

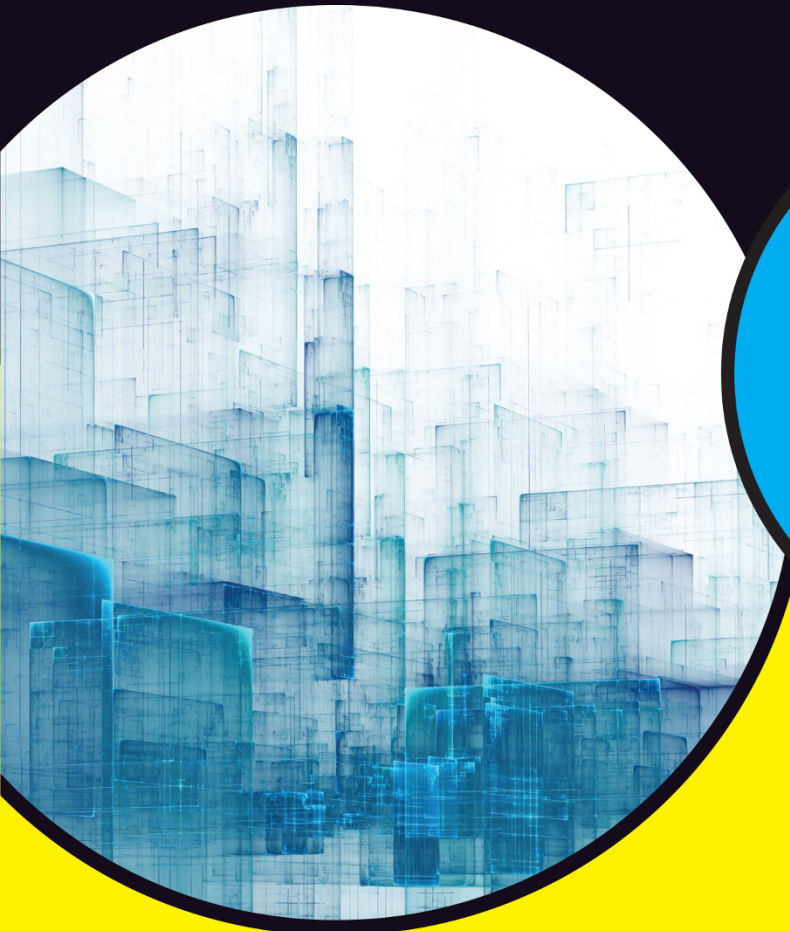
LEARNING MADE EASY



# Web Coding & Development

ALL-IN-ONE

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Paul McFedries



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**Web Coding & Development All-in-One For Dummies®**

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# Introduction

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When the web first came to the attention of the world's non-geeks back in the mid-1990s, the vastness and variety of its treasures were a wonder to behold. However, it didn't take long before a few courageous and intrepid souls dug a little deeper into this phenomenon and discovered something truly phenomenal: *They* could make web pages, too!

Why was that so amazing? Well, think back to those old days and think, in particular, of what it meant to create what we now call *content*. Think about television shows, radio programs, magazines, newspapers, books, and the other media of the time. The one thing they all had in common was that their creation was a decidedly *uncommon* thing. It required a *team* of professionals, a *massive* distribution system, and a *lot* of money. In short, it wasn't something that your average Okie from Muskogee would have any hope of duplicating.

The web appeared to change all of that because learning HTML was within the grasp of anybody who could feed himself, it had a built-in massive distribution system (the Internet, natch), and it required little or no money. For the first time in history, content was democratized and was no longer defined as the sole province of governments and mega-corporations.

Then reality set in.

People soon realized that merely building a website wasn't enough to attract "eyeballs," as the marketers say. A site had to have interesting, useful, or fun content, or people would stay away in droves. Not only that, but this good content had to be combined with a solid site design, which meant that web designers needed a thorough knowledge of HTML and CSS.

But, alas, eventually even all of that was not enough. To make their websites dynamic and interesting, to make their sites easy to navigate, and to give their sites those extra bells and whistles that surfers had come to expect, something more than content, HTML, and CSS was needed.

That missing link was *code*.

What we've all learned the hard way over the past few years is that you simply can't put together a world-class website unless you have some coding prowess in your site design toolkit. You need to know how to program your way out of

the basic problems that afflict most sites; how to use scripting to go beyond the inherent limitations of HTML and CSS; and how to use code to send and receive data from a web server. And it isn't enough just to copy the generic scripts that are available on the web and paste them into your pages. First of all, most of those scripts are very poorly written, and second of all, they invariably need some customization to work properly on your site.

## About This Book

My goal in this book is to give you a complete education on web coding and development. You learn how to set up the tools you need, how to use HTML and CSS to design and build your site, how to use JavaScript and jQuery to program your pages, and how to use PHP and MySQL to program your web server. My aim is to show you that these technologies aren't hard to learn, and that even the greenest rookie programmers can learn how to put together web pages that will amaze their family and friends (and themselves).

If you're looking for lots of programming history, computer science theory, and long-winded explanations of concepts, I'm sorry but you won't find it here. My philosophy throughout this book comes from Linus Torvalds, the creator of the Linux operating system: "Talk is cheap. Show me the code." I explain what needs to be explained and then I move on without further ado (or, most of the time, without any ado at all) to examples and scripts that do more to illuminate a concept than any verbose explanations I could muster (and believe me, I can muster verbosity with the best of them).

How you approach this book depends on your current level of web coding expertise (or lack thereof):

- » If you're just starting out, begin at the beginning with Book 1 and work at your own pace sequentially through to Books 2 and 3. This will give you all the knowledge you need to pick and choose what you want to learn throughout the rest of the book.
- » If you know HTML and CSS, you can probably get away with taking a fast look at Book 2, then settle in with Book 3 and beyond.
- » If you've done some JavaScript coding already, I suggest working quickly through the material in Book 3, then dig into Book 4 a little slower if you don't already know jQuery. You'll then be ready to branch out and explore the rest of the book as you see fit.
- » If you're a relatively experienced JavaScript programmer, use Books 3 and 4 as a refresher, then tackle Book 5 to learn how to code the back end. I've got a few tricks in there that you might find interesting. After that, feel free to

consider the rest of the book a kind of coding smorgasbord that you can sample as your web development taste buds dictate.

## Foolish Assumptions

This book is not a primer on the Internet or on using the World Wide Web. This is a coding and development book, pure and simple. This means I assume the following:

- » You know how to operate a basic text editor, and how to get around the operating system and file system on your computer.
- » You have an Internet connection.
- » You know how to use your web browser.

Yep, that's it.

### “I've never coded before!”

If you've never done a stitch of computer programming before, even if you're not quite sure what programming really is, don't worry about it for a second because I had you in mind when I wrote this book. For too many years programming has been the property of “hackers” and other technowizards. That made some sense because the programming languages they were using — with bizarre names such as C++ and Perl — were exceedingly difficult to learn, and even harder to master.

This book's main coding technologies — HTML, CSS, JavaScript, jQuery, PHP, and MySQL — are different. They're nowhere near as hard to learn as those for-nerds-only languages. I honestly believe that *anyone* can become a savvy and successful web coder, and this book is, I hope, the proof of that assertion. Just follow along, examine my code carefully (particularly in the first few chapters), and practice what you learn, and you *will* master web coding and development.

### “I have coded before!”

What if you've done some programming in the past? For example, you might have dipped a toe or two in the JavaScript waters already, or you might have dabbled with HTML and CSS. Will this book be too basic for you? No, not at all. My other main goal in this book is to provide you with a ton of truly *useful* examples that you can customize and incorporate into your own site. The book's first few chapters start slowly to avoid scaring off those new to this programming business. But

once you get past the basics, I introduce you to lots of great techniques and tricks that will take your web coding skills to a higher level.

## Icons Used in This Book



REMEMBER

This icon points out juicy tidbits that are likely to be repeatedly useful to you — so please don't forget them.



TIP

Think of these icons as the fodder of advice columns. They offer (hopefully) wise advice or a bit more information about a topic under discussion.



WARNING

Look out! In this book, you see this icon when I'm trying to help you avoid mistakes that can cost you time, money, or embarrassment.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

When you see this icon, you've come across material that isn't critical to understand but will satisfy the curious. Think "inquiring minds want to know" when you see this icon.

## Beyond the Book

Some extra content for this book is available on the web. Go online to find the following:

» **The examples used in the book:** You can find these here:

```
mcfedries.com/webcodingfordummies
```

The examples are organized by book and then by chapter within each book. For each example, you can view the code, copy it to your computer's clipboard, and run the code in the browser.

» **The WebDev Workshop:** To edit the book's examples and try your own code and see instant results, fire up the following site:

```
webdev.mcfedries.com
```

You won't break anything, so feel free to use the site run some experiments and play around with HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and jQuery.

# 1

## Getting Ready to Code for the Web

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