

Lab 3: CSS For Positioning

Objectives

1. Understand the CSS properties related to the Box Model.
2. See how changing the display type can affect content positioning.
3. Understand how flexbox can be used to create a page layout.

Setting up your workspace

Download the ZIP file for this week's lab. Extract the files and folders.

To add the labs files for this week drag the folder required into the Visual Studio Code workspace.

The files in the *lab3* folder will now appear on the left-hand side.

View the files

Your file structure should appear as follows:

```
f:\public_html\year1\pepd\lab3\  
f:\public_html\year1\pepd\lab3\images  
f:\public_html\year1\pepd\lab3\styles
```

As with the last lab there will be a number of HTML files created for you: *index.html*, *qualifications.html*, *skill-set.html* and *work-experience.html*. All four HTML pages are attached to the stylesheet *styles/main.css* which was done using the following:

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

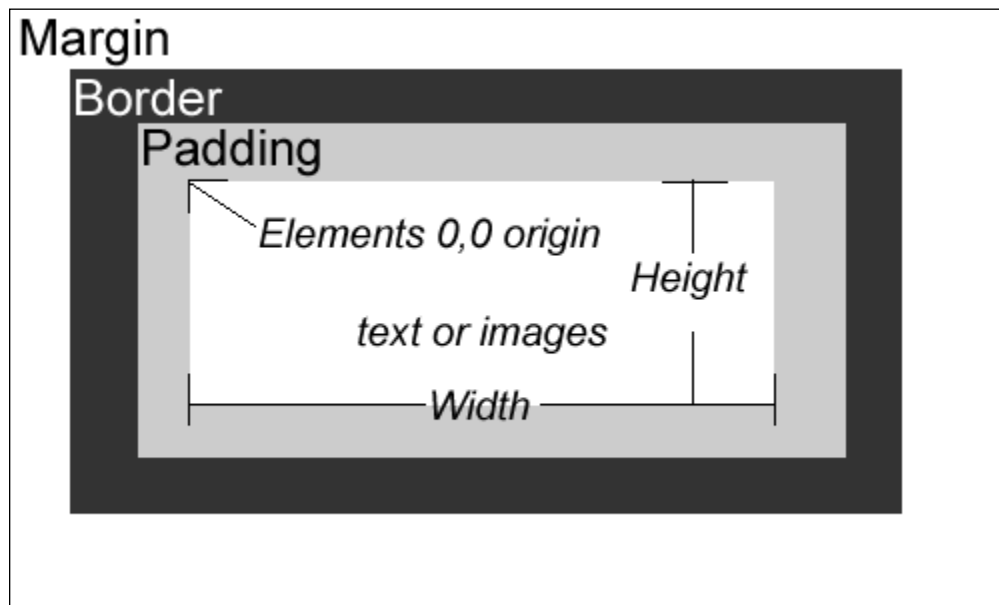
There is also a file called *flexcontainer.html* that we'll use to experiment with. Apart from when experimenting with *flexcontainer.html* the CSS in this lab should be added to *styles/main.css*.

Chrome Inspector

In this lab you'll find it very useful to use Google Chrome Inspector. To access the Inspector *right-click* anywhere in the page and choose *Inspect*. Under the elements tab you can see the HTML and CSS that is currently in play.

The Box Model

Every HTML element creates a box. With CSS, the properties of this box can be manipulated. These are the box's margins, borders, padding, width and height.



The box model explains how the various properties interrelate. The element itself is enclosed by three settable properties. Padding is closest to the element, the border is between padding and the margin, and the margin is placed around the border. Each of these three has its own properties and all are optional. In some instances, the box properties cannot be set. Most notably, inline elements (such as `<a>` and ``) cannot have their widths set (unless their display type is changed via CSS).

Box Model Margin

Margin is the space outside the border and adjacent to other content in the page.

Margin values can be set individually ie:

```
margin-left: 50px;  
margin-right: 150px;  
margin-top: 10px;  
margin-bottom: 150px;
```

The same value can be set to all four sides using the shorthand:

```
margin:10px;
```

If different values are required for all four sides then the following shorthand can be used:

```
/* Clockwise from the top left corner */  
/* i.e top right bottom left */  
margin: 10px 50px 20px 30px;
```

The same value can be assigned to the top/bottom and left/right using the shorthand:

```
/* top/bottom left/right */  
margin: 10px 50px;
```

Margin has a special value of `auto` that can only be applied to left/right margins. When an element has a width value, `margin: auto` will allocate whatever margin is available evenly between the left and right hand sides - this has the effect of centering the container.

Box Model Padding

Padding is the space inside the border.

As with `margin`, `padding` values can be set individually ie:

```
padding-left: 50px;  
padding-right: 150px;  
padding-top: 10px;  
padding-bottom: 150px;
```

The same value can be set to all four sides using the shorthand:

```
padding: 10px;
```

If different values are required for all four sides then the following shorthand can be used:

```
/* Clockwise from the top left corner*/  
/* i.e. top right bottom left */  
padding: 10px 50px 20px 30px;
```

The same value can be assigned to the top/bottom and left/right using the shorthand:

```
/* top/bottom left/right */  
padding: 10px 50px;
```

Box Model Border

This is the line drawn around an element and is separated from the element by any padding values set. The border properties are:

border-width The width of the border using either a specific value in a specific unit or the relative values `thin`, `medium` or `thick`.

border-style The style of the border can be `dotted`, `dashed`, `solid`, `groove`, `ridge`, `inset`, `outset` or `none`.

border-color The border colour as a hexadecimal or RGB value

Properties can be set specifically for each of the borders by using a rule that specifies the border as left, right, top or bottom. For example:

```
border-top-style: solid;  
border-top-color: #006666;  
border-right-style: dotted;  
border-right-width: 0.25em;
```

The most popular way to set a border is with the shorthand `border` property. This sets the three properties outlined above in one go. The rule can be written using the following syntax:

```
border: width style colour;
```

This shorthand can also be applied to individual sides ie:

```
border-top: 6pt dotted #FF0000;
```

Box Model width and height

These values can be set in pixels or as percentages. When percentages are used the element's dimensions are relative to any parent container.

Notice that the `width` and `height` properties are calculated inside any margin, border or padding values - this needs to be taken into account when creating a page layout.

Viewing the Box Model

Experiment with the box model by setting values for the *div#container* E.g:

```
#container{
  border:4px solid #ffff00;
  margin:50px;
  padding:50px;
}
```

We'll use `margin:auto` to center the *div#container*.

The `width` of the container can be set to a fixed width eg:

```
#container{
  width:1200px;
  margin:auto;
}
```

This will give the `#container` a width of 1200px and centre it in the browser window.

We can also use `width` values in percentages. Change the `#container` rule to:

```
#container{
  width:100%;
  margin:auto;
}
```

When using a percentage the container will be fluid and expand or contract within the browser window.

We might want to avoid making it too big or too small. As such we can use properties of `min-width` and `max-width` to set lower and upper limits. Amend the `#container` rule to:

```
#container{  
    width:100%;  
    margin:auto;  
    max-width: 1200px;  
    min-width: 600px;  
}
```

Container - parent/child

The container is a useful concept in page layout, as it allows us to control the dimensions of any ‘child’ elements that are nested inside it.

Complex page layouts will have various levels of nesting with `<div>` nested inside `<div>` after `<div>`.

Take a look at the HTML used in all the files in this lab. You’ll see that each has a ‘parent’ container `<div>`, into which child elements are placed.

Normal Flow

As well as the box model, an important concept is that of normal flow. This relates to the way HTML block elements flow down the page, and inline elements flow left to right.

Common block elements are `<p>`, `<h1>`, `<div>`, `` and ``.

Common inline elements are ``, `<a>` and ``.

With CSS however we can change this native behaviour. A `` is a block element. However, we can change it to behave like an inline element. In the *index.html* notice the navigation bar in *div#nav*.

Add the following to the stylesheet in *styles/main.css*.

```
#nav ul li{
    display:inline;
}
```

Notice how the links in the list are now aligned left to right - this is because they now behave as inline elements.

Many HTML elements have default values. A `` has a left padding value. This can be removed with:

```
#nav ul{
    padding-left:0;
    list-style:none;
}
```

The `list-style:none` is also used to remove any list marker.

The design calls for white links. Therefore, we'll add the following to create a blue header with white links:

```
#header{
    background-color: #263248;
    border-radius: 8px;
}
#nav li a{
    text-decoration: none;
    color: #fff;
}
#nav li a:hover{
    color: #7E8AA2;
}
```

We can tidy the appearance by amending the *#nav ul li* and adding a new rule for only the first list item. This will create a dividing border between the links.

```
#nav ul li{
    display:inline;
    padding-left:10px;
    padding-right:10px;
    border-left:1px solid #7E8AA2;
}
#nav li:first-child{
    border-left:none;
}
```

Introducing Flexbox

There are a number of ways to create page layouts with HTML and CSS. In recent years a technique known as 'flexbox' has become increasingly popular with developers.

Flexbox CSS properties can be used to control how different HTML elements behave when filling / 'flexing' into the space available.

When working with flexbox two types of element are created.

Flex Container: The Flex container is any HTML element that has been allocated a `display: flex` value. Most commonly this is a block element such as a `<div>`.

Flex Item: Flex items are those HTML elements that are the immediate children of a Flex container. These can grow or shrink to fill the space available in the flex container.

Open the experimental file *flexcontainer.html*. This has HTML of:

```
<div class="flex-container">
  <div class="item">Flex Item One</div>
  <div class="item">Flex Item Two</div>
  <div class="item">Flex Item Three</div>
</div>
```

and CSS of:

```
. flex-container{
  display: flex;
}
```

The `<div class="flex-container">` has been made a flex container and the three `<div class="item">` elements are all flex items.

In the sample files open *flexcontainer.html* and preview it in your browser.

The default behaviour of flex items is to attempt to fit in their parent container as efficiently as possible horizontally. The browser will therefore allocate the space available based on the content of each flex item.

Try changing the width of the `flex-container`. Initially, there won't be much different in the layout because we have so little content. The extra available space is simply added to the right hand side.

Amend the flex container rule with:

```
justify-content: space-between;
```

The available space is now equally distributed between the flex items.

Comment the CSS to display the `div.text`. We now have more content. Notice how the space is distributed based on the content of each flex item so you can no longer guarantee the flex items are the same width.

Properties can also be applied to the flex items. Add a CSS property to this test file as follows:

```
.item{  
    width: 300px;  
}
```

The three flex items now have the same width as each other. From a design perspective the text is too close so change the rule to add some padding:

```
.item{  
    width:300px;  
    padding:10px;  
}
```

Although we would expect the width of the items to be 300px the box model means they are actually only 280px because of the 10px of padding on the left and right hand sides.

To prove this, comment the CSS to display the images. See how the final image overflows.

We can fix this by increasing the width of the container by 60px - 6 times 10 pixels worth of padding.

```
.flex-container{
  display: flex;
  width: 960px;
}
```

Using flex-basis

With flexbox, flex items can have the `flex-basis` property set. The `flex-basis` property sets the initial main size of the element. As such it is similar to the CSS `width` property. However, if both `width` and `flex-basis` are set then the `width` property is ignored.

Change the CSS on the `.item` to:

```
.item{
  flex-basis: 300px;
  padding: 10px;
}
```

Like `width`, `flex-basis` can take values as percentages or in units such as pixels.

The `flex-basis` is one of three flex items properties that can be set by the shorthand CSS property of `flex`. The other two are `flex-grow` and `flex-shrink`.

Using flex-grow

The `flex-grow` property controls how a flex item grows and takes a positive integer. This represents the proportion of the available space than will be used by that particular flex item. It does not represent the proportion of the total space used. To see this in action, change the CSS of the container to a width percentage of 100%.

```
.flex-container{
  display: flex;
  width: 100%;
}
```

There is plenty of available space to the right-hand side. Now uncomment the CSS rules `.left-col`, `.right-col` and `.middle-col`.

The middle column has a flex-grow of 4 compared to the flex-grow of 1 on the left and right columns. As such the middle column helps itself to 80% of the extra available space, compared to the 10% each taken by the left and right columns.

It is best to use `flex-basis` with `flex-grow` as this ensures the value used for calculating the available space is the one set by `flex-basis`.

Using flex-shrink

The `flex-shrink` property works in the reverse fashion to `flex-grow`. That is it takes an integer value and this represents how much as a proportion the item should shrink. Shrinking occurs when the container is not wide enough for the content.

If you don't want your flex item to shrink then use a value of 0.

The Flex Shorthand

The `flex` shorthand can be used to set grow, shrink and basis in that order. For example the following sets both shrink and grow to 1 and then basis to 33%.

```
.item{
    flex:1 1 33%;
}
```

Note if you add the above to our sample file all three columns will be the same width even though they have different `flex-grow` values set by the CSS rules `.left-col`, `.right-col` and `.middle-col`. This is because as each column now has a flex-basis value of 33% there is no available space to distribute so the different flex-grow values are irrelevant. If you want to see the effect of the different `flex-grow` values change the 33% to a lower value such as 25%.

There is much more to flexbox that we've covered here but you'll see how effective it can be to create layouts.

Applying Flexbox to our Design

We'll now apply some flexbox to our main design. We are going to look at the header first so before we do so add a couple of rules to tidy up the font colours.

```
#header h1 a{
    color:#fff;
    text-decoration: none;
}
#header h1 a:hover{
    text-decoration: underline;
}
#logo{
    padding:10px;
}
```

Next, amend the `#header` rule for as follows:

```
#header{
    background-color:#263248;
    border-radius:8px;
    display:flex;
}
```

The `div#header` will now behave as a flex container.

The logo text and the navigation bar are now stacked from the left and we have plenty of available space to the right. As such we can use `justify-content`.

```
#header{
    background-color: #263248;
    border-radius: 8px;
    display:flex;
    justify-content:space-between;
}
```

Test and preview your page. The navigation bar should now appear to the right-hand side.

Next we'd like a sidebar on the right hand side of the main content. Add the following to distinguish between the *sidebar* and the *content*.

```
.section{
    padding:0 10px 10px 0;
}
.sidebar{
    padding:20px 40px;
    border:1px solid #ccc;
    border-radius:8px;
    margin: 70px 0 0 10px;
}
```

Both `.section` and `.sidebar` are children of `#content` so by adding the following they will become flex items.

```
#content{
    display:flex;
}
```

We might expect when resizing the browser window that the `.section` content would adjust. However, it currently won't because of the image in that part of the HTML. The image cannot by default be resized as it has a given width and height. As the image has a class of `.resize-img`, by adding the following we can change the behaviour of the image such that it will expand or contract to fit inside its parent element.

```
.resize-img{
    width:100%;
    height:100%;
}
```

This now the image in the `.section` resizes as required. However, we only want the `.sidebar` to have a width of 200px (the width of the profile PNG image) and we don't want it resize. Therefore we should add the following to `.sidebar`:

```
flex:0 0 200px;
```

The `.sidebar` now cannot flex (grow or shrink) as `flex-grow` is 0 and `flex-shrink` is 0 and has a `flex-basis` of 200px.

Test your page in the browser.

For completeness we could also add the following to the `.section`:

```
flex: 1 1 auto;
```

This indicates that the `.section` can grow or shrink and its width/flex-basis should be automatically set based on the space available.

Finally add the following to style the footer.

```
#footer{
    border-top:1px solid #ccc;
    margin:20px 10px 10px 0;
    clear:left;
    font-size:0.8em;
    text-align:center;
    font-style:italic;
}
```

Styling the table

To finish this example, other styling can be added for the `<table>` on the *qualifications.html* page.

```
table{
    width:100%;
    max-width: 600px;
    min-width: 300px;
}
th, td{
    padding: 10px 4px;
    text-align: left;
}
th{
    text-transform: uppercase;
    border-bottom: 4px solid #000;
    background-color: #fff;
}
tr:nth-child(odd){
    background-color: #ccc;
}
```

The `tr:nth-child(odd)` selector is used to give the table a striped effect by colouring odd table rows.

Creating and Styling a Definition List

On the *skill-set.html* page, there is an HTML construct we haven't seen which is called a definition list. This consists of:

- `<dl>` to define a definition list.
- `<dt>` to define a definition term.
- `<dd>` to contain a definition description.

This can be styled like any other HTML. Add these rules to your stylesheet.

```
dt{
    font-weight: bold;
    border-top: 1px dashed #ccc;
    padding: 20px 0;
}
dt:first-child{
    border-top: none;
}
dd{
    padding: 0 0 20px 0;
}
```

A definition list is an example of a very semantic HTML element. In the next lab, we'll add even more semantic elements.

Float

Until recently CSS layouts almost exclusively relied on a CSS property known as `float`.

With `float` values of `left` or `right` could be applied to move HTML elements (float them) to the left or right respectively. This technique was used in combination with the box model to stack HTML elements to create grids. The most well-known exponent of this technique was the CSS Bootstrap framework.

However, modern browser support for flexbox is such that you no longer need to use the `float` technique for layouts. As such `float` can be relegated to what it was originally designed for which is allowing an element to be placed along the left or right side of its container. This then allows text and inline elements to wrap around the floated element.

In the *index.html* add the following `` tag to the second paragraph of text.

```

```

In the *main.css* create a rule `.left-float` as follows:

```
.left-float{  
    float:left;  
    padding:0 15px 15px 0;  
}
```

The image will now 'float' to the left allowing text to flow around it. A padding value of 15px is set to the right and bottom only, in order to pad the image away from the text.

Try creating a `.right-float` rule and floating an image to the right hand side.