INTRODUCTION TO WEB DESIGN WITH DREAMWEAVER

By Michael L Curry

COMPANION WEBSITE

http://michaelcurry.com/Default.aspx?p=73&n=Articles-on-Web-Design-Topics

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class explains how to build and modify a website using Dreamweaver the industry standard in web design. This class covers the basics of creating a website. Students learn how to design individual web pages and create a whole site from those pages. Topics include: understanding HTML code, modifying text, placing images, designing with tables, using rollovers and managing the site.

ASSIGNMENT 1

You have been hired by Green Light Data Technologies, an Oregon manufacturer of network cable and accessories. Initially, the client wants you to only create a simple home page for their company that has their logo, some basic information about the company and their tech support.

Green Light Data Technologies

Main Office and Plant
Green Light Data Technologies
675 NE Glisan Street
Portland, OR 97230
Telephone 503-321-1234
Toll Free 800-123-4567
Fax 800-321-7654
email Support@greenlighttech.com

We are a leading manufacturer of networking cable and accessories located in Portland, Oregon. We offer quality networking products including custom cable services and other networking products. For nearly 10 years, Green Light Custom cabling services has helped customers solve their unique connectivity problems.

You can download all the files you need to complete this assignment by going to the companion website and clicking on download files.

NOTES

Dreamweaver is a powerful web design tool. In this assignment, we will explore the basics of the program.

Site Manager

The first step will be to define a site. Often when you work with Dreamweaver you may have more than one site that you need to work on. The site manager allows you to define sites and switch between sites. While you are initially working on the site, the files are located on your computer. However, ultimately you will publish those files to the internet onto your web server.

Publishing your site to your web server is out of the scope of this class since each site has unique login information. Your system administrator or ISP will provide you with the information you need for the site manager to publish your files on the web.

Text & HTML

In Design view, Dreamweaver is similar to a word processor. However, when you switch to code view you can see how the encoding of a web page works. If you are new to HTML, I suggest using the **Split** mode to learn HTML as you type.

Your client has provided you with text they want on their initial web page. You can simply copy and paste the text from the file they provided you onto your web page and begin to format the text to look nice on the web.

Spaces in an HTML file are ignored by the browser, and positioning with tabs is not supported. Instead, you can force spaces to appear by using the html code ** ** which stands for non-breaking space.

The enter key creates a two line break between text. In some cases though, you may only want a single line break which can be accomplished using the combination **control + enter key.** Again, you may find it instructive to observe the differences between using these two line breaks in Dreamweaver split view mode.

Page Properties

Page Properties are one way you can control the colors of a page, the text, and links. You can also set a title for your page as well as the page margins.

Images

Images are one major difference between web pages and word processor pages. When you place an image onto a web page, instead of being embedded inside of the page, you are creating a reference to an external image file.

Another consideration of working with Images is that the text does not wrap around the image, unless you align the image to the left or right in which case the text will wrap around the opposing side of the image. You can also increase the space between the text and the image by adjusting the horizontal and vertical space.

File Name

The file name of a home is usually very important. Unless your ISP or System Administrator tells you otherwise, **name your home page "index.html"** (no capitalizations and no spaces).

INTRODUCTION TO TABLES

Tables are used to place web elements in specific positions of a web page. Cascading Style Sheets is another way of positioning elements, but we focus on the traditional approach of using tables to layout content in this class.

For example, this design is achieved using a table to hold items in place like so.

Start with a 3 x 3 Table

Specify width as 800 px
Cell padding & spacing as 0
Merge the cells of rows 1 & 3

Header image goes here		
spaces	Content	photo
Footer goes here		

Tables are elastic, meaning they will stretch to accommodate the largest item in the table. Even if you specify a smaller table width, if the image you put in a table is larger than the width specified, the table will expand to hold the larger image.

You can nest tables within tables, which is often helpful for more complex designs.

You can specify properties of a table cell such as alignment and color. The color is very helpful for design. Ordinarily, when you enter text into a table cell, it will wrap the text however it wants to. A helpful technique is to set cell properties to **nowrap** which will prevent the text from breaking between words.

ASSIGNMENT 2

The client wants you to come up with an improved design for their review. A graphic designer has provided you with two new images, a header and a photo of cables. You will use tables in this assignment to create an updated design for their home page.

You can download all the files you need to complete this assignment by going to the class website and clicking on Assignment 2. Save these files in a new folder called **Assgn2.**

WEBSITE DESIGN TIPS

As you begin to add more complexity to a site, there are some important considerations you should plan for before you begin building a larger project.
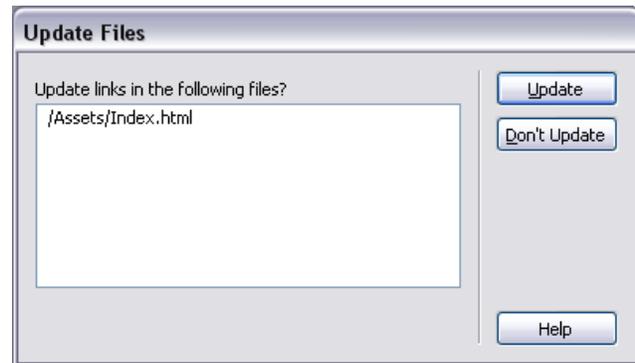
File Management

As you add more files to the project, keeping them organized is essential to both your sanity and manageability of the project. Any graphic files should be placed into a separate folder called "images." Your web pages should have an intuitive naming convention. For example, about_us.html is better than page5.html.

Introduction to Web Design with Dreamweaver Notes

A dozen web page files is a lot to manage, so if you find your site is approaching ten or more files, you should use subdirectories to keep things better organized. For example, you may have many products that you want to display on the website, and a separate page for each product. A natural organization would be to create a products folder, and place all your product pages inside that folder. You can also create an images folder inside the product folder for the images related to those pages.

Dreamweaver makes it simple to create folders and manage your site by dragging and dropping files. If you do reorganize the site, Dreamweaver will prompt to update the links inside the pages that to correspond to the changes you made. If you instruct it to make the updates, it will fix all the file references in the affected pages.

Update Files

Update links in the following files?

/Assets/Index.html

[Update] [Don't Update] [Help]

Working Smartly
While a small site with 3-5 pages is relatively simple to maintain, as the site gets larger it becomes much more complicated to manage. Imagine for a second that you have a 20 page website. If you need to change one menu link, that is 20 files you need to open and edit, 20 pages that must be verified in a web browser, and because of the repetitive nature of the work, you will most likely make a few mistakes which must be fixed and re-verified. So while changing one link may sound like a small task, it could easily take an hour of your time to complete. Therefore, it is important to have strategies that simplify your work and minimize the chances of error. Some of those will be discussed in class.

Creating a Site Template
As mentioned above, even seemingly small changes to a site can be time consuming. Therefore, before you start to build a site it is a good idea to develop a design template. Once you have one or more designs you're happy with, show them to the client for approval. Once approved, reuse the template for each new page so the site has a consistent look.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Your client is almost ready to build a full blown site and asks you to develop an updated design. A graphic designer has provided a few different background and color choices and the client wants the following menu choices on your new design:

- Home
- About Us
- Products   (under Products they will want four product pages)
- Locations
- Contact Us

The client was generally happy with your last design, but would like to see a few different color options before deciding on a final look for the site. You can download the files you need for this assignment by going to the class website and clicking on Assignment 3. Save these files in a new folder called **Assgn3.**

SCALING YOUR TEMPLATE INTO A SITE

Once you have a design you and the client are happy with, you will copy and paste the document multiple times to create the pages of your site and then rename the files according to your needs. First, update any links inside the template before you copy and paste though. For example, if you plan to create five pages, you should decide what those pages will be named, create the links inside your template and then make the necessary copies of the template. Otherwise, you will have to go back and change them individually.

ASSIGNMENT 4

Congratulations! You have received approval from the client on your design. At this point you are ready to create a full site for your client. Your graphic designer has developed additional images and the client has provided more content information for their site too.

You should go ahead and begin to develop all the main pages on your site using your template as the starting point. Additionally, you will need individual product pages for each of the products. The pages you will develop are:

Main Pages
- Home   (Index.html)
- About Us   (aboutus.html)
- Products   (products.html)
- Locations   (locations.html)
- Contact Us   (contact.html)

Products:
- Bulk Cat5   (bulk.html)
- Patch Cords   (patch.html)
- RJ45 Connectors (rj45.html)
- Ethernet Cards   (nic.html)

You can download all the files you need to complete this assignment by going to the class website and clicking on Assignment 4. Save these files in a new folder called **Assgn4.**

Page Links
Dreamweaver has a simple method of creating page links. You can drag the target onto a file in your site manager, or browse to the file. You should test the links also in your browser to make sure they work properly.

Bookmarks
Sometimes you do not want to just link to the top of a page but instead to a point farther down in a page. You can do this by first creating a bookmark at the point in the page you want to link to, and then adding the bookmark to your link. For example, this might be helpful for the store locater, to place the store locations in the document, and then create bookmarks beside each location. At the top of the page you can have a quick link to locations.
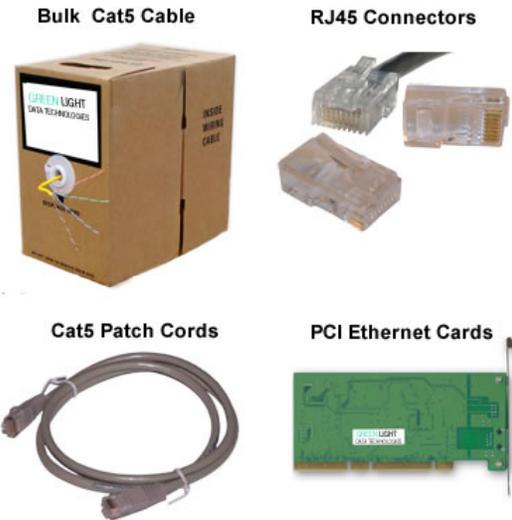
Image Maps
Graphics can also be used for linking to information. You can draw an image map and link a region to either a page or a bookmark. For example, you can use the Store Locator graphic to create a link to the store location bookmark details.

ASSIGNMENT 5 (ADVANCED TOPICS)

Nice Job! You are almost finished. There are just a few finishing touches the client would like to see. Your graphic designer has developed eight images the client would like converted into roll-overs for the main products page, with links to each of the sub pages for the products.

The last request from the client is an email contact form. They would like for prospective customers to contact them for more information about ordering products, special orders, prices, or general questions. You will modify the contact page to include an email contact form. You can create a trial account at http://www.formmail.com to assist you in implementing the email form.

You can download all the files you need to complete this assignment by going to the class website and clicking on Assignment 5. Save these files in a new folder called Assgn5.

Rollovers

A rollover is an image that, when viewed in a browser, changes when the pointer moves across it. Before you begin, you need two images for a rollover. The primary image is the image displayed when the page first loads, and a secondary image appears when the pointer moves over the primary image. Both images in a rollover should be the same size.

Too add a rollover, Select Insert > Interactive Images > Rollover Image.
The Insert Rollover Image dialog box appears. Complete the dialog box, then save and preview in a browser.

Form Mail

The form mail is a custom HTML form that when submitted is sent across the web to another server where it is delivered to an email address. Most hosting companies will offer some form of a form mail solution. You should ask your system administrator or ISP for details. We will be using an online site which offers a free one week form mail trail subscription.

CONGRATULATIONS

You now have all the information you need to begin creating websites using Dreamweaver!

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Practice is the best way to improve your skills. Build your own site, or volunteer to do a site for someone else. Read "Learning Web Design" by Jennifer Niederst, ISBN: 0596000367 to learn more tips. Take a Photoshop class to learn graphics for the web. Take the Dreamweaver and Photoshop for the Web class to learn more advanced topics.