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Cascading Style Sheets

Cascading style sheets (CSS) are an extension to HTTP and one of the greatest hopes for recapturing the Web's ideal of separation of presentation and data (content). The Web is the ultimate cross-platform system, and your content will be presented on such a huge variety of devices that pages should specify the meaning of the information and leave presentation details to a merger (or "cascade") of site-specified style sheets and the user's preferences.

Centralized Style

Use a single style sheet for all of the pages on your site (or possibly a few coordinated ones if you have pages with very different needs: for example technical /informational versus promotional pages).

One of the main benefits of style sheets is to ensure visual continuity as the user navigates your site. Publishers have long known the value of basing print products on a single typeface: no matter where you turn in a magazine or a newspaper, the text and basic layout will look the same. Websites can have similar cohesiveness if all the pages on a site link to the same style sheet.

Always use linked style sheets rather than embedded (in the page) styles. Only by referencing external file will you get the maintenance benefits of being able to update the look of your entire site with a single change. Also, by pulling style definitions out of your pages, you make them smaller and faster to download. If you use a single style sheet for your entire site, that file will be a single download once and for all.

You can of course override global settings with local instructions where necessary.

For each site, all the style sheets should be designed by a single, central design group.

Centralized design is the only way to ensure a consistent style and reap one of the main benefits of style sheets.

The Web is not WYSIWYG. The site's style sheet is merged the browser decision how to interpret the style and with the user's display preference settings