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About Dreamweaver

Dreamweaver is a powerful web authoring tool that can be used to create highly professional websites. This chapter looks at the user interface of the program, and explains some of the features that will enable you to start working on creating web pages. These include the Insert panel, the Properties Inspector, and the Dreamweaver toolbars. It also shows how to use external editors for content.

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Don't forget

Before you start creating web pages, it is a good idea to learn the basics of HTML, either with a book or a course. There are numerous training courses and classes in HTML coding.

Don't forget

In 2005, Adobe completed the acquisition of Macromedia, the creators of Dreamweaver.

Don't forget

A new, advanced feature of Dreamweaver CS5 is support for working with Content Management Systems (CMS). However, this is aimed more at commercial web publishing and so is not covered in this book.

Introducing Dreamweaver

In the early days of web design, the code used to create web pages was entered manually. This required the page designers to have a reasonable knowledge of the language, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), in which it is written. While this is not a full-blown computer language, and it can be learned reasonably quickly, it can be a time-consuming business to create websites in this fashion.

The next development in web-design software was the introduction of HTML editors. These are programs that help make the process of creating HTML code quicker and easier, by giving the author shortcuts for adding the elements that make up the coded page. However, this still requires a good basic knowledge of HTML: it makes the process quicker for the experienced designer, but it does not help the novice much.

The big breakthrough in web-design software, and one that introduced a huge new audience to the joys of web design, was the introduction of WYSIWYG programs. WYSIWYG stands for 'What You See Is What You Get', and they enable people to design their own web pages without even having to be aware of the existence of HTML. They work in a similar way to a word-processing or a desktop-publishing program: what you lay out on the screen is what the end user will see on their computer. With these programs, the HTML is still present (and you can edit it manually if you desire) but it is all generated automatically by the program in the background.

Dreamweaver is primarily a WYSIWYG web authoring program that provides an effective interface for quickly creating high-quality web pages. In addition, it contains a range of powerful tools for incorporating the latest web-design elements into sites, to give them a highly professional look. Overall, Dreamweaver is an ideal program for anyone involved in designing websites: its combination of simplicity and power makes it an excellent choice for the novice and the professional alike. For the experienced web designer, Dreamweaver CS5 also has improved functions for using cascading style sheets (CSS), and extensions can also be obtained for using the latest version of HTML (5). These can be downloaded from the Adobe website, at www.adobe.com

Start Screen

In order to help rationalize the number of options available when Dreamweaver is first opened, the latest version has a Start screen that appears initially, or when no other documents are open. The Start screen contains a variety of options for opening and creating documents, and also for obtaining help on using Dreamweaver CS5:

Click here to open a previously viewed file

Click here to create a new file



Check this box to disable the Start screen

Click here to access online help options for using the program

Don't forget



Even when you are using a WYSIWYG web authoring program, it is still important to follow the basics of good web design.

Hot tip



Click on the Top Features (videos) links to view short videos relating to some of the new features in CS5.

Workspaces

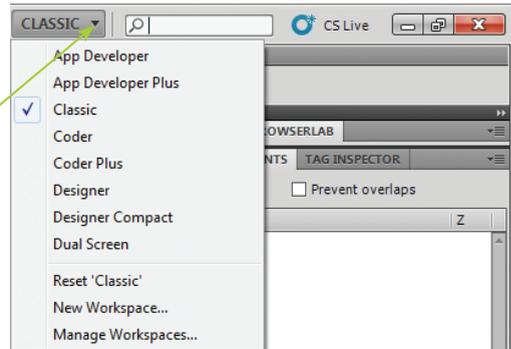
Within Dreamweaver CS5, there are a number of options for how you want to set up your work area, known as workspaces. These contain all of the main elements, but are arranged to suit how you want to work, mainly as a designer or a writer of code. To access and select different workspaces:

Don't forget



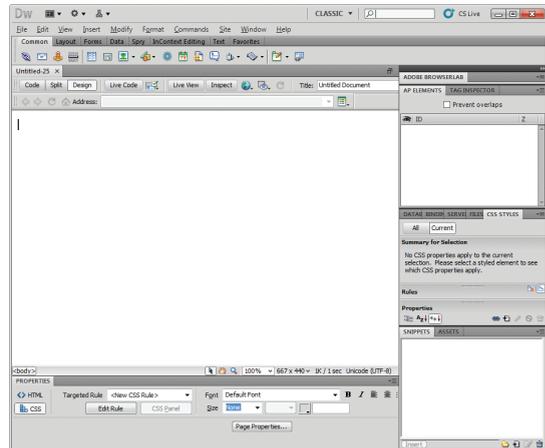
There are two other workspaces, named App Developer and App Developer Plus, that can be used by web developers using database technology and programming code.

- 1 Click here at the right-hand side of the main menu bar. Select the relevant workspace

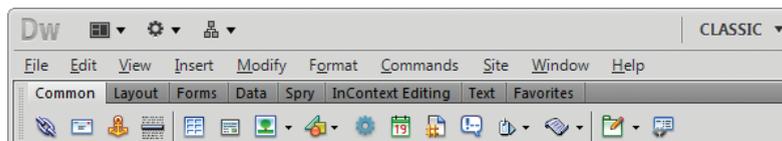


Classic

This is the workspace that was available with some earlier versions of Dreamweaver. By default, this displays toolbars, the main work area, and panels



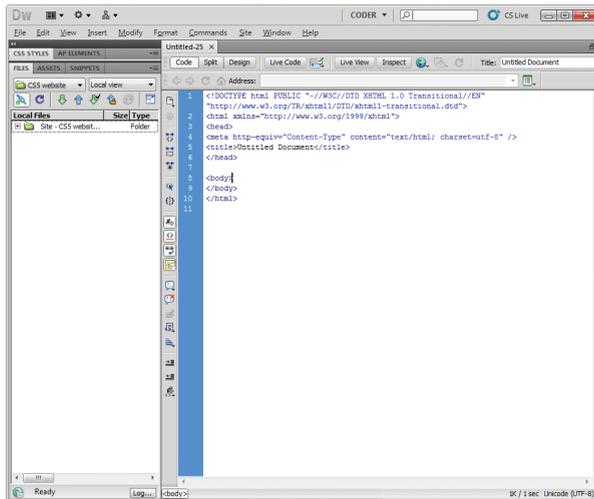
One feature of the Classic workspace, is the location of the Insert panel, at the top of the main window, just below the menu bar.



...cont'd

Coder

This can be used if you mainly create web pages in code. The panels are arranged on the left-hand side and, by default, display those features most frequently used when working in code.



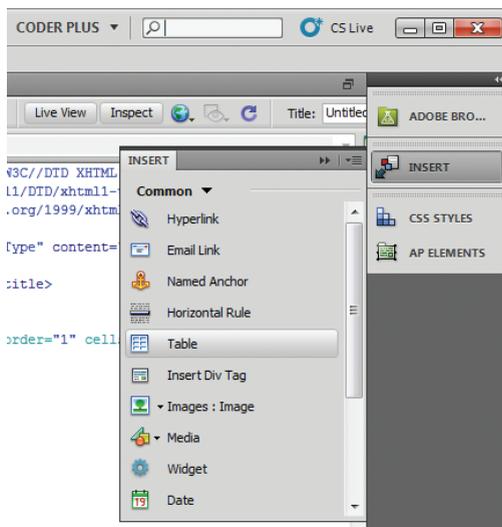
Don't forget



In the Coder workspace, it is still possible to access Design View to see how your page will look in a visual environment. For more information about the different views, see Chapter Two.

Coder Plus

This is an enhanced version of the Coder workspace, with additional panels situated on the right-hand side. The most notable of these is the Insert panel.



...cont'd

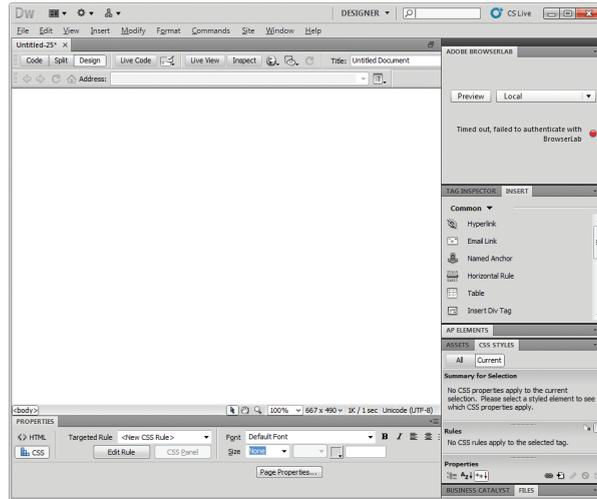
Designer

This is the default workspace, and is similar to the Classic workspace, except that the Insert panel is grouped with the rest of the other panels, at the right-hand side of the main window.

Don't forget

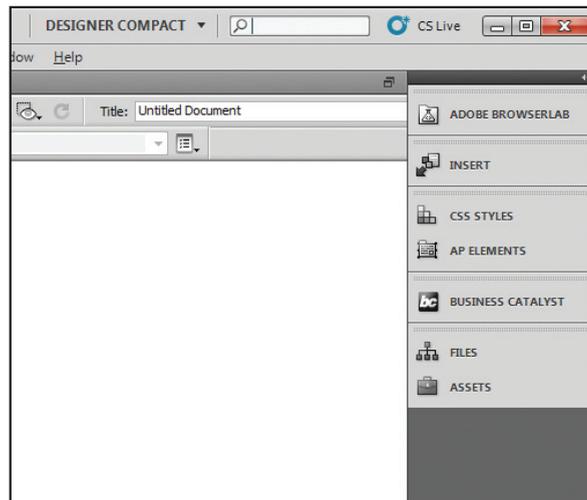


The styles and functionality of panels in Dreamweaver CS5 are now standardized with the panels in the other products in the CS5 suite of programs.



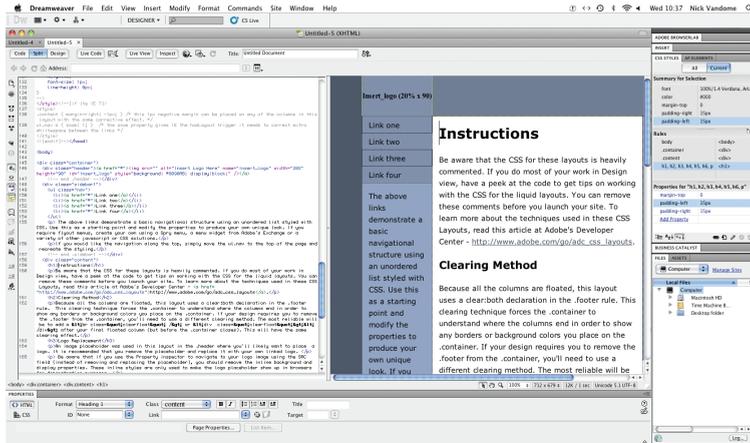
Designer Compact

This is similar to the standard Designer workspace, except that the panels are minimized, and group at the right-hand side. Each panel is activated by clicking on it, and it is then visible for one action. To keep a panel visible, drag it away from the group.

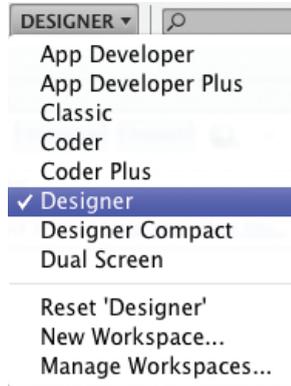


Workspaces (Mac)

With some previous version of Dreamweaver, the Mac version did not have the same versatility, in terms of workspaces. However, in CS5, this has been addressed, and the Mac version now has the same options as the Windows one. The only difference is the standard Mac interface:



The same workspace options are available.



The same view options are also available (see Chapter Two).



Preferences

Dreamweaver offers extensive options for the way the program looks and operates. These are located via the Preferences window. The preferences can be used to change the way the program and its elements appear, and also to change the way certain tasks are performed. There are 20 categories of preferences, and each category has several options. The Preferences options can be accessed by selecting Edit, Preferences (Windows) or Dreamweaver, Preferences (Mac), from the menu bar. Once the Preferences window has been accessed, it can be used to customize numerous elements of the program:

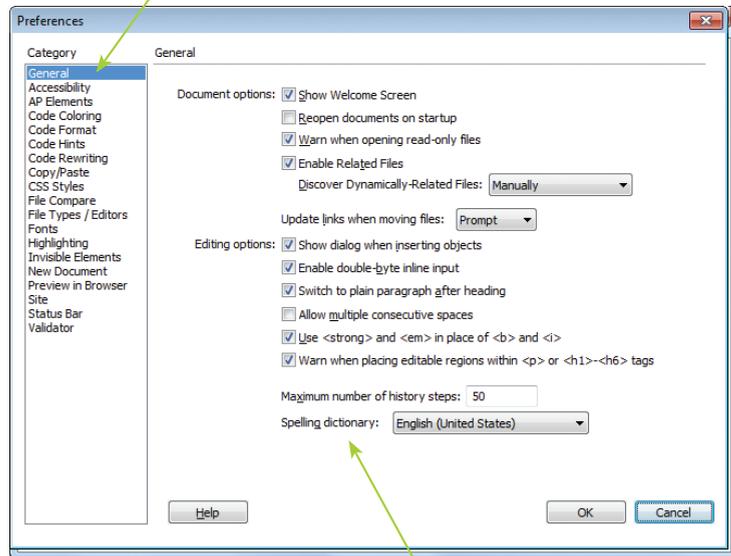
Don't forget



Take some time to look at the available preferences. Although you will not use all of them at this point, it is a good way to get a feel for the type of things you can change within the program.

1

Click here to select a category of preferences



2

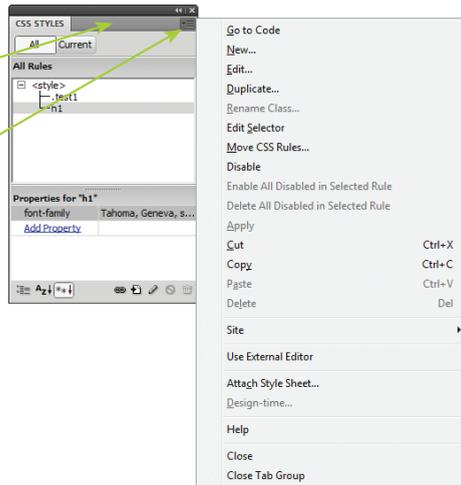
Select category options here, and click OK to apply them

Working with Panels

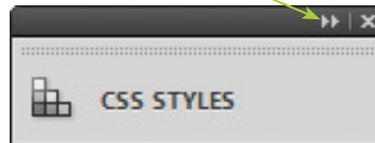
Panels in Dreamweaver CS5 contain numerous options for creating and editing content. They are docked along the side of the workspaces, to allow more space when designing pages. The panels can be selected from the Window menu on the menu bar. Once panels have been accessed, there are various ways in which to work with them.

1 Click and drag here to move a panel set

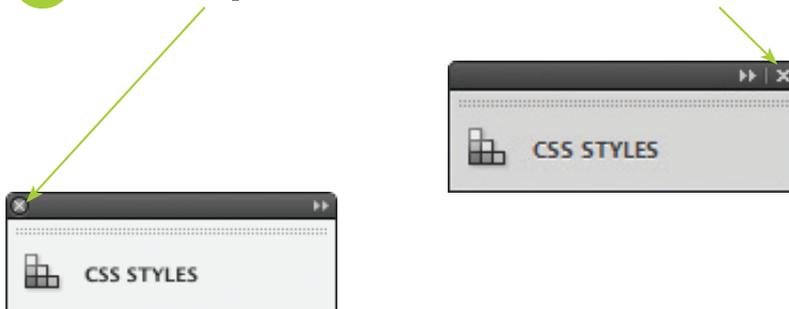
2 Click here to access a panel menu



3 Click here to expand or collapse a panel



4 To close a panel, click here (Mac) or here (Windows)



Don't forget



Panels are grouped in logical combinations that perform similar general tasks within Dreamweaver.

Hot tip



To move a panel from its current set, select Group [panel name] With from the panel menu. You can then select another panel set to group the selected panel with, or select New Panel Group, from the menu, to create it in a set of its own.

Don't forget

The Insert panel can be accessed by selecting Window, Insert, from the menu bar.

Don't forget

The head part of an HTML document contains information that is not displayed on the published page. One function of head information is to help search engines locate a page on the web.

Insert Panel

The Insert panel is the one that is used most frequently for adding content to web pages.

Common

This is the default setting, and the one that contains some of the most commonly used elements on a web page, such as hyperlinks, tables, images, and templates.

Layout

This provides options for creating tables, layers, and frames. It also provides various options for viewing tables.

Forms

This contains all of the elements that are used in online forms. For more information about this, see Chapter Ten.

Data

This contains buttons that can be used to insert data into the head section of a web page. This can include items, such as metadata, keywords, and descriptions. It also has options for adding scripts, such as Javascript, into an HTML document.

Spry

This contains buttons that can be used to insert Spry elements into a web page, for an improved experience for users. Spry elements are created with a combination of Javascript, cascading style sheets, and HTML, and include items like expanding menu bars and text-validation areas.

InContext Editing

This contains options for adding editable regions to pages.

Text

This contains buttons for inserting text functions, including bold, italics, preformatted text, headings, and lists. Some of these functions are also available on the Text Property Inspector, and also from the Text menu on the menu bar.

Favorites

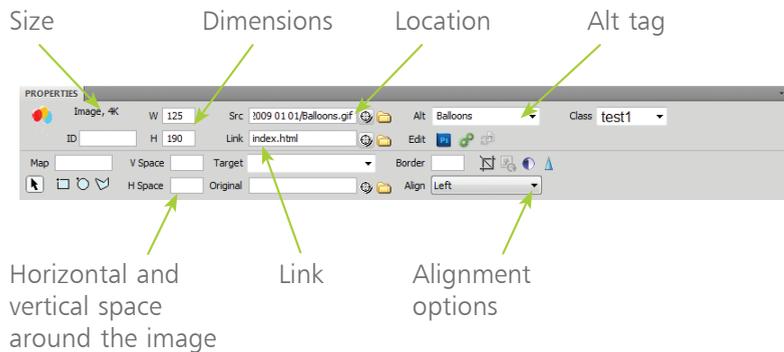
This can be used to create a custom list of the most frequently used items within the Insert panel. To add Favorites, right-click (Ctrl+click on the Mac) on the Insert panel, and then select the required items in the Customize Favorites Objects window.

Properties Inspector

The Properties Inspector displays the attributes of the currently selected item on the page, whether it is an image, a piece of text, a table, a frame, or an element of multimedia. In addition to viewing these attributes, you can alter them by entering values within the Properties Inspector. For instance, if you want to change the size of an image, you can select it, and then enter the new size required. To display the properties of a particular element, it has to be selected first.

Image properties

Select an image by clicking on it once, to display the relevant Properties Inspector:



Hot tip

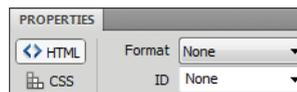


When using images on a website, create a separate folder in which to store them. This way you will always know where the source for your images is.

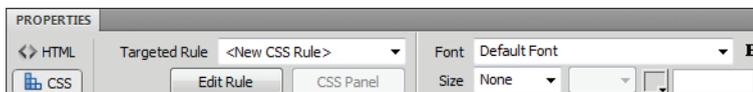
HTML/CSS Toggle

Within the Properties Inspector, there are options for toggling between HTML options for adding specific tags, and CSS for formatting content. To toggle between the two:

- 1 Click on the HTML button to apply formatting tags, such as paragraph or heading tags



- 2 Click on the CSS button to add CSS rules, which can be used for items like text formatting



Don't forget



The most commonly used external editors with Dreamweaver are for editing HTML code and editing images. HTML editing can be done with a text editor (such as Notepad on a PC or TextEdit on a Mac), and images can be edited with a graphics program, such as Fireworks or Photoshop.

External Editors

When designing web pages, you will be working with a lot of elements that cannot be directly edited within Dreamweaver. These can include elements, such as sound files or movie clips, and images (although some editing can be done on images directly within Dreamweaver). One way to edit them would be to do so in an appropriate program, before they are inserted into Dreamweaver. However, if you then need to edit the items again, once they have been imported, it can be frustrating having to open up the file again, edit it, and then re-import it. Dreamweaver simplifies this process by providing direct links to external editors that can be used to edit items while they are still in the Dreamweaver environment.

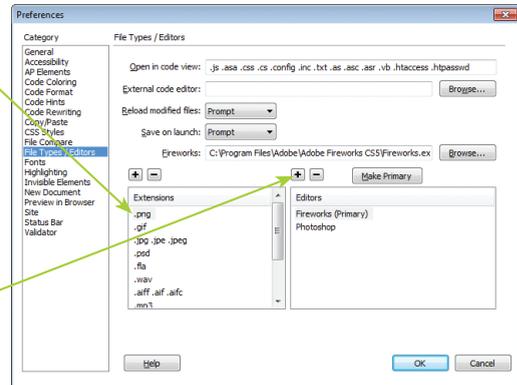
It is possible to specify which program you want to use for specific tasks, e.g. editing images by selecting the file type and the program from the File Types / Editors category of the Preferences window:

1 Select Edit, Preferences, from the menu bar, and select the File Types / Editors category

2 Click here to select a file type

3 Click here to select an external editor from your hard drive

4 Click OK



...cont'd

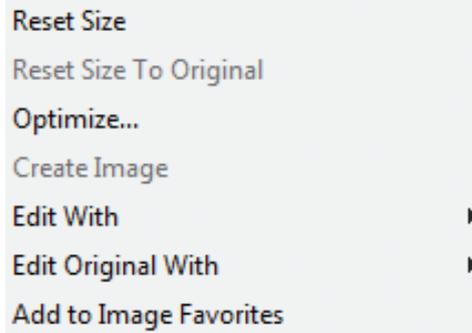
Using external editors

Once you have selected the required external editors for different file formats, it is then possible to access them while you are working on a page:

- 1 Select an element on a page, such as an image



- 2 Right-click (Windows) or Ctrl+click (Mac) on the item, and select the Edit With option that contains the primary editor for the selected item. To edit the item with a different editor, select Edit With, and then browse to the program that you want to use to edit the selected item



- 3 To change the external editor for a specific file type at any time, select Edit, Edit with External Editor, from the menu bar, and change the selection in the File Types / Editors dialog box, as shown on the last page

Beware



Files have to be saved and named before their content can be edited using an external editor. If you try and do this without saving a file, a dialog box will appear, asking you to save it.

Don't forget

Hyperlinks, or just links, can be colored differently, depending on their current state. Different colors can be applied for a link before it has been activated, after it has been activated, and when it is in the state of being pressed.

Beware

If you are using a background image on a web page, make sure it is not too complex or gaudy. This could create a dramatic initial effect, but, if people are looking at the page a lot, it could become irritating. Similarly, background colors should, in general, be subtle and unobtrusive, rather than bright and bold. White is a very effective background for pages.

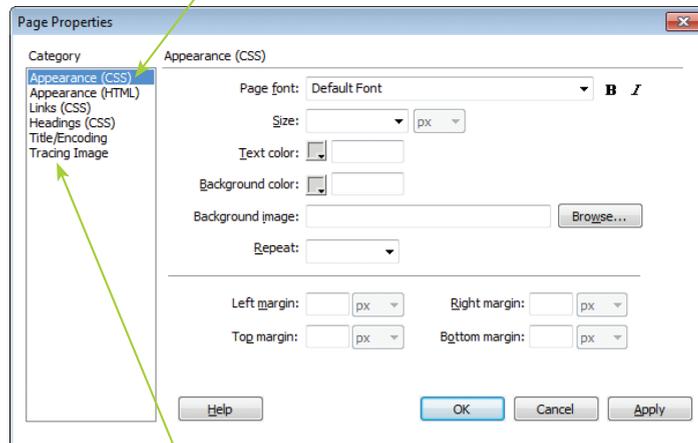
Page Properties

In addition to setting preferences that affect all of the files you work on in Dreamweaver, it is possible to set properties for individual pages. These include items like background color, the color of links, and the margins on the page. To set page properties:

- 1 Select **Modify, Page Properties**, from the menu bar, or click on the **Page Properties** button on the **Properties Inspector**



- 2 Click here to select attributes for options, such as background images, text color, background color, and default page font



- 3 Click here to select other categories for the page properties. These include document title and tracing image (which is an image comprising a page design that can be inserted into a file and be used as the basis to create the actual page)