**Brian Preston**

**CSD 430/ Module 10 Assignment**

**July 20, 2025**

**Creating Custom Tags: Personal Perspective from Development and the Beauty Industry**

As I have been able to dive further into my journey of web development and working with vibrant pages within my own industry, one of the most powerful features I have personally come to value is the use of custom tags. These user-defined tags allow developers to encapsulate repetitive logic and use clean, intuitive syntax across pages. According to Matthew James Taylor, “Custom elements make HTML simple to code, easier to readandkeep your CSS well organized” (Taylor, 2023). This is especially true when you're juggling both branding and functionality—something I’ve had to balance working in the cosmetics industry, where visual presentation and performance must go hand in hand.

Custom tags are incredibly useful for reducing redundancy and improving clarity in codebases. I feel that when we are working with JSP, HTML, or even (CFML), the concept remains the same: create a reusable element with a defined structure that can be dropped into multiple locations across your site or app. From my own experience working on promotional microsites for product launches at Estée Lauder, we used custom tags to insert consistent headers, promotional banners, and seasonal countdowns. This saved time and ensured brand consistency across campaigns.

From a practical standpoint, the "how" of creating a custom tag is fairly straightforward once you're familiar with the development stack you're working in. In ColdFusion, for example, Adobe explains that “custom tags let you extend CFML by adding yourowntags to the ones supplied with ColdFusion” and that they allow for code reuse while offering "off-the-shelf solutions for many programming chores” (Adobe Help Center, n.d.-a). This philosophy directly aligns with the fast-paced demands of the beauty and retail sectors. When coordinating promotions across 20+ store websites, the ability to define a <cf\_saleTimer> tag that handles the countdown and message display for flash sales isn’t just helpful—it’s necessary.

I feel that one of the biggest advantages of using custom tags is how they improve collaboration across teams. Designers, developers, and marketers can work more independently when content and functionality are encapsulated. For example, in my team, I might define a custom tag like <product-card> with attributes like name, price, and image. Marketing just has to drop this into the product list template and set the values—no need to touch the underlying logic.

Custom tags also increase readability. As the J2EE 1.4 Tutorial describes, “Custom tags are user-defined JSP language elements that encapsulate recurring tasks” (Using Custom Tags, n.d.). This makes the codebase easier to understand for new developers, which is critical in fast-moving industries like cosmetics where seasonal turnover happens in bothproducts and staff.

Of course, there are disadvantages. One potential is overusing custom tags or creating them without documentation.

I have seen projects where someone created a dozen nearly identical custom tags—each with slight variations—making it harder to maintain in the long run. I believe good naming conventions and team communication are essential. As Taylor reminds us, “Choose descriptive tag names so your markup reads well” (Taylor, 2023). This is simple but effective.

Another issue is browser compatibility and validation. While HTML custom tags are widely supported today, you still need to define styling in CSS (display: block) to avoid layout issues. Likewise, in ColdFusion or JSP, misplacing your taglib or failing to import a directory can lead to frustrating compiler errors. Still, I believe the pros outweigh the cons. From my experience, creating custom tags allows me to maintain a cleaner and more scalable codebase, while enabling rapid application development. I feel that anyone working in high-pressure, visually-driven industries—like cosmetics, fashion, or luxury retail—would benefit from learning how to implement custom tags effectively.

One article shared by our professor offered a great breakdown of how custom tags work in JSP. I really appreciated how clearly it described the process, from declaring the tag library with a <%@ taglib %> directive to including the implementation files in your /WEB-INF/tags/ folder. Based on that, I have written a simple custom JSP tag that can be used to display a branded welcome message, something I have done on multiple client-facing landing pages.

**Code Example: Custom Welcome Tag (inspired by the tutorial)**

Tag file (welcomeMessage.tag) stored in /WEB-INF/tags/

jsp

CopyEdit

<%@ tag description="Displays a custom welcome message" pageEncoding="UTF-8" %>

<%@ attribute name="name" required="true" %>

<p>Welcome, <strong><%= name %></strong>! We’re so glad you’re here.</p>

JSP page using the tag:

jsp

CopyEdit

<%@ taglib prefix="custom" tagdir="/WEB-INF/tags" %>

<html>

  <head><title>Welcome Page</title></head>

  <body>

    <custom:welcomeMessage name="Brian" />

  </body>

</html>

This small component could be reused in any section of a website or internal portal. For me, reusable components like this make development more enjoyable and less error-prone. They’ve been especially useful during last-minute launches and seasonal campaigns like our Gift with Purchase that seem to pop up overnight in the beauty world.

Again, I see custom tags as a simple but powerful way to organize, scale, and maintain your code, whether you're building a sleek landing page for a new skincare line or customizing user dashboards for loyalty members. I believe they are a must-learn tool for any developer who values clarity, consistency, and speed.

**References**

Adobe Help Center. (n.d.-a). Creating custom tags. <https://helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/developing-applications/building-blocks-of-coldfusion-applications/creating-and-using-custom-cfml-tags/creating-custom-tags.html>

Creating custom tags. Adobe Help Center. (n.d.). <https://helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/developing-applications/building-blocks-of-coldfusion-applications/creating-and-using-custom-cfml-tags/creating-custom-tags.html>

Taylor, M. J. (2023, February 11). Custom HTML tags (18 things to know before using them). <https://matthewjamestaylor.com/custom-tags>

Using Custom Tags. The J2EE(TM) 1.4 Tutorial. (n.d.). <https://docs.oracle.com/javaee/1.4/tutorial/doc/JSPIntro9.html>