11.2.4

HTML Declarations and Metatags

In this section, you'll learn about declarations and metatags. These enhance HTML documents by supplying more detailed information.

First, let's create a new HTML page. Open VS Code, and then create a file named `index2.html`. In the blank HTML file, place an exclamation point (`!`) on the first line, and then press Enter. The editor autofills with the code that we need for a basic HTML page, as the following code shows:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible" content="IE=edge">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0"
    <title>Document</title>
</head>
<body>

</body>
</html>
```

The preceding code is a bit more complicated than the previous example. But, we can still discern the basic structure of the document. Remember the different tag types? The code has a head section, which contains some metadata about the HTML document, as follows:

```
<head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible" content="IE=edge">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0"
```

```
    <title>Document</title>
</head>
```

The code also has a body section, which is currently blank, as follows:

```
<body>

</body>
```

Let's now examine the code in more detail:

- The `<!DOCTYPE html>` line: This is a declaration and not a tag. A **declaration** doesn't contain content. Instead, it informs web browsers of the version of HTML that the document uses. This should always be the first line in an HTML document. And, the default declaration is HTML 5, which is the version that's currently the most widely used.
- The `<html lang="en">` tag: This is the opening < `html` > tag. Additionally, `lang="en"` specifies that English is the language that the HTML document uses. This is called a **language attribute**. It tells screen readers which pronunciation engine to use.
- The `<head>` opening tag: This opens the head section, which serves as a container for the setup elements. Think of it like this: In Jupyter Notebook, imports occur in the first cell. In Python, imports occur at the beginning of the code. In HTML, imports occur in the head section.
- The `<meta>` tags: The name meta is short for metadata. We place metadata tags in the head section. They give basic information, like the page width, to the web browser. We won't go over all the metadata tags in this code. But if you'd like more information, see HTML Tag (https://www.w3schools.com/tags/tag_meta.asp) in the W3Schools reference documentation.

NOTE

You might have noticed that each of our `<meta>` tags consists of only an opening tag. We call this a **singleton tag**. Singleton tags are those that don't need a closing tag.

- The `<title>` and `</title>` tags: These are the opening and closing tags that contain the title, which gets displayed on the web browser tab.
- The `</head>` closing tag: This closes the head section.

- The `<body>` and `</body>` tags: These will contain the elements that display on the webpage, such as navigation menus, lists, and paragraphs.
- The `</html>` closing tag: This closes the HTML document.

Finally, note that in the head section, the `meta` and `title` tags are indented. That makes the code look cleaner and thus seem easier to read.

Now, practice creating a basic HTML document yourself in the following Skill Drill:

SKILL DRILL

In VS Code, create a new HTML file named `index3.html`. Type an exclamation point (`!`), and then press Enter or Tab to create a default HTML document. Then place two paragraph elements in the body. The text can be anything you like.

So far, you've learned important basic skills about creating HTML elements. But, that's only the start of building your coding skills. Next, you'll learn about more HTML elements that can add depth and details to a webpage.