Introduction to CSS

Intro

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) are the layout tool used for specifying how a web site looks. When you go to a page and see a navigation bar, a footer and images embedded in a news article with text wrapping around them it was CSS that made that happen. This is a really critical thing to remember. CSS defines the look of a page whereas HTML structures and gives meaning to content.

CSS Properties

The majority of CSS is about specifying properties and giving those properties values. There are well over a hundred different properties and far more possible values they can be assigned. Not all properties make sense on all elements.

An example property is `color` . The color property sets the text color of an element. For example This spans color was set to purple. The syntax for a property/value pair in css is `property: value;` . So to set the color to purple the code is `color: purple;` .

CSS Selectors

Another critical piece of CSS is selectors. We do not want to have to set the font of every single paragraph every time we write a new paragraph. That would be a tremendous amount of work and near catastrophic if one ever decided they wanted to switch from a serif to sans-serif font.

Selectors let us set rules for which elements styles will apply to. They can be as simple as applying a style to everything using the `*` selector or we can be as specific as applying a style to every other row of tables which exist in sections belonging to the class "data-display" `section.data-display tr:nth-of-type(odd)` . In general you will not be using selectors as specific as this but you can if you need to.
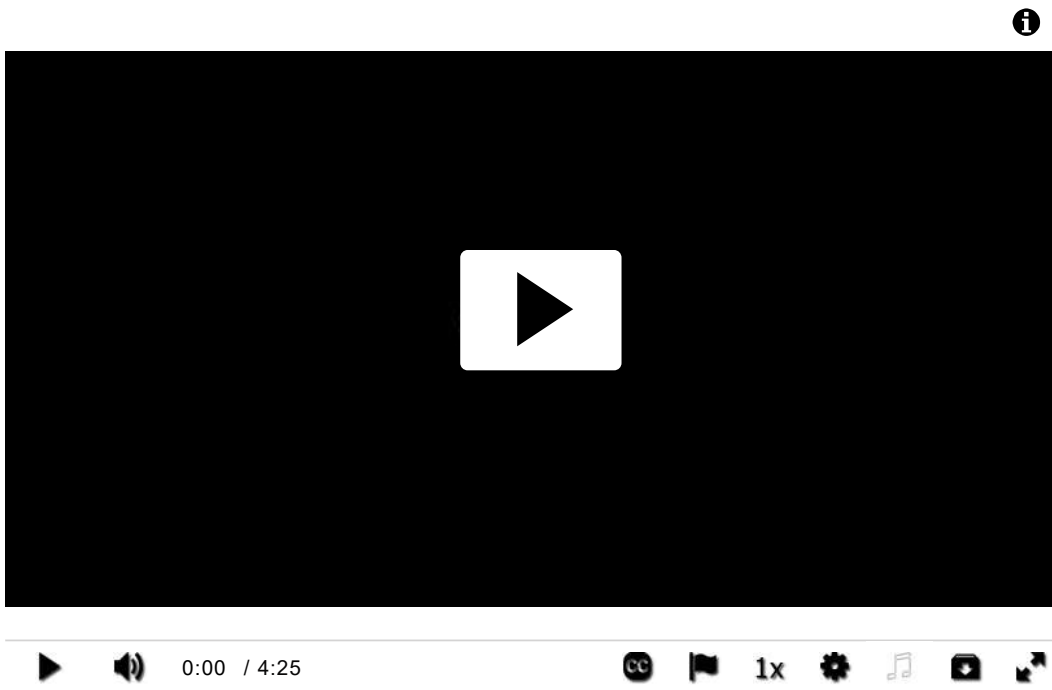
Syntax of CSS

CSS syntax has really only two parts, the selector syntax and the style syntax. Here is an example of a pair of CSS rules.

The selector comes before the curly braces. Within the curly braces are the CSS property and value pairs separated by semi-colons. Each CSS rule is usually separated by a new line for readability.

Activity

Go to a few websites you visit frequently. Use Chrome developer tools to inspect some elements and look at the styles which are applied to them and look at the selectors they use to apply those styles.

Review

This sub-module should give you a basic understanding of what CSS is and allow you to recognize CSS code when you see it. You may not know what the selector rule is actually doing or what the style is actually changing but at this point you should be able to look at a file and tell if it is an HTML file or a CSS file by looking at the code. In the next modules you will learn more about the common selectors and a few important CSS properties.