How to work with external Cascading Style Sheets

Many web professionals find it that using an *external style sheet*--a style sheet that exists in its own file--offers a number of advantages over including styles in the header of an HTML file. These advantages include:

*   Flexibility: With CSS stored in one file, you can easily change the appearance of all documents that refer to the external style sheet.

*   Consistency: All documents sharing the same style sheet will have a similar appearance.

Using an external style sheet separates *form* from *content*. Separating form from content is a widely-adopted principle in web design which allows, among other benefits, for content to be shared in a range of contexts.

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 1**).

    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.

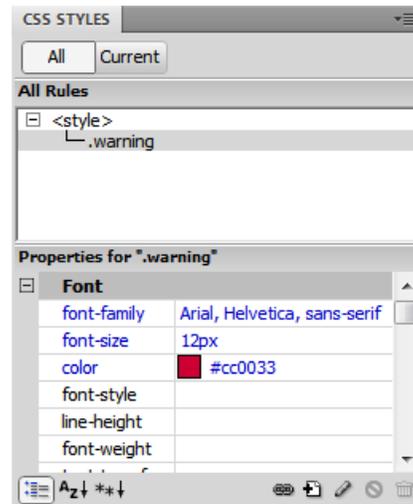   The Move To External Style Sheet dialog box opens (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1 CSS Styles panel

Figure 2 Move To External Style Sheet dialog box

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

The Save Style Sheet File As dialog box opens (**Figure 3**).

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*.
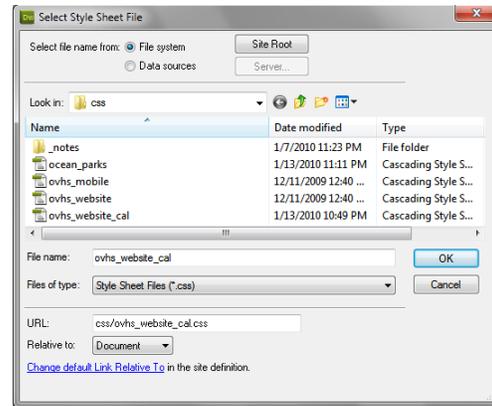
Dreamweaver exports the CSS file.

Figure 3 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 4**).

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.

Delete Embedded Style Sheet button

Figure 4 CSS Styles panel

Attaching an external style sheet

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.

To attach an external style sheet:

1. Open a document.

1. Make sure the CSS Styles panel is open.

   If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.

2. Click the Attach Style Sheet button (**Figure 5**).

   The Attach External Style Sheet dialog box opens (**Figure 6**).

3. Click Browse, navigate to your saved style sheet, select it, and click OK (Windows) or Choose (Mac OS) (**Figure 7**).

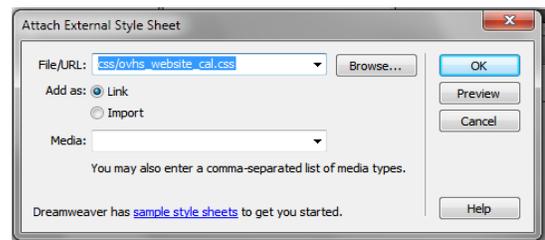**Figure 5** CSS Styles panel

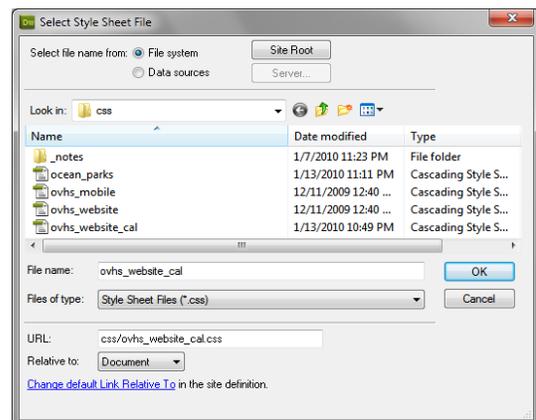**Figure 6** Attach External Style Sheet dialog box

Figure 7 Selecting a CSS style sheet to attach

4. In the Attach External Style Sheet dialog box, click OK (**Figure 8**).

Dreamweaver attaches the style sheet to your document (**Figure 9**).

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.
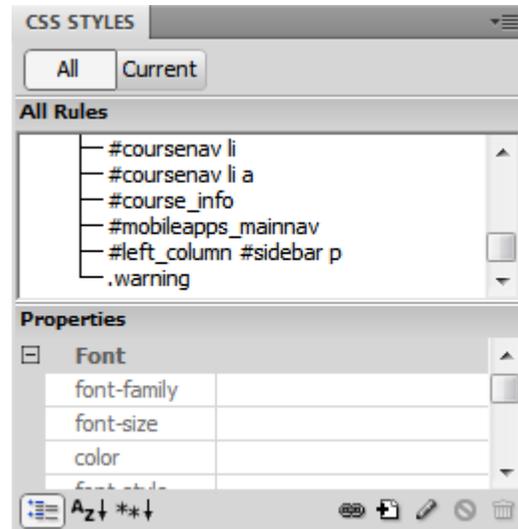

Figure 8 Confirming style attachment

Figure 9 Attached style sheet

Creating external style sheets

You can also create external style sheets directly.

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 10**).

   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 11**).

   • *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 12**).

   • *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.

     ◦ Compound selectors include *descendant*, *group*, and *pseudo class* selectors. Each are discussed in detail earlier in this guide.
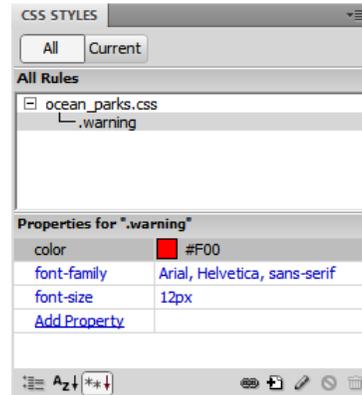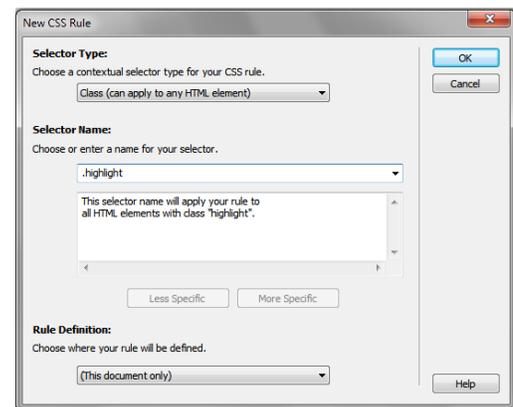

Figure 10 CSS Styles panel

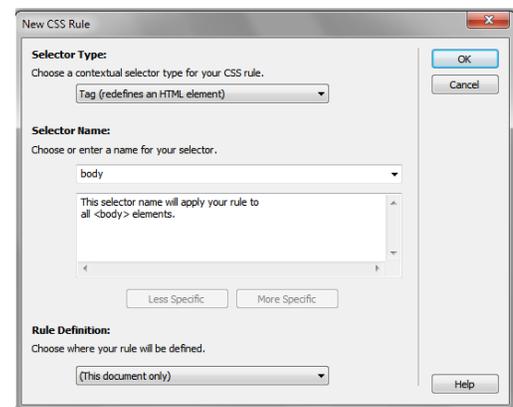**Figure 11** Create your own HTML tag (class)

Figure 12 Modify an existing tag

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

8. Click OK.

   The Save Style Sheet File As dialog box opens (**Figure 13**).

9. Name and save the style sheet in a folder named css in your local root folder.

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

11. Click Save.

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

13. Click OK.

    The new external style sheet is automatically attached to the current document and listed in the CSS Styles panel (**Figure 14**).
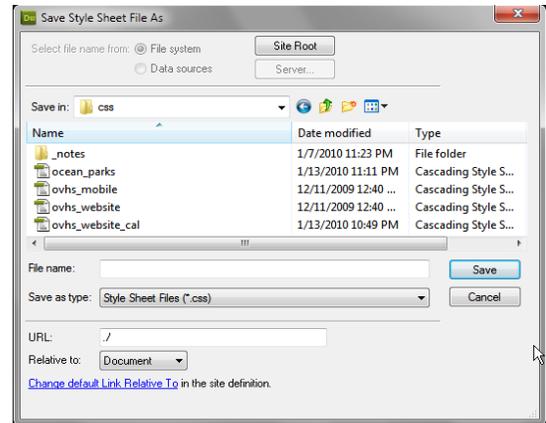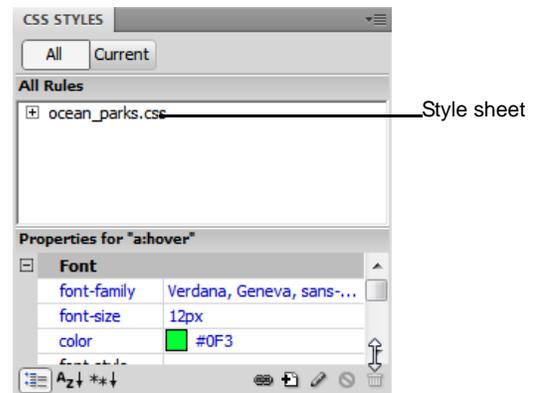

Figure 13 Save Style Sheet File As dialog box

Figure 14 New external style sheet