



Practical Web Design for Absolute Beginners

Adrian W. West

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Adrian W. West
Colyton, United Kingdom

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I dedicate this book to the open source community. Without these committed people we would not have free text editors, free FTP programs, and free servers such as XAMPP/Apache. Because the software is free and supported by many forums run by knowledgeable enthusiasts, there are no obstacles preventing my readers and students from learning how to produce excellent websites from scratch.

—Adrian W. West

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About the Author

Adrian W. West resigned as a chartered engineer to become the UK director of a correspondence school. He has been teaching in one form or another since 1982. He introduced computers into his workplace in 1987 and taught the staff how to use them. For four years, he taught computer skills to undergraduates at a college in Cheshire in the United Kingdom.

Adrian lives in Colyton, a town in Devon, England, and for the past 17 years, he has designed and produced websites for national and local businesses and charities. For a time, he also served as a computer technician and teacher to his community. Then he decided to concentrate on his favorite occupation: designing websites. To avoid disappointing his former clients, he launched a free computer-help website at <http://www.colycomputerhelp.co.uk>. He also cofounded with Moira Wight the web design service <http://www.amwebdesign.co.uk>.

Adrian writes monthly computer-help articles for two local magazines. He is the author of two earlier Apress publications: *Practical HTML5 Projects* and *Practical PHP and MySQL. A simplified approach*.

About the Technical Reviewer

Massimo Nardone has more than 22 years of experience in Security, Web/Mobile development, Cloud, and IT Architecture. His true IT passions are Security and Android.

He has been programming and teaching how to program with Android, Perl, PHP, Java, VB, Python, C/C++, and MySQL for more than 20 years. He holds a Master of Science degree in Computing Science from the University of Salerno, Italy.

Massimo has worked as a Project Manager, Software Engineer, Research Engineer, Chief Security Architect, Information Security Manager, PCI/SCADA Auditor, and Senior Lead IT Security/Cloud/SCADA Architect for many years. His technical skills include the following: Security, Android, Cloud, Java, MySQL, Drupal, Cobol, Perl, Web and Mobile development, MongoDB, D3, Joomla, Couchbase, C/C++, WebGL, Python, Pro Rails, Django CMS, Jekyll, Scratch, etc.

He currently works as Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) for Cargotec Oyj. He worked as a visiting lecturer and supervisor for exercises at the Networking Laboratory of the Helsinki University of Technology (Aalto University). He holds four international patents (PKI, SIP, SAML, and Proxy areas).

Massimo has reviewed more than 40 IT books for different publishing companies and is the coauthor of *Pro Android Games* (Apress, 2015).

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—Adrian W. West

Introduction

The Aim of This Book

This book was written to provide a superior alternative to the increasing use of Content Management Systems (CMS) programs (WordPress, Joomla, Drupal, Go Daddy, etc.). CMS is a children's coloring book style of program that has resulted in millions of dreadful websites produced by amateurs who have no training in design and web-user psychology. The aim of this book is to teach the readers those essential skills in addition to teaching them how to use HTML and CSS code.

Producers of CMS programs promote their programs by implying that HTML and CSS are difficult to learn. However, HTML and CSS are not difficult. As languages go, they have a very small vocabulary, and better still, all the words are either English words or abbreviations of English words. This book will demonstrate that coding is not difficult and will also show you how to use HTML and CSS to produce unique, fast-loading, top-quality websites.

This book will teach you HTML and CSS using short, easily assimilated steps. *Practical Website Design for Absolute Beginners* avoids a tedious theoretical approach by introducing small amounts of new code in each short chapter. HTML and CSS are essential if you wish to take full control of a website's design and maintenance.

I have provided the reader with a wide range of attractive templates for web pages and websites. The great majority of chapters build on the templates created in previous chapters. The reader has a practical project to complete in almost all the chapters and is taught to produce practical web pages right from the start. The readers are guided to produce the majority of the templates themselves by following the instructions in each chapter. As a result they will have an intimate knowledge of the code in the templates and will have complete control over the quality and content of their sites.

The Origin of This Book

When teaching web design to my students, I prepared worksheets and emailed them so that they could have hands-on experience. I found that students learned faster if the chapters were short, they felt a real sense of achievement as they completed each small project. This book is a collection of those short worksheets so that readers can learn without the aid of an online human tutor.

Who Is This Book for?

This book will help people who would like to do the following:

- Design and produce their own unique, fast-loading websites
- Avoid using complex slow-loading JavaScript by using HTML5 and CMS
- Have complete control over their websites

- Maintain a website that they already own
- Upgrade from HTML 4 to HTML 5
- Escape from the restraints, disadvantages, and uniformity of CMS-based websites

In this book, you will not only learn to use HTML and CSS, but you will be taught vital features that you will not learn from CMS programs. For instance, you will be taught the following:

- The techniques for creating an attractive and useful website
- How to ensure that your site will be found by search engines
- The importance of focus and the composition of web pages
- The effective use of color
- How to create clear, intuitive navigation between the pages of a website

The Level of Skill Required

If you can type an email or a letter, you can create an HTML web page and a CSS style sheet. However, you must possess the basic skills for using Windows or Mac operating systems so that you know how to the following:

- Create a new folder
- Navigate from folder to folder
- Put a shortcut icon on your desktop
- Download and install a free program
- Save a copy of a file using *Save As...*
- Right-click and rename a file or folder
- Copy and paste using short-cut keys
- Be able to download folders from the book's website and unzip them

The Structure of This Book

Practical Website Design for Absolute Beginners is a project-oriented book that introduces small amounts of new code in short practical chapters. Each chapter builds on the templates created in the previous chapters. The many web pages and website templates can be easily adapted by readers for their own websites.

Chapter 1: This chapter explains the considerable advantages of using HTML and CSS rather than a coloring-book content management system (CMS). The next sections give advice on using free programs to enable you to produce the book's websites and adaptable templates. You will learn about the standard structure for a web page and then produce your first web page structure, which will form the basis of all the subsequent projects in the book.

Chapter 2: The previous chapter only produced the structure for a web page, so this chapter adds some content to that structure. The reader will add an extra page and learn how to link the two pages by means of hyperlinks.

Chapter 3: This chapter applies CSS styling (Cascading Style Sheets) to the previously created template. The chapter demonstrates how the appearance of all the pages in a whole website can be changed by an amendment to the single CSS file. The CSS amendment cascades into all the pages in the website.