

# Manila Masters Training

## Lesson 1: Designing Themes for Manila

### Introduction

Manila makes it easy for both you and your users to create and update the content of websites. The key is separating the form, or graphical layout, of the website from the content. In Manila's language, the form of a website is a theme. Theme creation can be done with any text/HTML editor. For the purposes of this workshop, we will step you through the creation of themes using what we have found to be the most full-featured and standard HTML editor: Macromedia's Dreamweaver.

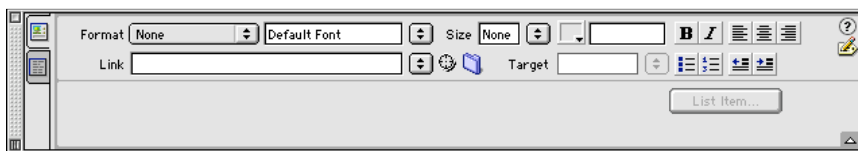
### The Software and Files

Dreamweaver 4 has been installed on your machines. We aren't going to use any DW4 specific features, so you should not experience many differences if you are using previous versions of Dreamweaver on your home machine. There is a folder on your machine called "dreamweaver layout". In this folder are the files that we will be using to build the manila theme. You will also find this folder on the workshop CD for your own use later.

### Getting Familiar with Dreamweaver 4

The focus of this workshop is building sites using Manila, not Dreamweaver, and as such it will not focus on the details of building a site using Dreamweaver. We do however need to establish a basic familiarity with the Dreamweaver environment before we begin doing anything with it.

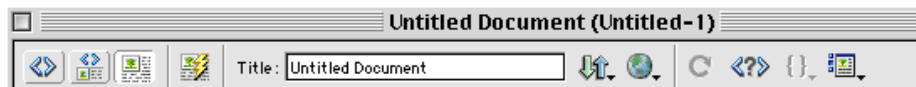
The Dreamweaver interface consists of two primary palettes and for today's exercise, one window which is your layout area. The first palette to note is the objects palette (shown to the right). The objects palette contains most of the objects that you may want to include in a page. From here, you can include graphics, tables, Fireworks html, Shockwave and Flash items among many others. The default object set shown is called "common" and includes the aforementioned items. There are also characters, forms, frame, head, invisibles and special object items.



The second important palette is the properties palette. It is generally displayed near the bottom of the window and works as a contextual guide to modifying objects in your layout.

From the properties palette, you can change font faces, formats, sizes and colors. You can select paragraph justification and indents. The palette allows you to easily adjust table widths, column and row specifications, and alignments. This is also where you hyperlink text and graphics to other pages.

Finally, there is the page layout area itself. This is where you will compose your page. The layout window can be viewed in a number of ways:



The first button along the top of the window changes the view to a source-code only view. This is great if you really want to spend your time editing the html of the current page. The second button creates a split view wherein the html is placed in the top half of the window and the layout is shown in the bottom half. The third button gives you the default—layout only view. This is also where you put the title of the document (the title that will show in the title bar of the web browser).

Along the bottom of the window is the primary feature of the Macromedia Standard Interface:



The left side of this window informs you of the html tags currently affecting the selected area of your page. For example, if you had an area within a table selected, you would see “<body><table><tr><td>”. If you desire to make modifications to any of these objects—the whole table for instance—you could put your cursor anywhere in the table and then click on the <table> tag at the bottom of the screen. This would display the table characteristics in the properties window.

The next item to the right shows you the monitor resolution that your layout window is currently simulating. This can be helpful as you consider designing your theme to be viewable on both small screens (including webtv) and monitors with larger resolutions.

Following this is a small area that displays the current page size and how long it would take to download on a 56k modem.

Finally there is a mini-launcher that gives you quick access to open and close other Dreamweaver palettes that you may frequently, or not-so-frequently, use. This is a great way to avoid desktop window clutter. You may customize these items to better suit your style of work in the Dreamweaver preferences panel.

## Creating the Layout Table

For this workshop, we will create a layout whose building process will give you a basic familiarity with Dreamweaver. As we construct this layout, we will address specific issues related to building a theme for Manila.

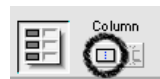
Let’s begin by creating a new document in Dreamweaver. Go to the *file* menu and select *new*. Before we get to placing things on this page, let’s go ahead and save it. Save it to the directory: “Dreamweaver layout” as “layout.html”.

We will start assembling our layout by placing a table on the page. Place your cursor on the page and click on the table button in your common objects palette. Create a table that has the dimensions of 5 rows, 0 padding, 3 columns, 0 spacing, 600 pixel width and 0 border.



With the table selected, align it to the horizontal-center of the page by choosing “center” from the “align” menu in the properties palette.

Merge the rows of the first column by placing your cursor in the first row of the first column and dragging from that cell to the last row of the first column. This should highlight every cell in that column. Select the merge cells command in the properties window to combine these into a single cell. Do the same procedure with the third column.



The diagram shows a large rectangular area defined by a dashed border. In the center of this area is a smaller table structure, also defined by dashed lines. This central table has three horizontal rows and two vertical columns. The space to the left and right of this central table structure is empty, representing the main content area of a page layout.

We now have our basic table created. We now need to go to work placing both utility and design graphics to complete the layout.

## Placing Graphics and Colors

Place your cursor in the left column, that you merged earlier, and choose the *insert image* command from the common objects palette. Navigate to the “Dreamweaver layout” folder on your computer and find the image “shim.gif”. Select this graphic; it will be placed in your layout at your cursor location. The “shim.gif” is an invisible gif that was created with Macromedia Fireworks, but could be created with any web-graphic creation software.



Select the “shim.gif” image, if it is not already selected, and choose copy from the edit menu. Place your cursor in the third column and paste a “shim.gif” in that column. Finally, paste a “shim.gif” into each the first, third and fifth rows of the second column.

In order to give our table more definition and to aid browsers in rendering it properly, we are going to use these shims to define its dimensions. Select the shim in the first row of the second column. You will not be able to see this shim since it is invisible, but it should be sitting in the far left side of that cell. When you have the shim selected, note that its characteristics are displayed in the properties palette. When we created our table earlier, we gave it a width of 600 pixels. The table has three columns with the outer most having a width of 10 pixels (which will be a table border). This gives us 580 pixels left for our middle column. In the properties palette, give this shim a width of 580 while leaving the height value at 10. Do this also for the shims found in the third and fifth rows of the second column.



Some of the cells in this table will simply be acting as a border for our layout. Why would we go through all of this work for a border? First of all, standard table borders give pages an amateurish thrown-together look. Second, by creating this table in which every pixel is accounted for by an invisible gif, we ensure the integrity of this layout across multiple browsers. We wouldn't necessarily need to make our borders visible—they could be not be given a fill color and sit there purely as a layout utility. For today's workshop, we are giving this table a strong 10 pixel dark border to convey a sense of solidity, knowledge and professionalism.

Select the shim in the first column. It will probably be sitting in the vertical-center of the cell. Using your keyboard-arrow keys, tap right or left to put your cursor either right before or after the shim. Enter the color “006699” as your background color for this cell. Continue doing this for each cell that has a shim in it. Follow this by making the background color of the shimless cells white: “FFFFFF”. Once you have done this, your table should have the following appearance:



Maybe this is kind of boring so far. Let's make it a little more fun by dropping in the banner that we will be using for this project. Place your cursor in the second row of the second column (it's white). Select the insert image command from the common objects palette. Find the “banner.gif” image from the “Dreamweaver layout” menu. Select it to place it into your layout.



### Nesting the Text Table

We are definitely going to want a great area to put our content and navigation in. We are going to need this to be a place that is very flexible to allow for whatever content we may wish to place here in the future. Placing the cursor in the fourth row of the second column, place a table with the following properties: 1 row, 10 padding, 2 columns, 0 spacing, 100 percent width and 0 border.

The first column of this table is going to handle our calendar, navigation, and membership boxes. The second column is going to contain our editorial menu and body text. Simply note each as shown in this graphic:

calendar	editorial menu
navigation	page title
membership	body text

The column containing our body text will need a lot more width than the column containing our navigation. The body text column must be flexible enough to allow for whatever content a user may decide to publish, such as graphics or movies, without compromising the integrity of your theme. We also need to visually set it apart a little by selecting a background color for it. Finally we need to adjust the alignment of each cell to always display our text as we would expect.

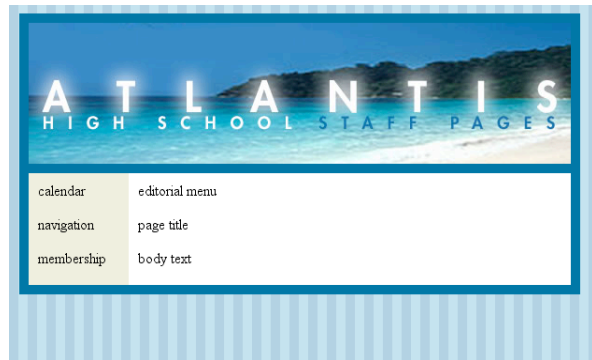
Place your cursor in the first column and set the width to 100 pixels. While you have this cell selected, select a background color of "E9E9E9". Place your cursor in the second column and give it a width of 440 and leave the background as white. Now adjust the alignment of these two cells by selecting the cells, like you did earlier when we merged the rows, and selecting alignments of top and left.

calendar	editorial menu
navigation	page title
membership	body text



## Adding a Background Image

Select Page Properties from the Modify menu. You will find the settings for adding a background image here. Click on the Browse button and find the “bg.gif” graphic in the “Dreamweaver Layout” folder. If you would like, you can also change your link, visited link and active link colors as well as the colors of your text and page. If you are creating a layout where you wish to have access to the full width of the browser window, you can set the top and left margins to “0”. Your page should now look similar to the one shown to the right.

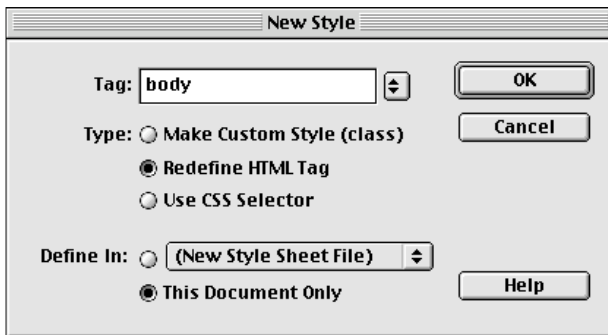


## Creating Styles with Cascading Style Sheets

If you are not currently using CSS to define your text properties in sites that you are building, you should seriously take a look at moving towards using it. It is especially important in building themes as Manila expects its usage. CSS aids you in maintaining consistency within your website by allowing you to format text on your pages by assigning it to a style group rather than defining font, size and color attributes for each paragraph. Using CSS allows you to make changes to a single setting within your site or theme and have text across the site reflect those changes immediately. CSS is also a great way to ensure that your site text will display similarly across multiple browsers and platforms as it allows you to define text, not by a size relative to the user's browser preferences, but by precise pixel and point designations.

We will use Dreamweaver to help us get started with our CSS. Once we have moved our theme into Manila, future changes will have to be hand-coded directly into the Manila interface.

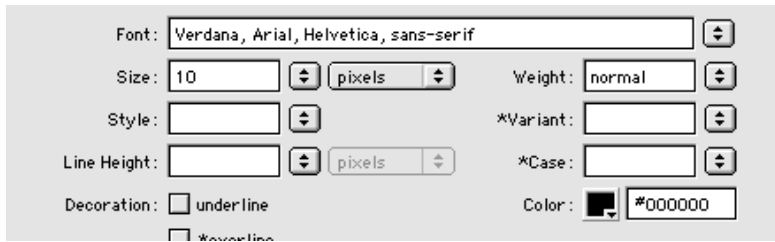
Open your CSS window by clicking on the CSS button in the mini-launcher at the bottom of your layout window. With this window open, add a new style sheet by clicking on the icon at the bottom of the window that has a plus-sign in it. This will activate a dialogue asking you what you wish to create. Create a new document-only style sheet that redefines the HTML tag <body>.



There are a number of directions that you could go from the dialogue shown to the left. If we were going to use Dreamweaver to create our website, we would want to define a “New Style Sheet File”. This would create a new CSS file, outside of our HTML files, that would dictate the appearance of text on all HTML files within our site that called upon it. We could also create our own classes by creating a custom style or “class”. This way we could create styles such as “.bluemainheadline” or “.leftnavigationtext”. The “Use CSS Selector” option permits us to

give rollover properties to plain HTML text on our page. This feature, which is becoming more and more common, allows you to select different text attributes for mouseover or “hover” and active states. By choosing the “Redefine HTML Tag” option, we will be doing exactly that, setting our own properties for already commonly used HTML tags, such as <p>, <h1> and <h2>.

Let's set some basic attributes for our text. Set the font to “Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans-Serif”; the size to 10 pixels; the weight to “normal”; and the color to “000000” or black.



Go ahead and repeat the preceding procedure by clicking on the “new style” button in the css window. This time redefine the <h1> tag, in “this document only”, with the following attributes: “Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans-Serif”; size: 18 pixels; weight: “bold”; and color

006699.

Define the <h2> tag also. Define it similarly to the <h1> tag except make the size 16 pixels.

## Wrapping Up

That does it for designing our layout using Macromedia Dreamweaver. We are now ready to take the html code that Dreamweaver has created and copy and paste it into a plain text editor to mark up for manila. If you are using Windows you can use Wordpad, which is installed as part of windows, or a more full-featured editor such as Allaire’s Homesite. Macintosh users can use SimpleText or the freely downloadable BBEdit Lite from Bare Bones Software.