

Writing Course Home Pages

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Abstract

After an introduction to URLs and HTML, you will prepare a course home page using a text editor and a Web browser. You will enter the HTML code for the home page in the editor window and use the browser to see how the HTML is interpreted by the browser.

URLs

host name Each computer on the internet has a unique *host name*. Examples: `fs3.ee.ubc.ca`, `violet.berkeley.edu`, `www.yahoo.com`.

protocol Information is sent between hosts using sets of commands and responses called *protocols*. Examples: FTP (to transfer files), telnet (to log into remote computers), SMTP (to transfer mail between computers), and HTTP (to retrieve hypertext documents).

URL Each page on the Web is identified by a three-part URL (“Uniform Resource Locator”) composed of the protocol, the host name and the document. Example:

`http://www.ee.ubc.ca/~elec379`.

HTML

- Web pages are written in a “language” called HTML.
- HTML consists of ordinary text surrounded by “tags” that structure the document.
- Web browsers are programs that retrieve and display HTML documents.
- We will enter the HTML text for a course home page and view it with a Web browser.

A Blank Web Page

We'll start by creating a blank web page which we'll customize as we learn more about HTML. Do the following:

- Start a text editor (DOS' *edit* or Windows' *Notepad*) and enter the following text into a file. Indentation and capitalization are not important.

```
<html>
  <head>
    <title> My Course </title>
  </head>
  <body>
  </body>
</html>
```

-
- Save the document to the file: `c:\mypage.html`.
 - Start a browser (e.g. Netscape).
 - Open the URL: `file:c:\mypage.html`.
 - You've just created a web page!

Section Headings

Now we'll add to the page and in the process learn to use seven more HTML tags. These will be enough to create a nice course home page. The first new tag creates section headings:

- Enter the following text (modified as appropriate) in the `<body>` section:

```
<h1>My Course</h1>
```

- Save the modified document and press the `Reload` button on the browser. The course name should now appear on the page.

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- Add the following line after the course name to create a second-level section heading:

```
<h2>Instructor</h2>
```

- Add the following additional second-level section headings to your course page:
 - Objectives
 - Course Outline
 - Textbook
 - Links
 - Evaluation
- Check your work by saving the file and `Reloading` it into the browser.

Text and Paragraphs

Paragraph formatting is determined by the browser *not* by the formatting in the HTML text! You must insert `<p>` tags where you want a new paragraph to start. Otherwise all of your text will be run together into one large paragraph.

- Add a few sentences about your course after the “Objectives” section heading.
- Use a `<p>` tag to break up this text into two paragraphs.
- Save your text and reload the modified document into the browser.
- Adjust the browser window width to see how paragraphs are reformatted by the browser.

Lists

The `` and `` tags are used to mark the start and end of an un-numbered list. Between these tags the `` tag is used to mark the start of each list item.

For example, the following HTML generates a two-item list:

```
<ul>
<li> first item
<li> second item
</ul>
```

- Add `` and `` tags in the “Outline” section of your page.
- Add a list of topics to the course outline using the `` tag before each list item.

Links

The `<a>` and `` (“anchor”) tags create links to other documents. The text between these tags is displayed underlined and can be “clicked” to follow that link. The URL of the link is placed within the `<a>` tag as shown below.

- Add the following text into the “Links” section:

```
<a href=http://www.ubc.ca> UBC's Web Page </a>
```

- Click on the link to test it and then use the browser's Back button to return to your own page.
- Add your department's name and link it to your department's home page.

Pre-Formatted Text

The `<pre>` and `</pre>` tags allow you to display pre-formatted material such as tables. Line breaks are preserved and the text is displayed in a typewriter-like font.

- Enter the following text (modified as appropriate) into the “Evaluation” section:

```
<pre>
  final exam           50%
  midterm exam        25%
  assignments          25%
</pre>
```

Citations

Placing the `<cite>` and `</cite>` tags before and after a book title makes it appear underlined or in italics.

- Enter the following text (modified as appropriate) in the “Textbook” section:

```
<cite>The Art of Electronics</cite>, Paul
Horowitz and Winfield Hill, Cambridge University
Press, 1989.
```

Hints

- concentrate on content
- keep your pages simple and consistent
- don't use HTML if you need control over a document's layout and typography – use PDF instead