According to HTML standards, each HTML document requires a *document type declaration*. The "DOCTYPE" begins the HTML document and tells a [validator](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/index.html.en) which version ofHTML to use in checking the document's syntax.

If standard HTML does not meet your needs but you still wish to gain the benefits of HTML validation, see the section on [using a custom DTD](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/customdtd.html).

The following DOCTYPEs are commonly used:

**<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/strict.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **HTML 4.01 Strict**. HTML 4.01 Strict is a trimmed down version of [HTML 4.01](http://www.w3.org/TR/html401/) that emphasizes structure over presentation. [Deprecated elements](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/deprecated.html) and attributes (including most presentational attributes), [frames](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/frames/), and link targets are not allowed in HTML 4 Strict. By writing to HTML 4 Strict, authors can achieve accessible, structurally rich documents that easily adapt to [style sheets](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/css/) and different browsing situations. However, HTML 4 Strict documents may look bland on very old browsers that lack support for style sheets.

Newer browsers such as Internet Explorer 5 for Mac, Netscape 6, and [Mozilla](http://www.mozilla.org/) use a standards-compliant rendering for HTML 4 Strict documents. These browsers use a "quirks" mode for most other document types to emulate rendering bugs in older browsers.

**<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/loose.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **HTML 4.01 Transitional**. HTML 4 Transitional includes all elements and attributes of [HTML 4 Strict](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/doctype.html#html4strict) but adds presentational attributes,[deprecated elements](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/deprecated.html), and link targets.

Newer browsers such as Internet Explorer 5 for Mac, Netscape 6, and [Mozilla](http://www.mozilla.org/) use a standards-compliant rendering for HTML 4.01 Transitional documents that include the URI of theDTD in the DOCTYPE. These browsers use a "quirks" mode to emulate rendering bugs in older browsers if the URI is omitted:

<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN">

**<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Frameset//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/frameset.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **HTML 4.01 Frameset**. HTML 4 Frameset is a variant of [HTML 4 Transitional](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/doctype.html#html4transitional) for documents that use [frames](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/frames/).

**<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **XHTML 1.0 Strict**. [XHTML 1.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/) Strict is an XML version of [HTML 4 Strict](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/doctype.html#html4strict).

**<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **XHTML 1.0 Transitional**. [XHTML 1.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/) Transitional is an XML version of [HTML 4 Transitional](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/doctype.html#html4transitional).

**<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Frameset//EN"  
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-frameset.dtd">**

This declares the document to be **XHTML 1.0 Frameset**. [XHTML 1.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/) Frameset is an XML version of [HTML 4 Frameset](http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/doctype.html#html4frameset).

**<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 3.2 Final//EN">**

This declares the document to be **HTML 3.2**. [HTML 3.2](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/wilbur/) is well supported by most browsers in use. However, HTML 3.2 has limited support for [style sheets](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/css/) and no support for[HTML 4](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/) features such as [frames](http://www.htmlhelp.com/reference/html40/frames/) and internationalization.

**<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//IETF//DTD HTML//EN">**

This declares the document to be **HTML 2.0**. [HTML 2.0](http://www.w3.org/MarkUp/html-spec/) is widely supported by browsers but lacks support for tables, frames, and internationalization, as well as many commonly used presentational elements and attributes.