Bootcamp   Menu ▾

Spaces

HTML   CSS

XML Syntax Rules

[‹ Previous]   [Next ›]

The syntax rules of XML are very simple and logical. The rules are easy to learn, and easy to use.

XML Documents Must Have a Root Element

XML documents must contain one **root** element that is the **parent** of all other elements:

```
<root>
  <child>
    <subchild>.....</subchild>
  </child>
</root>
```

In this example **<note>** is the root element:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<note>
  <to>Tove</to>
  <from>Jani</from>
```

```
<heading>Reminder</heading>
<body>Don't forget me this weekend!</body>
</note>
```

The XML Prolog

This line is called the XML **prolog**:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
```

The XML prolog is optional. If it exists, it must come first in the document.

XML documents can contain international characters, like Norwegian øæå or French êèé.

To avoid errors, you should specify the encoding used, or save your XML files as UTF-8.

UTF-8 is the default character encoding for XML documents.

Character encoding can be studied in our Character Set Tutorial.

UTF-8 is also the default encoding for HTML5, CSS, JavaScript, PHP, and SQL.

All XML Elements Must Have a Closing Tag

In XML, it is illegal to omit the closing tag. All elements **must** have a closing tag:

```
<p>This is a paragraph.</p>
<br />
```

Note: The XML prolog does not have a closing tag! This is not an error. The prolog is not a part of the XML document.

XML Tags are Case Sensitive

XML tags are case sensitive. The tag <Letter> is different from the tag <letter>.

Opening and closing tags must be written with the same case:

```
<message>This is correct</message>
```

"Opening and closing tags" are often referred to as "Start and end tags". Use whatever you prefer. It is exactly the same thing.

XML Elements Must be Properly Nested

In HTML, you might see improperly nested elements:

```
<b><i>This text is bold and italic</b></i>
```

In XML, all elements **must** be properly nested within each other:

```
<b><i>This text is bold and italic</i></b>
```

In the example above, "Properly nested" simply means that since the <i> element is opened inside the <b> element, it must be closed inside the <b> element.

XML Attribute Values Must Always be Quoted

XML elements can have attributes in name/value pairs just like in HTML.

In XML, the attribute values must always be quoted:

```
<note date="12/11/2007">
  <to>Tove</to>
  <from>Jani</from>
</note>
```

Entity References

Some characters have a special meaning in XML.

If you place a character like "<" inside an XML element, it will generate an error because the parser interprets it as the start of a new element.

This will generate an XML error:

```
<message>salary < 1000</message>
```

To avoid this error, replace the "<" character with an **entity reference**:

```
<message>salary &lt; 1000</message>
```

There are 5 pre-defined entity references in XML:

<	<	less than
>	>	greater than

&	&	ampersand
'	'	apostrophe
"	"	quotation mark

Only < and & are strictly illegal in XML, but it is a good habit to replace > with > as well.

Comments in XML

The syntax for writing comments in XML is similar to that of HTML:

```
<!-- This is a comment -->
```

Two dashes in the middle of a comment are not allowed:

```
<!-- This is an invalid -- comment -->
```

White-space is Preserved in XML

XML does not truncate multiple white-spaces (HTML truncates multiple white-spaces to one single white-space):

XML:	Hello Tove
HTML:	Hello Tove

XML Stores New Line as LF

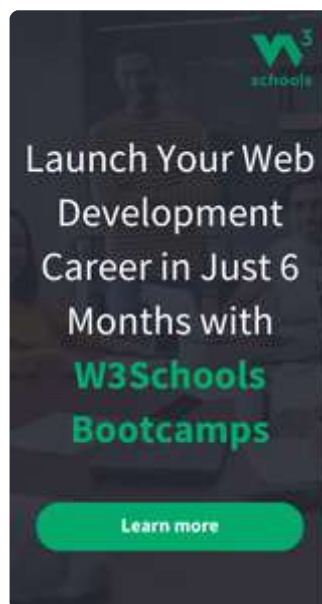Windows applications store a new line as: carriage return and line feed (CR+LF).

Unix and Mac OSX use LF.

Old Mac systems use CR.

XML stores a new line as LF.

Well Formed XML

XML documents that conform to the syntax rules above are said to be "Well Formed" XML documents.
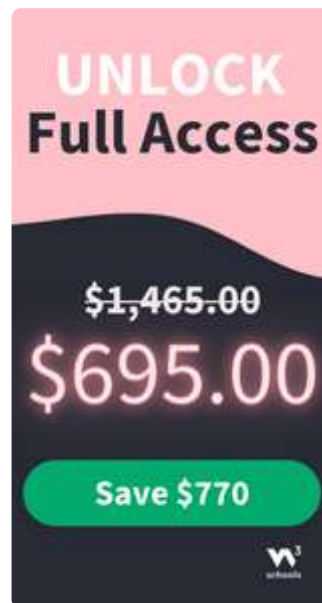
〈 Previous   Next 〉

**Get certified
by completing
a XML
course today!**

Get started

Report Error

Spaces

Upgrade

Newsletter

Get Certified

Top Tutorials

HTML Tutorial
CSS Tutorial
JavaScript Tutorial
How To Tutorial
SQL Tutorial
Python Tutorial
W3.CSS Tutorial
Bootstrap Tutorial
PHP Tutorial
Java Tutorial
C++ Tutorial
jQuery Tutorial

Top References

HTML Reference
CSS Reference
JavaScript Reference
SQL Reference
Python Reference
W3.CSS Reference
Bootstrap Reference
PHP Reference
HTML Colors
Java Reference
Angular Reference
jQuery Reference

Top Examples

HTML Examples
CSS Examples
JavaScript Examples
How To Examples
SQL Examples
Python Examples
W3.CSS Examples

Bootstrap Examples
PHP Examples
Java Examples
XML Examples
jQuery Examples

Get Certified

HTML Certificate
CSS Certificate
JavaScript Certificate
Front End Certificate
SQL Certificate
Python Certificate
PHP Certificate
jQuery Certificate
Java Certificate
C++ Certificate
C# Certificate
XML Certificate

FORUM | ABOUT