



# Meet CSS

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a language used to control the presentation of elements within HyperText Markup Language (HTML) documents. Presentation is specified by “styles” that may be assigned “inline” to HTML element **style** attributes, or by “rules” within `<style> </style>` tags in the HTML document’s head section, or as rules within separate style sheets. Each style rule selects specified elements then applies specified styles to them.

CSS was created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to regain control of document markup as HTML grew from the initial few “tags” that merely defined the structural elements of a document – headings, paragraphs, hyperlinks, lists, etc. As further tags were added controlling images, text color, font size and background color, it became recognized that the source code of many web pages often contained a great deal of markup for very little actual content.

The W3C offered a solution to regain control of document markup by separating their structural and presentational aspects. HTML tags would continue to control the structure but presentational aspects would now be controlled by “style rules” written in the Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) language. Besides distinguishing between structural and presentational aspects of a document, the CSS solution brings these additional benefits:

- **Easier maintenance** – a single style sheet can control multiple HTML documents, so changing appearance across an entire website is possible by editing just one style sheet.
- **Smaller file sizes** – removal of all presentational markup from HTML produces smaller files, which download faster.
- **Greater control** – margins, borders, padding, background color and background images to any HTML element, and the appearance of certain parts of the interface, such as the cursor, can now be specified.

The latest CSS specification (CSS3) is divided into modules that allow enhancements such as rounded borders, drop-shadows, gradient color-fills and animation effects – these and more are demonstrated by example in this book.



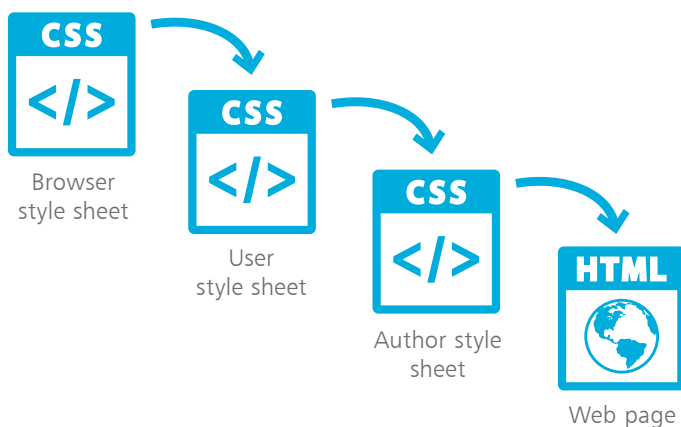
The W3C is an international consortium whose members work together to develop web standards. The CSS home page can be found on the W3C website at [www.w3.org/Style/CSS](http://www.w3.org/Style/CSS)

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The term “Cascading” in CSS describes the manner in which style rules can fall from one style sheet to another. The cascade determines which style rule will have precedence over others and be the one applied to the selected HTML element.

There are three basic types of style sheet that can specify style rules to be applied to HTML elements:

- **Browser (default) style sheet** – browsers employ an intrinsic set of style rules that they apply to all web pages by default. These vary slightly between different browsers but all have common features such as black text and blue hyperlinks.
- **User style sheet** – some browsers allow the user to specify their own appearance preferences, which effectively creates a custom style sheet that overrides the browser’s default style sheet.
- **Author style sheet** – where the HTML document specifies a style sheet created by the web page author, the browser will apply the style rules it contains, overriding both the user style sheet and the default browser style sheet.



So the cascade means that the browsers will typically apply the style rules in an author style sheet, if present, otherwise it will apply the style rules in a user style sheet, if present, otherwise it will apply the style rules in the browser’s style sheet by default.



CSS is the universally accepted style sheet language that is recognized by all modern web browsers.



Final precedence of style rules that target the same element is determined by their “specificity” weight.