Inline CSS and external CSS are two different methods of applying styles to HTML documents. Here's a breakdown of their differences:

Inline CSS

1. **Definition**: Inline CSS involves applying styles directly to individual HTML elements using the style attribute.

2. **Usage**: Each HTML element can have its own unique styles specified in the element's tag. For example:

```
<p style="color: red; font-size: 16px;">This is a paragraph.</p>
```

3. **Scope**: The styles defined inline only apply to the specific element they are applied to, making it easy to override other styles but not effective for reusability.

4. **Priority**: Inline styles have the highest specificity and will override styles from both external and internal CSS.

5. **Maintainability**: Inline styles can lead to duplication and make HTML files messy. They are harder to maintain, as styles are scattered throughout the HTML.

External CSS

1. **Definition**: External CSS involves linking a separate .css file to the HTML document, allowing styles to be centrally managed.

2. **Usage**: You link the external CSS file within the <head> section of your HTML document using the <link> tag:

```
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="styles.css">
```

3. **Scope**: Styles defined in an external CSS file can be applied to multiple elements across an entire site, promoting consistency and reusability.

4. **Priority**: External styles can be overridden by inline styles but have a lower priority than inline CSS.

5. **Maintainability**: External CSS improves maintainability, as changes can be made in one central file rather than in each individual HTML element. It also keeps HTML files cleaner and more readable.