

1. CSS – OVERVIEW

What is CSS?

Cascading Style Sheets, fondly referred to as **CSS**, is a simple design language intended to simplify the process of making web pages presentable.

CSS handles the look and feel part of a web page. Using CSS, you can control the color of the text, the style of fonts, the spacing between paragraphs, how columns are sized and laid out, what background images or colors are used, as well as a variety of other effects.

CSS is easy to learn and understand but it provides a powerful control over the presentation of an HTML document. Most commonly, CSS is combined with the markup languages HTML or XHTML.

Advantages of CSS

- **CSS saves time** - You can write CSS once and then reuse the same sheet in multiple HTML pages. You can define a style for each HTML element and apply it to as many web pages as you want.
- **Pages load faster** - If you are using CSS, you do not need to write HTML tag attributes every time. Just write one CSS rule of a tag and apply it to all the occurrences of that tag. So, less code means faster download times.
- **Easy maintenance** - To make a global change, simply change the style, and all the elements in all the web pages will be updated automatically.
- **Superior styles to HTML** - CSS has a much wider array of attributes than HTML, so you can give a far better look to your HTML page in comparison to HTML attributes.
- **Multiple Device Compatibility** - Style sheets allow content to be optimized for more than one type of device. By using the same HTML document, different versions of a website can be presented for handheld devices such as PDAs and cellphones or for printing.
- **Global web standards** - Now HTML attributes are being deprecated and it is being recommended to use CSS. So it's a good idea to start using CSS in all the HTML pages to make them compatible with future browsers.

Who Creates and Maintains CSS?

CSS is created and maintained through a group of people within the W3C called the CSS Working Group. The CSS Working Group creates documents called **specifications**. When a specification has been discussed and officially ratified by the W3C members, it becomes a recommendation.

These ratified specifications are called recommendations because the W3C has no control over the actual implementation of the language. Independent companies and organizations create that software.

NOTE: The World Wide Web Consortium or W3C is a group that makes recommendations about how the Internet works and how it should evolve.

CSS Versions

Cascading Style Sheets level 1 (CSS1) came out of W3C as a recommendation in December 1996. This version describes the CSS language as well as a simple visual formatting model for all the HTML tags.

CSS2 became a W3C recommendation in May 1998 and builds on CSS1. This version adds support for media-specific style sheets e.g. printers and aural devices, downloadable fonts, element positioning and tables.

2. CSS – SYNTAX

A CSS comprises of style rules that are interpreted by the browser and then applied to the corresponding elements in your document. A style rule is made of three parts:

- **Selector:** A selector is an HTML tag at which a style will be applied. This could be any tag like <h1> or <table> etc.
- **Property:** A property is a type of attribute of HTML tag. Put simply, all the HTML attributes are converted into CSS properties. They could be *color*, *border*, etc.
- **Value:** Values are assigned to properties. For example, *color* property can have the value either *red* or *#F1F1F1* etc.

You can put CSS Style Rule Syntax as follows:

```
selector { property: value }
```

Example: You can define a table border as follows:

```
table{ border :1px solid #C00; }
```

Here table is a selector and border is a property and the given value *1px solid #C00* is the value of that property.

You can define selectors in various simple ways based on your comfort. Let me put these selectors one by one.

The Type Selectors

This is the same selector we have seen above. Again, one more example to give a color to all level 1 headings:

```
h1 {  
    color: #36CFFF;  
}
```

The Universal Selectors

Rather than selecting elements of a specific type, the universal selector quite simply matches the name of any element type:

```
* {  
    color: #000000;  
}
```

This rule renders the content of every element in our document in black.

The Descendant Selectors

Suppose you want to apply a style rule to a particular element only when it lies inside a particular element. As given in the following example, the style rule will apply to `` element only when it lies inside the `` tag.

```
ul em {  
    color: #000000;  
}
```

The Class Selectors

You can define style rules based on the class attribute of the elements. All the elements having that class will be formatted according to the defined rule.

```
.black {  
    color: #000000;  
}
```

This rule renders the content in black for every element with class attribute set to *black* in our document. You can make it a bit more particular. For example:

```
h1.black {  
    color: #000000;  
}
```

This rule renders the content in black for only `<h1>` elements with class attribute set to *black*.

You can apply more than one class selectors to a given element. Consider the following example:

```
<p class="center bold">  
This para will be styled by the classes center and bold.
```