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Inherit, Initial and Unset Values for CSS Properties

Published on December 10, 2016

CSS

By Alligator.io

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All CSS properties have 3 basic values in common: `inherit`, `initial` and `unset`. Inherit and initial have been around for a long time, but unset is a new addition. What the values will do can at times get confusing, so here’s a breakdown:

- `inherit`: Get the property from the parent element.
- `initial`: The default value for the property (the browser default).
- `unset`: Acts as either inherit or initial. It’ll act as inherit if the parent has a value that matches, or else it will act as initial.

Here’s an example to make is clear. Here’s our markup:

```
<div class="wrapper">
  <p class="one">Snake<p>
  <p class="two">Lizard<p>
  <p class="three">Alligator</p>
  <p>Komodo Dragon</p>
</div>
```

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```
p.one { color: inherit; }

p.two { color: initial; }

p.three { color: unset; }
```

- **Snake** is orange, it inherits from the wrapper `div`.
- **Lizard** is black, it takes the initial browser default value.
- **Alligator** is orange, in this case `unset` acts as `inherit` because there is a parent with a matching value.
- **Komodo Dragon** is purple, the only paragraph that takes its value from the `.wrapper p` selector.

👉 A neat trick with `unset` is when combined with the `all` shorthand, which automatically affects all properties of a selector. The following unsets every properties of the selected `p` elements:

```
article p {
  all: unset;
}
```

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imechemi • January 3, 2022

I always see these values in editor's auto-suggestion but never understood what they meant and also I never had to use them. But this is enlightening to know that they have a meaningful function. 👋🏻

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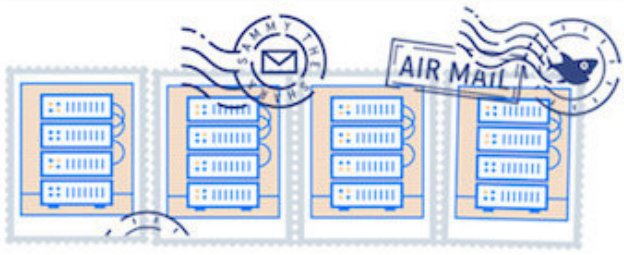

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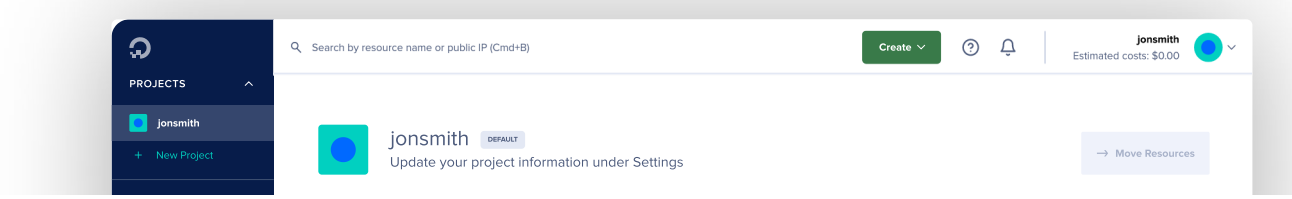

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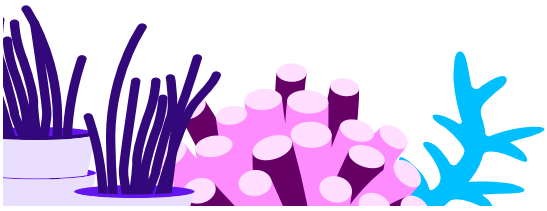

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