

Quick and Dirty of HTML



Back in the dark ages of the 20th Century (before the introduction of such wonderful software as Dreamweaver or FrontPage), people had to make websites the old fashioned way, using simple programs like Notepad (the computer program, not the paper kind) and a special language called HTML, which stands for... wait a second, you didn't think I was going to give you all the answers did you?! I tell you what, why don't you tell me what it means!! Use those Google search skills!

H_____T_____ M_____ L_____

Now I know what you are thinking..."Yea, like that clears anything up!" But let's think about it... What does H_____ mean? If you go back to your knowledge of Latin based prefixes you should remember it means "above," "beyond," "excessive." Right, so now we know that H_____T_____ means something "beyond the normal T_____."

What about M_____? On <http://dict.die.net/> I found that the definition for M_____ is "the amount added to the cost to determine the asking price." Okay wait, that doesn't really make sense considering our subject, does it? Let me look again... alright, now I see a second definition says "a method of adding information to the text indicating...instructions for layout of the text on the page." That sounds a lot like formatting to me! You've formatted documents before, right? Title is centered and underlined. Paragraphs are indented and double-spaced. Etc, etc, etc.

And L_____. Well, if you don't know what L_____ means by now, it's time to turn in your badge and go on home. Maybe Taco Bell is hiring. But wait, you need to know L_____ for that job, too!

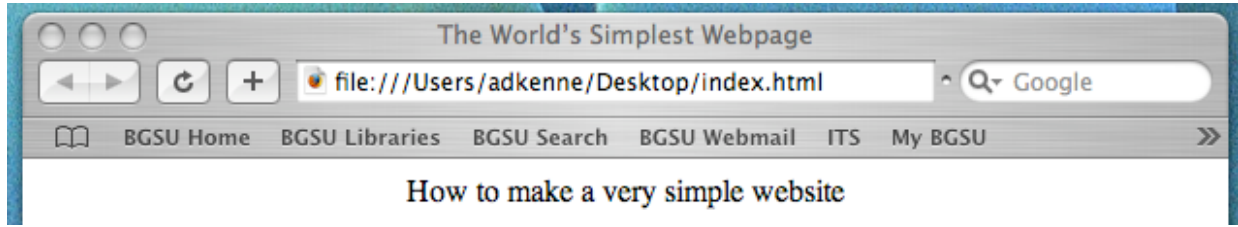
That's it! Not that scary now that we've dissected it, is it? We now know that HTML is just a special language that we speak (actually *type*, because computers don't have ears!) that tells a computer how to arrange the information that we want to put in the document! In this case, the document is a webpage, but I'll tell you another secret...**ALL** softwares have these hidden languages (or *codes* as computer nerds call them because they think they are sooo cool), but you just can't seem them!

And let's be honest, in most cases you don't want to see 'em. You don't need to see 'em. Even if you did, you wouldn't understand 'em... so, why bother!?! And I'll be honest with you, to make simple websites, you probably still don't need to see them either, but I want you to understand why they are there before we get started.

WARNING: Scary looking code on the next page...turning of the page not for the faint of heart!

Below is a webpage. Doesn't look much like a website does it? But it is. In fact, the HTML below if saved and opened in an internet browser will look just like the picture below it.

```
<html>
<head>
<title>The World's Simplest Webpage</title>
</head>
<body>
<p>< center>How to make a very simple website </center></p>
</body>
</html>
```



Kinda boring. I know, but I said we were going for simple here...

So, let's figure out exactly what we did. Let's look at that code again, shall we?

First, I'm going to rearrange it a little bit. In all honesty, when I write HTML (or I should say, WHEN I wrote HTML, since now I cheat and use Dreamweaver pretty much everytime!! Why not when they've made it so easy!) I like to use spaces and indentations to make it more "readable." This way I can see right away if I've made a mistake (such as failing to "turn off" a command).

```
<html>
  <head>
    <title>The World's Simplest Webpage</title>
  </head>

  <body>
    <p>< center>How to make a very simple website </center></p>
  </body>
</html>
```

Okay, so let me stop here to say "Computers are dumb." Computers can't think. Therefore, they can only do what humans (who can think) tell them to do. Any "thinking" they appear to be doing is a direct result of a program a human wrote that tells a computer what to do. Sometimes the program is written really well, and computers (which have great memories!) can do what they were told really fast so it sometimes looks like they are really good at thinking, but believe me when I say that somewhere, someone, some time told a computer what to do in that situation! Why am I telling you this, because when writing HTML, we have to always tell the computer to start and to stop doing something. This will become more clear if you read on....

So we said that HTML is a language that tells the computer how to format our text. The problem is that you don't know the language. But seeing as I'm fluent, I will translate for you. I've written the English translation in red below.

<html>	Okay dumb computer, I'm going to start writing a webpage now.
<head>	First, I need to give it a header. (Kinda like you wrote headers on your papers in high school.)
<title>	Now I'd like to give my website a Title.
The World's Simplest Webpage	
</title>	That is the end of my Title.
</head>	That is the end of my header.
<body>	Now I'd like to start writing the body of my website. (The content...the meat and potatoes...)
<p>	I want to start a new paragraph.
< center>	I want to start centering.
How to make a very simple website	
</center>	Please stop centering. (Well, it doesn't say "please" but I'm using artistic interpretation)
</p>	That is the end of my paragraph.
</body>	That is the end of my body.
</html>	That is the end of my website.

See, everything starts. And everything stops. Kinda reminds me of the clapper... Clap on. Clap off.

Let's say you wanted to bold the word simple located in the body, you'd just have to know the translation for bold in html, which I happen to know is (or in some snooty dialects). Let's look...

How to make a very simple website becomes
How to make a very **simple** website

To italicize: you would use <i>:

How to make a very <i>simple</i> website becomes
How to make a very *simple* website

To underline: you would use <u>:

How to make a very <u>simple</u> website becomes
How to make a very simple website

To bold, italicize, and underline: you would use , <i>, and <u> (notice the order of the starting and stopping commands):

How to make a very <i><u>simple</u></i> website becomes
How to make a very ***simple*** website

Now that you know the syntax of HTML, you just have to learn the semantics. Okay, enough showing off that Computational Linguistics degree (did I mention I have a masters in Computational Linguistics?)...I'll put it in non-linguistic terms: Now that you know the structure of the language, you just have to learn the entire lexicon (a.k.a. the vocabulary) if you want to speak it fluently.

"But wait" you say! "You said we didn't have to learn to speak it." I did indeed, and I meant it! I was just teasing about the whole "learning the entire lexicon" thing. I don't even know the whole vocabulary (so maybe I'm not as fluent as I claimed to be). But that is the great thing about Dreamweaver, it *does* know the whole vocabulary! Or I should say, some people who do know the whole vocabulary got together with some people that know another, even more complicated computer language called C++, and together they created this software that is basically a glorified translator! So now, instead of typing `That's great`, you can click on a little icon with a B on it (much like in Microsoft Word) and the computer will write that code into the document for you. And you never have to look at that code again!!!

