



CSS Tables... they are actually useful

Before you jump all over me telling me that tables for layout are a bad thing (and I agree) hear me out for a second. **This is not using tables for layout.** The HTML table structure is meant to display organized tabular data and not for layout. Using `display: table` tells the browser to show the content as a table without changing the underlying structure of the content.

In the example below we have the following HTML structure

```
<div id="wrapper">
  <div id="header"></div>
  <div id="main">
    <div class="row">
      <div id="nav">
        Navigation
      </div>
      <div id="extras">
        <h2>Extras</h2>
      </div>
    </div>
    <div class="row">
      <div id="content">
        <h2>Content</h2>
      </div>
    </div>
  </div>
</div>
```

And the following CSS:

```
#main {
  display: table;
  border-collapse: collapse;
}
```

```
.row {
  display: table-row;
}
#nav {
  display: table-cell;
  width: 180px;
  background-color: #e7dbcd;
}

#extras {
  display: table-cell;
  width: 180px;
  padding-left: 10px;
  border-right: 3px dotted #d7ad7b;
}

#content {
  display: table-cell;
  width: 360px;
  padding-left: 10px;
}
```

The display property allows you to specify a range of table-related values in order to make elements display as though they were table elements. The available display values are:

- table makes the element behave like a table element
- table-row makes the element behave like a table row (tr) element
- table-cell makes the element behave like a table cell (td) element
- table-row-group makes the element behave like a table body row group (tbody) element
- table-header-group makes the element behave like a table header row group (thead) element
- table-footer-group makes the element behave like a table footer row group (tfoot) element
- table-caption makes the element behave like a table caption element
- table-column makes the element behave like a table column (col) element
- table-column-group makes the element behave like a table column

group (colgroup) element

The CSS for the example in this post shows one possible way to style HTML for it to display like a table. We have display values that will cover all the table child elements as specified in the [HTML5 Specification](#).

It may not be the most elegant solution but it works and it provides a way to create table-like displays without breaking the web.

Links

- http://www.digital-web.com/articles/everything_you_know_about_CSS_Is_wrong/
- <https://www.iandevlin.com/blog/2013/06/css/css-stacking-with-display-table>
- <https://www.sitepoint.com/solving-layout-problems-css-table-property/>