

# Using width, max-width and margin: auto;

As mentioned in the previous chapter; a block-level element always takes up the full width available (stretches out to the left and right as far as it can).

Setting the `width` of a block-level element will prevent it from stretching out to the edges of its container. Then, you can set the margins to `auto`, to horizontally center the element within its container. The element will take up the specified width, and the remaining space will be split equally between the two margins:

This `<div>` element has a width of 500px, and margin set to `auto`.

**Note:** The problem with the `<div>` above occurs when the browser window is smaller than the width of the element. The browser then adds a horizontal scrollbar to the page.

Using `max-width` instead, in this situation, will improve the browser's handling of small windows. This is important when making a site usable on small devices:

This `<div>` element has a max-width of 500px, and margin set to `auto`.

**Tip:** Resize the browser window to less than 500px wide, to see the difference between the two divs!

Here is an example of the two divs above:

## Example

```
div.ex1 {  
    width: 500px;  
    margin: auto;  
    border: 3px solid #73AD21;  
}  
  
div.ex2 {  
    max-width: 500px;  
    margin: auto;  
    border: 3px solid #73AD21;  
}
```