



HTML Concepts Glossary

G. Tod Abbott

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HTML Terms Glossary

absolute addressing: An HTML link that specifies the entire path name of a file, such as: “C://Web/FIELDS/PAGES/index.htm,” or “http://www.epa.gov/index.htm.” Opposed to relative addressing.

ActiveX: Microsoft’s proprietary technology for creating applications and scripts that can be linked into Web pages. This is only fully supported by Internet Explorer and the Microsoft Windows platform.

anchor: The term for a link in an HTML page. The “A” in `` stands for Anchor. Name anchors provide links within a page.

animation: There are many types of animation on the Web. The most common are GIF animation, in which a GIF file contains a number of different images that it plays in progression, and JavaScript animation. In JavaScript animation, script code is used to move objects around the screen and change their attributes. JavaScript animation can respond to user interaction. Hitting the escape key will stop the GIF animation playing on a page. Flash technology supports more sophisticated and efficient animation, and other technologies, such as Quicktime, also provide animation capabilities.

attributes: The attributes of an HTML object go into the tag defining the object (or its style) and determine things such as color, font face, alignment and the like:

```
<FONT FACE="Arial" SIZE=3>
```

here, the FACE and SIZE elements are attributes.

background: The background of a web page is an image or color specified by the HTML document to appear behind the other images and text that appear on the page. A Table cell can have a colored or image background as well.

bandwidth: The amount of data that is used to transfer a particular image or page to a Browser. The goal in HTML authoring is always to keep bandwidth down to ensure the document and images load as quickly as possible onto browsing computers. Bandwidth is also a consideration with locally viewed documents, as a large page or image still takes longer to load than a smaller one.

Behavior: In Dreamweaver an Action defines what happens when a particular Event happens. Events include a mouse click on an object, the mouse cursor moving over the item, the page being loaded, etc.

border: A border is a graphic that appears around an image, table cell or frame section in an HTML document. The `<...BORDER=...>` order attribute determines the width of the border, while the `<...BORDERCOLOR=...>` determines the color of the border. Images used as links automati-

cally have a border placed around them. This can be turned off by assigning “0” as the border attribute.

browser: The software used to access HTML documents on the web and locally. Netscape Communicator/Navigator, and Microsoft Internet Explorer are the most popular browsers in use, while other browsers, offering different levels of sophistication are also widely used. When authoring pages, it is important to test them in as many different browsers as is possible to check for compatibility.

Cascading Style Sheet (CSS): A technology that allows for more precise and efficient control of the attributes and placement of elements on a web page. A Local Style Sheet is defined between the `<STYLE TYPE="text/css">` and `</STYLE>` tags in the document Header and applies only to that document. A remote Style Sheet can be referenced by any number of different pages, and can supply an easy way to modify the attributes of all the elements on any number of pages. CSS is only supported by the latest versions (≥ 4) of Navigator and IE.

CGI Scripting: “Computer Gateway Interface” is the most common method of tying web pages to active content. A CGI script runs on a web server, and can process form inputs and other information from a remote browser, and can act on that information or pass it to other applications on the machine or network which can then process the information.

character entities: The HTML equivalent of certain characters that cannot be reliably encoded as regular text. For instance, if you need a “greater-than” sign in the body of your HTML text, you cannot just type “>,” for the browser would read that as the closing of a tag definition. Instead, you would have to type, `>`. All character entities begin with `&` and end with `;`.

body: Generally the most substantial section of an HTML document, the body follows the Head, and is where all the page layout and other code appears. All the code that will appear within the window of a browser appears between the `<BODY>` and `</BODY>` tags.

cookies: A line of information written to a text document stored on your computer that a remote server can access. A cookie commonly stores things like a user ID, the date and time of a visit to a web site, or the contents of a shopping cart at a commercial web site.

coordinates: Coordinates identify a precise location within an image (in the case of an image map) or of an entity in a browser window (in the case of a style sheet entity). Coordinates are generally given as X, Y pairs separated by commas, but not spaces. Coordinates used for positioning of a layer

using CSS are measured from the top left corner of the page.

cross-browser: Since different browsers display information differently, and have different capabilities, trying to make the most compatible document for Internet viewing is an exercise in siting the lowest common denominator. Presentations can require particular software and hardware, but Web documents should not. In general, Tables, Frames, Image Maps, Forms and 256-color images are permissible, while Style Sheets and JavaScript are not.

DHTML: Dynamic HTML is a vague term used, generally, to apply to web authoring that uses Style Sheets, and/or some sort of scripting (like JavaScript).

Document Object Model: The DOM promises to revolutionize web authoring by defining every element of a web page and browser window as an object that can be defined or manipulated. JavaScript currently offers the most capability to control the browser DOM.

eight-dot-three: Since many people are still using older DOS and Windows systems, and certain network protocols do not support long file names, ALL HTML DOCUMENTS MUST BE SAVED UNDER AN 8.3 NAME. That means "FIELDS System.html" must become "fieldssy.htm". To avoid complications with case sensitivity, it is best to make all file names all lower case.

embedded media: Anything that is placed within a web page other than images and text is considered "embedded media." This primarily refers to video and sound files.

external: generally, a term used to apply to elements that are not located within the given web page code. Images are stored externally to a page, as can be external style sheets and JavaScripts. Opposed to local. U.S. EPA web guidelines specify that any link that leads to a non EPA site is an "External Link" and must be indicated as such on the page.

font family: Determines the font used to display text in a web browser. The "font-family" attribute in a Style Sheet determines the font, while works in regular HTML. Careful, though, the font name must appear precisely as it appears in the font menu, and a machine can only use the specified font if it is installed on the system. What's more, different platforms (such as Windows and Macintosh) have different standard fonts, so normally it is best to provide several font names (for instance:). If no appropriate font is on the system viewing the file, the browsers default font will be used.

forms: A set of HTML tags that describe standard interface elements for a user to enter data and make selections. The data entered into a form can be used with JavaScript to do things like search a page or send one to another page, or by a

CGI script to do almost anything else.

frames: An HTML device that divides a browser window into a set of independent sub-windows that display the contents of other pages (which are specified by a frameset tag). Frames are particularly useful for navigation bars, where the navigation links remain in place as the content of the other frames change, and for offering a list of items to be viewed as the user wishes. Frames can be named, and then manipulated via links or JavaScript.

frameset: The tag that determines the size, location and content of the frames in a window. Also a term for referring to the set of frames defined by the frameset.

framesource: The tag that identifies the external web page that contains the contents of a given frame.

FTP: File Transfer Protocol is, in this context, how one uploads the pages one has authored to a web server. A web author can also set up a file to be downloaded by remote users via FTP.

head: The first section of an HTML document. The Head does not appear in the browser window, but is where the Title, metadata, and Style Sheet definitions appear. JavaScript code also usually resides between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags.

hexadecimal: A base-sixteen system made up of numbers and letters used to identify the RGB value of a color for use on a web page. For instance, You can specify a light gray background by using the tag <BGCOLOR="#CCCCCC">, where every two "C's" indicates the level of either Red, Blue or Green in the color. Both PaintShop Pro and PhotoShop can be set to display the Hexadecimal value of any color. The hexadecimal value must be preceded by a pound-sign (#).

HTML (XML, SML): Hypertext Markup Language is the Lingua Franca of the Web. HTML is a subset of XML, which is itself a subset of SML.

image map (Client Side, Server Side): An image map assigns coordinates to particular areas of an image so that when clicked-on or moused-over the browser reads that event and links to another page, or performs some action. Client side image maps are completely contained on the page in which they appear. An older technology, Server Side image maps had the map code remaining on the web server to be processed via CGI.

Java: Sun Microsystem's attempt at a transparently cross-platform programming language. Java is an object-oriented programming language descended from C++ that writes code not to a particular processor of type of machine, but to a "Virtual Machine" that runs under the Java code and translates the commands into something the host machine

can understand. Because of its “cross-platform” capabilities, Java is well suited to use on the web. At this point, however, the way Java is used on a page does not usually justify the performance degradation it causes.

JavaScript: Initially called “LiveScript”, Netscape changed the name of their Navigator Scripting language to jump on the Java Bandwagon. There is no real connection between Java and JavaScript. JavaScript has some support in Internet Explorer, so offers the best alternative for cross-browser scripting. JavaScript can control just about every element in a browser window (even the window itself), and is also useful for acting on form data and other activities. JavaScript is generally object-oriented. Microsoft's version is called JScript, while a new independent standard version is called ECMAScript. Hopefully, all browsers will soon operate with ECMAScript.

link: HTML documents can be seen as little more than a series of links tied together with text. An Anchor link “<A...>” begins every reference on the document that reaches to outside documents, while an image link links to specific image files.

metadata: Information about the page itself, rather than about its topic. Metadata is useful for recording the author and other features of a page, but is most often used to provide keywords and descriptions for search engines. Metadata tags appear in the HEAD of an HTML document.

palette (stylistic): A basic set of colors chosen to be used for all (or most) graphic elements of a web site or presentation. Especially good for buttons, divider elements, and table colors. Using a consistent, carefully chosen palette goes a long way toward producing a professional looking, unified site.

pixel: The basic unit of a browser window. With Style Sheets, object locations can be specified via pixel coordinates.

plug-in: An extension to the standard browser software that offers some special ability or the enables the browser to interpret nonstandard files and data. While there are a few standard plug-ins, most require a user to download them and install them, which takes, at least, time. Unless it offers a capability you can't get any other way, you should avoid requiring plug-ins for a site.

relative addressing: URLs that locate a file by giving its position relative to the present file. Two dots (“../”) represent moving up one directory level. Two files that are located in the same directory are linked merely by entering the appropriate file name in the link, no directory information is needed. Relative file names make a site or presentation mobile, so that they can be played on any system no matter what disk they are on, provided their internal directory structure is maintained.

RGB: Red, Green, Blue color space that is the standard for color definition on the web. Colors are identified for a browser either by hexadecimal numbers specifying particular red, green and blue values, or by a color name.

rollover: A page element that triggers some action when the mouse cursor is moved over it, usually an image change.

Shockwave: A popular plug-in technology by Macromedia that allows complex animation and vector graphics. Related to Flash.

splash screen: An HTML page that appears momentarily and then automatically loads a new page. Sometimes used merely as an introduction to a site, but this is annoying. A functional splash screen will check the browser or other information for the viewer and then automatically send them on to an appropriate page. This is particularly handy for testing for JavaScript or CSS ability.

structure: The first step of any web project is sketching out a directory structure in as much detail as possible. The more you know about the directory structure, the more you will be prepared to supply links when composing the pages.

tables: A useful HTML device that allows for the orderly presentation of data, as well as a method for controlling the position and alignment of objects on a web page. Tables can also be used to provide boxes of color and frames for text or images. Tables are made out of rows that are made out of cells, so that the definition proceeds left to right, top to bottom. A table border can be turned off by typing “BORDER=0” within the table definition.

tag: The basic unit of HTML. Tags tell the browser what the object is, how to display it, and how it might interact. All tags have openings and closings, beginning with <...> and ending with </...> where the ellipses(...) represent the particular tag syntax.

tile: Small images displayed as a background are repeated over and over on the page, in a grid. Such backgrounds can be series of distinct objects, or can be textures designed so that each tile in the background meshes with those around it.

title: Text appearing between the <TITLE></TITLE> tag in an HTML document will appear in the window head as the title of the page. This title will also be used if the user bookmarks the page.

UNIX (case sensitivity issues): Most web pages are delivered by UNIX based servers. UNIX is a case-sensitive operating system, meaning that files named “FIELDS.html” and “Fields.html” would be seen as different files. It is necessary that all link references have the proper case. It is best to just choose a standard and stick to it.

URL: Universal Resource Locator. This is the standard method for locating and linking to external files from within a web page. The parts of a URL are:

“http://www.epa.gov/Region5/OW/FIELDS/SHARED/PAGES/FLDHOME.HTM”

“http://” hypertext transfer protocol, tells the browser what sort of file it is.

“www.epa.gov” the Internet domain, tells the browser on what IP address the file is located.

“/Region5/OW/FIELDS/SHARED/PAGES/” the directory path to the file on the server’s disk.

“FLDHOME.HTM” the name of the actual file to be served.

VBScript: A scripting language developed by Microsoft to leverage its Visual Basic development environment into Internet scripting. Like ActiveX, a powerful technology, but used only with Internet Explorer on the Windows Platform.

Web Server: The machine that receives the requests from a client computer running a web browser and processes the request, running any appropriate CGI script or other activity, then sending back the appropriate file.

WYSIWYG Editor: A web authoring tool that allows one to compose a page simply by dragging and dropping appropriate page elements into place (What You See Is What You Get). In general, WYSIWYG editors are easier to use, but text editing provides greater control and efficiency. Dreamweaver combines both techniques.