

Chapter 1

Introducing Your New Best Friend

In This Chapter

- ▶ Introducing the new features of Dreamweaver MX 2004
 - ▶ Examining your Web site objectives
 - ▶ Finding your way around in Dreamweaver
-

Welcome to the wonderful world of Dreamweaver. If you're an experienced Web designer, you're going to love the power and sophistication of this HTML editor. If you're new to Web design, you'll appreciate its simplicity and intuitive interface. Either way, this chapter starts you on your way to making the most of Dreamweaver by introducing you to the menus and panels that make this program so useful.

Dreamweaver can help you with every aspect of Web development, from designing simple pages, to fixing links, to publishing your pages on the World Wide Web. Dreamweaver can handle the simplest HTML, as well as some of the most complex and advanced features possible on the Web, including Cascading Style Sheets and Dynamic HTML (see Chapters 8 and 9 for more information on these features). Dreamweaver also integrates a powerful HTML text editor into its easy-to-use graphical design environment.

If you already work in another Web design program, don't worry — you can use Dreamweaver to modify existing Web pages and continue to develop your Web site without losing all the time you already invested. All Web design programs create HTML pages, and those pages can open in any other Web design program. So, for example, if you've been working in a program such as Microsoft FrontPage or Adobe GoLive, you can still change to Dreamweaver to edit and develop your site further. At the end of this chapter, you find tips about some of the challenges in the section called "Working on Web Pages Created in Another Web Design Program."

In this chapter, you find an introduction to the new features in Dreamweaver MX 2004, get a tour of the desktop, and an overview of what makes Dreamweaver such a powerful Web design program. (If you don't understand a new vocabulary term as you read through this book, look it up in the comprehensive glossary included on the accompanying CD-ROM.)

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So What's New in Dreamweaver MX 2004?

Now the good stuff. All those requests you make to Macromedia, all that wishful thinking . . . believe it or not, they heard you and many of the little — and not so little — things we all have been wanting in this program are finally here!

The following list provides you a quick overview of some of the new features you find in version MX 2004:

- ✔ The changes to the interface in this version aren't as dramatic as the changes to the Workspace made in the previous version, Dreamweaver MX, but you find some lovely enhancements. Beware that you no longer have the option of using the floating panels interface, the only option in the Dreamweaver versions prior to MX. You now have a choice between the Designer interface, which is graphical and features panels that lock into place, or the HomeSite/Coder-Style, which (as the name suggests) displays the HomeSite text editor. You have the option when you first turn on the program, and you can always make the changes in Preferences. If you choose the Designer interface, you can expand and collapse panels as needed and move them around to create a work environment that suits your preferences. Throughout this book, most of the screenshots and instructions reflect the Designer interface. If you're a code head (forgive me, someone who prefers working in the raw HTML), choose the HomeSite option, and you find many great features that make writing HTML code easy so you don't have to type all those tags in manually.
- ✔ The Designer interface is more streamlined and intuitive in its organization in this new version. You also find the interface easier to customize. For example, if you don't like the Properties inspector at the bottom of the screen, just drag it to the top and it locks into place.

The Insert bar at the top of the screen is smaller in this version to take up less room in the work area. And, if you want to keep your favorite features handy, select Favorites from the pull-down list and right-click to easily customize the bar to hold your favorite features.
- ✔ Keeping up with the general trend in Web design, Macromedia greatly enhanced support for Cascading Style Sheets. You find many predefined style sheets to get you started and the Dreamweaver graphical interface renders those styles better so you don't always have to preview your work in a browser to see how it looks. The CSS panel and rules inspector are also improved to provide more options and make creating your entire design with CSS easier. You find more on these great features in Chapters 8 and 9.

- ✔ Dreamweaver is finally better suited to handling content from Microsoft Office documents. I have to say I think this one is long overdue, but now you can copy and paste content from Word and Excel and not lose the formatting. Dreamweaver even makes tables out of Excel spreadsheets.
- ✔ When you open Dreamweaver, you'll notice a new Start Screen. Anytime you don't have a file open, this screen reappears, providing quick access to a variety of page formats, premade templates and styles, and recently opened documents.
- ✔ Small, file-like tabs across the top of the work area make moving among open documents easy. In previous versions, the filename of open documents was at the bottom of the work area.
- ✔ No matter what language you speak, you can now work in Dreamweaver thanks to full Unicode support. Even languages that Dreamweaver is not localized for render properly in the work area.
- ✔ Dreamweaver is the best Web design tool for developing sites that work across multiple browsers, and Dreamweaver has great tools for checking your work to ensure that it displays well on the browsers you want to target. Now, those features work in real time thanks to Dynamic Cross Browser Validation. Specify the browsers you want to design for and Dreamweaver checks your work every time you save your pages.
- ✔ Want to crop, resize, or sharpen an image without launching an image editor? Now you can perform these common tasks right in Dreamweaver. You can also adjust brightness and contrast. Look for these new features in the Properties inspector and enjoy saving time on those quick image fixes and edits.
- ✔ You no longer have to use the Dreamweaver Site Setup before you can work on a Web site. If you prefer to just log in to a server and make quick changes or open files on your hard drive without setting up the main folder first, you can skip this previously required step.

However, if you want to use the Dreamweaver wonderful site management features, which allow you to easily move files and folders without breaking links and automatically fix links if they do get broken, you still want to use Site Setup. But don't worry, that's really an easy step, especially with the Dreamweaver Site Setup Wizard. You find detailed steps for setting up your site in Chapter 2.
- ✔ If you build your site with ASP, you will be pleased to find that ASP.NET server controls now include real objects and Properties inspectors. Look for the new ASP.NET tab on the Insert bar.
- ✔ A collection of new templates makes creating complex designs with a click of a button even easier. Templates are covered in detail in Chapter 4.

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So, what's the big deal about Dreamweaver?

Dreamweaver has gotten great reviews and attracted considerable attention because it solves common problems found in other Web programs. Many Web designers complain that WYSIWYG design tools create sloppy HTML code, alter the code in existing pages, and make manually customizing pages difficult. Most of these problems stem from the fact that people who know how to write HTML code manually are used to having total control over their HTML pages. Unfortunately, many Web design programs force you to give up that control in order to have the convenience and ease of a graphical design tool.

Dreamweaver gives you both control and convenience by packaging an easy-to-use graphical design environment with a powerful HTML text editor, and in this latest version of Dreamweaver, the built-in text editor is even more powerful. Then Dreamweaver goes a step further with a feature Macromedia calls Roundtrip HTML. With Roundtrip HTML, you can create your HTML pages in any program, open them in Dreamweaver, and not have to worry about your original HTML code being altered.

Dreamweaver respects your HTML code. A big problem with many other Web design programs is that they can dramatically change HTML code if it doesn't conform to their rules. Unfortunately, the rules on the Web constantly

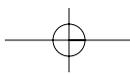
change, so many designers like to break the rules or at least add their own variations to the theme. If you create a page with custom HTML code in a text editor and then open it in a program such as Microsoft FrontPage, you run the risk that FrontPage may change your design when it tries to make your code fit the rules of FrontPage.

Dreamweaver promises not to alter your code, which is one of the reasons it's become a best friend to so many professional designers. Still, Dreamweaver is not perfect, especially if you use the Clean Up HTML feature on custom code or special scripts. If you're a programmer creating advanced features, you may want to turn off some of the Dreamweaver automatic code rewriting features by choosing **Edit** → **Preferences** → **Code Rewriting**.

The challenge was in figuring out how to display HTML code created in any editor in the Dreamweaver graphical design environment without changing the code to match Dreamweaver's rules, even when you use some special code Macromedia has never seen before. The success that Macromedia has had in solving this problem is a big part of the reason why Dreamweaver has gotten so much attention, won so many awards, and attracted the loyalty of even the most die-hard HTML coders.

Introducing the Many Components of Dreamweaver

Dreamweaver can seem a bit overwhelming at first. It has so many features that all the panels, toolbars, and dialog boxes can be confusing when you start poking around. To help you get familiar with all the great options in this



program, the next few sections introduce you to the interface and provide an overview of the basic functions of Dreamweaver. You also discover where to find most of the features and the functions of the buttons and menu options. All these features are covered in more detail in the rest of the book.

The Workspace

Creating a basic Web page in Dreamweaver is easier than ever, but it does take an extra step in this new version. When you launch Dreamweaver, the Start Screen appears in the main area of the program (and it reappears anytime you don't have a file open). From this Start Screen, you can choose to create a new page from one of the many Dreamweaver pre-made templates, or you can create a new blank page by selecting HTML from the Create New options in the middle column. When you select HTML, Dreamweaver creates a new blank HTML page in the main *Workspace*, as shown in Figure 1-1. You can type text directly into any page in the Workspace and apply basic formatting, such as bold and italics, simply by selecting Text⇨Style⇨Bold or Text⇨Style⇨Italics.

You build HTML pages, templates, style sheets, and so on in the Workspace, which consists of a main window that shows the page you're working on and a number of panels and windows that provide tools that you can use to design and develop your pages (shown in Figure 1-1). The Dreamweaver Workspace consists of the following basic components: the menu bar (at the very top), the Insert bar (just below it), the Document window (the main area of the screen, just below the Insert bar), the Properties inspector (at the bottom of the screen), and the Vertical Docking panels (to the right of the Document window) that expand and collapse as needed.

The Document window

The big, open area in the main area of the Workspace is the Document window, which is where you work on new and existing pages. If you use the Designer interface and are in Design View, you see your page as it would display in a Web browser, but if you look at the HTML code behind it (which you can do by clicking the Code buttons at the top of the work area), you see that it's a simple HTML file. If you choose the Split button, you can see the HTML code and the Design view simultaneously.



Pages viewed on the World Wide Web may not always look exactly the way they do in the Document window in Dreamweaver because not all browsers support the same HTML features or display them equally. For best results, always test your work in a variety of Web browsers and design your pages to work best in the browsers that your audience most likely uses. Fortunately, Dreamweaver includes features that help you target your page designs to specific browsers. (For more information on browser differences, check out Chapter 9.)

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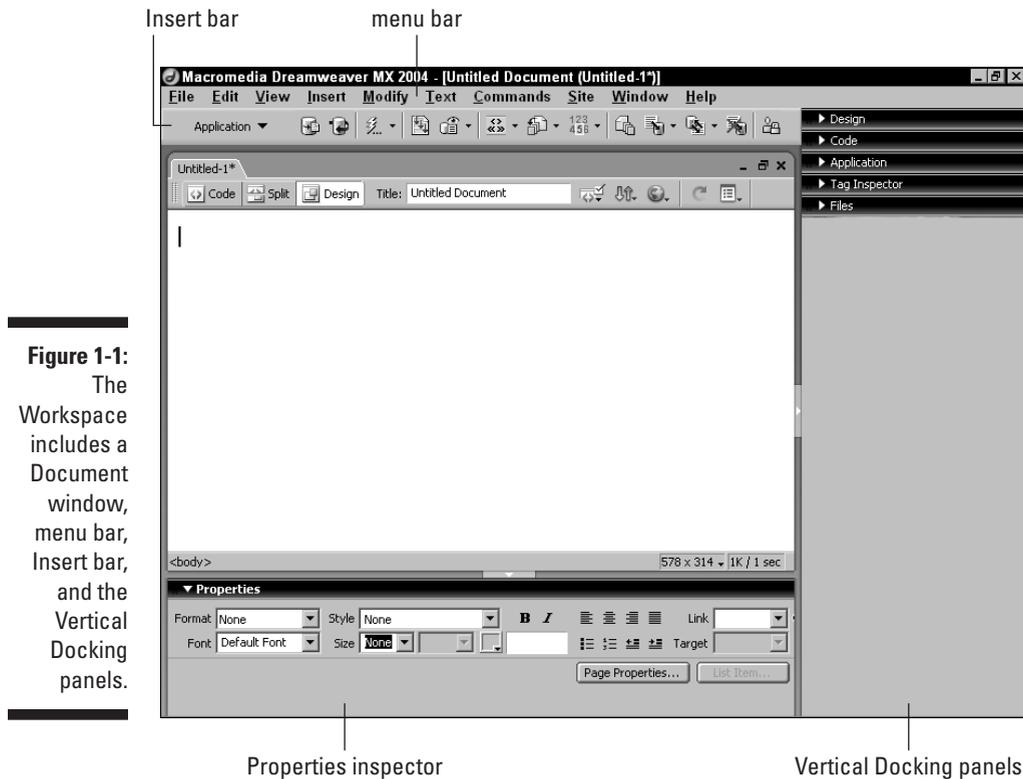


Figure 1-1:
The
Workspace
includes a
Document
window,
menu bar,
Insert bar,
and the
Vertical
Docking
panels.

Customizing the interface

The docking panels, palettes, and bars in Dreamweaver provide easy access to many of the program's features. You can move these elements around the screen by selecting them and dragging and dropping them. If you find that having all these windows open distracts you from your ability to focus on your design, you can close any or all of them by clicking the tiny icon in the top right of all the main panels and selecting Close Panel from the pull-down menu (it looks like three bullet points with lines next to them with a little arrow underneath, and it's really, really small). You can close them all at once by choosing Window⇨Hide Panels, and you can access any or all the panels through the various options on the Window menu. If you want to open a panel — the CSS Styles panel, for example — choose Window⇨CSS Styles and it expands to become visible on your screen.

The Properties inspector, Insert bar, and panels are integral parts of this program, and you find a lot more information about them throughout the book. Check out the Cheat Sheet at the front of this book for a handy reference to the Properties inspector options. In Chapter 2, you discover some of the most common features, such as inserting images (the icon for inserting an image is in the Common Insert bar at the top of the page).

The Insert bar

The Common Insert bar at the top of the page contains buttons that provide quick access to many common features. For example, click the icon that looks like a piece of a chain and you insert an HTML link into your page. Click the little envelope icon and you insert an e-mail link.

The Insert bar has eight *subcategories* that offer separate sets of buttons for various functions: Common, Layout, Forms, Text, HTML, Application, Flash Elements, and Favorites. The Favorites Insert bar is blank by default, and you can customize it to hold your favorite options. Simply right-click in the bar and you can easily customize this bar. Throughout the book, I refer to these by their full names, such as the Forms Insert bar or the Layout Insert bar. You find more information on each of these in their relevant chapters. For example, the Forms Insert bar is covered in detail in Chapter 12, and Application is covered in Chapters 13, 14, and 15.

Use the small arrow to the right of the name to access the pull-down list and switch from displaying the buttons on one subcategory to showing the buttons for another. Figure 1-2 shows the pull-down list with the Common Insert bar selected. To change the icon display, choose Edit⇨Preferences, and select the Panels option.

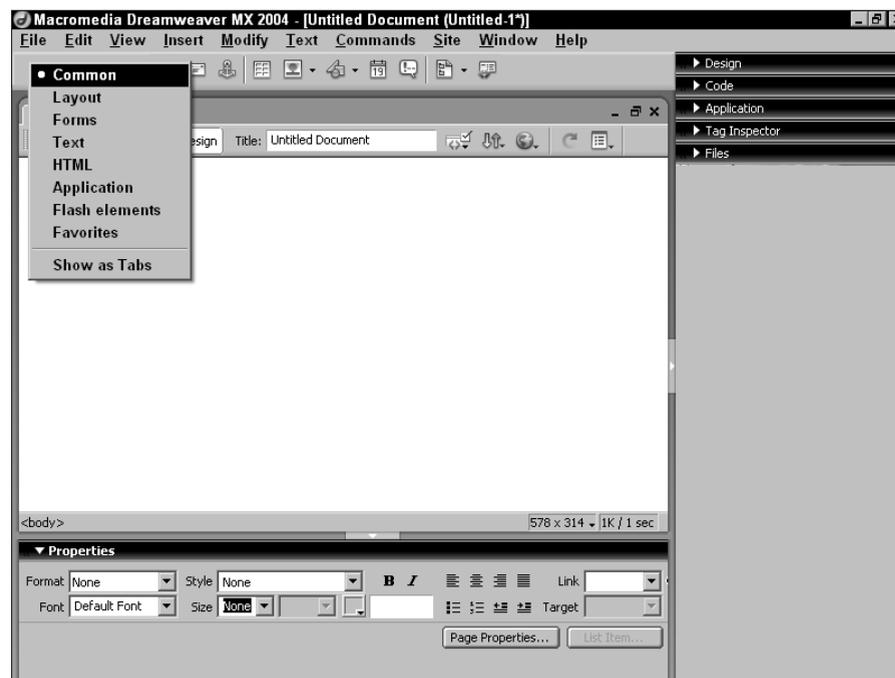


Figure 1-2:
The Insert bar provides quick access to options for forms, tables, images, and more.

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The Properties inspector

The Properties inspector is docked at the bottom of the page in Dreamweaver. If you prefer it at the top of the screen, you can drag it up there, and it locks into place. The Properties inspector displays the properties of a selected element on the page. A *property* is a characteristic of HTML — such as the alignment of an image or the size of a cell in a table — that you can assign to an element on your Web page. If you know HTML, you recognize these as HTML *attributes*.

When you select any element on a page (such as an image), the inspector changes to display the properties, or attributes, for that element, such as the height and width of an image or table. You can alter those properties by changing the fields in the Properties inspector. You can also set links and create image maps using the Properties inspector.

Figure 1-3 shows the image options displayed in the Properties inspector, including height and width, alignment, and the *URL* (Uniform Resource Locator or, more simply, Web address) to which the image links.

Figure 1-3:
The Properties inspector displays the attributes of a selected element, such as an image shown here.



At the bottom-right corner of the Properties inspector, you see a small arrow. Click this arrow to reveal additional attributes that let you control more advanced features.

Figure 1-4 shows the Properties inspector when you select a table. Notice that the fields in the inspector reflect the attributes of an HTML table, such as the number of columns and rows. (See Chapter 6 to find out more about HTML tables.)

The Vertical Docking panels

The Vertical Docking panels, shown in Figure 1-5, are located to the right of the work area (although you can easily move them to the left). The Vertical Docking panels display a variety of important features in Dreamweaver,

including Files in a site, Assets, CSS (*Cascading Style Sheets*), Behaviors, History, and the Application features (the Databases, Data Bindings, Server Behaviors, and Components). You can open and close panels by selecting the panel name from the Windows menu, and you can hide these panels by clicking the tab with the small arrow on the left of the panels.

Figure 1-4:
The Properties inspector displays the attributes of a selected HTML table or cell when selected.

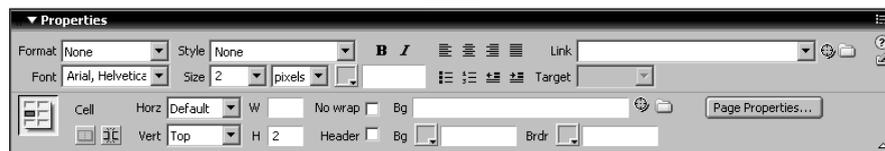
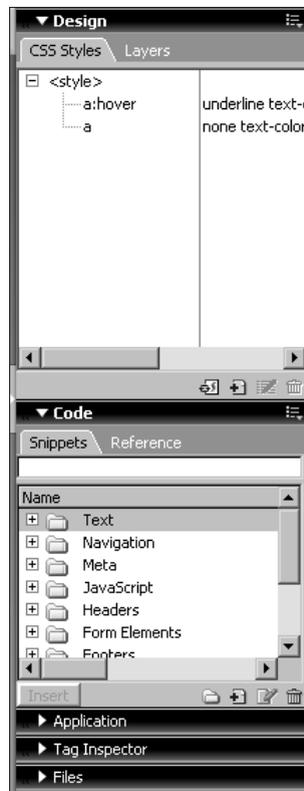


Figure 1-5:
The Vertical Docking panels provide easy access to various Dreamweaver features, including CSS, Behaviors, and Application features.



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The following list offers a description of some of the elements that you access through the Vertical Docking panels (the others are described in greater detail in their respective sections of the book).

- Files panel:** Shown in Figure 1-6, the Files tab in the Files panel lists all of the folders and files in a Web site and helps you manage the structure and organization of the site. The Files tab is also where you access FTP (*file transfer protocol*) capabilities. You can use the Connect button at the top of this dialog box to dial quickly into your server. The Get and Put buttons enable you to transfer your pages back and forth between your computer and the server. (See Chapter 2 to find out more about the Site panel.)

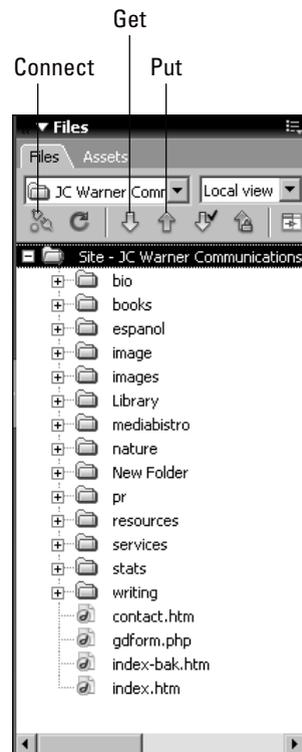


Figure 1-6: The Files tab provides a view of the site structure and files in a Web site.

- Assets panel:** The Assets panel provides easy access to the images, colors, external links, multimedia files, scripts, templates, and Library items in a Web site. The Library panel, shown in Figure 1-7, enables you to store items in a central place so that you can easily add them to multiple pages. After you store an element in the Library (you store an item simply by dragging the element onto the Library panel), you can then

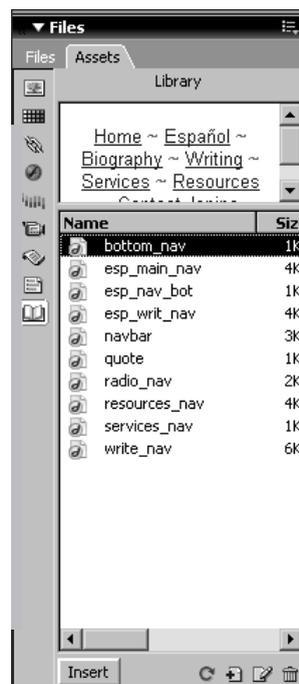


drag that element from the Library onto new pages. The Library is ideal for elements used throughout a Web site, as well as those that you must update frequently. The other parts of the Assets panel work in much the same way, providing easy access to related elements. You find more on the Library feature in Chapter 4.

These features work only if you define your site using the Site Definition dialog box, available by selecting Site→Manage Sites. If you find that the Library options aren't available to you, go to Chapter 2 and follow the steps for defining a site.

- Design and Rule panels:** These two panels enable you to define styles by using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). CSS styles are similar to style sheets used in word processing and desktop publishing programs, such as Microsoft Word and QuarkXPress. You define a style and name it, and the style is then included in the CSS Styles panel, which is accessible through the tab at the top of the panel (see Figure 1-8). The Design panel provides access to the CSS Styles panel, shown in Figure 1-8, where you can specify the type, size, and formatting of the style. After you define a style, you can apply it to text or other elements on a page. The Rules panel is a Tag inspector for CSS. Style sheets are a big time-saver because they let you set several attributes simultaneously by applying a defined style. (For more information about CSS, see Chapter 8.)

Figure 1-7: The Assets panel stores items in a central place, which makes placing the same element, such as a navigation row, on multiple pages easy.



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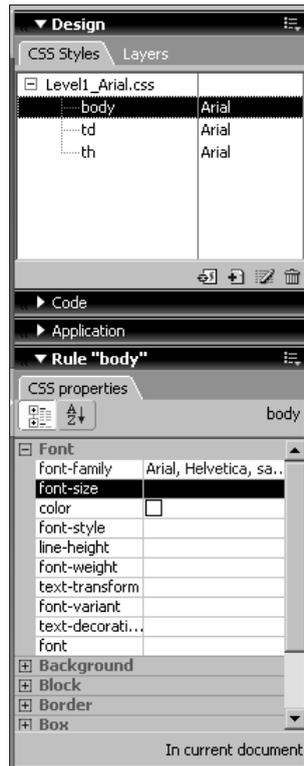


Figure 1-8: The Style Definition panel makes creating new combinations of formatting features as CSS easy.

- ✓ **Tag inspector:** The Tag inspector provides access to the Attributes, Behaviors, and Relevant CSS tabs. In Dreamweaver, *behaviors* are scripts (usually written in JavaScript) that you can apply to objects to add interactivity to your Web page. Essentially, a behavior is made up of a specified event that, when triggered, causes an action. For example, an event may be a visitor clicking an image or section of text, and the resulting action may be that a sound file plays. Figure 1-9 shows the Behaviors panel. The left pane displays events; the right pane displays the actions triggered by those events. (Chapter 9 provides more information on creating and applying behaviors.)
- ✓ **History panel:** The History panel, shown in Figure 1-10, keeps track of every action you take in Dreamweaver. You can use the History panel to undo multiple steps at once, to replay steps you performed, and to automate tasks. Dreamweaver automatically records the last 50 steps, but you can increase or decrease that number by choosing **Edit**→**Preferences**→**General**, and changing the Maximum Number of History Steps.
- ✓ **Application Panel:** This is where you find Data Bindings, Server Behaviors, Components, and Databases options, but you use these only if you work with a database. These options are described in more detail in Chapter 14.

Figure 1-9:
Clicking
the + button
opens a
drop-down
list of
behaviors.

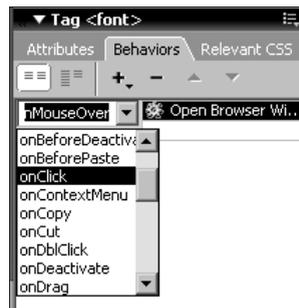


Figure 1-10:
The History
panel keeps
track of
all your
actions in
Dream-
weaver,
which
makes
undoing or
replaying
steps easy.



Code and Split views

The Code view in Dreamweaver reveals the best-integrated HTML text editor of any Web design program. In Figure 1-11, the Split View option is selected, which makes seeing the graphical design area and the HTML code at the same time possible. Notice that the highlighted text in the graphical area is also highlighted in the HTML Code view. Changes made in one immediately appear in the other. This integration makes moving back and forth between writing HTML code manually and creating it in the graphical editing environment nearly seamless.

The menu bar

At the top of the screen, the Dreamweaver menu bar provides easy access to all the features that you find in the Insert bar, Properties inspector, and panels, as well as a few others that are available only from the menu. The following sections provide a general description of each of the menu options.

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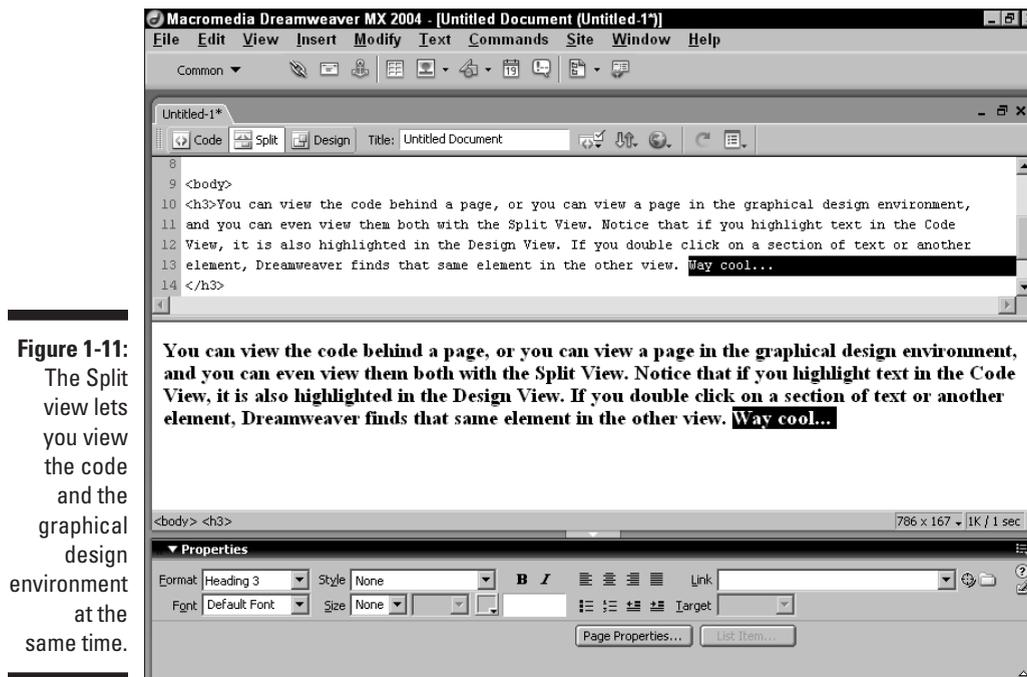


Figure 1-11: The Split view lets you view the code and the graphical design environment at the same time.

The File menu

You find many familiar options, such as New, Open, and Save, on the File menu, shown in Figure 1-12. You also find a Revert option, which is similar to the Revert feature in Adobe Photoshop. This sophisticated undo feature enables you to return your page quickly to its last-saved version if you don't like the changes you made. Dreamweaver automatically keeps track of up to 50 actions, but you can increase or decrease that number by choosing Edit → Preferences → General and changing the maximum number of history steps.

The File menu also includes access to Design Notes, a unique feature that associates private notes with HTML and other files. Take a look at Chapter 4 for more information about Design Notes and other Dreamweaver features that make collaboration easier.

You can also find features useful for checking your work in Web browsers on the File menu. Most Web design programs include some way of previewing your work in a browser. Dreamweaver takes this feature two steps further by enabling you to check your work in a number of browsers and even test the compatibility of your pages in different versions of different browsers.

Figure 1-12:
The Check
Target
Browsers
feature
produces a
list of HTML
tags on a
page that
older
browsers do
not support.



Figure 1-12 shows the Check Page options, which includes Check Accessibility, Check Links, and Check Target Browsers — all great tools for testing your work. The Check Target Browsers option enables you to specify a browser and version, such as Netscape 3.0 (still a widely used browser on the Web) or Internet Explorer 3.0. When you do a browser check, Dreamweaver generates a report listing any HTML features you use that the chosen browser doesn't support.

The Check Links feature verifies all the links in a site and produces a report with all broken and unresolved links. The Check Accessibility feature checks to make sure the page displays properly in browsers for the blind and other systems for the disabled.

The Edit menu

The Edit menu contains many features that you may find familiar, such as Cut, Copy, and Paste. One feature that may be new to you is the Edit with External Editor option, which enables you to open an element in another program, such as an image editor, and make changes without ever leaving Dreamweaver.

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You also find the Preferences settings on the Edit menu. Before you start working with a new program, going through all the Preferences options to ensure that the program is set up the best way for you is always a good idea.

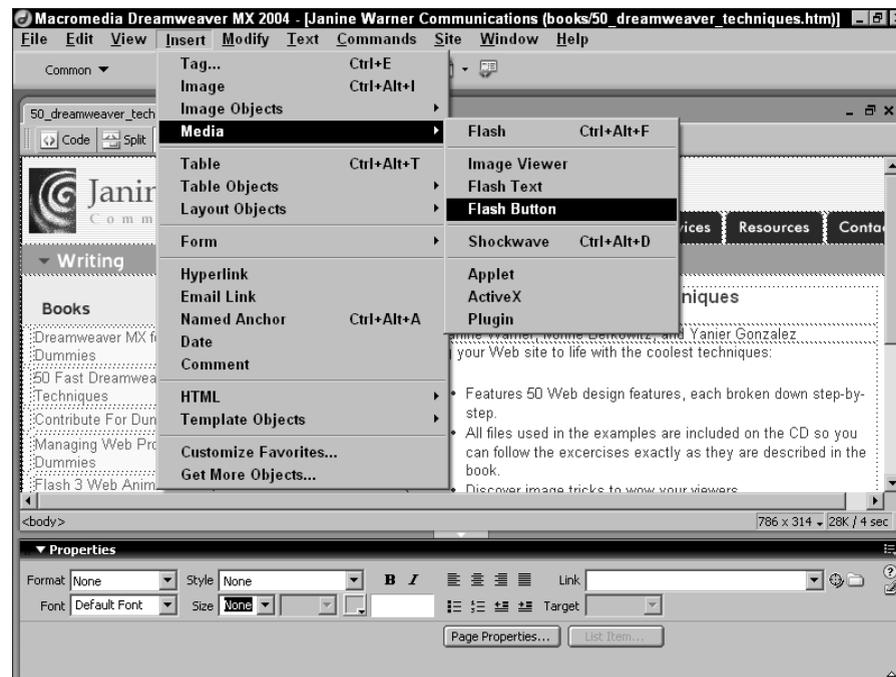
The View menu

The View menu provides access to some helpful design features, such as grids and rulers. The Visual Aides option on the View menu gives you the option of turning on or off the borders of your HTML tables, frames, and layers, as well as controlling visibility of image maps and other invisible elements. This option is useful because you often want to set the border attribute of these HTML tags to zero so that they're not visible when the page displays in a browser. However, while you work on the design of your page in Dreamweaver, seeing where elements, such as tables and layers, start and stop is very useful. Checking the frame options in the View menu lets you see the borders in Dreamweaver even if you don't want them visible to your site's visitors.

The Insert menu

As shown in Figure 1-13, the Insert menu offers access to a number of features unique to Web design. From this menu, you can insert elements such as a horizontal rule, a Java applet, a form, or a plug-in file.

Figure 1-13:
The Insert menu makes adding a variety of elements to your pages, including multimedia files, easy.



Dreamweaver offers extra support for inserting Flash and Shockwave Director files, both of which are products from Macromedia. (You can find out more about using multimedia files in Chapter 11.)

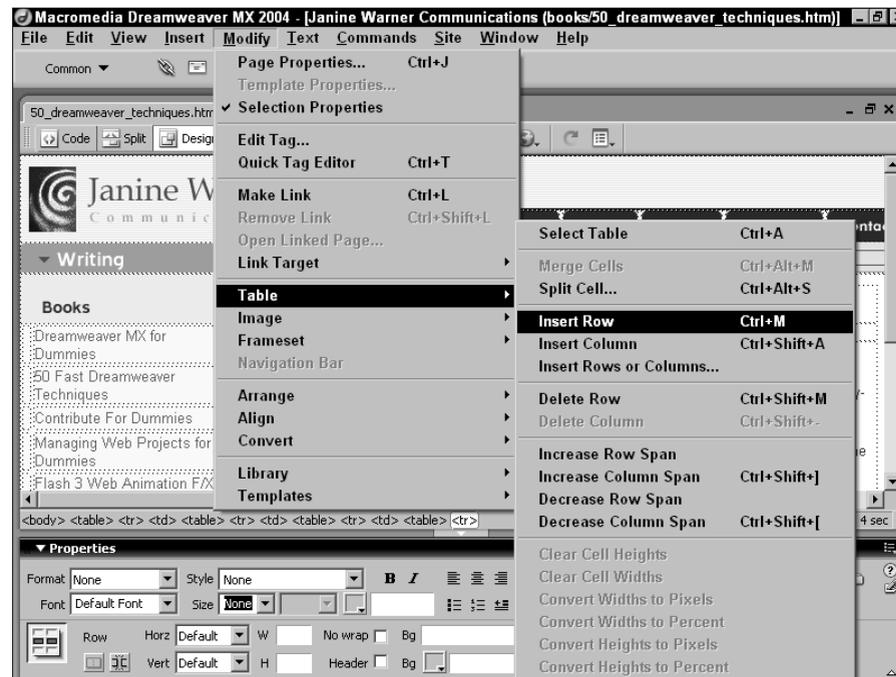
The Modify menu

The Modify menu is another place where you can view and change object properties, such as the table attributes shown in Figure 1-14. The properties (usually called *attributes* in HTML) let you define elements on a page by setting alignment, height, width, and other specifications.

Page Properties

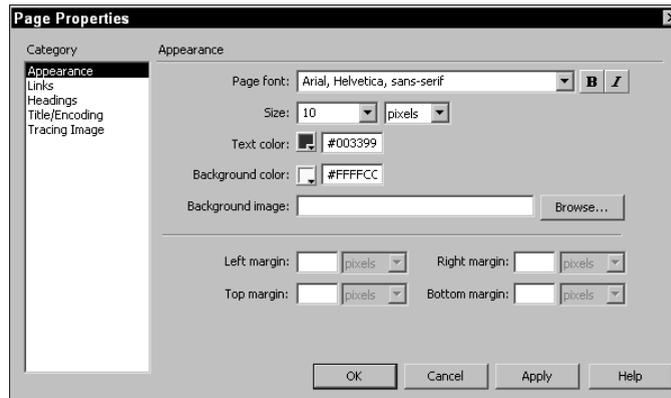
You can also set individual attributes using the Properties inspector. To alter properties for an entire page, use the Page Properties dialog box, available from the Modify menu or by clicking the Page Properties button at the bottom of the Properties inspector. Changing page properties (see Figure 1-15) enables you to set link and text colors for the entire page and specify the background color or image.

Figure 1-14:
The Modify menu makes changing object properties, such as the table attributes shown here, easy.



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Figure 1-15: The Page Properties dialog box provides access to background and text color attributes.



The Text menu

You can easily format text with the Text menu by using simple options, such as bold and italic, as well as more complex features, such as font styles and custom style sheets. Text formatting options have evolved dramatically on the Web. Just a few years ago, you didn't even have the option of specifying a particular font style or controlling leading and spacing. Today, although these options aren't yet universally supported, you have more control than ever over the look of your Web pages.

For example, if you choose a particular font for your text, that font must be available on the user's computer for the text to display properly. Because of this limitation, HTML enables you to specify several font possibilities to improve your odds that a font you want displays. The browser searches the user's computer for one of these fonts in the order in which you list them. Dreamweaver recognizes the importance of specifying more than one font and the safety of using the more popular fonts.

The Commands menu

The Commands menu, shown in Figure 1-16, provides access to a host of options in Dreamweaver. These options include the Start and Play Recording features, which let you quickly save a series of steps and then repeat them. To use this feature, choose Commands⇨Start Recording, perform whatever actions you want to record — for example, copying and pasting some text — and then choose Stop Recording. Then to perform that action again, choose Commands⇨Play Recorded Command. You can download an action by choosing Command⇨Get More Commands, which automatically launches a browser and takes you to the Macromedia Web site. You can download new commands from the Web site that adds functionality to Dreamweaver.



Figure 1-16:
The
Commands
menu offers
easy access
to some of
Dream-
weaver's
most
advanced
features.

The Clean Up HTML option on the Commands menu helps you correct bad HTML code, and the Clean Up Word HTML feature is designed especially to correct the common problems caused by the Save As HTML feature in Microsoft Word.

The Add/Remove Netscape Resize Fix option on this menu inserts or removes a JavaScript script designed to help correct a Netscape bug by automatically reloading the page when users resize their browser windows.

The Create Web Photo Album option launches Macromedia Fireworks and uses it to automate the creation of a photo album with a series of images. If you choose Optimize Image in Fireworks, a selected image automatically opens in the optimization area in Fireworks.

Another great feature on the Commands menu is the Set Color Scheme command. This option includes a list of background and text colors specially designed to work well together on the Web.

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The Site menu

The Site menu provides access to the options you need to set up your site, a process required before many of the other Dreamweaver features work properly. (This process is covered in detail in Chapter 2.) The Site menu also gives you easy access to the Check In and Check Out features, which are options that can help you keep a team of designers from overwriting each other's work. (Chapter 4 also talks about this feature.)

The Window menu

The Window menu lets you control the display of panels and dialog boxes, such as Insert, Properties, and Behaviors. To turn on these features, select the panel name so that a check mark appears next to the feature you want to display; to turn the feature off, click again to remove the check mark. Other panels and dialog boxes, such as CSS Styles and HTML Code Inspector, are also listed on the Window menu for easy access.

The Help menu

The Help menu provides easy access to help options that can assist you in figuring out many features of Dreamweaver. You also find access to the Dreamweaver template and example files under Help.

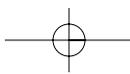
Templates and examples provide visual samples of common HTML designs, such as tables and frames, and provide design ideas and great shortcuts for creating complex layouts.

The Status bar

The Status bar appears at the very bottom-left of the Dreamweaver screen. On the right end of the Status bar, you can see shortcuts to many other features. On the left end, you find HTML codes that indicate how elements on your page are formatted. If you run your mouse pointer over text that is centered, for example, the Status bar displays `<CENTER>`. This feature makes double-checking the kind of formatting applied to any element on your page easy.



You can also use the Status bar to identify a section on your page. For example, if you click the name of a tag in the Status bar, the section of your page where that tag is applied is highlighted. This makes selecting certain sections of a page easier, such as a table.



Working on Web Pages Created in Another Web Design Program

In theory, all Web design programs should be compatible because HTML files are, at their heart, just ASCII (or plain-text) files. You can open an HTML file in any text editor, including Macintosh SimpleText and Windows Notepad. However, HTML has evolved dramatically over the years and different Web programs follow different standards, which can cause serious conflicts when a page created in one program opens in another.

One of the reasons Dreamweaver is so popular is because it creates very clean code and is considered more accurate and more respectful of HTML standards than other programs. Dreamweaver is also better at creating pages that work in different browsers and on different platforms, but importing files created in another Web program can be challenging, even in Dreamweaver.

To help with the transition, Dreamweaver includes some special features, such as the Clean UP Word HTML option, designed to fix some of the common problems with Microsoft Word's HTML code.



Before you start working on a site that was developed in another program, you need to import the site into Dreamweaver. I recommend you make a backup of the site first so you have a copy of all the original pages. You find step-by-step instructions for importing an existing Web site in Chapter 2.

The following sections describe the most popular HTML editors and what you need to know if you're moving files from one of these programs to Dreamweaver.

Microsoft FrontPage

Microsoft FrontPage is one of the most popular HTML editors on the market, in large part because Microsoft Office is so popular. FrontPage also offers some powerful features as well as an attractive bundle of programs for Web developers, including Image Composer, a bundled graphics program designed for creating images for the Web. FrontPage also includes *Web components* that you can use to add interactive features, such as a simple search engine or a discussion area, to your Web site. Web components work only if their corresponding programs reside on the Web server that you use, but many commercial service providers now offer FrontPage Web components.

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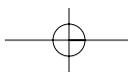
If you are migrating a site from FrontPage to Dreamweaver, first make note of any FrontPage Web components that you use, such as search engines or forms. Dreamweaver doesn't offer these same built-in features, and you won't be able to continue editing them in Dreamweaver the way you did in FrontPage. Though the components still work, thanks to the Dreamweaver Roundtrip HTML, which respects unique code, you sacrifice some of the convenience of the FrontPage built-in components for Dreamweaver's more standard approach to creating code. If you use a number of components, are used to the way they work in FrontPage, and feel that you can't live without them, you may be better off sticking with FrontPage for a while.

If you're ready to graduate to Dreamweaver (and I've spoken to many frustrated FrontPage users who are happy after they make the switch), you can re-create all the components you use in FrontPage by using CGI and other programming in conjunction with your pages in Dreamweaver. If you don't know how to do that yourself, consider hiring a programmer to help you make the transition and then maintaining the site yourself in Dreamweaver after those features are re-created.

If you use CSS or Layers in FrontPage, you need to pay special attention to those features as you convert your site to Dreamweaver. Microsoft FrontPage isn't as good as Dreamweaver at creating high-end features that work in both Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer, so you probably want to improve your code if you expect viewers to use any browser other than Internet Explorer. Because CSS and layers are more complex than HTML to code, you probably don't want to edit this code manually — converting from other editors to Dreamweaver can get pretty tricky. Tables can also get messy when you switch from one program to another. In some cases, you may find that the simplest solution is to delete the elements that you created in FrontPage and re-create them in Dreamweaver. (For more on CSS and layers, check out Chapters 8 and 9.)

Microsoft Word

Although Microsoft Word is a word processor and is not considered an HTML editor per se, it does have HTML output capabilities. As a result, you will likely encounter pages that have been output from Microsoft Word at some point. The problems you find in HTML code generated from Word are similar to the problems generated from FrontPage: They both tend to output verbose and redundant code that deviates from HTML standards. Because Word-generated HTML is so common, Dreamweaver includes a special Clean Up Word HTML command. To use this feature, choose **Commands** ⇨ **Clean Up Word HTML** and then specify the code you want altered in the Clean Up Word



HTML dialog box. When you use this feature, Dreamweaver removes excess code, which can help your pages load faster and work better in different browsers.

NetObjects Fusion

If you work in NetObjects Fusion, you face a more dramatic transition to Dreamweaver than you do coming from almost any other HTML editor discussed in this section. That's because Fusion took a unique approach to Web design and HTML code output. Although the program is not widely used anymore, many Web sites out there were created with it.

The biggest challenge with Fusion sites is that Fusion uses complex HTML tables and a transparent graphic to control spacing. The down-to-the-pixel design control enticed many graphic designers because they can create complex layouts with less effort, but those designs are not well supported by all browsers — meaning that the designs don't work well for broad audience sites.

The problem if you import a Web site created with Fusion is that it has very complex code that doesn't lend itself easily to further editing in any other program. Unfortunately, if you want the cleanest HTML code possible, which speeds up download time and makes editing pages easier in the future, your best bet is to re-create your designs from scratch. I'm sorry to break this to you, but if you import a site created in Fusion, you should probably start over with Dreamweaver; the transition process is just too daunting to be worth it. Move all your images into new image directories, set up a new site in Dreamweaver, and start over with your design work.

Adobe GoLive

Adobe GoLive offers some great features for easy page design and a lot of similarities with Dreamweaver, but it also brings some of the same problems as pages created in NetObjects Fusion (see the preceding section). GoLive makes using a grid to provide down-to-the-pixel layout control possible, in much the same way Fusion does. So, like Fusion, GoLive often outputs very complex code that is difficult to edit in other programs.

Because you can see the alignment grid in GoLive, you may be more aware of the complex table that GoLive creates in the background. The grid feature in GoLive is optional, and if the site you import was created without this feature, converting your pages to Dreamweaver is a much easier task. If the site was created using the grid, you may find that re-creating your pages from

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scratch in Dreamweaver is your best option. The code used to create the complex HTML tables that GoLive uses in its grids is extremely difficult to edit outside of GoLive. If you work with people who use GoLive, try to get them to avoid using the Layout Grid feature when designing their pages and you have an easier time working on the site with Dreamweaver.

If you add any JavaScript actions to your pages in GoLive, you can't edit them in Dreamweaver, either, but the actions still work. Likewise, CSS and other Dynamic HTML features created in GoLive do not work well in Dreamweaver unless you know how to edit the code manually. If your page contains any actions or DHTML features, you may find re-creating the page in Dreamweaver is easiest.

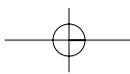
Other HTML editors

In the early days of the Web, lots of different visual HTML editors were being used. Today only a few major ones are left. The few that I discuss here seem to capture most of the market. Still, you may find yourself inheriting sites built in really old editors such as Adobe PageMill, Claris HomePage, or Symantec VisualPage, to name a few. Each of these programs present fewer problems than either Fusion or GoLive, because they aren't capable of creating the complex, high-end features that are hardest to migrate from one program to another.



No matter what program your site is originally created in, as you consider how best to convert your work into Dreamweaver, pay special attention to unusual code output, nonstandard rules about HTML tags and syntax, and sophisticated features such as CSS, Dynamic HTML, and sophisticated programming, such as ASP, Java, or CGI scripts. These Web page elements are most likely to cause problems when you import them into Dreamweaver.

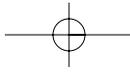
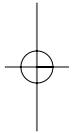
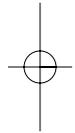
For the most part, you can open any HTML page with Dreamweaver and continue developing it with little concern. If you run into problems, remember that you always have the option of re-creating the page from scratch in Dreamweaver — a sure way to get rid of any unwanted code. You may also want to use the Dreamweaver Clean Up HTML feature to identify potentially problematic code. To use this feature, choose **Commands**⇒**Clean Up HTML** and then select the elements you want to alter in the Clean Up HTML dialog box.

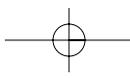


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Also be careful if you use Adobe ImageReady to automatically output HTML with images, for example, if you use the slicing feature to break up a large image into smaller images arranged in an HTML table. ImageReady also relies heavily on the transparent image trick for alignment and makes heavy use of the Colspan attribute in tables. Both of these tricks are problematic if you change the table width values. If you have trouble getting your images to align the way you intend, you may again be better off deleting the original page and re-creating the table in Dreamweaver. The good news is after you migrate your site into Dreamweaver, your work goes much more smoothly and your sites works better for a broader audience in the future.





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