



Understand Structure

The skeletal structure of an HTML document has three parts:

- **Document type declaration** – declaring precisely which version of HTML is used to mark up the document.
- **Head section** – providing descriptive data about the document itself, such as the document’s title and the character set used.
- **Body section** – containing the content that is to appear when the document gets loaded into a web browser.

Document type declaration

The document type declaration must appear at the start of the first line of every HTML document to ensure the web browser will “render” (display) the document in “Standards Mode” – following the HTML specifications. The document type declaration tag for all HTML documents looks like this:

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
```

It is important to note that HTML is not a case-sensitive language – so the document type declaration tag, and all other tags, may alternatively be written in any combination of uppercase and lowercase characters. For example, the following are all valid:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
```

```
<!Doctype Html>
```

```
<!doctype html>
```

The choice of capitalization is yours, but it is recommended you adhere consistently to whichever style you choose. The document type declaration tag capitalization style favored throughout this book uses all uppercase to emphasize its prominence as the very first tag on each page – but all other tags are in all lowercase.

Those familiar with earlier versions of HTML may be surprised at the simplicity of the HTML document type declaration. In fact, the document type declaration in earlier versions was not actually part of the HTML language – so required lengthy references to schema documents. By contrast, the modern HTML document type declaration is an intrinsic part of HTML itself.



The document type declaration in earlier versions of HTML was part of the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) from which HTML is derived.

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The entire document head section and body section can be enclosed within a pair of `<html>` `</html>` tags to contain the rest of the document. The HTML specification actually states that these are optional, but it is logical to provide a single “root” element. Most HTML tags are used in pairs like this to act as “containers” with the syntax `< tagname > data </ tagname >`.

Head section

The document’s head section begins with an HTML opening `<head>` tag and ends with a corresponding closing `</head>` tag. Data describing the document can be added later between these two tags to complete the HTML document’s head section.

Body section

The document’s body section begins with an HTML opening `<body>` tag and ends with a corresponding closing `</body>` tag. Data content to appear in the browser can be added later between these two tags to complete the HTML document’s body section.

Code comments

Comments can be added at any point within both the head and body sections between a pair of `<!--` and `-->` tags. Anything that appears between the comment tags is ignored by the browser.

Fundamental structure

So, the markup tags that create the fundamental structure of every HTML document look like this:

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
<html>
  <head>
    <!-- Data describing the document to be added here. -->
  </head>
  <body>
    <!-- Content to appear in the browser to be added here. -->
  </body>
</html>
```



An HTML “element” is any matching pair of opening and closing tags, or any single tag not requiring a closing tag – as described in the HTML element tags list on the inside front cover of this book.



The “invisible” characters that represent tabs, newlines, carriage returns, and spaces are collectively known as “whitespace”. They may optionally be used to inset the tags for clarity.