

Learn CSS By Use Cases

ebook by Joe Harrison



Properties **box-shadow**



Joe Harrison
@frontendjoe

box-shadow

Properties

Intro

The main use case for a shadow is to convey elevation. I tend to keep it's usage minimal as you'll notice there are not many use cases for it here. In dark mode, shadows are not so cool but we can use this property for other techniques, like outlines and pulse effects.

Syntax

The box-shadow property only has a shorthand option and the coolest thing about box-shadow is that you can have multiple shadows on the same element. X offset, Y offset, blur and then spread as an optional value, make up the list of property value arguments.

box-shadow

Properties

Special Power

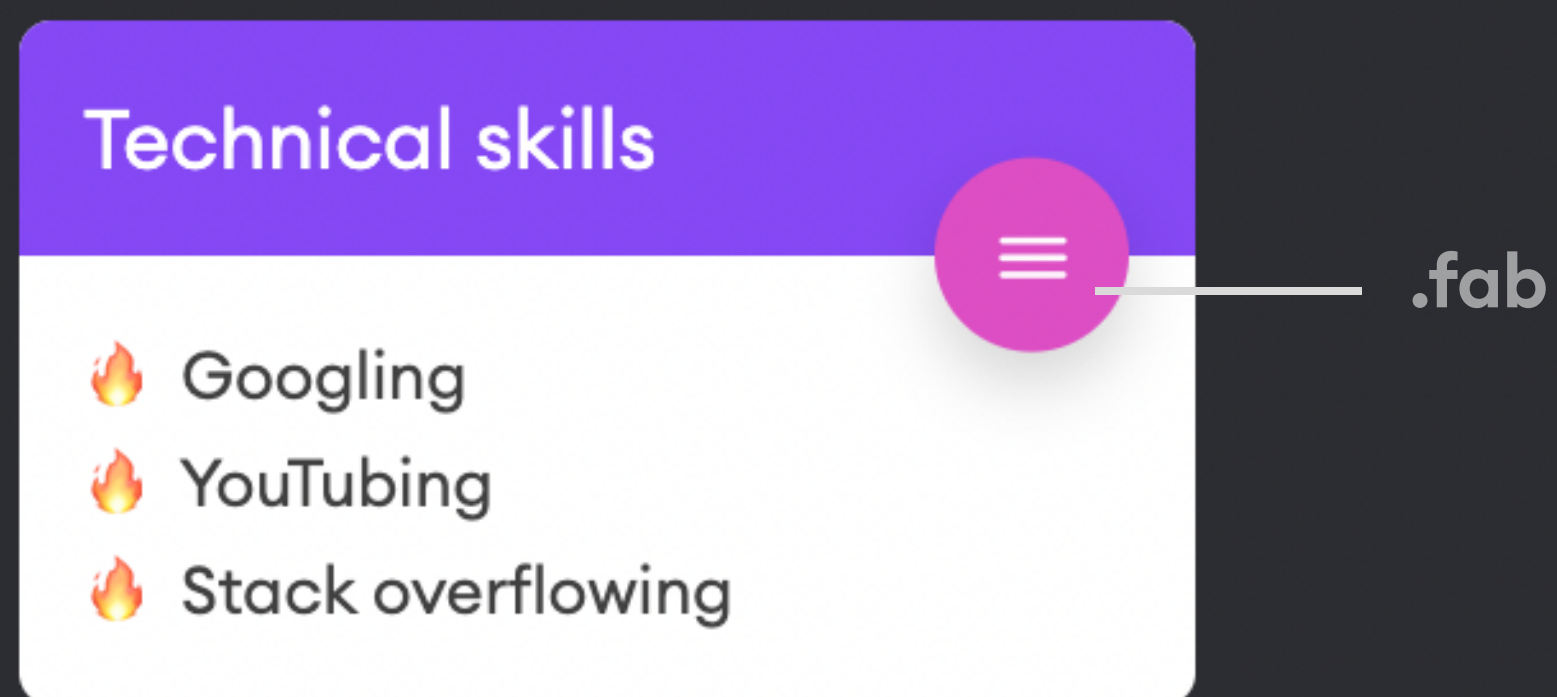
When combined with opacity or rgba colors, it can be used to create very clean soft shadows. Giving elevation to elements helps them stand out and the custom focus shadow is a game changer for me – I took the idea from Netlify.

Tips

To achieve clean soft looking shadows use a dark rgba color with a very low level of opacity (preferably less than 16%/0.16). Neumorphism is fun to play around with but I've found very difficult to maintain. It is however, a great example of adding multiple box-shadow's to a single element.

Elevated elements

Floating action buttons



```
.fab {  
  box-shadow:  
    0 8px 16px rgba(0, 0, 0, 0.16);  
}
```

x

y

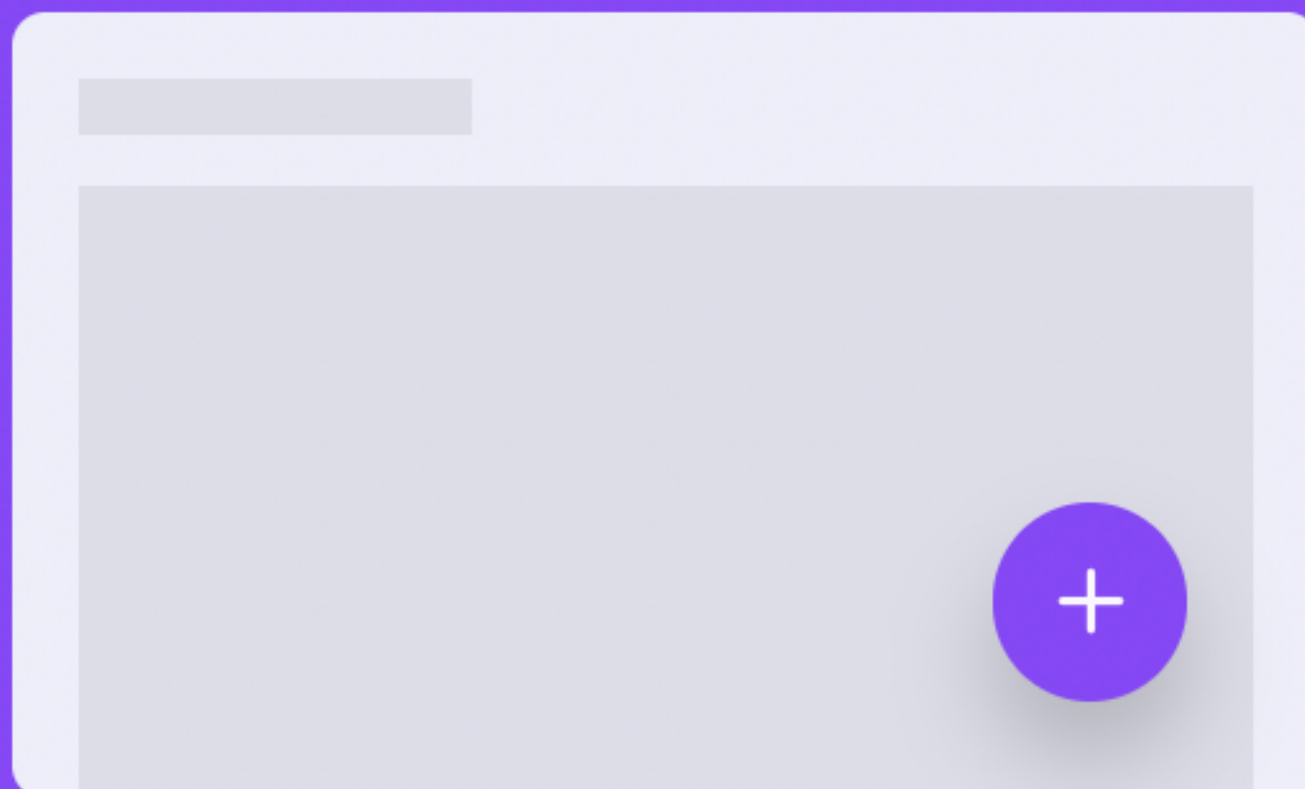
blur

color

Shadow colors are
often rgba values with
very low alpha/opacity

Elevated elements

Floating action buttons



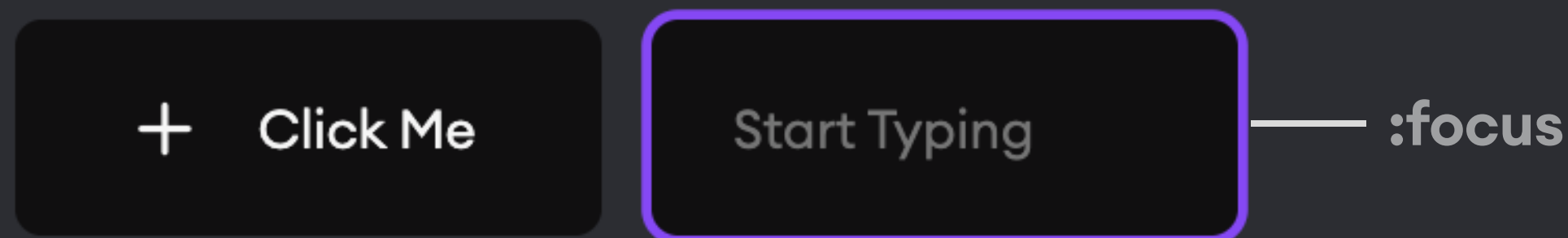
```
.fab {  
  box-shadow:  
    0 0.5rem 1rem #e9e9e8;  
}
```

As well as “px” we can also use “rem” lengths and hex codes for the color. Rem box-shadow’s will scale with the root element font-size, where as px will not



Outlined controls

Elegant accessibility



```
button:focus,  
input:focus {  
  box-shadow: 0 0 0 3px #8f44fd;  
}
```

Diagram illustrating the CSS box-shadow values for the outlined controls:

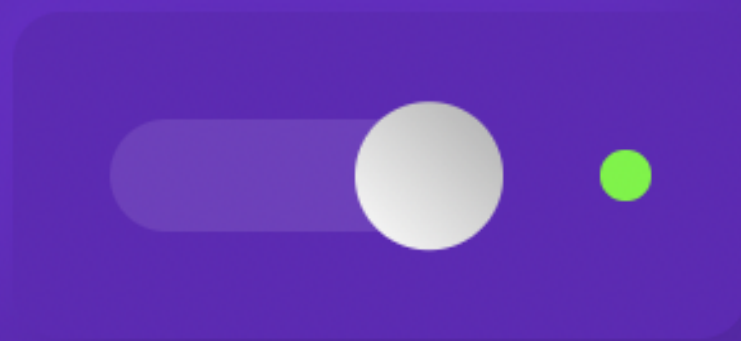
- blur**: Points to the third '0' in the box-shadow value.
- spread**: Points to the '3px' value in the box-shadow.

Setting blur to 0 and spread to any value will create a solid outline shape, perfect for highlighting active controls



Neumorphism

Soft modern UI



```
.neumorphism {  
  background: #6328b9;  
  box-shadow:  
    dark 12px 12px 30px #5623a1,  
    light -12px -12px 30px #702dd1;  
}
```

Separate
multiple
shadows
with comma

Negative lengths will change
the shadow's natural position

box-shadow

Properties

Knowledge Gained

- 🏆 In UI design, a box-shadow is used to convey elevation
- 🏆 A box-shadow consists of three required arguments and one optional argument
- 🏆 Shadows do not work well in dark mode but can be used to outline elements
- 🏆 Shadow colors are often rgba values with very low alpha/opacity
- 🏆 We can add multiple shadows to elements



Joe Harrison
@frontendjoe