Bonus Chapter

Ten Tip-Top Online HTML References

*W*hen the time comes to dig more deeply into markup details, you'll want to know where to turn for information and answers. In this bonus chapter, we provide our ten very favorite HTML, XHTML, and CSS online resources.

But listing only ten HTML resources didn't cover all the great stuff we wanted to share, so we added more resources for the master documents that specify HTML, XHTML, and CSS down to the last jot and tittle (no relation, sorry) — namely the W3C Recommendations that govern their contents and structure. We also provide information about the Document Type Definitions (DTDs), to which such recommendations correspond, and we provide pointers to information about using character codes as character entities.

Ten Magnificent HTML Resource Sites

Though there's no shortage of good HTML resources online, some are simply so superlative that we have to call your attention to them. Our personal Top Ten in no particular order:

✔ **The World Wide Web Consortium (`www.w3.org`)** is not just the fountain from whence HTML, XML, XHTML, CSS, and a whole lot more springs, it's also a great source of information, tutorials, and tools. Spend some time rooting around the W3C site, and you won't be disappointed.

✔ **The Web Design Group (`www.htmlhelp.com`)** has the motto "Making the Web accessible to all," but they've also got great references and tools, as well as help forums, FAQs galore, and some great design guides and color code info.

✔ **W3 Schools (`www.w3schools.com`)** uses "the best things in life are free" as its tag line, and it's got lots of free and useful stuff to prove that point — including HTML and XML tutorials that cover the basics of markup, plus CSS, tons of XML applications, numerous scripting languages for client- and server-side scripts, and a whole lot more.

✔ **Webmonkey (`www.webmonkey.com`)** was, once upon a time, part of Wired magazine. It's always been a great resource for Web developers, but now it's on its own. Dig into this site for an extensive how-to library that covers lots of interesting topics in (for openers) Web authoring, design, multimedia, and e-business, as well as quick references for everything from JavaScript to special characters and color codes.

✔ **A List Apart Magazine (`www.alistapart.com`)** bills itself as a Web site that "explores the design, development, and meaning of Web content, with a special focus on Web standards and best practices." Lots of full-time, professional developers, designers, architects, and project managers are active on this site. A List Apart also has lots of great content (and ideas for aspiring Web designers and developers) to share.

✔ **WebDesignerDepot (`www.webdesignerdepot.com`)** is a Web design site that seeks out and describes new and different graphic design techniques. Additionally, it provides great examples and best practices for Web and graphics design. The principals blog and opine regularly on the state of design art and artifice, but they also have an active and vocal user community of other designers who chime in on coding, typography, page design, Photoshop, and lots, lots more.

✔ **Smashing Magazine (`www.smashingmagazine.com`)** aims its coverage squarely at Web designers and developers. It seeks to keep them abreast of the latest trends, tools, and techniques related to their design and development interests. Articles are interesting, innovative, and downright spunky. Run by the German company Smashing Media GmbH, Smashing Magazine is definitely worth an extended visit.

✔ **The Web Developer's Virtual Library (`http://wdvl.com`)** is a treasure trove of information, tutorials, and tools coverage, with Web design and programming techniques out the ying-yang. This is a site to spend some serious time on — in fact, you may find yourself spending more time there than is good for you. Attack it with a specific agenda (unless you have more time than you know what to do with).

✔ **Noupe (`www.noupe.com`)** is a Web-based magazine that targets Web designers and developers with the latest info, design approaches, and tips for HTML, CSS, AJAX, JavaScript, graphics, typography, and so forth. It's a real multicultural extravaganza, overseen by a crew from all over Europe, and run by the German company Smashing Media GmbH. Be sure to spend some time at the site to savor its many viewpoints and savvy advice.

✔ **CSS-Tricks (`http://css-tricks.com`)** is "curated" by über Web (and CSS) geek Chris Coyier. Look to this site for an outstanding collection of articles, how-to's, tutorials, and screen casts, and for an active set of forums on CSS, JavaScript, PHP, and content management systems (CMS). You can also find tips and tricks and a peachy-keen Web design gallery with feedback.

Of course, now that we've given you ten of these top sites, we feel we've only managed to get you started. To that end, we include several more online resources to help you in your HTML, XHTML, and CSS endeavors. As you create your own set of favorites and find the tools you like best, you'll also establish your own set of favorite references as well. Enjoy!

Nothing but the Specs, Please!

The formal documents that describe HTML and XHTML are on the W3C's Web site at `www.w3.org`. Markup languages usually include version numbers to identify them specifically and uniquely. The current version of HTML is 4.01. It dates all the way back to December 1997; you can find the document at `www.w3.org/TR/html4`.

XHTML has gone through two major drafts, 1.0 and 1.1, since it first appeared in 2000. The 1.1 version is more advanced than 1.0, but most Web content developers (and, for that matter, software tools) still follow the 1.0 specification anyway. An XHTML 2.0 specification is in *Public Working Draft* status (meaning its authors haven't finalized its content and structure).

The Cascading Style Sheets markup language also falls under the W3C's control. You can find a wealth of information on this subject at its Cascading Style Sheets home page at `www.w3.org/Style/CSS`. As with XHTML, CSS comes in three versions, called levels 1, 2, and 3; again, as with XHTML, the third version remains a work in progress.

When a W3C specification is finished, it's known as a *W3C Recommendation*.

You can find specifications for all three versions of both XHTML and CSS at the following sites:

- XHTML 1.0 Recommendation (Second Edition, 8/1/2002) at `www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1`
- XHTML 1.1 Module-based XHTML Recommendation (5/31/2001) at `www.w3.org/TR/xhtml11`
- XHTML 2.0 Working Draft (7/26/2006) at `www.w3.org/TR/xhtml2`
- CSS level 1 (1/11/1999) at `www.w3.org/TR/CSS1`
- CSS level 2 revision 1 (also known as CSS 2.1, 7/19/2007) at `www.w3.org/TR/CSS21`
- CSS level 3 (varies): Look for Level 3 entries on the CSS Current Work page at `www.w3.org/Style/CSS/current-work`

The HTML and XHTML DTDs

The HTML and XHTML specifications use *Document Type Definitions* (DTDs) written in the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) — the grand-daddy of all markup languages — to define the details.

In its earlier versions, HTML used elements for formatting; over time, developers realized that formatting needed its own language (known as Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS), and that HTML elements should describe only a page's *structure,* not its appearance or display characteristics.

This resulted in three flavors of HTML, which also apply to XHTML as well. This explains why each of the following list items employs the (X)HTML designation:

- **(X)HTML Transitional:** Uses HTML's elements to describe font faces and page colors. XHTML Transitional accounts for formatting elements in older versions of HTML. Formatting elements in XHTML Transitional are *deprecated* (considered obsolete) because the W3C would like developers to move away from them and to a combination of XHTML Strict and CSS. We use the XHTML Transitional DTD for the markup in this book.

- **(X)HTML Strict:** Doesn't include any elements that describe formatting. This version is designed to let CSS drive the page formatting. The CSS-with-XHTML Strict approach is an ambitious way to build Web pages, but in practice it has its pros and cons. CSS provides more control over your page formatting, but creating style sheets that work well in all browsers can be tricky.

✔ **(X)HTML Frameset:** Includes *frames* — markup that allows you to display more than one Web page or resource at a time in the same browser window. Frames are still used in some Web sites but are much less popular today than they were in the late 1990s. Our advice is to steer clear of frames altogether.

All Web browsers support all elements in HTML Transitional (and in XHTML 1.0 Transitional, if proper tag formatting is used); you can choose to use elements from it or stick with (X)HTML Strict instead. If you use frames, then technically you have to work with (X)HTML Frameset, but all elements still work the same way. This book covers all XHTML and HTML tags in all versions (lumping them into one category called (X)HTML) because all real-world Web browsers support all three flavors.

Any properly constructed HTML or XHTML document must reference a DTD in its first line of text. Simply put, that means you'll use one of the entries from the Markup column in Table BC-1 to start any of your coding efforts!

Table BC-1		Where the HTML and XHTML DTDs Are
Type	*Name*	*Markup*
HTML	Transitional	`<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/loose.dtd">`
HTML	Strict	`<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/strict.dtd">`
HTML	Frameset	`<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Frameset//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/frameset.dtd">`
XHTML	Transitional	`<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">`
XHTML	Strict	`<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">`
XHTML	Frameset	`<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Frameset//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-frameset.dtd">`

Character Codes Come in Many Flavors

When it comes to reproducing odd or unusual characters in HTML or XHTML documents, a strange coding technique is used to represent such so-called "character entities." These generally take the form `&` (for ampersand, for instance) where the ampersand symbol (`&`) indicates that the character entity is starting and everything from there up to the semicolon (;) is a symbolic or numeric character code. It just so happens that `&` and `&38;` both reference the same thing: the character code that represents an ampersand character on your computer display.

The following list includes pointers to a whole slew of different character codes you can use, without reservations, in XHTML documents, but you must use them carefully in HTML documents. (XML is a lot smarter about Unicode characters, which include nearly every printable glyph known to man.) For HTML, the ISO-Latin-1 character set (and its regionalized variants) is safe, but you should experiment carefully to see what you can and can't use from Unicode in your HTML documents by testing with lots of different Web browsers to see what works and what doesn't.

- **Unicode Code Charts:** `www.unicode.org/charts`
- **ISO-Latin-1 character set:** `www.htmlhelp.com/reference/charset`
- **Greek characters:** `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0370.pdf`
- **Currency symbols:** `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U20A0.pdf`
- **Miscellaneous symbols:** `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U2600.pdf`
- **Arrow characters:** `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U27F0.pdf` and `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U2900.pdf`
- **Mathematical characters:** Search *math* at `www.unicode.org/charts` (there are six different, relevant code charts)

  Download `http://unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1D400.pdf` to keep a complete compendium of this information at your fingertips.
- **General punctuation:** `www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U2000.pdf`