

Mastering Cascading Style Sheets

Taming The Cascading Style Sheet Beast

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Pulling The Monster Out From Under The Bed

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1. Introduction to cascading style sheets



As you probably already know, CSS is a distant cousin to the Boogey Man and lives under the beds of webmasters, which explains why many of us spend so many hours on the computer in a constant state of sleep deprivation and caffeine intoxication.

For our peace of mind and health, we will yank the CSS Monster out from under the bed and into the blinding light so we can overcome our fear and hopefully be able to enjoy a full nights rest knowing that the CSS Monster is not so ugly and can actually be our friend, if we'll let it.

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), was brought about by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and not by evil programmers with too much time on their hands as originally believed, to develop a standard, which could be interpreted by different browsers. This became a necessity as Microsoft and Netscape battled for world

domination and kept adding html attributes, which were only understood by their browser. Great for them, but bad for us. Now, through the implementation of CSS, we can design ONE website for all browsers instead of multiple websites, one for each browser.

What started out as a way of standardizing the way code was displayed through basic things, like font and color tags, has quickly grown into something much more powerful, which makes sense because all of the not so evil programmers could now spend more time working on the one standard which could be understood by all browsers.

CSS can be utilized in your web pages a couple different ways.

The FIRST and the one that takes priority over the others is what is known as Inline CSS and is used inside the html tag directly and only affects what is inside that element. This is a useful method when you are doing something like adding a Drop Cap or something, which will only be used once or twice and you don't want to clutter up your External Style Sheet.

The SECOND, and the one that takes priority over an External Style Sheet but not Inline CSS is the Internal Style Sheet which is placed in head of your page between the <head>and</head> tags. You might want to use this when you only have one page on your website or you need a page to look differently than the other pages which use your main CSS External Stylesheet. You could then use your Inline Style Sheets to overwrite anything on a line-by-line basis should you need to. Remember from above, the Inline CSS takes priority over the others.

The THIRD method is the External Style Sheet. This is a document that lives outside of your web page. By placing some code in the

head of your web page between the <head>and</head> tags, you tell your web page to look for and use the instructions from that file to interpret how to display your page.

This method is useful when you have two or more pages and will allow you to control the look across all of your pages maintaining a consistent look throughout.

What a huge time saver!

Just imagine what will happen when the guru's and “powers that be”, decide the BIG, RED, BOLD HEADLINES are no longer cool! With External Style Sheets, you can just edit your .css file (external style sheet), and get ready for a night out, although you may find yourself lonely because all of your webmaster friends will be working feverishly through the weekend making this change on each individual page.

What happens when you are using inline css, internal css, and external css?

Good question! I'm glad you asked!

This is where the word “cascading” comes onto the scene. Let's say that you have an External Style Sheet, which sets the look for your entire site. On one page in particular you add some new elements and some inline css, which differs from what you've outlined in your external style sheet.

Everything will “cascade” or fall into place. It will first use any inline code, then it will look for any internal code in your pages head and then it will use any external style sheet. If you've used inline code to change the color and font of one particular paragraph, the rest of the paragraphs and all other elements will still be defined by the external style sheet. They play together nicely, so to speak.

2. Inline Cascading Style Sheets



To use inline styles, you use the, (drumroll please).... style tag, otherwise known as the style attribute. Did you guess correctly? You can say yes, No one will ever know but you.

If you've ever taken a peek inside your html or source code, then you may have seen these little critters there because that's where they like to live. For the purpose of our lesson, we've captured one of these elusive style tags and placed it on the page right below here where you can get a good look at it in the light.

```
<p style=
```

There, it doesn't look so scary now does it? Kind of harmless really. The problem is right now, it doesn't know what to do, so it's just sitting there patiently awaiting instructions.

They are very obedient and follow orders extremely well as long as the instructions come in a clear voice, which they can understand.

Let's have some fun with it and give it something to do.

```
<p style="color:red; font-family:verdana; margin-left:20px">This is the text on the page that will be affected</p>
```

So, what we've done is taken the old <p> (paragraph) tag and added a style that will affect everything up until we close the paragraph with the </p> tag.

In the example above, if you haven't already guessed, we used the style tag to change the color to red, use the verdana font and apply a left margin of 20px.

If we would have used sans serif font instead of verdana, then we would have placed that inside of single quotes like 'sans serif'.

*Anytime you use two words **inline**, you must enclose in **single quotes**.*

Taking a closer look at the example above and see what makes it work.

We used the style= followed by a set of instructions. The first part of the instruction is known as the property and the second part is known as the value.

property:value

The first property we wanted to specify was the color and the first value was red. You separate the property and value with the colon:

color:red

When using more than one property and value, separate those with the semi-colon => ;

color:red; font-family:verdana

or

color:red; font-family:'sans serif'

Remember, two words needs to be enclosed in single quotes when being used inline.

Pretty simple, right? I know you are nodding your head enthusiastically. Tell me more, I can almost hear you saying.

What properties can I define for my fonts?

Excellent question!! I knew you were catching on!

The most common things you may like to define are as follows:

font-family

font-style

font-variant

font-weight

font-size

line-height
word-spacing
letter-spacing
text-decoration
text-transform
text-align
text-indent
vertical-align

That's cool, but... what do they do?

I'm glad you asked. Let's look at each one and see what is possible, see what values are available for each property.

We'll be sticking with the <p> (paragraph) tag to keep this simplified for the time being but you can also use style tags with other font tags and not just the paragraph tag. Like your <H1> (heading) tags for instance. We'll get back to this a little later though. Just wanted to mention it so I wouldn't freak you out later.

font-family

```
<p style="font-family:arial">
```

You can choose your favorite font for this. One thing to keep in mind with the property is that everyone may not have your favorite font installed on their machine. If no other font is defined as a back up, then the browser will use it's default font. You can choose an alternate font by placing more than one in the value section. You do this by separating each value with a comma.

```
<p style="font-family:arial, serif">
```

This tells the browser that if arial is not installed on the surfers machine, to use the generic serif font.

font-style

```
<p style="font-style:italic">
```

Choose from normal, italic or oblique, if you can tell the difference between italic and oblique please refer me to your optometrist so I can get a new prescription for my glasses.

font-variant

```
<p style="font-variant:small-caps">
```

Your choices here are “normal” and “small-caps”, which should have been called “all caps” instead because that's what it does. So, I can sense you're scratching your head right now and wondering, “why would I every need to use the “normal” tag?”. Hmm, this tells me that you're thinking in the right direction!

We'll jump ahead for a moment, not quite time travel, but a definite leap forward in this tutorial. If you were using an Internal or External Style Sheet and had your paragraph text set to small caps, you might want to jump out of small caps for a bit and have a small section of normal text. Ah ha!!

font-weight

```
<p style="font-weight:bold">
```

Choose from normal, bold, bolder & lighter. Alternatively, you could choose a number 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800 or 900 with 400 being equal to “normal” and “700” being equal to bold.

font-size

```
<p style="font-size:large">
```

xx-small, x-small, small, medium, large, x-large, xx-large

Medium is generally the browsers default size, so you may see at one size and someone else at another.

smaller, larger

These two when used, will adjust themselves according to the parent element. If the section you were working in was defined as small and

you used “larger”, then the “larger” value would adjust your new area to medium.

Length

Use this to set an exact size by selecting a pixel size

```
<p style="font-size:18px">
```

%

Use this to set an exact size by selecting a percentage

```
<p style="font-size:75%">
```

line-height

```
<p style="line-height:120%">
```

normal

```
<p style="line-height:normal">
```

This is the default

Number

```
<p style="line-height:1.4">
```

Number multiplied by the current font size to set distance between lines

Length

```
<p style="line-height:16pt">
```

Use this set set a fixed distance between the lines

%

```
<p style="line-height:140%">
```

Sets the distance between lines based on the percentage of current line size so the 1.4 and 140% are essentially the same. Maybe the programmers do have a mean streak.

word-spacing

```
<p style="word-spacing:20px">
```

```
<p style="word-spacing:-0.4px">
```

This sets the distance between words. I can hear you saying, “Nooooo”, haha, Yes, it is! Choose between normal, which is default or set a length. It is possible to use a negative number here to crunch the words together or overlap.

letter-spacing

```
<p style="word-spacing:10px">
```

```
<p style="word-spacing:-0.4px">
```

I know, I know. Obvious huh? As with the word-spacing, you can also use a negative number to crunch the letters together, while leaving the distance between words the same, unless you specified that to be different.

text-decoration

```
<p style="text-decoration:line-through">
```

Guess what this one does. Bingo! It decorates the text. Choose from any of the options below, which I think are pretty self explanatory. If you were working in a section of underlined text, you could use the “none” tag to flip out of it for a bit.

none

Default decoration. Text has no special decorations like below.

underline

Creates a line underneath the text, like hyperlinked text.

overline

The opposite of underlined. One of our evil programmers had dyslexia and nobody had the heart to tell him so they just left this one in.

line-through

Creates a line through the middle of the text. This is a mandatory decoration for internet marketing because product prices, days left and copies available fluctuate on a minute to minute basis. This

allows you to quickly cross out the ~~\$29.99~~ and list it for \$19.99, but only for ~~8 hours~~, ~~4 hours~~, 2 more hours but you better hurry 'cause there's only 12, 8, 5, 2, 1 copies left!

blink

Doesn't work in IE or Opera, so why even use it??

subliminal

Creates an unconscious reaction to the text on your page, forcing the surfer to follow your instructions without question. Ok, I made that one up, there's no such value! Don't we wish!!

text-transform

`<p style="text-transform:capitalize">`

Finally, one that is not so obvious! Here you can set all characters to all caps, 1st letter of each word caps, no caps, etc..

none

Default, will appear as it is typed. If you were working in an all caps section you could flip out of it for the specified text and it would resume when this tag was closed.

capitalize

Use this to capitalize the first letter of each word

uppercase

Set all letters to caps

lowercase

All letters are lowercase, no caps

text-align

`<p style="text-align:center">`

Determine how the text is to be aligned. You can select from left, right, center and justify. Left is the default and will be how it is displayed if this property is not set, depending on the surfer's browser

or any other specifications set in your internal or external style sheets.

text-indent

```
<p style="text-indent:15px">
```

```
<p style="text-indent:-15px">
```

Set either the length or percent. You can use a negative number here. If you have other text, table or pictures to the side, this can place the text on top of it.

vertical-align

```
<p style="vertical-align:super">
```

baseline

Places at the baseline. Common around pictures.

sub

Created subscript, which will place the character slightly lower than the surrounding characters as you would expect to see in H₂O which is a common example of subscript.

super

Creates superscript which is common in pricing, \$19.⁹⁹, this could be used in conjunction with the decoration:underline to create \$19.⁹⁹

top

The top of this character will align with the top of the tallest element on the line. Generally used with images.

text-top

Aligns with the top of the parent element. Huh? You probably won't see much of a difference between top and text-top. Top, aligns with the tallest element on the line where text-top uses the parent elements font, so if you were working in a size 24px font, you could create some new text with a size 12px font and use text-top and it

would magically rise above the base line and the top would be even with the size 24px text.

middle

Aligns in the middle of the element, common for pictures.

bottom

Aligns with the bottom of the lowest element in the line. Common with pictures.

text-bottom

Works like the text-top, only it's the bottom.

length

```
<p style="vertical-align:28px">
```

You can raise or lower by setting specific px (pixels), pt, (points) inch (uh.. inches), mm (millimeters), cm (centimeters), pc (picas) or em (ems, will cover later).

%

```
<p style="vertical-align:120%">
```

Set by calculating a percentage of the line height value. May use negative number for this value.

Now that you have an idea about what can be done with fonts, let's go ahead and play around with it a bit.

Let me introduce to you the background element. Since we are still working on paragraphs and text, this won't be about the page background but rather placing our text on a background.

Using this code...

```
<p style="background: blue; color: white;">Here's our nice white text on a blue background.</p>
```

You could alternatively use an image

```
<p style="background: url(some_cool_image.gif);color: white;">Here's our nice white text on a background image</p>
```

...would place our white text on a blue background. If you like, you can take a quick break, stretch your legs and come back ready to get some hands on!

Ok, since you're reading this, I'll assume that you've either had your break and are ready to get to it or you're just so eager to get started that you skipped the break. Either way, congratulations on making it this far. Hopefully, you've come to see that CSS is understandable and that you shouldn't be afraid to dig into it.

When working with your actual pages or external .css files, you should always make a back up copy before making any changes. This way you can feel free to change one thing at a time then see what it changed, then just rinse, wash and repeat until you get it the way you like.

Having your page or .css file backed up is like working with a big ol' etch a sketch, if you mess up, just shake it and start over. I feel a little silly saying this but if you have a laptop and are about to shake it...
STOP!!

Ok, why don't you go ahead and open up your favorite text editor and create a new blank page. Write out a paragraph or two, or copy and paste from somewhere else and then look at your html code.

Remember our `<p style=` critters from above? Of course you do! Go ahead and start adding and changing around some of the elements and values from above just to get a feel for it. Once you're comfortable with that, we'll move on to some other elements.

Hi, I take it that you've mastered the font-size and text-transform elements by now and are ready to tackle something a little heartier. Good! Let's jump into Internal Style Sheets.

3. Internal Cascading Style Sheets



All the same elements and values apply as they did above, we will just list them differently. Instead of being directly “inline” in the html code, we'll place the css in the head of our document, in-between the <head>and</head> tags.

We start by placing the following opening and closing css tag in the head of our page

```
<style type="text/css">  
</style>
```

All CSS code will be placed between the two tags.

In our Internal Style Sheet and our External Style Sheet, we will now use the following syntax.

```
selector {property: value}
```

The property and value tags are the same as with our inline, like when we set our property “color” to the value “red”. Our “selector” above was the <p> (paragraph). We actually were defining it when we use <p style=

The selector is basically our html tag we want the css to affect. Like now, I could leave the individual paragraph tags alone in the html and just add the following between my css open and close tags in the head

```
<style type="text/css">
p {color: red; }
</style>
```

Now anywhere I typed, as long as it was a normal paragraph, the text would be red. We can also set multiple values as we did before but since we aren't confined to being "inline" now, we can go ahead and enter after each semi-colon ; to help make things easier to read.

Where it was...

```
font-family:serif; font-size: medium; text-decoration: none;
```

It's now

```
font-family: serif;
```

```
font-size: medium;
```

```
text-decoration: none;
```

The only other thing we need to do here is tell it which selector to define and show where the property and value begin and end for the paragraph selector.

We do this by first naming our selector, followed the the opening tag, which is { we will then place our code and close with }

It doesn't matter if the {} are on the same line as above with our {color:red} or as follows.

```
<style type="text/css">
p {
color: red;
font-family: serif;
font-size: medium;
text-decoration: none;
}
</style>
```

Now, let's expand on that and add a background color. Since our background will affect the body of the page, we will want to use the "body" selector. If we were doing this without css, the body tag is where the background properties would be defined. Like this..

```
<body bgcolor="#000000">
```

Now, we can define in css like this.

```
body {  
background: #000000;  
}
```

I've highlighted the selector in red, the property in green, the value in blue and bolded the opening and closing tags.

We can place as many css defines as we want. You've probably seen pages full of these if you've every had a look at a .css file before. You open it up, your jaw hits the desk and you quickly close the page not wanting to disturb the monster.

Next time you open one, you can browse on through it and recognize what the selectors are that are being controlled and what properties and values are being assigned to them.

Let's look at the two defines we've been working on to see how they look together.

```
<style type="text/css">
```

```
/* This is a comment */
```

```
p {  
color: red;  
font-family: serif;  
font-size: medium;  
text-decoration: none;  
}
```

```
body {
```

```
background: #000000; /* This is another comment*/  
}  
</style>
```

You may have noticed a couple of comments in the code above. Comments can be on their own line or at the end of a line. These are your friends, sometimes your best friends when working with a long style sheet as often they will tell you what part of the web page the section or line of code affects.

Above we set the body to use Black as a background for our page. We can actually define many different things with our “body” selector. For the following example, I'm actually going to grab the body define from one of my Wordpress themes.

```
body {  
background: url("background.png");  
font-family: 'Lucida Grande', 'Lucida Sans Unicode', Verdana, sans-  
serif;  
font-size: 14px;  
margin: 0;  
padding: 0;  
}
```

Let's stare this monster down!

We can see by looking, quite simply now that we are setting the body of the page to use a background image. Because no path is set for this image, it must be in the same folder as your web pages. We are telling it to use the Lucida Grande font and enclosing the two words in single quotes, (double quotes will confuse it), we are telling it that if the surfers browsers does not have Lucida Grande font installed to try the ones that following in that order and ending with a generic font.

Additionally, we want the page to be displayed with no margin and no padding and want to use a size 14px font as the page default. We can override this at anytime by creating a new selector, which we will do later.

Did you get through that without pulling out any hair? I bet you breezed right through it didn't you?

The above was a custom template, I'm using. Let's take a look at the Wordpress default theme. We'll just look at the body selector define again.

```
body {  
font-size: 62.5%; /* Resets 1em to 10px */  
font-family: 'Lucida Grande', Verdana, Arial, Sans-Serif;  
background: #d5d6d7 url('images/kubrickbgcolor.jpg');  
color: #333;  
text-align: center;  
}
```

Here, we are using the font-size 62.5%, remember from earlier when we covered the font-size property, the percentage is based up line height. So the default font size will be 62.5% of whatever the line size is. So if we define different line heights in various places throughout our page and don't add a new define for the font size in that particular place, it will use the default 62.5%

Ok, I said earlier that we would go over what “em” is and since it's being used here, I guess this is as good a time as any.

When using px to set font sizes, line heights, etc.. you are setting an exact number for that font or line height, etc.. which means that how it is viewed is dependent upon the viewers screen resolution. A 12px font will look differently on a 600x800 screen that it does a 1024x780 screen.

The em setting is basically a scalable size and how it is displayed is calculated based on the font-size property of the parent element. What the body selector did above is set the default text size to be about 10px. 1 normal em is about 12px. So with this base established, you can use “em” instead of px to allow for scaling. Which means that your page can look the way you designed it on any resolution screen.

Just remember that the “em” calculates from whatever the parent size is. To explain, let's say we've kept our 1 em at 12px because we didn't scale it down by setting the 62.5% like we did in the wordpress css body css above.

So if we were to use 1.2em to define our paragraph text size, this would be multiplied by our default 12px for a slightly larger font, however if we had set our paragraph to 62.55% and then were working within a paragraph and set some text to be 1.2em, it would calculate on our already reduced 62.55% for a figure slightly larger than the 10px but less than 12px.

There really was no simple way to explain that. I hope you didn't get thrown off there, the main thing to remember is that you can always back your style.css file up and make changes until you get the look you want. The key is to not be afraid of it.

The cool thing is that we can also use the em to scale our images, so the whole page is able to expand and contract as needed to fit in the surfers screen, looking exactly as we intended it to look.

Back to the default wordpress body CSS we were looking at.

Notice this time, there are two values for the background property. As you might have already guessed, the first is a color that will display until the image background loads.

```
background: #d5d6d7 url('images/kubrickbgcolor.jpg');
```

The color of the font is set to 333 which is almost black. You can use the 3 digit color codes or the full color code or even a color name like “whitesmoke”.

To find out which 3 digit color code is what, which can be difficult when going over your Wordpress Style Sheet, you can use this page which has the codes along with a visual of the color to make it easier on you to make the right changes to your style sheets.

Three Digit Color Codes

You can use this page for color names as well as Hex codes.

Color Names and Hex Codes

Let's take a look at defining our hyperlink colors. First let me start by saying, the selector for that will start with the letter a

If you think about it for a sec, it will make sense. Our hyperlinks start with

```
<a
```

Like our paragraph tag started with <p

We used the letter p for the selector to define paragraph css and we'll use the letter a to define anchor (linking) text.

```
a {  
  color: #0000FF; /* links will be blue */  
}  
a img {  
  border: #ccc 1px solid; /* linked images will have 1px border */  
  padding: 4px; /* linked images will have 4px padding */  
}  
a:visited {  
  color: #0000FF; /* visited links will be blue */  
}
```

```
a:hover {  
color: #FF0000; /* links hovered over with mouse will be red */  
}
```

I've commented the links above though I'm sure you already knew what each one was for.

Since we have several things behaving the same, there is no reason to place each in it's own css open and close tags. We can define more than one selector per line as long as we want the properties and values to be the same.

Let's do this again.

```
a, a:visited {  
color: #0000FF; /* links and visited links will be blue */  
}  
a img {  
border: #ccc 1px solid; /* linked images will have 1px border */  
padding: 4px; /* linked images will have 4px padding */  
}  
a:hover {  
color: #FF0000; /* links hovered over with mouse will be red */  
}
```

We can add as many selectors as we like, just separate each with a comma. When looking through a style.css file, often you will see many selectors on one line like this piece I copied from the Wordpress default theme.

```
h3 a, h3 a:hover, h3 a:visited {  
color: #0000FF;  
}
```

This is defining that we want all h3 heading tags which are linked to be blue, also that the link should be blue when hovered over or visited.

What if we wanted the link to turn red when hovered over? We can just peel the h3 a:hover out of that line and place it on it's new line or add it into another line that already had the property and value that we wanted applied.

New line with h3 a:hover removed

```
h3 a, h3 a:visited {  
color: #0000FF;  
}
```

New line defining h3 a:hover

```
h3 a:hover{  
color: #FF0000;  
}
```

Now, any linked heading 3 will turn red when hovered over.

This gives you complete control over your properties and values. Just because a line has several selectors doesn't mean they have to stay there. Strip out the ones you want to have different properties and/or values and define them separately.

So far, we've been talking about basic html tags that are being defined, such as the paragraph, hyperlinks, headings, etc.. But what happens when we want <H1> headings or <p> paragraphs to appear differently in different sections of our page?

That's easy! We use CLASSES!!

That's right, we'll sit all of our little css monsters at little desks and line them up in neat rows and stand in front of the chalkboard. No, no, no. Not that kind of class.

Let's take a peek at our Wordpress default theme style.css file which you received with this ebook. I'm going to grab some css code from there and paste it below.

```
h2 {  
margin: 30px 0 0;  
}  
h2.pagetitle {  
margin-top: 30px;  
text-align: center;  
}
```

You see here the h2 selector with the margin set at 30px. Every time there is a <H2> on the page, this will affect it.

BUT... if we want our <H2> to appear differently someplace else, we can tell it that this is different than the normal <H2> tag and to apply different properties and values by defining it with a class! In your web pages html you would add this to your <H2> tag.

```
<H2 class="pagetitle">
```

The same would apply if we want paragraphs to look differently.

Also, remember that the style sheets are cascading, meaning the fall together. So if you want to change the text alignment on your <h3> tag, you might find a line like the following in your style sheet...

```
h3 {  
margin: 30px 0 0;  
}
```

... and add the property and value there, like this...

```
h3 {  
margin: 30px 0 0;  
text-align: center;  
}
```

If that doesn't make the change on your page, then it is likely that the text-align property has already been defined for the h3 tag somewhere else. The quickest way to see is just use your "find" in whatever text editor you are using and search for h3. You should be able to scan through and see what properties and values are defined and where.

Remember, if the selector you want to change is already grouped together on a line with other selectors for the properties you want to alter, just peel it out and create a new entry or add the change to another existing entry.

Sometimes, you may want one of your selectors, like the paragraph to do something different like align right instead of left. This is easy to do by assigning a new paragraph selector like..

```
p.right {  
text-align: right  
}
```

It could also look like

```
p.right {text-align: right}
```

Remember, the opening and closing tags can be on the same line, they are just usually broken apart to make reading easier, especially when you have multiple properties and values defined.

In your html, for the area you wanted to align right, you would just tell it to use those properties and values by calling the p.right class.

```
<p class="right">
```

That paragraph will now align to the right instead of whatever your p selector is defined as default.

The p. is placed in front of the right because it is still working off of the paragraph <p> in your html.

The same would apply to any sub settings you wanted to define for any of your other html elements like..

h1.sample

h2.

h3.

p.

Then just call that call in the associated html element by placing the class= tag and the portion that comes after the period. For our h1.sample, we would change our <h1> tag to this...

```
<H1 class="sample">
```

Sometimes you may see selectors like this...

.storycontent

... that aren't a normal html tag. That is perfectly fine. Using the class=, those properties and values are applied the same as the other was by using a DIV tag.

The DIV tag?

Stop! Don't panic, thinking you must have scrolled past the section where we discussed DIV tags because you didn't. There, you can relax and take a deep breath!

The div tag is used to define a section in your document. Keep in mind that a break
 will usually be inserted automatically after the closing div tag.

These will usually be used where no preset html tags exist such as the <p> or <h1> tags and will allow you even greater control of your page.

Going back to my custom Wordpress theme, there are several sections which use the .storycontent selector above. This is the section where the actual blog content is posted for this particular

them and there are several properties and values assigned to this.

Here is a little copy and paste from that themes style.css

Remember, this is just a part of it that we will stare down.

```
.storycontent,  
.storycontent p {  
color: #333;  
font: normal normal 12px 'Trebuchet MS', Verdana, sans-serif;  
line-height: 130%;  
text-align: justify;  
margin-bottom: 10px;  
text-align: justify;  
}  
.storycontent a {  
color: #333;  
border-bottom: #333 1px dotted;  
text-decoration: none;  
}  
.storycontent a:hover,  
.storycontent a:visited:hover {  
border-bottom: 0px;  
}
```

You are probably able to look at the above styles and understand what properties and values have been assigned to these selectors. If so, congratulations! You should pat yourself on the back for being such a good student!

If not, don't be discouraged. We've covered quite a bit and may take reading through a couple of times, actually practicing with this on your own test pages and viewing the style.css file of your blog if you have one before things start to fall into place for you.

In my custom themes index.php page, the following tag can be seen.

```
<div class="storycontent">
```

Everything between the opening <div> and closing </div> will be affected by the selectors starting with .storycontent in the above style.

For example, any hyperlinks falling between the opening and closing div tags above will be affected by this

```
storycontent a
```

```
This section...
```

```
.storycontent a:hover,
```

```
.storycontent a:visited:hover
```

... tells us that all links hovered over and visited withing those div tags will behave the same. Since css is cascading, and no link color has been defined, it will use the color from the...

```
storycontent a
```

```
which is color: #333
```

If we wanted the hover and visited links to have a different color, we would do what? That's right, just define it by adding that property and value to that section like...

```
.storycontent a:hover,
```

```
.storycontent a:visited:hover {
```

```
border-bottom: 0px;
```

```
color: #0000FF;
```

```
}
```

We could go a step further and have the hover and visited different by splitting them up into their own sections. We could then go on to make the hover link expand into all caps and increase size by 140% and change font families and other things by setting those properties and values.

In place of div tags, we can also use span tags. This comes in really handy if you just want to alter one character, a word or a line of text quickly without adding a break afterwards like the div tag does.

Here is an example of how you would use it.

<p>You are writing something here and it is using the default style set for the paragraph but you want to make a few words blue so you overwrite the paragraph style temporarily with the span style</p>

We could also have changed the font size or numerous other things. By now, hopefully some of the fog is lifting and you are able to start seeing your style sheets in a different way. Able to look through and tell what sections are affecting what.

Because it would be impossible to go over every possible combination without filling up phone books full of text, which I think there are some CSS books that do exactly that, I want to help put your mind in a place where you are able to look through a web page, find the selectors, class= and then search through your style sheet to find the section that is affecting it.

Because so many of us operate weblogs and with Wordpress being as popular as it is, I want to spend a minute going over it with you. When you are editing your Wordpress style.css, the sections are pretty well commented to help you locate the selectors, which most directly affect that section of your page.

Here are the section comments from the Default Wordpress Theme.

```
/* Begin Typography & Colors */
```

```
/* Begin Structure */
```

```
/* Begin Headers */
```

```
/* Begin Images */
```

```
/* Begin Lists */
```

```
/* Begin Form Elements */  
/* Begin Comments*/  
/* Begin Sidebar */  
/* Begin Calendar */  
/* Begin Various Tags & Classes */
```

When wanting to make changes to your template, first determine what section you are wanting to change. Is it the header, the way images are displayed, the sidebar, or basic colors? You can then scroll through your style.css file a little quicker when you know what section the style is most likely located in.

You do have to keep in mind how any changes you make may affect the rest of the page. If you have three columns and you increase the size of your right sidebar by 30px, you may want to decrease the size of your left sidebar or the main, content column by 30px to allow your page to fit on the screen the same.

Don't be afraid to experiment! Just save your existing stylesheet under a different file name like style-BACKUP.css and if things get out of hand, you can put everything back to it's original condition quickly.

Now, I don't expect everyone that has gotten to this point to rush out and apply for jobs as css designers for the top Fortune 500 and software development companies but I do hope that you have a good concept of how things work and won't be afraid to get in there and get their hands dirty, make a few changes and see how things change what.

4. External Cascading Style Sheets



While what we were working on above referred a lot to the style.css, we need to cover one more thing before we move on to some fun stuff.

The code for external style sheets and internal style sheets is the same. The only difference being that the internal style sheets are place in the <head> section of your document.

To use external style sheets, we will do this.

Look in the head of your document and cut everything between your css opening and closing tags, then delete the tags.

```
<style type="text/css">
```

Copy everything in here

```
</style>
```

Paste what you cut from there into a text document and save as style.css and upload to the directory you webpages will reside. Your style.css must be plain text with no other html tags, just the css code itself.

Then in the head of your document, place the following line of code which tells the browser that the information needed to render this page is located in the file style.css

```
<LINK href="style.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css">
```

That's it. If you will be using this style sheet on pages within different directory levels, you can specify a complete url instead of just the style.css.

Make sure that the link href code above to your style sheet is in the head of every page you build or it won't know where to find it and won't display correctly.

Also, for testing purposes, well any purposes actually but especially for testing purposes, you can, instead of backing up your style.css file as we mentioned earlier, you can create a new file and name it something, anything like myteststyle.css and then just change in the code above to use that style sheet. If you don't like it, just switch it back.

If you feel so compelled, you can visit W3 Schools for even more information which hopefully after reading through this will make understanding and growing an easier process for you.

Now, It's time to have some fun!

After all, what's the point of learning any of this if we don't use it. As internet marketers there are several things you could be doing immediately to make your sales pages come alive with pop and sizzle and we'll get into some of that now.

Add a shadow to your images.

This is a great technique for making your testimonials stand out. You can use an extra div tag to do this.

```
<div align="center">
```

```
<div
```

```
style="width:115px;height:115px;filter:shadow(color:gray);"><img
```

```
src=http://www.yoursite.com/images/image1.jpg width="100"
```

```
height="100" style="border:1px solid black;"></div></div>
```

For this effect, you want to use a width and height for your shadow filter which is slightly larger than your image. In the example above, we are using a picture that is 100x100 and the shadow filter is 15px larger.

If your image was 80x80, you could use a shadow that was 90x90 and adjust from there for more or less shadow. You can also adjust the strength and direction of the shadow by defining those with the color property, like...

```
(color:gray,strength:18, direction:132)
```

How about some cool box borders

Dashed Box

```
<div style="margin:0px auto;BORDER: black 1px dashed;PADDING: 15px;FONT-SIZE: 12px;WIDTH: 200px;BACKGROUND-COLOR: white;TEXT-ALIGN: center">
```

Place an image, text or both here

```
</div>
```

You can, of course, adjust the size of the box, text alignment, font size, font family and what ever else you like here.

To see some more really cool things you can do like using drop caps, creating magazine style layouts and plenty of other cool things you can do to spice up your sales pages, visit [Mandarin Design](#).

That concludes this tutorial!

I wish you the best and hope you will continue to work on your CSS skills as it is becoming more and more a norm in website creation and can allow you to put yourself out in front of others that haven't taken the time to learn.

Thanks,

Pierre Du Plessis



Let us take you on a career flight

Courtesy of NASA