Text Editors

Before you build a webpage or website, you must have the right software to assist you with the process. Never use word processing programs, like Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or Open Office, to write HTML. Although they all include some HTML features, the quality of HTML code they produce is inferior, and bloated with presentational markup. It would be best if you had a good text editor to work with HTML.

A text editor is a program that allows users to create and edit plain text files, and that's what an HTML file is: it's plain text with markup that uses angle brackets to denote tags.

Plain Text (Textual) Editors vs. HTML (or WYSIWYG) Editors

Stay away from any HTML tool that advertises itself as a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor. A **WYSIWYG editor** allows the user to view something very similar to the end result— while the document is being created. In other words, it hides the actual HTML code from the user. Many times, too, the quality of the HTML code these tools produce is inferior, and bloated with presentational markup.

Plain text software is a basic text editor that doesn't add any extraneous code to your files. All computers come with this type of editor— on a Windows machine, it is Notepad, on a Mac it is TextEdit. You can certainly use either of these to edit HMTL code without adding any extra formatting or garbage code to your files. In the early days of the Web, designers and developers used exactly these tools when they wrote code on a PC or a Mac. Those doing their work on a terminal attached to a mainframe computer used the plain text editors on those platforms.

Choosing an HTML Editor

A good HTML editor is software that makes it easier and faster to write the clean, error-free HTML code that we will teach you to write in this course. Specifically, these types of editors have smart features like:

- **Auto-completion** — the software detects when a user enters an opening HTML tag and automatically inserts the closing tag. **Note:** This feature has been intentionally turned off of the lab tool in this course to assist you in developing good coding habits.

- **Error-checking** — the software checks the HTML file for syntax errors as you work and alerts you in some way, so you can go back and fix the problem right away.

- **Syntax highlighting** — the software displays the content of your HTML file in a particular color and the HTML structural tags in the file in a different color so you can assess the structure of the file at a glance.

A good HTML editor can significantly boost your productivity. Listed below are some free, cross-platform HTML editors:

- [Atom](#)— editor for both HTML and CSS, but it requires some customization to make it work. Here's an [article](#) that explains how to do

the customization.

- [Komodo Edit](#)
- [Visual Studio Code](#): —another great tool, but requires setup to customize for HTML and CSS

Be Sure to Use a Text Editor

Be Sure to Use a Plain Text Editor. Do not use Word or WordPad!

CSS files are also plain text files, so you can use the same editor for HTML and CSS! Choose wisely.

Review Checkpoint

To test your understanding of the content presented in this assignment, please click on the Questions icon below. If you have trouble answering any of the questions presented here, you are always free to return to this or any assignment to re-read the material.

1. What is an HTML editor?

a. A text-based tool which assists in creating and editing HTML code.

Incorrect. Try again.

b. A text-based tool that features code completion (also called autocompletion).

Incorrect. Try again.

c. A text-based tool that offers users functionalities that boost productivity.

Incorrect. Try again.

d. All of the above.

Correct. An HTML editor includes all of the above features.