Is there a recommended maximum line length for HTML or JavaScript? [closed]

Asked 9 years, 11 months ago   Active 1 year, 9 months ago   Viewed 33k times

40

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Closed. This question is opinion-based. It is not currently accepting answers.

⬤ **Want to improve this question?** Update the question so it can be answered with facts and citations by editing this post.

Closed 2 years ago.

Most style guidelines for most programming languages recommend a maximum line length, typically 80 characters. This seems impractically short for HTML and JavaScript (when it is embedded in HTML). Is there a consensus on a practical line length limit for HTML/JavaScript? Or is it generally left up to the developer's common sense?

javascript   html   coding-style

asked May 22 '10 at 1:44

Matthew
24.2k   25   90   151

Many "services" will not wrap long lines and do not have scroll bars, so past 72 or 80 chars can simply get cut off. Some **terminal** windows, **GitHub**, etc. Also, it just helps for readability even if there are scrollbars. So while, the code will run, it may not always display everything. – SherylHohman Jul 19 '18 at 0:05 ✎

7 Answers

Active Oldest Votes

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Since you mention JavaScript, this is what Douglas Crockford has to say on the topic:

Avoid lines longer than 80 characters. When a statement will not fit on a single line, it may be necessary to break it. Place the break after an operator, ideally after a comma. A break after an operator decreases the likelihood that a copy-paste error will be masked by semicolon insertion. The next line should be indented 8 spaces.

From: Code Conventions for the JavaScript Programming Language

answered May 22 '10 at 1:54

Daniel Vassallo
294k   65   470   419

10   8 space indent I find make the code harder to read and severely limits how much code you can out in a line – Newtopian May 22 '10 at 2:00

3   @Newtopian: Note that he recommends an 8 space indent only for the line that follows a statement break, ie. when a statement does not fit in a single line. Otherwise he recommends "The unit of indentation is four spaces". Personally I tend to prefer a 2 space indentation in JavaScript. – Daniel Vassallo May 22 '10 at 2:02 ✎

2   a 4 space indent makes it difficult to hit 80 lines. I would go with 2 and 80 or 4 and 100. – nativist.bill.cutting Oct 7 '13 at 12:53 ✎

17

This limit seems to be a legacy from *ancient* IBM punch cards. Why is 80 characters the 'standard' limit for code width?

I really find it hard to work with only 80 characters for HTML. It gets unreadable really fast. So I decided for myself to take the line length on **GitHub** as measurement.

There seem to be different character limits depending on OS and/or browser. But 120 should be a quite safe value.

On Ubuntu:

- Firefox: 126
- Opera 12.16: 126
- Chromium: 113

On OSX 10.9:

- Google Chrome: 125
- Firefox: 122
- Safari: 121

Source: What is Github's character limit, or line length for viewing files on github?

On the other hand sometimes choosing your own standard doesn't work. Coding standards or linters for your language or framework might force you to stick to 80 characters. Which at least can be really helpful when it comes to reading code on mobile screens.

But for HTML I'd devo rise this number to 120 characters. For the sake of readability. I mean think of all the CSS-class-heavy frameworks like Bootstrap, what would your template look like in the end with only 80 characters line length? (Apart from that you'd better choose Bourbon Neat which won't pollute your HTML with tons of classes.)

edited May 20 '18 at 20:46   answered Nov 17 '15 at 13:33

leymannx
3,989   4   30   39

If a linter or framework forces me to stick to 80 chars I'm not using it, ever. – Marc.2377 Dec 21 '19 at 22:16

11

Google says 500-ish for JS: https://developers.google.com/closure/compiler/faq#linefeeds

The Closure Compiler intentionally adds line breaks every 500 characters or so. Firewalls and proxies sometimes corrupt or ignore large JavaScript files with very long lines. Adding line breaks every 500 characters prevents this problem.

uglify `--max-line-len 500` or grunt-contrib-uglify `options: { maxLineLen: 500 }`

I'm not sure if the limit applies to HTML or CSS, but I haven't seen that option for any CSS compressor I've used.

SMTP rules would apply to HTML email: https://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc0821.txt

The maximum total length of a command line including the command word and the CRLF is 512 characters.

answered Sep 20 '15 at 20:35

Webveloper
949   9   15

1   For me, this answer approaches the most correct, because it speaks to actual real-world limitations. Even if the reasoning behind it is kind of edge case (firewalls) it still makes a lot of practical sense. – JamesWilson Mar 21 '16 at 22:31

2 ▲ i'd like to point out that this is related to compiled scripts, something you shouldn't be editing, but rather compiling into. – Mathew Kleppin Dec 9 '19 at 17:21 ✎
⚑

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The 80 character line limit spawns from the days of screens without a lot of real estate. Now it's just like that for readability, and so it's possible to have two (or more) different code files opened side-by-side, without having to scroll to see each of them.

Those reasons still apply to HTML and JavaScript, although, it's obviously not necessary to comply with them. So it's up to you.

I agree that with HTML it can be difficult to keep within that limit, although with JavaScript it shouldn't be a problem.

⟲

answered May 22 '10 at 1:49
Carson Myers
31.8k 33 113 161

▲ Thanks! The reason I mention javascript is because it is sometimes embedded several indentation levels-deep in HTML. But I am really mostly talking about HTML. –
⚑ Matthew May 22 '10 at 1:51

4 ▲ Well I suppose one could say you shouldn't have deeply nested javascript in an HTML page. Personally I prefer to only have one language per source file as much as
⚑ possible – Carson Myers May 22 '10 at 1:57

▲

3

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The maximum limit on line length is whatever you feel comfortable reading and editing. personally, any code of mine that won't fit on the screen without wrapping will be rewritten.

⟲

answered May 22 '10 at 1:47
VoodooChild
9,420 6 57 96

▲

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Many "services" (eg Some **terminal** window implementations, **GitHub**, etc) will not wrap long lines and do not have scroll bars.
So anything beyond past 72 or 80 chars can simply get cut off.

Also, it just helps for readability even if there are scrollbars, code can be easier to read/digest/debug if it can fit on (or mostly on) a single screen width.

So while, the code will run, it may not always be able to be displayed in its entirety.

⟲

answered Jul 19 '18 at 0:10
SherylHohman
9,361 13 54 67

▲

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How about putting all of the HTML on one line? How will browsers cope with that? I've read somewhere that some browser (can't remember which one) breaks with long lines.

Stripping new lines from the file is an optimisation technique. You don't need to give clients the same easy-to-read version that you use when you develop it. You can give them a stripped version. Why? Bandwidth is not free.

⟲

answered Jul 25 '11 at 2:14
hassan
21

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1 ▲ I've never seen a web browser that cared about line breaks at all, let alone line length. Stripping out newlines is perfectly safe. – duskwuff -inactive- Jul 25 '11 at 6:16
⚑

▲ @duskwuff I'm not sure sure. I remember that YUI has some code on split lines because of a browser compatibility issue. They obviously valued the browser more
⚑ than a byte. – David Snabel-Caunt Jul 25 '11 at 20:26 ✎

1 ▲ That's a good point - line breaks do have some special meaning in JavaScript, as well as within `<pre>` in HTML. Still... – duskwuff -inactive- Jul 25 '11 at 22:30
⚑