

How to create Cascading Style Sheets

Cascading style sheets (CSS) are collections of formatting rules that control the appearance of content on a web page. By using style sheets, you can achieve greater consistency across your website (even if your site consists of only one page). CSS styles provide you with a wide range of options for formatting text. This guide shows you how to take advantage of Cascading Style Sheets to maintain consistency and to apply characteristics to text.

If you've been using Adobe Dreamweaver CS4, you may have been using CSS without knowing it. Dreamweaver formats all text with CSS by default. Every time you change certain text properties in the Property inspector, such as text size and text color, Dreamweaver prompts you to define a new CSS rule or update a style for the text. Dreamweaver places these style definitions in the beginning of each web page's code. A collection of these definitions is known as an *internal style sheet*, because it is contained within an individual web page.

Internal style sheets (sometimes called *embedded style sheets*) are great for maintaining consistency within a document, but Cascading Style Sheets are especially useful for maintaining consistency across a number of different pages. By using an *external style sheet*—a separate document that holds CSS style information—you can make sure that text appearance is consistent across multiple pages. Not only does a consistent appearance look more professional, but usability experts say that site visitors find what they're looking for more easily on sites where text appearance and placement is consistent.

Defining CSS styles

The most basic way to define CSS styles in Dreamweaver is to apply formatting by using the CSS options in the Property inspector. When you do, you are prompted to create a new CSS rule. You need to name the new rule and define the type of CSS.

There are three main types of CSS:

A *Class* style is similar to the styles you use in word processing and page layout programs. For example, you may want to format all body text in 10-point, Arial, dark green type. You can create a Class style with these attributes and then apply this style to all body text in your web site.

A *Tag* style applies global formatting to individual HTML tags, as opposed to individual selections. Suppose you want to modify the Heading 1 paragraph style to always appear in purple text. Instead of creating a class style and applying it to every heading in the document, you can create an HTML Tag style with these attributes and apply it to the Heading 1 <h1> tag. In effect, you are redefining the HTML tag.

An *ID* style is only used once within a document or page. It is used as a unique identifier (ID) for a style applied to elements such as a header, banner, or menu that is only present in one location in the document.

A *Compound* style is used to format text in different ways based on how a user interacts with the text. For example you can use a compound style to change the look of text when a user rolls over a link.

Whenever possible, redefine existing tags instead of creating new CSS styles. The existing tags provide a useful hierarchy for both you and the users of your site, and they also make it easier for people using screen readers to use your site.

In addition to using the CSS options in the Property inspector, you can define, apply, and modify CSS styles by using the CSS panel, which you will do in this guide.

To redefine an existing HTML style tag by using a CSS Tag rule:

1. Start Dreamweaver.
2. Create a new HTML document.
3. Save and name the Dreamweaver document.
4. Type some text in the document.
5. Select the text.
6. Using the Property inspector, apply an HTML tag such as Heading 1 to the text.

The text appears in the default Heading 1 format (**Figure 1**).

7. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open and expanded. If it is not open, select Window > CSS Styles.

8. To create a new style, click the New CSS Rule button (+) at the bottom of the CSS panel (**Figure 2**).

The New CSS Rule dialog box opens (**Figure 3**).

9. In Selector Type pop-up menu, select Tag.

This option lets you add CSS properties to an existing HTML tag.

10. From the Selector Name pop-up menu, select h1 (the tag for Heading 1).

11. In the Rule Definition pop-up menu, select This Document Only or New Style Sheet File.

The option *This Document Only* defines the style as part of the document's internal style sheet. The option *New Style Sheet File* defines the style as part of an external style sheet.

12. Click OK.

Note: If you choose to create an external style sheet by selecting New Style Sheet File, you are prompted to select a location for the new style sheet (.css) document.



Figure 1 Text with default Heading 1 tag applied

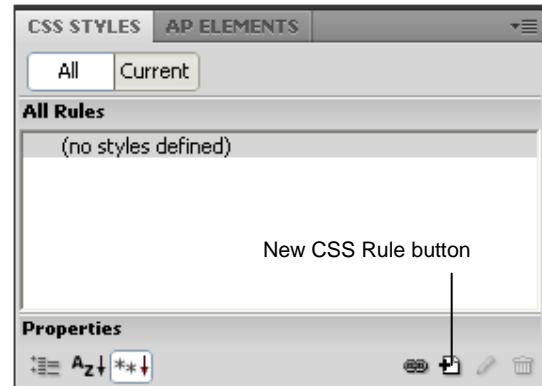


Figure 2 CSS Styles panel

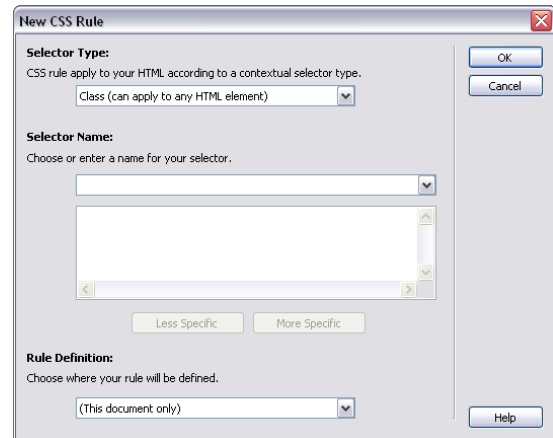


Figure 3 New CSS Rule dialog box

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens with the Type category selected (Figure 4). The dialog box has the options listed below. (For more details, select Help > Dreamweaver Help.)

- *Type* changes text properties such as font, size, and color.
- *Background* controls background properties. For example, you can use a colored background or an image or create a fixed or scrolling background.
- *Block* controls spacing and alignment of text and lines on the document.
- *Box* changes the box that surrounds a block element. It affects properties such as height, width, padding, and margins.
- *Border* changes the border properties around text, such as style, width, and color.
- *List* controls list properties such as text type and bullet appearance.
- *Positioning* defines text position on the page.
- *Extensions* controls page breaks and the visual appearance of the cursor.

13. Select options for Type, such as the following (Figure 5):

- Select Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans-serif from the Font-family pop-up menu.
- Select 14 from the Font-size pop-up menu, and select px (pixels) for the measurement unit (in the pop-up menu to the immediate right of the Font-size pop-up menu).
- Type #006600 in the Color box, or select a color in the Color picker.

Note: All Heading styles are bold by default. If you don't want the text to be boldface, select Normal from the Weight pop-up menu.

14. Click Apply.

Observe that the Heading 1 text, or the text you chose, in the document has changed. (You may need to move the dialog box.)

15. To change the background, select Background in the Category pane on the left.

The Background category of the CSS Rule definition dialog box opens (Figure 6).

16. Select a color in the Color picker or type a hexadecimal number in the Background color dialog box, such as #CCCCCC. (Make sure the background color is lighter than the color of the text.)

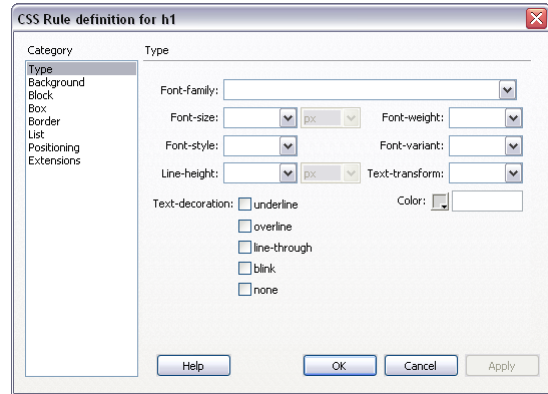


Figure 4 CSS Rule Definition dialog box

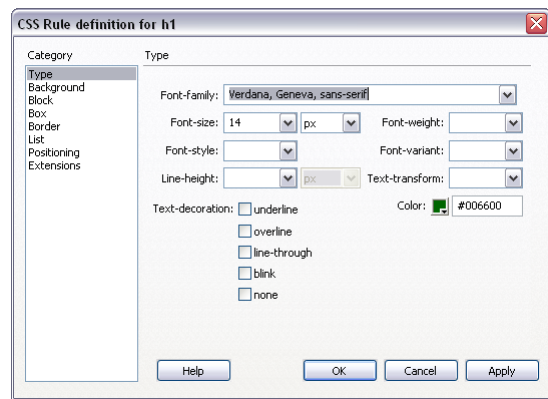


Figure 5 CSS Rule Definition dialog box showing type options

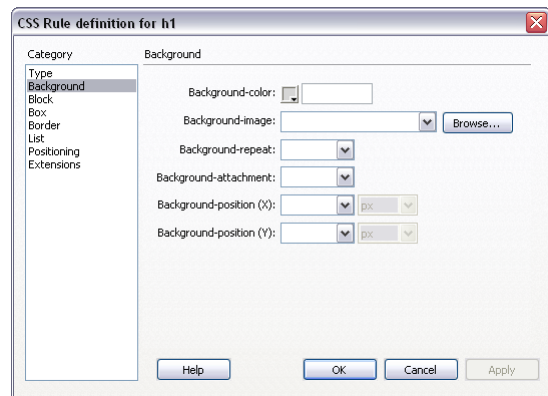


Figure 6 CSS Rule Definition dialog box showing background options

17. Click Apply to see your changes.
18. To change the border and its properties, select Border in the Category pane.

The Border category of the CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens (**Figure 7**).
19. Under Style, you can make changes such as deselecting the option Same For All and selecting the option Solid in the Top pop-up menu.
20. Under Width, you can make changes such as typing 1 in the Top pop-up menu, and leaving pixels selected as the measurement unit.
21. Under Color, you can make changes such as entering #006600, or whatever color you chose in step 13.
22. Click OK.

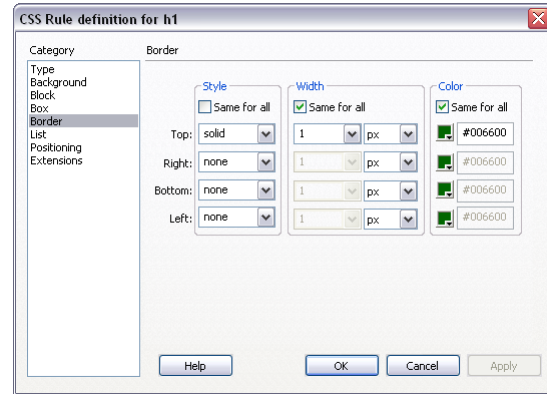


Figure 7 CSS Rule Definition dialog box showing options for formatting borders

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box closes.

Observe that the appearance of the Heading 1 text you created has now changed (**Figure 8**).

23. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open.

If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.
24. Make sure that All is selected in the CSS Styles panel.

Observe that the h1 style now appears under <style> in the All Rules area, indicating that this tag is part of the style sheet. Also observe that properties for this tag appear in the Properties area (**Figure 9**).
25. To make further changes to the tag style, select it and click the Edit Rule button.

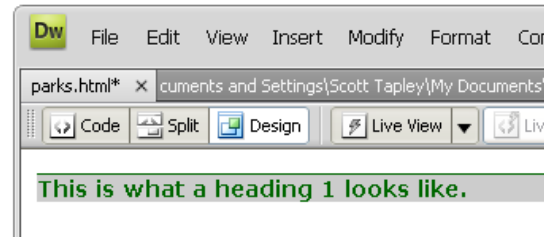


Figure 8 Text with new style formatting applied

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens. Make any changes you wish. When you are finished, click OK.

Note: You can also make changes using the Properties area of the CSS Styles panel, but it is easier to make changes using the CSS Rule Definition dialog box.

26. To apply the style to new text, select the text and then select Heading 1, or the tag you modified, in the Text Property inspector.

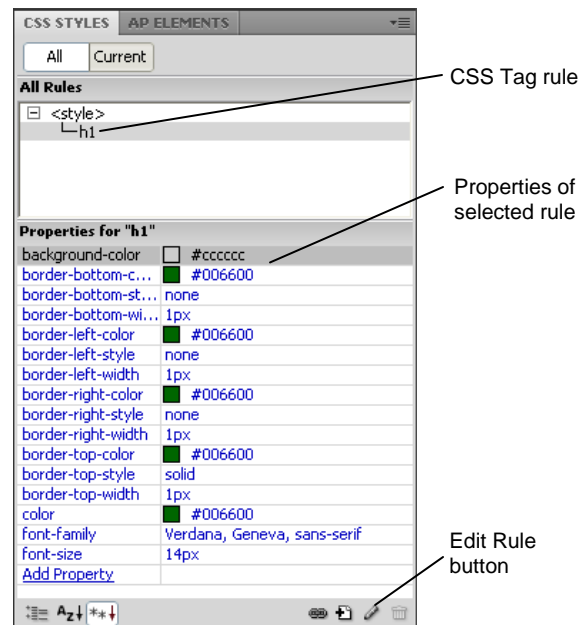


Figure 9 Style added to CSS Styles panel

To create a new CSS Class rule:

1. Start Dreamweaver.
2. Create a new HTML document.
3. Save and name the Dreamweaver document.
4. Type some text in the document. Make sure that no formatting is applied to the text (**Figure 10**).
5. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open.

If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.

6. To create a new style, click the New CSS Rule button (+) at the bottom of the panel.

The New CSS Rule dialog box opens (**Figure 11**).

7. In the Selector Type pop-up menu, select Class.
8. In the Selector Name box, type a name for the style such as **.warning**.

Note: Class rule names must begin with a period and cannot contain spaces or special characters. If you forget to type the period, Dreamweaver will add this automatically.

9. In the Rule Definition pop-up menu, select This Document Only or New Style Sheet File.

This Document Only option defines the style as part of the document’s internal style sheet. *New Style Sheet File* option defines the style as part of an external style sheet.

Note: If you select to create an external style sheet by selecting New Style Sheet File, you are prompted to select a location for the new style sheet (.css) document.

10. Click OK.

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens (**Figure 12**).

11. Select the options for Type, such as the following (**Figure 12**):
 - Select Arial, Helvetica, Sans-serif in the Font-family pop-up menu
 - Select 12 from the Size-size pop-up menu, and select px (pixels) for the measurement unit.
 - Type #CC0033 in the Color box, or click the color box and select a color in the Color Picker.

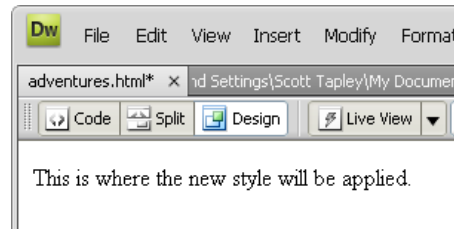


Figure 10 Text with no formatting applied



Figure 11 New CSS Rule dialog box

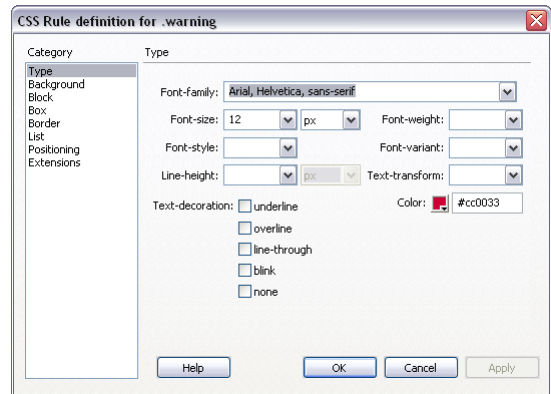


Figure 12 CSS Rule Definition dialog box showing type options

12. To change the formatting of text blocks, select Block in the Category pane.

The Block category of the CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens (**Figure 13**).

13. In the Letter-spacing box, you can make changes such as typing 3 and selecting pixels for the measurement unit.

This setting adds space between each letter.

14. In the Text-indent box, you can make changes such as typing 5 and selecting pixels for the measurement unit.

This indents the first line of each paragraph.

15. Click OK.

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box closes.

16. Select the document text.

17. Make sure the Property inspector is open and the HTML option is selected.

In Windows, the Property inspector is docked at the bottom of the screen. If the Property inspector is not open, select Window > Properties.

18. Select warning, or the name of your style, from the Class pop-up menu (**Figure 14**).

19. In the document, deselect the text by positioning the mouse pointer next to it and clicking once.

Observe that the format of the text has changed (**Figure 15**).

20. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open.

If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.

21. Make sure that All is selected in the CSS Styles panel.

Observe that the newly created CSS rule now appears under <style> in the All Rules area, indicating the new rule is part of a CSS style sheet. Also observe that properties for the style appear in the Properties area.

22. To make further changes to the style, select it and click the Edit Rule button.

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box opens.

Note: You can also make changes using the Properties area of the CSS Styles panel.

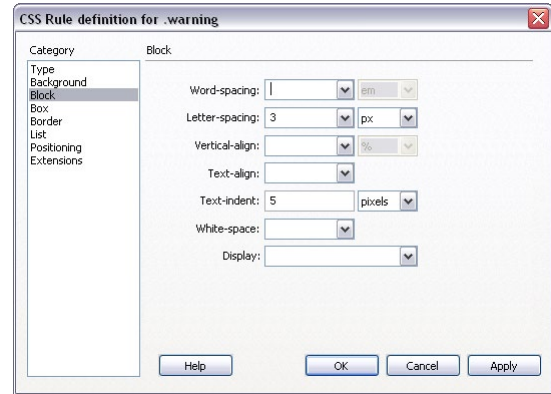


Figure 13 CSS Rule Definition dialog box showing options for formatting text blocks

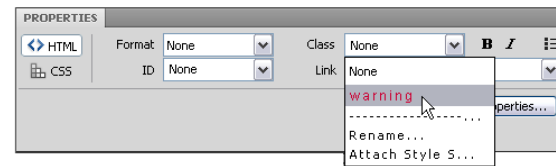


Figure 14 Text Property inspector

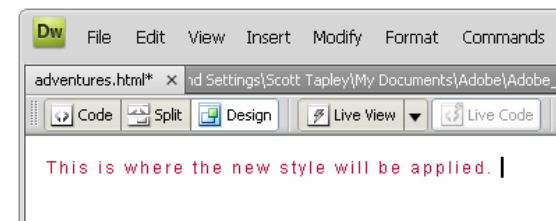


Figure 15 Formatting applied to text

Exporting CSS rules to an external style sheet

You can convert an internal CSS style sheet to an external one by exporting it, removing the internal CSS style sheet, and attaching the exported CSS style sheet to one or more web pages.

To export a style sheet:

1. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open (**Figure 16**).
If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.
2. Make sure that All is selected in the CSS Styles panel.
3. Select the CSS rule you want to move to an external style sheet.
Note: To move more than one rule at a time, you can Shift-click to select multiple rules that are next to each other. To select multiple rules that aren't next to each other, you can Control-click (Windows) or Command-click (Mac OS) the names of the rules.
4. Right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Mac OS) the selected rule(s) and select Move CSS Rules in the context menu.

The Move To External Style Sheet dialog box opens (**Figure 17**).

5. Select A New Style Sheet and then click OK.

The Save Style Sheet File As dialog box opens (**Figure 18**).

6. Browse to a location for the CSS file, enter a name for the file, and click Save.

Note: It is good practice to place CSS files in their own folder and good practice to name that folder "css."

Dreamweaver exports the CSS file.

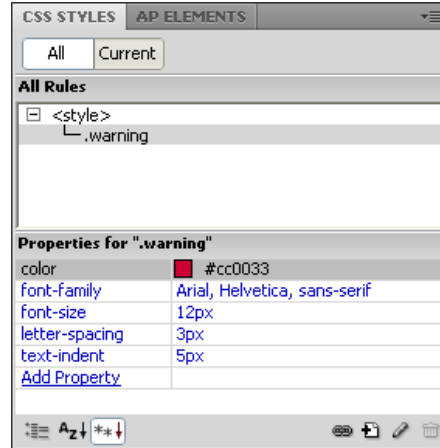


Figure 16 CSS Styles panel



Figure 17 Move To External Style Sheet dialog box

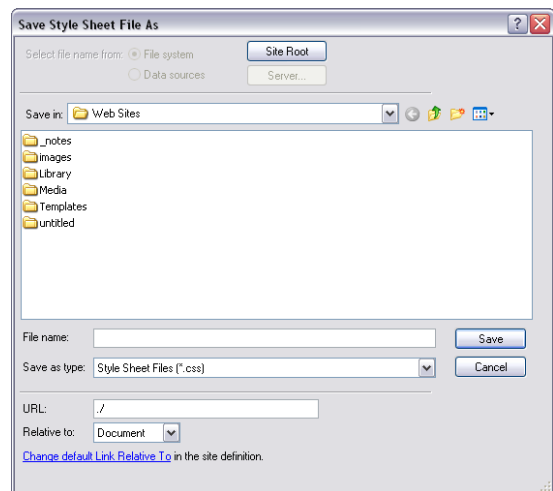


Figure 18 Save Style Sheet File As dialog box

To delete an internal style sheet:

1. In the CSS Styles panel under All, select <style>.
2. Click the Delete Embedded Stylesheet button (**Figure 19**).

Dreamweaver removes the internal style sheet. If the internal style sheet contains any styles still being used on the page, the affected text reverts to its default formatting, or it takes on the formatting defined in the external style sheet.

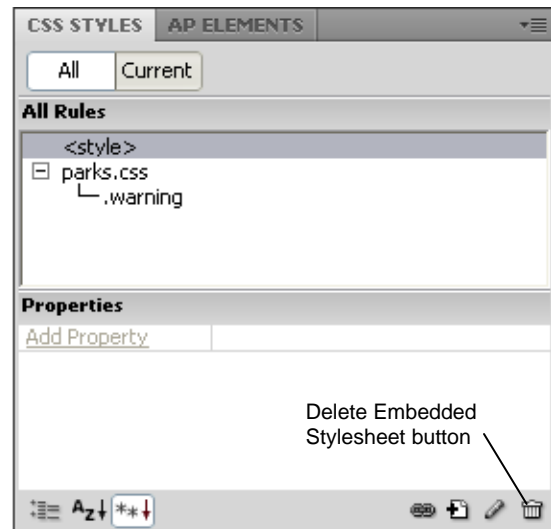


Figure 19 CSS Styles panel

Attaching an external style sheet

It's preferable to use external style sheets, especially if you have more than one web page. Once you create an external style sheet and attach it to multiple documents, you can instantly change any style in all your documents by making changes to the external style sheet.

Note: Once you start using an external style sheet, it is best to make all text formatting changes through that style sheet. If you make formatting changes through the Property inspector, Dreamweaver will automatically create a new internal style sheet.

1. Open a document.
2. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open.
If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.
3. Click the Attach Style Sheet button (**Figure 20**).
The Attach External Style Sheet dialog box opens (**Figure 21**).
4. Click Browse, navigate to your saved style sheet, select it, and click OK (**Figure 22**).

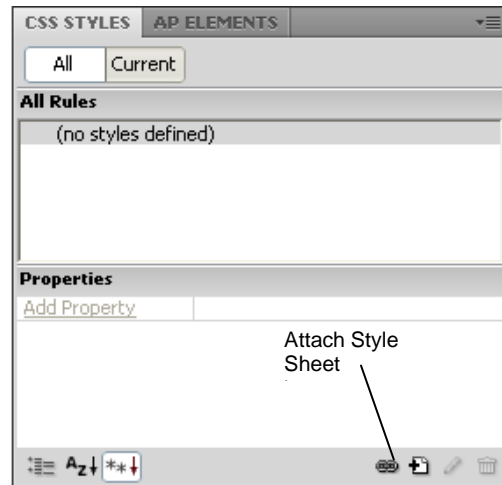


Figure 20 CSS Styles panel

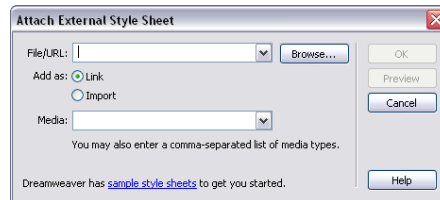


Figure 21 Attach External Style Sheet dialog box

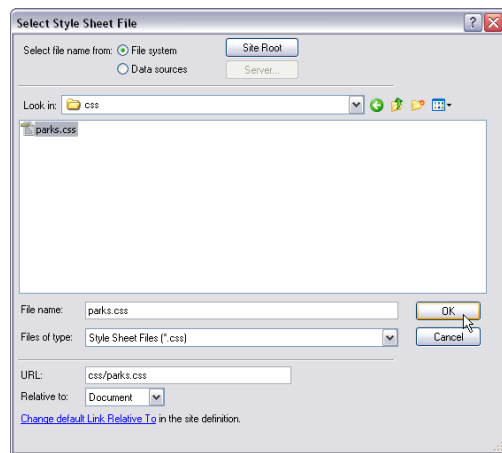


Figure 22 Selecting a CSS style sheet to attach

5. In the Attach External Style Sheet dialog box, click OK (**Figure 23**).

Dreamweaver attaches the style sheet to your document (**Figure 24**).

The style sheet's rules are now available in the Property inspector. You may need to expand the style sheet to see its rules.

You can attach the same style sheet to multiple documents. When you make changes to the style sheet, those changes will appear in all documents the style sheet is attached to.

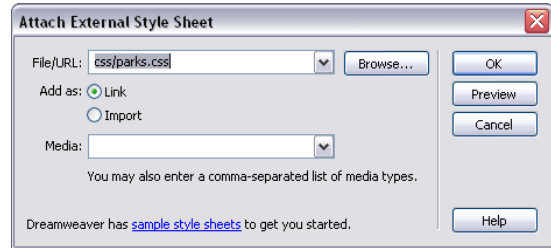


Figure 23 Confirming style attachment

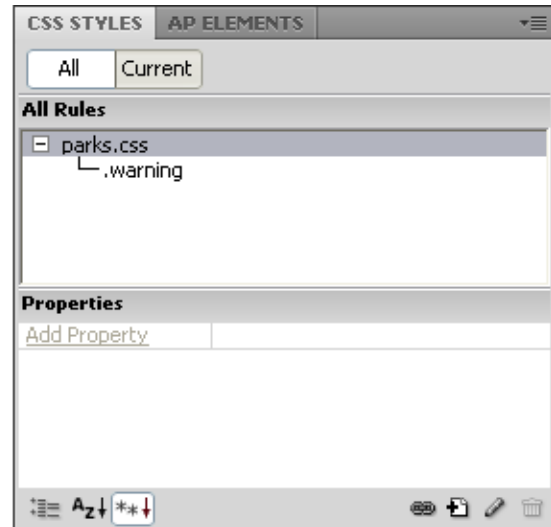


Figure 24 Attached style sheet

Creating external style sheets

You can also create external style sheets.

1. Start Dreamweaver.
2. Create a new HTML document.
3. Save and name the Dreamweaver document.
4. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open (**Figure 25**).
If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.
5. To create a new style, click the New CSS Rule button (+) at the bottom of the panel.
The New CSS Rule dialog box opens.
6. Select one of the following types of styles:
 - *Class (Can Apply To Any HTML element)*. Make your own HTML tag by naming a new style and defining its formatting.
 - In the Selector Type pop-up menu, select Class.
 - Type a name in the Selector Name box.
Note: Class names typically begin with a period and do not have spaces or special characters. Example: .highlight (**Figure 26**).
 - *Tag (Redefines an HTML Element)*. Change the default format of any tag in a document.
 - In the Selector Type pop-up menu, select Tag.
 - In the Selector Name pop-up menu, select the type of tag to redefine (for example, H1 tag, Body, or Table) (**Figure 27**).

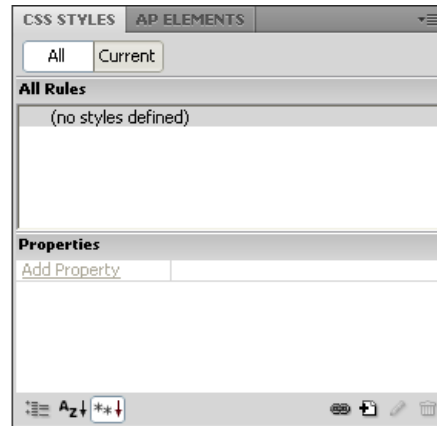


Figure 25 CSS Styles panel

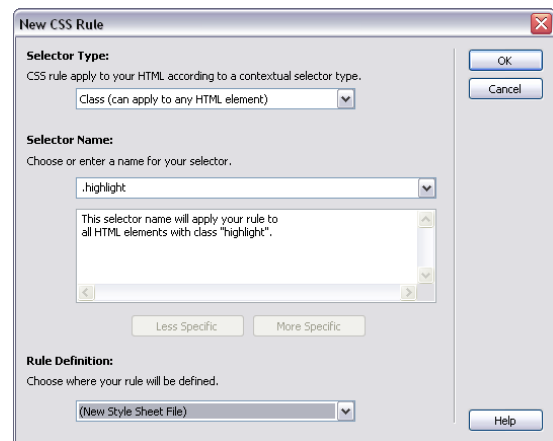


Figure 26 Create your own HTML tag (class)



Figure 27 Modify an existing tag

- *ID (Applies To Only One HTML Element).*
 - In the Selector Type pop-up menu, select ID.
 - Type a name in the Selector Name box.
- *Compound (Based On Your Selection).*
 - In the Selector Type pop-up menu, select Compound.
 - In the Selector Name pop-up menu, select the type control to apply to linked text (**Figure 28**).
 - Link controls the normal state of the link. The default color is blue.
 - Visited controls the link format after a visitor has clicked it. The default color is purple.
 - Hover controls the link format as the mouse moves over the link. The default color is red.
 - Active controls the link format while it is being clicked. The default color is red.

8. In the Rule Definition pop-up menu, select New Style Sheet File.

9. Click OK.

The Save Style Sheet File As dialog box opens (**Figure 29**).

10. Name and save the style sheet in your local root folder.

11. Make sure Site Root is selected in the Relative To box.

12. Click Save.

13. Use the CSS Rule Definition dialog box to set the formats for the new style.

14. Click OK.

The new external style sheet is automatically attached to the current document and listed in the CSS Styles panel (**Figure 30**).



Figure 28 Create a Compound style

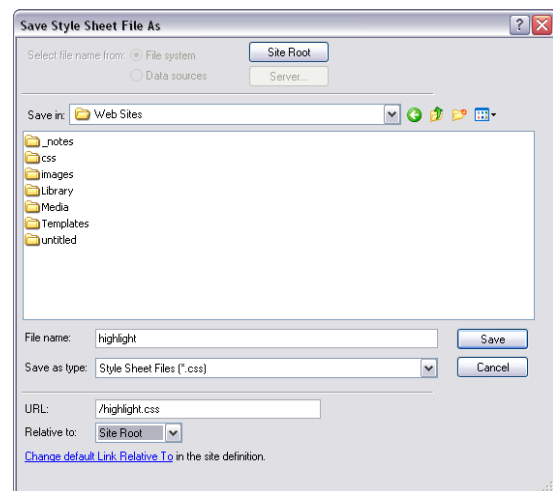


Figure 29 Save Style Sheet File As dialog box

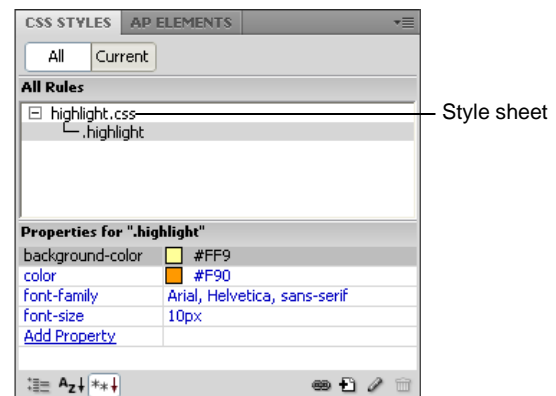


Figure 30 New external style sheet

Edit styles

1. To view a style sheet's rules, click the plus symbol beside the style sheet you want to edit in the CSS Styles panel.

Dreamweaver displays style sheet's rules.

2. Select the rule you want to edit.
3. At the bottom of the CSS Styles panel, click the Edit Rule button (**Figure 31**).

The CSS Rule Definition dialog box for the selected style opens (**Figure 32**).

4. Make formatting changes in the CSS Rule Definition dialog box. Then click OK.

The changes take effect immediately. Because you editing an external style sheet, the same changes are applied to any other documents attached to this style sheet.

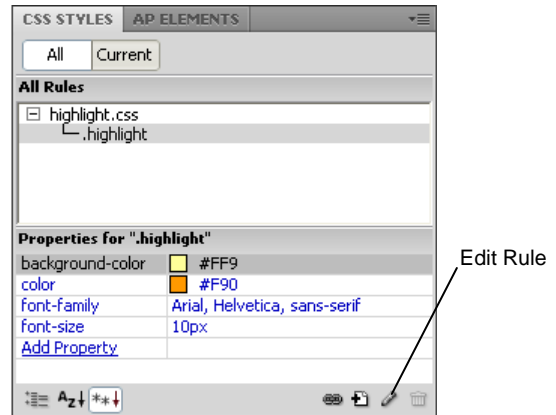


Figure 31 CSS Styles panel

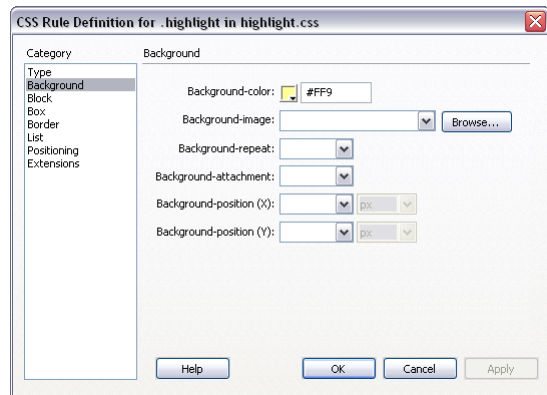


Figure 32 CSS Rule Definition dialog box