

# The Concept of Cascade and Inheritance in CSS

Understanding the concept of cascade and Inheritance is important to understanding how CSS works. In this lesson we will take a look at what these concepts are.

Every successful CSS developer understands cascade and inheritance. It's really pivotal. Now let me explain it to you.

## Inheritance

The English word *Inheritance* means to receive something from a former owner. Usually, a predecessor, ancestor, parent or former owner.

The same may be said of CSS. Inheritance in CSS means that styles from parent elements can be inherited by children elements. i.e without specifying the style on the children element themselves.

Let's see an example.

Consider the markup below:

```
<div class="parent">
  I am the parent element.
  <p class="child"> I am the child element</p>
</div>
```

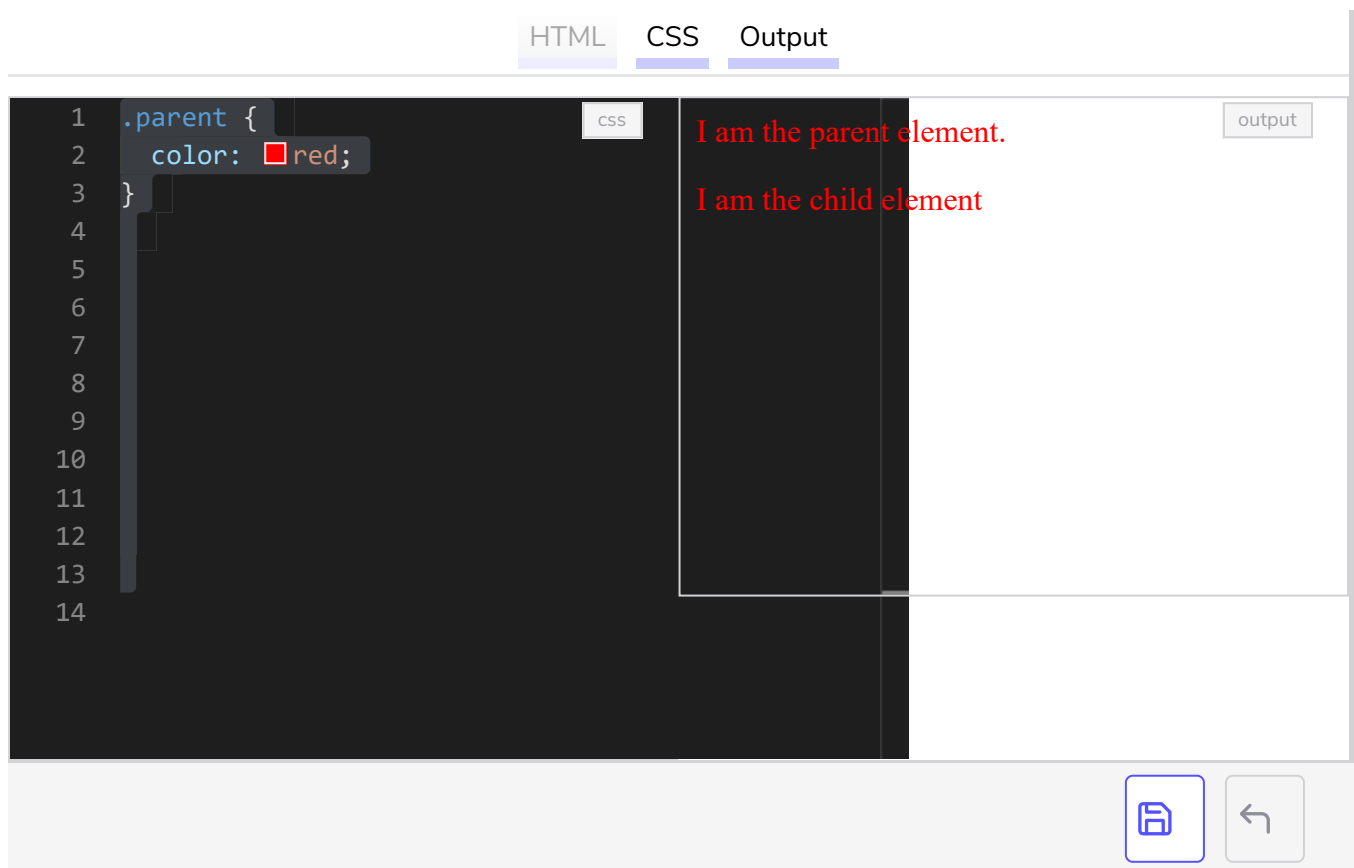
The markup is pretty simple.

We've got a `div` that houses a `p` element. i.e the `div` is the parent element, and the `p` a child element.

Is it possible to apply a style to the parent element, `div` and have it inherited by the child element, `p` ?

Let's try to give the parent element a color of red. Does the child element inherit this value of red too?

Inherit this value of red too?



As you can see from the output above, both parent and child have a color of red, even though the style was **only** set on the parent element.

This is the **inheritance** at play!

Now you know certain properties can be inherited! Note that, all CSS properties are **NOT** inheritable. Some aren't.

Inheritance is very useful in most cases. It means you may not have to duplicate styles all over the place. Sometimes it means you do have to override styles on a child element.

Whatever the case, you now understand what inheritance is!

## Cascade

The concept of cascade in CSS is usually misinterpreted. It does have a similarity with Inheritance but subtly different.

Inheritance applies to the DOM tree. Parent and children relationship.

Cascade has nothing to do with the DOM relationship in a document, BUT the relationship between multiple stylesheets.

In the event that you have more than one stylesheet applied to a document, *Cascading* means that styles can fall (or cascade) from one style sheet to another, enabling multiple style sheets to be used on one HTML document.

Here's a more practical way to put it:

In a lesson before this, we saw how styles from the browser had an effect on the document - without any intervention from us. We also discussed the need to override these styles in certain cases. Well, that is the cascade at work!

The fact that multiple stylesheets can affect the same document revolves around the concept of cascade in CSS.

In a much later lesson, I show an example of how to include more than one stylesheet into a document.

## Conclusion

Now you are armed with the fundamental knowledge of the cascade and inheritance in CSS. These concepts can be a source of frustration to newcomers to CSS. You certainly won't be one of those.

Let's get going 👍