Difference between HTML and XHTML

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Tim Berners-Lee was the creator of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), and he alone worked on it. “In 1980 he created **Enquire**, a **software** program that used hypertext links to represent random associations" (Daly, 1996). First it worked only with documents on his computer, however he wanted to expand on that and be able to get information or documents from someone else’s computer. That would mean he would have to get permission from them, then add the new material to a central database and then look at the information. Tim however thought about having the document and his computer open to everyone, so not only his colleagues but everyone else could see the information.

This meant no central database, no central manager and no scaling programs. But what if someone wanted to add images, underline their links and many other things? So Tim put together “a relatively easy-to-learn coding system- HTML” (Quittner, 1999). A week later Tim put together the first but not last World Wide Web browser, “which allowed users anywhere to view his creation on their computer screen.” (Quittner, 1999). This creation of Tim’s made the number of people using the internet sky-rocket, it when from 600,000 people to 40 million, at one point; it was doubling every 53 days. However due to it being an easy-to-learn coding system, many web pages have become sloppy, so now we have Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML), but how is it different from HTML? Well I will tell you what is HTML, XHTML and what the differences between these markup languages are.

**What is HTML?**

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is the makeup language for websites, but it wasn’t until 1995 HTML 2.0 came out and five years later it became an international standard. With HTML though, you have to understand it is not a programming language, you cannot program “if this-do that” in the pages, however programming code can be embedded in an HTML page. “HTML was originally conceived as a simple markup language to render research documents on the Web” ("Computer desktop encyclopedia," 2010).

Now we can find anything and everything on the Web, not just research documents. We can order clothing, computers, furniture, plane tickets, food and we can search for where we want to go for vacation and where we want to live. You can make a web page about one of the things I listed or something else, and you don’t need to know the language in order to make one. There are programs that are drag and drop, where you drag what you want onto the page and put the information onto it. However, if something does not look right or is in the wrong spot, it does help to know the language. Also another advantage of knowing the language, is that you can fix bugs and issues and cut down on all the coding that the drag and drop programs create. So I will discuss some of the basic code that you would use in HTML.

First the HTML page will have these elements in them:

<HTML></HTML>

<TITLE></TITLE>

<BODY></BODY>

The title element is the title that shows up on the very top of your browser, an example would be when you are on Facebook, at the top it says Facebook. ("Html elements," 2010) The Body element is all the information on the page; it contains the text, the images, the videos, the links and everything else. Last is the HTML element, this is the root element and all your elements are contained in this. The second part of the code is the ending tag, which is </HTML> this ends the element. Some browsers will allow you not to end the tag, however not many browsers do and you can run into some issues if you don’t the tag.

Now we move onto some of the things you can put into the body element, and the first one I will talk about is text. You can make text bold, italic, small, big, emphasized and more. Below is the code you will use in order to change your text:

<b>**This makes the text bold**</b>

<i>*This makes your text italic*</i>

<small>This makes your text small</small>

<big>This makes your text big</big>

<em>Emphasized text</em>

Of course this is not all you can do but these are some basic text changes, and this makes your page a little bit more interesting because it’s just not nothing but text. You have things that are bold, mean it’s important and stand out to someone. Italic can mean it’s a title of a book, an article or something along those lines. Not only that you can have the text aligned on the page, it can be on the right hand side, centered or left hand side. This way the text is just not in all one spot and makes the user turn away because there is nothing but text.

Another element that are found on web pages are images, and the way to code that is: <img src="*url*" alt="*some\_text*"/> The url is the location of where the image is located at, which can be in a folder on your computer, on another web page, etc. The some\_text part is the alternative tag, and this stats the purpose of the image. For example, if you have a picture of a warning sign, the alt tag will look like this: alt =”Warning!” This way, if someone who is visually impaired will hear what is contained in the alt tag, so they know what the image is.

The last thing I am going to discuss is tables. Tables are most useful to organize

information, below is an example of how to write a table in HTML.

<table border="1">  
<tr>  
<td>row 1, cell 1</td>  
<td>row 1, cell 2</td>  
</tr>  
<tr>  
<td>row 2, cell 1</td>  
<td>row 2, cell 2</td>  
</tr>  
</table>

The result of that code would look like this:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| row 1, cell 1 | row 1, cell 2 |
| row 2, cell 1 | row 2, cell 2 |

However, most programmers who work with HTML don’t use the table tags to create tables anymore. Instead they use are div tags, which does the exact same thing and it helps organize the layout of the page also. There is also another way to create tables, and that is to create a container and use grid tags. Next topic is XHTML, which is like HTML except it is stricter then HTML.

**What is XHTML?**

Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML) is a combination of HTML and XML into a single format. XHTML can be extended with proprietary tags, and it must be coded more rigorously. The reason for XHTML was that “over the years, HTML coders have become sloppy, because Web browser software was originally written to tolerate many variations in HTML coding” ("Computer desktop encyclopedia," 2010). What is nice is that XHTML is coded just like HTML, so there is no need to learn new tags and how to write everything. You just need to make sure that you are aware of some of the changes that have occurred from going from HTML to XHTML. That is what I will discuss for you in the next section.

**The differences between HTML and XHTML**

The difference between HTML and XHTML is syntax and you have to end all tags in XHTML, whereas HTML you really didn’t have to end any tags. Not only that with wireless devices becoming more and more popular, it is harder to display HTML pages due to anyone can make HTML pages. The reason for changing from HTML to XHTML is because it is stricter and is more rigorous coding standards. Which might make you think this is one reason no one would use XHTML, however this makes the web page less sloppy looking, and is able to be view on wireless devices a lot easier. This means that when making an XHTML page you need to have some knowledge of the markup language, rather than with HTML where you didn’t need any experience. Now this brings me to discussing some of the syntax differences between the two languages.

The first one is that all the tag names must be in lowercase, and all elements must be closed. For example in HTML you would code the paragraph like this: <P>The fox jumped over the moon. However in XHTML you would code that same line like this, <p>The fox jumped over the moon. </p> “Even empty elements such as break must be terminated with a / symbol.” (Ficther, 2002) Below is an example of how you would write a break in HTML: <p>The fox jumped over the moon<br> and in XHTML you write it like this: <p>The fox jumped over the moon. <br/></p>.

Another difference is that attribute names must also be lowercase and attribute values must be quoted. “Quoting attributes was considered good practice in HTML, but usually the page worked if you left the quotes off”. (Ficther, 2002) An example of using quotes in HTML and XHTML would be when you are putting an image on the web page. In HTML you would write <img src=logo.gif WIDTH=78 HEIGHT=120> and so in XHTML you would put quotes around logo.gif, the 78 and 120, and width and height would be lowercased. Thus the code would look like this <img src=”logo.gif” width=”78” height=”120”/> and you would also close the element because HTML you don’t have to. There are other syntax differences between HTML and XHTML but those are just a few to show how they do differ.

One man wanted to be able to share his documents with people besides his colleagues, and created HTML and a browser to handle the hypertext language and since then the internet and web pages have been changing ever since. We were brought ENQUIRE, HTML and now we are slowly going to be shown XHTML, and who knows what might be brought to us next.

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