

Lesson 2: Adding Links and Text Traits

This is part of a distance class on Dreamweaver. Dreamweaver CS3 was used for the screen captures, but this material would be applicable for the most part to people using Dreamweaver MX 2004 or Dreamweaver 8. Created by Linda Ffolliott, ECAT, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Arizona.

Set up your directory structure now

Before you start creating links, especially links to other documents in your own "site," be sure that you have created the structure for your website on your local computer, as it will be on the host server. Dreamweaver allows you to move files, in the files panel (we will discuss this in Lesson 7). However, it is worth the time to take a few minutes to think out your website structure. There is no set way to set up a site. It is perfectly reasonable to create a site in which all the files are kept in one folder (or directory). You may decide to put all of your images in one folder and your HTML files in the "parent" folder. You may be working with a group of people on the site, and decide that each person should have a separate folder.

I am a big believer in keeping your directory structure as simple as possible. If you are planning on a modest site with perhaps 20 documents, including graphics, just keep the files in one directory. If you plan on expanding your website within the next year, then start thinking about logical folders for the parts of your site.

Whatever your structure for your site, make it the same on your local computer as it will be on the host computer.

Absolute versus relative addresses for links

Again, as background before you start adding links to your web pages, keep in mind that there are different types of "addressing." Although right now we are talking about web documents, this also applies to references to web images or other types of documents like PDF files.

Absolute addresses require the complete URL, such as

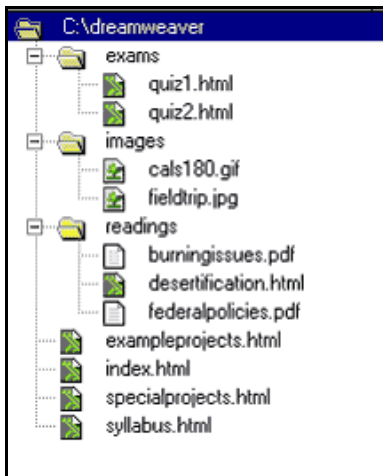
- <http://www.arizona.edu> - to reference the University of Arizona's home page
- <http://w3.arizona.edu/~english> - the home page for the University of Arizona's English Department
- <http://www.aceweb.org/> - a site about a professional organization for communicators and technologists, especially those affiliated with land grant institutions

If you are linking to a page not found on your host server, you need to make the address absolute. All absolute addresses require starting with **http://** or whatever the complete URL is (some page links can begin with **https://** or **ftp://**).

Site root-relative addresses are indicated with a leading forward slash

- /aginfo.html to link to the College of Agriculture's home page, when you have a site on the CALS server
- /extension/ to link to the Extension's home page, when you have a site on the CALS server
- /PLP/plpext/ to link to the Plant Pathology Extension area, when you have a site on the CALS server

You would use this type of coding if the page or image were on another site on the same server as you are located. In essence, you are dropping the leading **http://cals.arizona.edu** part of the URL. You would have to type these addresses in, since they would not be part of the site you control and thus would not be on your local computer. If you are uncertain about how to code this type of link if it is not on your website, then use the absolute type of address.



Pretend that this is a picture of your current website, in terms of its directory structure. There are three folders with files in the folders, and some files at the "root" or main area. You would use links here called document-relative addresses.

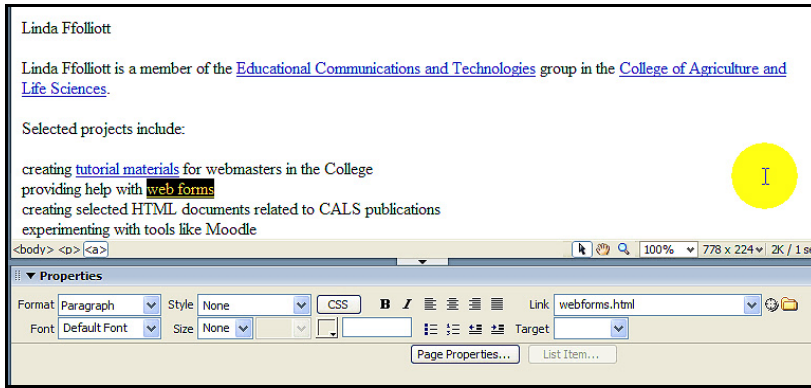
Document-relative addresses assume that the link is within the current folder (your folder) or folders under your main folder.

- readings/burningissues.pdf would reference the file **burningissues.pdf** within the **readings** folder
- exams/quiz1.html would reference the file **quiz1.html** within the **exams** folder
- syllabus.html would reference the file **syllabus.html** within the same folder as the document with the link

Dreamweaver will create this coding for you, as long as you know which file you want to link to and the file is found on your local computer. Linking using the browser icon in Dreamweaver is shown in the video **Adding Links in Dreamweaver**. The file could be an empty file initially, but the file needs to be listed in the "files panel" area.

Creating textual links to other documents

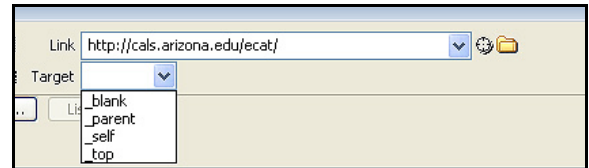
The heart of the web is linking to other documents. I cannot image any web document that does not have a least one link (this would be true certainly for HTML documents). If nothing else, you need to have a link back to your "parent" unit, like a class linking to the affiliated department, a project linking to the department or county or college, etc. You will probably create most of your links using the Properties panel window. Be sure that the document you are adding links to has been saved on your local computer. You begin by highlighting the text in your open document that you want to become a link. If it is a link to a page outside your site, you have to type in or paste in the complete URL for the page. The Folder icon lets you open up your local hard drive and navigate through folders to find the file.



This screen capture shows a link to another page on the same site as this document. After you select the document you are linking to, look at the resulting text that is put in the link text box. Be sure that it is NOT referencing your local hard drive, or the link will not work once the file is put on the host server.

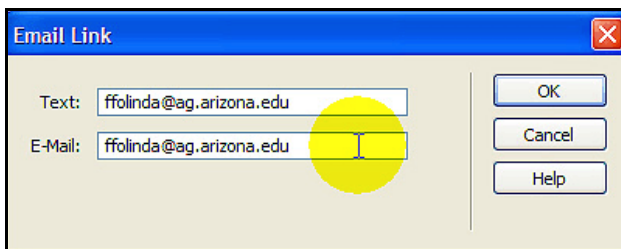
As you plan your website and your links, be careful about leading people away from your website, especially on your initial page or with links found at the top of your web page. If at all possible, try to make the text on your links as clear as possible (so the user knows that type of information will come up on the link). Also do not use a link with a name of "click here". This is considered poor web design, and also it is not helpful to a person using a screen reader and hearing the links read.

You will notice in the Properties panel a window labeled Target. If you leave that option blank, when you create a link, then as the user selects the link he/she is moved from your current page to the linked page. If you select the option of **_blank** from the drop-down options, then a NEW window is opened when that link is selected. Some people like to use this option of opening a new window when the link is going to an external website.



If you create a link on your document and want to remove the link, put your insertion point somewhere inside the link, and select **Modify** from the Menu bar, then **Remove Link**. Or you can click someplace inside the link and delete the link reference in the Properties panel.

Email links



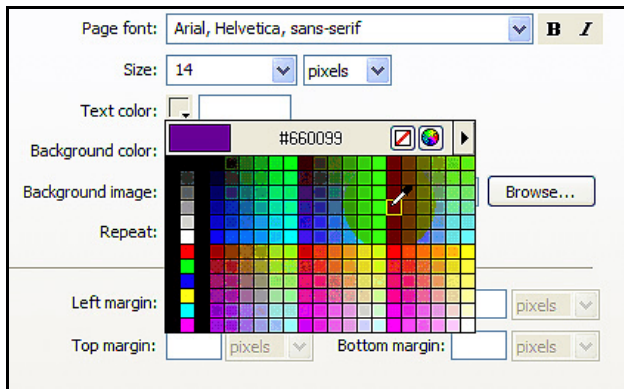
A final type of link is an email link. The official HTML coding is called a MAILTO code. When an email link is clicked, an email message dialog box pops up, which lets the user send an email message immediately to the person associated with the link. To create an email link, highlight the text you want to make a link, and click on **Insert** on the Menu bar, then **Email Link** and this box appears:

The email link is an easy way to add some interactivity to your page but recognize that not everyone will be able to send email through this link. The user's browser must be set up for emailing for this MAILTO tag to work.

Although most faculty and staff using their browser in a work location would have this feature activated, inexperienced users may not have turned on this feature. Furthermore, this feature is often turned off on public machines, like in a library or computer lab, since a single person is not using these machines. (Or if the feature is turned on, it is giving as the return email a generic email for that lab.)

Therefore, it is a good idea to not bury your email address in the link, but to spell out the email address, as in the above example, so someone can print the page or read the page and jot down your email, to later send you an email through a regular email program. In other words, don't make the text part of the email input box your name, but have it show the email.

General comments about color in your web document



In general, colors for text and backgrounds in web documents are expressed in hexadecimal codes. A pixel of color on the monitor is made up of three projected colors of light that mix optically (in your eye). The three colors are red, green, and blue, and these are combined differently to produce different colors. The hexadecimal value used to reference a particular color has no "inherent" meaning to the average person. Later in this lesson I will talk about selecting a color using the Page Properties window or the Properties panel. As you select colors, the color is expressed in the window as a hexadecimal

code.

The six numbers and/or digits used for the color code represent the saturation levels for red (first two codes), green (middle two codes), and blue (last two codes). All colors on the screen are made up by combining red, green, and blue (RGB). The hexadecimal value is made up of combinations of digits (0 through 9) and letters of the alphabet (a, b, c, d, e, f). It does not matter if the letters of the alphabet are lowercase or uppercase.



Besides selecting one of the colors which appear in the color palette, you can also click on the system color picker button (boxed in the screen capture), to see displays of millions of colors.

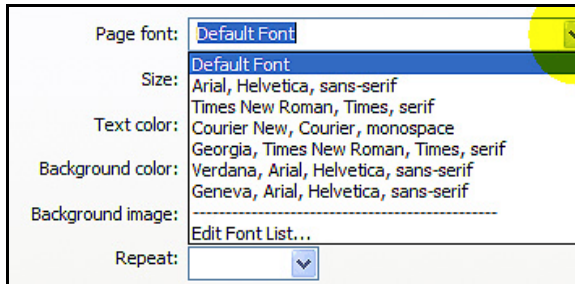
Don't get carried away with colors. Too many different colors in one document are a distraction to the user. Color can be one of the components that identify your website "theme", so pick a few colors and use them consistently.

As you start to use color on your pages, keep in mind that some people seeing your site are color blind. Color blindness is the inability to perceive colors in a normal fashion. The most common form of color blindness is red-green (inability to distinguish red and green).

Because there is no single form of color blindness, it is difficult to not use colors that some of the audience cannot see. In general it is how these colors are used, particularly if they are used against each

other, that causes problems. Furthermore, do not use color as the only means of conveying information. For example, don't say "Select the titles in red to see the new publications." For more information about color blindness and to see examples of what a color blind person sees, check out the Wikipedia article at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorblind.

General comments about font face and font size

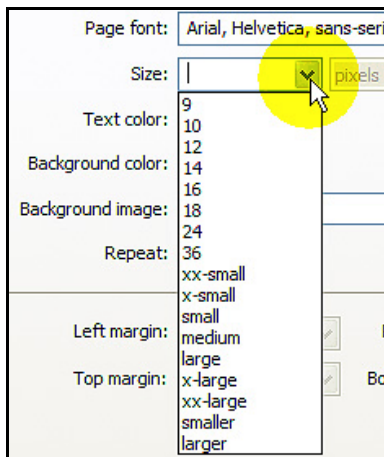


Dreamweaver groups font face options with typically three or four fonts. This is because not all computers have the same fonts.

When you start playing with font faces through Dreamweaver, you will see that the software lists fonts with three or four specific font names in one group. When displaying your text, the browser works it way through these font names, from left to right. If the first

font is not on the local computer, one of the others will be. If you use the option of Default Font in Dreamweaver, then the default font in the local user's browser will be used. In most cases this is either Times or Times Roman.

Besides text color (and you may decide to leave all of your text black), two other font attributes which you will change are font size and the font face (the type of font displaying). However, if you are not already aware of this, recognize that site visitors can change the font appearance when they look at your documents on their local computers.



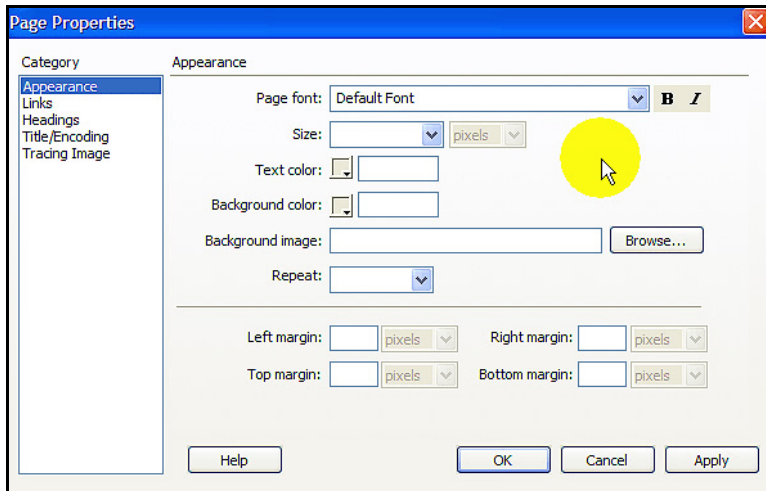
Compared with any word processor, the options for font size that appear in the listing in Dreamweaver are more limited, as you can see if you click on the size listing. The smallest font is font 9 and the largest is font 36. If no font size is specified, more current browsers display a 16 pixel font. Although there are only a limited number of font sizes showing, if you create style sheet rules (to be discussed more in Lesson 4), you can specify other font sizes.

You can also use what is called relative sizing. This means that you select, from the listing under the numbers, options such as xx-small, larger, or xx-large. When you use a relative size option, the browser looks at the nearby font size, and adjusts the new font accordingly. If the bulk of your text were using a font size of 14 pixels, and you used a font size x-large, that is being expressed in terms of the "base font."

I encourage you to consider using relative font sizing. This is one of the recommendations from the World Wide Web Consortium, so that someone can change the default font size (on their browser) and still see text that you want to emphasize (by your selection of a "larger" option from the listing) and text that you want to un-emphasize (which would be one of the "smaller" options in the listing).

The font (for font face) attribute specifies the style of lettering. This is the least "dependable" attribute to use, since users will not have all the same fonts as you do on your machine. As an example, if you create a web document and use a font of Elephant, if a user seeing your **page** does not have that font on his/her local computer, then the local computer displays the text using a different font. And the user can turn off your font style through browser settings.

Changing page properties



The same colors that can be applied to text can also be applied to a page. Page settings are found under **Modify** on the Menu bar, then **Page Properties**.

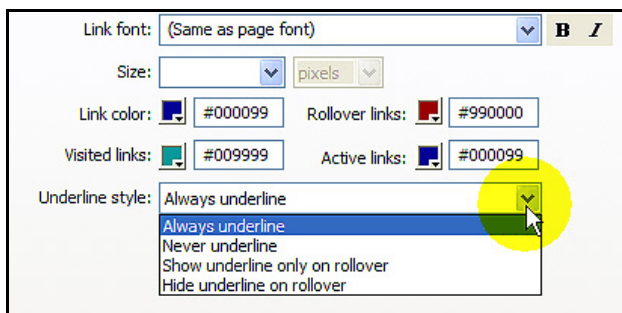
The same Color Swatch display that comes up for text coloring comes up through this menu. Be careful when selecting a page color that your text still clearly shows against the background. Also test how your page prints on a black and white printer. You may also need to use this same Page Properties dialog box to change colors for links, or pick a size or font face for text in your document.

The advantage of using Page Properties for text is that it changes all text on a given page to a color or size or style of font. It would be better to use the Page Properties window to make global changes for a document, before starting, rather than having to change coding constantly to a particular size or color or font style.

Even if you do not use a different color for your page, be sure the hexadecimal code for white is entered here #ffffff. If no page color is entered, then some of the older versions of Internet Explorer display the page color as grey.

Changing link properties

The default is to use a blue color for links before they are visited and then a purple color after the link is visited. Also all links are underlined. Another important set of traits under the **Modify, Page Properties** window is the one for links.

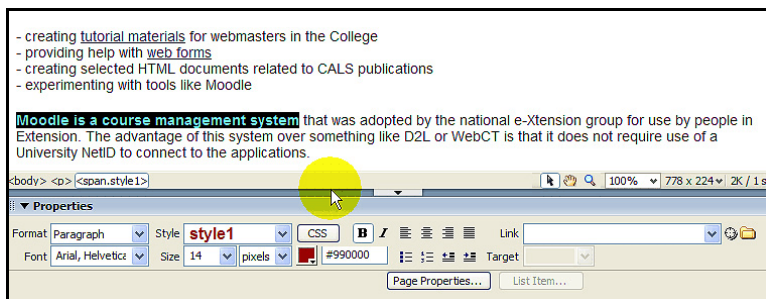


This screen allows you to change colors for the four types of links. This is demonstrated in the video **Changing Page and Link Properties**. You do not have to make the four types of links different colors. Some people only make the rollover link (the color of the text when the mouse is over the link) different. A different rollover link color reinforces that this is a link.

When you select two or three or four link colors through the Page Properties window, Dreamweaver creates the appropriate link code. These are a:link, a:visited, a:hover, a:active. These codes have to be listed in this order or some browsers may ignore the rules for the links. If you have inherited a site that has coding for links, you should check to make sure the links are listed in this order. These rules might be internal or external. We will look more at these concepts in Lesson 4.

Using the Properties panel with text

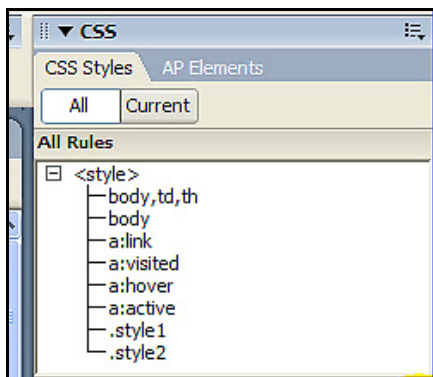
In Lesson 1, I mentioned that one of the optional display areas is the Properties panel. If this is not displaying when you are in your document work area, select **Window** from the Menu bar and click on **Properties**. The name that Dreamweaver documentation often gives to this window is the Property inspector, but I will normally use Properties panel.



We will discuss in later lessons how the Properties panel can be used for lists, indentation, graphics, and table traits. For this lesson, you will use the panel to change text traits. If text is already in your document, you can select the text and use the Properties panel to change traits. On a blank screen, you can also select a particular trait (like font size) and

then type in text. That selected trait is applied to the text as you type. In this sense, it is similar to selecting text options in a word processing program.

Starting with Dreamweaver MX 2004, anytime you apply traits using the Properties panel to selected text, Dreamweaver creates a style sheet rule for you. The name of style1, style2, etc. appears in the Style window in the Properties panel. We will look more at style rules and how to create other rules and edit these rules created when you use the Properties panel in Lesson 4.

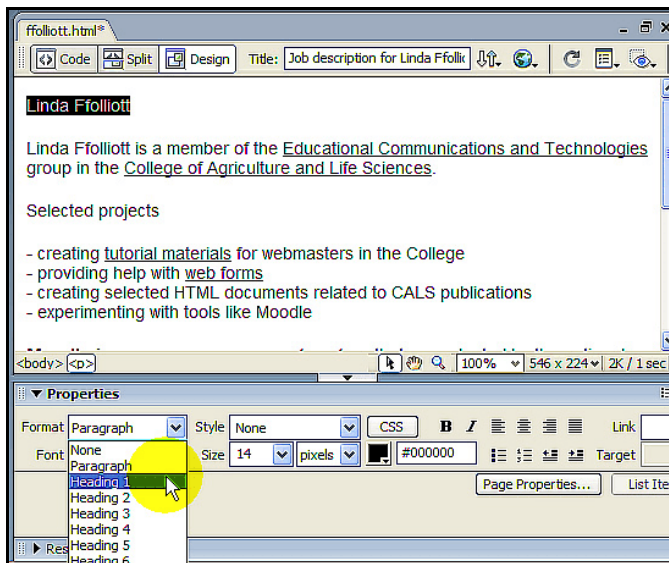


When you use the Properties panel for text, Dreamweaver creates simple rules or selectors. These are called class selectors. As we work through these lessons, we will see other types of rules or selectors, but even as a beginner, you will create rules when you use the Properties panel to apply traits to text. These rules are shown under the Style panel in the Properties panel or in the list of rules if the CSS panel is opened (as is showing to the left).

Headers in your web document

Dreamweaver is creating HTML coding for you, as you work with your documents. The coding syntax, however, comes from the World Wide Web Consortium, with a website of **www.w3.org**. The codes used to create web documents were first created in 1990. One of the earliest codes was for headers.

There are six header tags, <h1> through <h6>. <h1> is the largest and <h6> is the smallest. Most tags have a code that turn on the feature and turn off the feature, and the header tag is like this. The header tags must use an ending tag </h1>, </h2>, </h3>, etc. These header tags should only be used in the "top" area of a document when it displays in a browser, or for subsequent headings in each new section of a document. It should NOT be used to format paragraphs although you can apply a header tag to a paragraph. Header tags, especially the larger header tags, appear to be bold faced. Browsers will display headers with "a blank line" between the header and subsequent text. You can change traits associated with headers by creating style rules. We will look at this in Lesson 4.



In Dreamweaver, you can select HEADERS using the Properties panel, under the Format option. I am using the term HEADERS since that is the official name of the tag, but the Dreamweaver drop-down list calls these headings.