10

Working with Tables

Figure 10.1 HTML tables can be used to create all kinds of data tables.

Figure 10.2 With a little imagination, you can use tables to replicate nearly any layout you can make with page layout programs such as Quark or PageMaker.

Table functionality was added to HTML to simplify presenting tabular data, such as scientific reports. While tables are still great for making, well, tables (**Figure 10.1**), clever designers quickly realized that tables could be used to vastly improve design options (**Figure 10.2**).

Like the mailboxes that line the wall at the post office, each individual cubbyhole, called a cell, holds discrete information that doesn't ooze over into the other boxes. As you can see in **Figure 10.3** on the next page, tables are divided into rows, which cross the table horizontally, and columns, which span the table vertically.

Hand-coding a table is tiresome at best. In fact, tables are probably the most convenient feature of most WYSIWYG Web page creation programs, although many of these tools code tables rather sloppily—not so with Dreamweaver.

Setting Up Tables

Creating a table is a three-part process, although the second and third steps often take place simultaneously.

1. First, you insert the table onto your page.

2. Then, you modify the properties of the table and its cells.

3. Finally, you insert content, such as text and images, into the table.

✔ Tips

- You can plan your table beforehand, if you know how many cells you want; or you can make it up as you go along, and add cells, rows, and columns as needed.

- While virtually every current Web browser handles tables correctly, many older browsers, and most nongraphic browsers, don't. See Appendix A on the Web site for tips on working with different kinds of browsers.

- If you're planning on working with dynamic content using layers, you can automatically convert tables to layers. From the document window menu bar, select Convert > Tables to Layers. See Chapter 14 for more on layers and instructions on how to convert tables to layers and vice-versa.

Figure 10.3 This table consists of three columns and five rows. The center column consists of only two cells, the larger of which was created by merging together four cells.

Figure 10.4 Choose Table from the Insert menu.

Figure 10.5 Click on the Table button on the Objects palette to open the Insert Table dialog box.
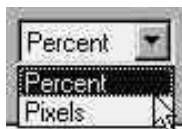

Figure 10.6 Click on the Width drop-down menu to make the width unit either pixels or percent of the browser window.

Figure 10.7 I inserted a new table with five rows and two columns.

To insert a table:

1. Click to place the insertion point where you'd like the table to appear.

2. You can insert a table in one of two ways:
   ◆ From the Document Window menu bar, select Insert > Table (**Figure 10.4**).
   or
   Click on the Table button on the Objects palette: .

   Either way, the Insert Table dialog box will appear (**Figure 10.5**).

3. In the Rows text box, type the number of rows you want in your table.

4. In the Columns text box, type the number of columns you want your table to have.

5. Choose a width for your table.
   ◆ You can choose to have your table occupy a certain percentage of the page.
   or
   You can choose the number of pixels your table will occupy.

   Type a number, either pixels or percent, in the Width text box.

6. Click on the Width drop-down menu to choose either pixels or percent (**Figure 10.6**).

   I'll discuss the other table options later in this chapter.

7. Click on OK to close the Insert Table dialog box. Your new table will appear (**Figure 10.7**).

✔ **Tip**

■ Even if you specify an exact width in pixels, your table may resize itself—it will stretch to fit the content you put in it. If you set a percentage width, the table will resize based on the size of the user's browser window.

SETTING UP TABLES

Adding Content to a Table

Now that you've got your table right where you want it, you need to put stuff in it.

To add text to your table, just click in the cell where you want your text to go, and start typing and formatting (**Figure 10.8**).

Adding images to a table is just like adding images to any other part of a page. Just click in the table cell you want your image to live in, and then place the image as usual.

For more detailed instructions on working with images, refer to Chapter 8.

✔ Tips

- You can move from cell to cell in a table by pressing the tab key. Shift + Tab moves the cursor backwards.

- You can drag images and text into table cells from elsewhere on the page. Highlight the text or image, and then click on it and drag it into its new home.

- You may want to select an entire table in order to move it or copy it to another page. You can click and drag to highlight a table, but you can accidentally drag table borders that way. Here's a foolproof way to do it.

To select a table:

1. Click on the table that you want to select.

2. From the Document window menu bar, select Modify > Table > Select Table
   or
   Right-click (Ctrl+click) on the table, and from the pop-up menu that appears, select Table > Select Table.

Either way, your table will be selected (**Figure 10.9**) and you can copy, cut, drag, or delete it.

Figure 10.8 You can type and format text in a table just as you would text on a blank page.

Figure 10.9 The entire table will be selected. A dark outline will appear around the table, and handles will appear in the lower-right corner of the table.

Figure 10.10 When the table is selected, the Properties inspector will display Table properties.

✔ Tip

- Selecting a table makes the Properties inspector display the table's properties automatically (**Figure 10.10**). This is the only way to display table properties.

Figure 10.11 Click to place the insertion point in your future table header cell.
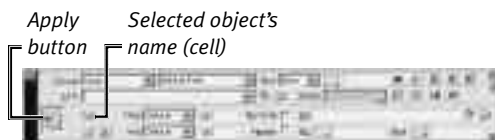
Apply button   *Selected object's name (cell)*

Figure 10.12 The Properties inspector, displaying Table Cell properties. You can tell which part of the table you've selected by the appearance of the Apply button and the displayed name of the selected object.

Figure 10.13 The text in the new table header cell is now bold and centered in the cell.

Using a header cell

A header cell can be used to indicate the purpose of your table. In most browsers, table header cells appear with their text boldfaced and centered in the cell.

To use a header cell:

1. Click in the cell (usually at the top of the table) that you'd like to designate as the header cell (**Figure 10.11**).

2. In the Expanded Properties inspector (**Figure 10.12**) click on the checkbox marked Header.

3. The text in the selected cell will be centered and boldfaced. (**Figure 10.13**).

✔ Tips

■ The appearance of table header cells may vary slightly from browser to browser, but the concept is the same: they stand out from the rest of the table.

■ You can make an entire row or column of cells into table header cells.

ADDING CONTENT TO A TABLE

Using the no-wrap option

Text in table cells usually wraps to fit the width of the cell. If you turn off text wrapping, the cell will expand to fit the text.

To use the no-wrap option:

1. Select the column, row, or cell to which you want to apply the no-wrap option.

   ◆ To select a cell, just click in it.

   ◆ To select a column or row, you can click and drag to select the entire row or column; see To select a column or row, later in this chapter.

2. Click the No Wrap checkbox.

If there is already text in any of the cells to which the no-wrap option is applied, the cells may expand to fit the text within them (**Figure 10.14**).

Figure 10.14 The cell expanded to fit the text that was suddenly no longer wrapped to fit the column.

Stupid No-Wrap Tricks

To break a line in non-wrapped text, press Enter (Return) to start a new paragraph, or Shift+Enter (Shift+Return) for a line break. If you change the cell's contents so there is extra blank space in the unused cell, you can clear column widths to close up empty space. See To clear column widths, later in this chapter.

ADDING CONTENT TO A TABLE