

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) Basics

Though most of us will design with a web builder program, such as Dreamweaver or GoLive, it still helps to know some basic HTML in order to troubleshoot errors if nothing else. The key thing to remember about HTML is that “tag commands”—the writing you see in angle brackets (<>)—*tend* to work in pairs. There’s a starting command tag and then an ending, within which the affected text is sandwiched. Most ending tags differ from the starting tag with the inclusion of “/” the forward slash. So if you wanted make the word “important” **bold** in HTML, you would find the tags for bold and put them around the word important:

```
<b>important</b>
```

The tags themselves will not be visible to the website visitors, just the effect those tags have on the text for the site.

Tags used for formatting text

Below are some examples of tags to be used with text:

Tag	Function
	Makes the text bold
<i></i>	<i>Italicizes</i> the text
<u></u>	<u>Underlines</u> the text
<p></p>	Forms a paragraph section

Tags used for inserting images and links

Working with **images** and **links**, the images and URLs should preferably already exist before you try to point to them. Of course you can put in filler information until you have created the data you to which you are linking, but that would lead to dead links and graphic place holders. The following 2 tags are important for inserting images and links on your site:

 where *name* is the filename and location of the image you wish to use on your webpage. For example, if you want to put up a headshot of yourself on your RPI website, and you saved the image with the filename “me.jpg,” in a folder called “images,” the HTML for this would look like

name of URL where *URL* is the address you want visitors to go to if they click on the spot on your webpage, and name of URL is whatever you want to call the link. So, for example, if you wanted to create a link to RPI’s homepage from your website, it would look like
 Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

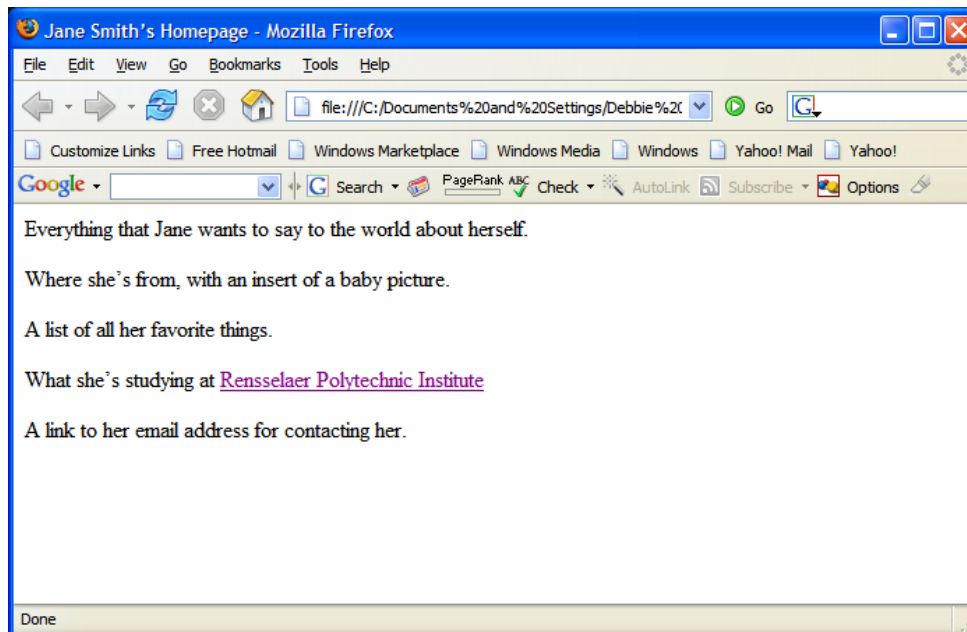
General tags for making an HTML page

After (or before) you have put together all the information you want to put on the page, there are some additional tags to be aware of that make up an HTML site. At the top of an HTML page should be the tag `<html>`, with its corresponding closing tag of `</html>` at the very bottom. Below the starter `<html>` tag comes the `<head>` tag. Beneath that comes `<title>` where you would want to put the name of the webpage, such as *Jane Smith's Homepage*, followed by the closing tag `</title>`. The title is what gets displayed on the very top bar of a webpage, which, frankly, often goes unnoticed. Below that, you want to put the closing tag `</head>`. Whatever you do want visitors to see *on* your webpage should start with the tag `<body>` and end at the bottom of the page with `</body>`.

Here is an example of all of this:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Jane Smith's Homepage</title>
</head>
<body>
<p>Everything that Jane wants to say to the world about herself. </p>
<p>Where she's from, with an insert of a baby picture.</p>
<p>A list of all her favorite things. </p>
<p>What she's studying at <a href="http://www.rpi.edu">Rensselaer Polytechnic
Institute</a></p>
<p>A link to her email address for contacting her. </p>
</body>
</html>
```

The code above looks like this in a Firefox browser:



Going forward

The quick and easy way to test your HTML code is to write your code and text in Notepad and save your work as an *.html file. Then open that file in the browser of your choice to see if everything looks the way you had expected. You can try it now with code above for Jane Smith's Homepage.

What has been discussed here, however, barely scratches the surface of HTML coding. You can find many resources on the web regarding HTML authoring. One recommendation is <http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp> and another is http://www.webmonkey.com/webmonkey/reference/html_cheatsheet/. Another resource to look at is the source code of some of your favorite websites. To do this, go to the main menu of Firefox, and click on View→Page Source. In Internet Explorer, go to View→Source. There you will see the source code for the page that you are browsing at that moment. Do remember that there may be a lot more code there than has to do with simple HTML as popular web building programs add more code when they are used. But after becoming familiar with HTML, you could find the source code that for a section of a site you may like, copy that, and test it for inclusion in your own work.

Happy designing!

Debbie Rowe
Doctoral Student
Department of Language, Literature, and Communication
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute