2&gt;I'm a &lt;span style="color: #ffc200"&gt;technical writer&lt;/span&gt; specializing in HTML, CSS, web design, and web typography&lt;/h2&gt;</pre>

## The Social Media Links

The final element of the page header is the collection of links to your social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. This collection is a key element of the page, so you should make it stand out from regular body text by using a larger font size or a unique color (or both).

For my own page, as shown in the following example, I styled the social media text with a sans-serif font and a 16px font size, and I typed the names in uppercase letters. For the links, I applied the third color from my color scheme (#0092ff) and removed the underline. Hovering over each link changes the text to the #ffc200 color and underlined. Note, too, the use of a vertical-bar symbol (|) to separate items.

## PLAY

The page introduction should be short—ideally, no more than two lines. At the same time, it should be balanced visually on the screen, with each line extending as close to the right edge of the text block as possible. I've set up an exercise on the Web Design Playground to help give you some practice doing this.

⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/7](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/7)




## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

### ► Try This

⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/8](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/8)

This example styles the personal home page's social media text with a font, font size, uppercase letters, and link colors and underlines that change when each link is hovered over.

WEB PAGE	
CSS	<pre>h3 {   font-size: 16px; } a {   color: #0092ff;   text-decoration: none; } a:hover {   color: #ffc200;   text-decoration: underline; }</pre> <p>The CSS code for the h3 element</p> <p>The CSS code for the regular link text</p> <p>The CSS code for the link text when the reader hovers over it using the mouse pointer</p>
HTML	<pre>&lt;h3&gt; &lt;a href="http://www.facebook.com/PaulMcFedries"&gt;FACEBOOK&lt;/a&gt;   &lt;a href="https://twitter.com/paulmcf"&gt;TWITTER&lt;/a&gt;   &lt;a href="https://www.pinterest.com/mcfedries/"&gt;PINTEREST&lt;/a&gt;   &lt;a href="http://codepen.io/paulmcf/"&gt;CODEPEN&lt;/a&gt;   &lt;a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/paulmcfedries"&gt;LINKEDIN&lt;/a&gt;&lt;/h3&gt;</pre>

### FAQ

What happened to the `<hr>` tags? In the initial page structure, I used horizontal rules above and below the social media links to separate them from the other page text. With the styles I've applied to the links, however, they already appear fully separate from the rest of the text, so the horizontal rules became redundant.

### The Body Text

The bulk of the personal home page is taken up by text that describes who you are, what you do for a living, what you do for fun, and so on. This text is the page's *body text*, and its content is entirely up to you.

You've already set the default text color, font size, and text alignment for the body element, and those values are inherited by the `div` element that contains the content section of the page. All that remains is to apply the body text typeface, which in my example is the serif font Georgia. To ensure that this typeface gets applied to the entire content section, I add the font to the `div` element's `font-family` property.



### ► Try This

⇒ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/10](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/10)

This example styles the personal home page text with the Georgia typeface. It also changes the bulleted list's bullets to circles.

WEB PAGE	<p>I've been a professional technical writer for more than 25 years. I have over 90 books to my credit, which have sold more than four million copies worldwide. I've been building websites since 1996, so I have intimate knowledge of HTML, CSS, and web design. My passion is to write books and articles to pass along that knowledge and to create tools that help people build awesome web pages.</p> <p>That's my work side, so what about my personal side? That is, what do I do in my spare time? I'm glad you asked! Here's a partial (and alphabetical) list of things and activities that interest me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Chariot racing</li> <li>◦ Dog polishing</li> <li>◦ Duck herding</li> <li>◦ Extreme ironing</li> <li>◦ Navel fluff sculpture</li> <li>◦ Staycationing</li> </ul>
CSS	<pre>ul {   list-style-type: circle; }</pre> <p>The <code>list-style-type</code> property is set to <code>circle</code> to change the bullet.</p>
HTML	<p>A <code>&lt;p&gt;&lt;/p&gt;</code> block is used for each paragraph.</p> <p>The content section's <code>div</code> element with the Georgia font stack applied</p> <pre>&lt;div style="font-family: Georgia, serif;"&gt;   &lt;p&gt;     I've been a professional technical writer for more than 25 years.     I have over 90 books to my credit, which have sold more than four     million copies worldwide. I've been building websites since 1996, so     have intimate knowledge of HTML, CSS, and web design. My passion     is to write books and articles to pass along that knowledge and to     create tools that help people build awesome web pages.   &lt;/p&gt;   &lt;p&gt;     That's my work side, so what about my personal side? That is, what     do I do in my spare time? I'm glad you asked! Here's a partial (and     alphabetical) list of things and activities that interest me:   &lt;/p&gt;   &lt;ul&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Chariot racing&lt;/li&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Dog polishing&lt;/li&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Duck herding&lt;/li&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Extreme ironing&lt;/li&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Navel fluff sculpture&lt;/li&gt;     &lt;li&gt;Staycationing&lt;/li&gt;   &lt;/ul&gt; &lt;/div&gt;</pre>



## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

### MASTER

Your body text also helps you determine the optimum width for the page. When you set text left-aligned, the right side of each text block is ragged, meaning that each line ends at a different point. Ideally, you should adjust the width so that your text blocks aren't too ragged (that is, one or more lines have too much whitespace at the end).

In this example, note two things:

- I embedded each of the two paragraphs inside a `<p></p>` block to honor the semantic role of the text.
- To give the bulleted list a bit of pizzazz, I set the `ul` element's `list-style-type` property to `circle` to change the default bullets.

### The Page Footer

The final element of the personal home page is the page footer. As you can see in the following example, I used the footer to display a copyright notice and my contact information (which in this case consists of my email address). Feel free to use the footer to add any other information you see fit, such as a "thank you for reading" message, a slogan or favorite epigram, or extra contact details.

#### ► Try This

➡ Online: [wdpg.io/projects/home-page/12](http://wdpg.io/projects/home-page/12)

This example separates the footer text from the body text by adding a horizontal rule and by styling the footer text with a lighter gray color, a smaller font size, and italics.

WEB PAGE

---

© 2019 Paul McFedries  
Contact: mail at my-last-name dot com

CSS

```
hr {  
  color: #666;  
}
```

The `hr` element is given a lighter color.

HTML

```
<div style="font-family:Georgia, serif; color: #666; font-size:  
14px; font-style: italic;">  
  <hr>  
  &copy; 2019 Paul McFedries<br>  
  Contact: mail at my-last-name dot com  
</div>
```

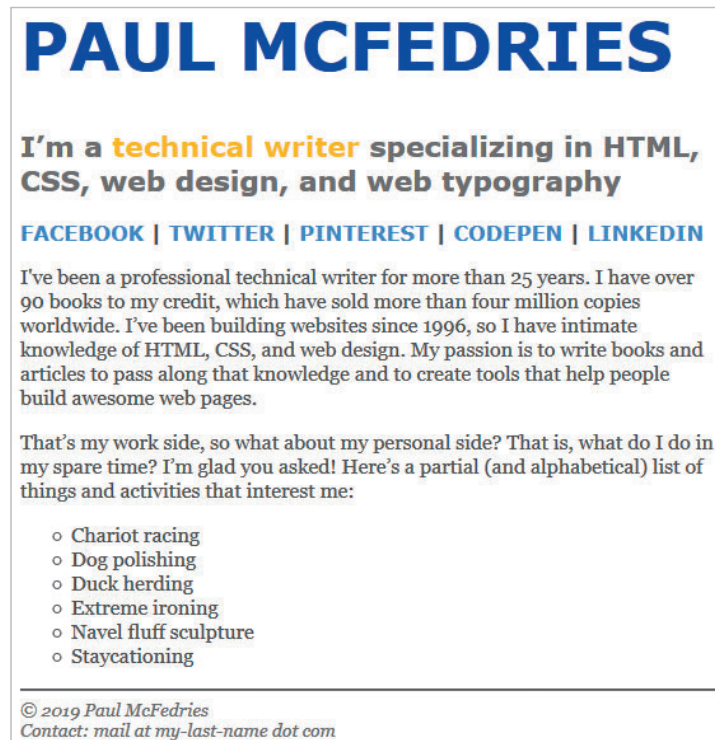
The `div` element is styled with a font, lighter color, smaller font size, and italics.

The email address is obfuscated.



## From Here

The final version of the personal home page (mine is shown in Figure 5.3) is pretty much what you'd expect: a simple, straightforward page that establishes your first home on the web. (If you're itching to get your code out there for all to see, check out Appendix A to get the details.)



► **Figure 5.3** A personal home page, ready for the web.

Even though you're only getting started with HTML and CSS, you still have plenty of ways to add personal touches to your humble home page. You can always add more text, of course, including a numbered list (such as a top-ten list of your favorite books or bands). You can also play with the colors, try different typefaces, mess with typographical details such as the font size and alignment, and add some links.

If you find yourself slightly disappointed with your page, that's to be expected. After all, at this early stage in your web-design education, you have only limited control of the elements on the page, and you're missing key design ingredients such as images, margins, and page layout. Not to worry—you'll be learning all that and more in Part 2.

## PLAY

Although dark gray (#333 or #444) text is most often used with a white background, other text colors can achieve subtle effects. A dark brown text color exudes warmth, for example. On the Web Design Playground, I've set up an example. ➡ [Online.wdpg.io/projects/home-page/11](http://Online.wdpg.io/projects/home-page/11)

## FAQ

Why does your email address look so weird? If you're going to include your email address in your contact info, never display the address in plain text; you run the risk of the address being harvested by spammers. Instead, obfuscate the address in a way that foils the spammers' bots but is still easy for a human to figure out.

## BEWARE

When adding a copyright notice, you may be tempted to include both the word Copyright and the copyright symbol (©), but this format is redundant. Use one or the other, but not both.



## Project: Creating a Personal Home Page

### Summary

- Sketch out the page you want to build.
- Choose the typefaces for the headings and body text.
- Choose a color scheme.
- Build the initial page structure: the barebones HTML tags and the global CSS properties applied to the `body` element.
- Fill in and style each section one by one: the title, the introduction, the social media links, the body text, and the footer.