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Using Expression Web to Create Basic CSS

Now that you have a basic understanding of style properties and values, it is time to use Expression Web to create your styles. Expression Web lets you specify which CSS specification you want to use on your website. There are three separate CSS schemas: 1, 2, and 2.1. On the Authoring tab of the Page Editor Options dialog box, you left the default CSS schema at CSS 2.1, which includes advanced positioning elements. In this chapter, you will focus on CSS 1 formatting. For the exercises in this chapter, you will be alternating between the `<h1>` and `<body>` elements using the `structural.html` page from Chapter 3. In the following chapter, you will use more advanced CSS positioning with CSS 2.1.

Creating New Styles

You can create new styles in Expression Web in several ways, some of which you saw when you explored the Format menu. Other options include the following:

- *The Format toolbar*: This is most useful for creating quick styles on the fly but is limited to text and borders. This toolbar is open by default.

- *The Styles toolbar*: This is not on by default but is an unrecognized gem for quickly creating new styles and applying both classes and IDs to your page. Use View ➤ Toolbars to launch this toolbar. I like to dock it at the bottom of Expression Web.

- *The Apply Styles task pane*: This displays not only any existing styles you might use but also a link near the top to launch the New Style dialog box.

- *The Manage Styles task pane*: This also includes a link to launch the New Style dialog box.

The best way to learn how to create a style in Expression Web is to do so. Before you can create styles in Expression Web, though, you must have a web page or stylesheet open. Since you cannot use the tools in Expression Web to create or manage styles without a web page or stylesheet open, all the examples and exercises in this section will use the `structural.html` page from Chapter 4 unless otherwise stated. If you prefer, you can download a fresh copy of the `structural.html` page at `http://foundationofexpressionweb.com/exercises/chapter6/` or download a zip file with all the Chapter 6 exercise files.

You will be using the New Style dialog box to create your website styles, so launch the New Style dialog box shown in Figure 6-1 using the New Style link in the Manage Styles or Apply Styles task pane. You can also launch this dialog box from the Format ➤ New Style menu.
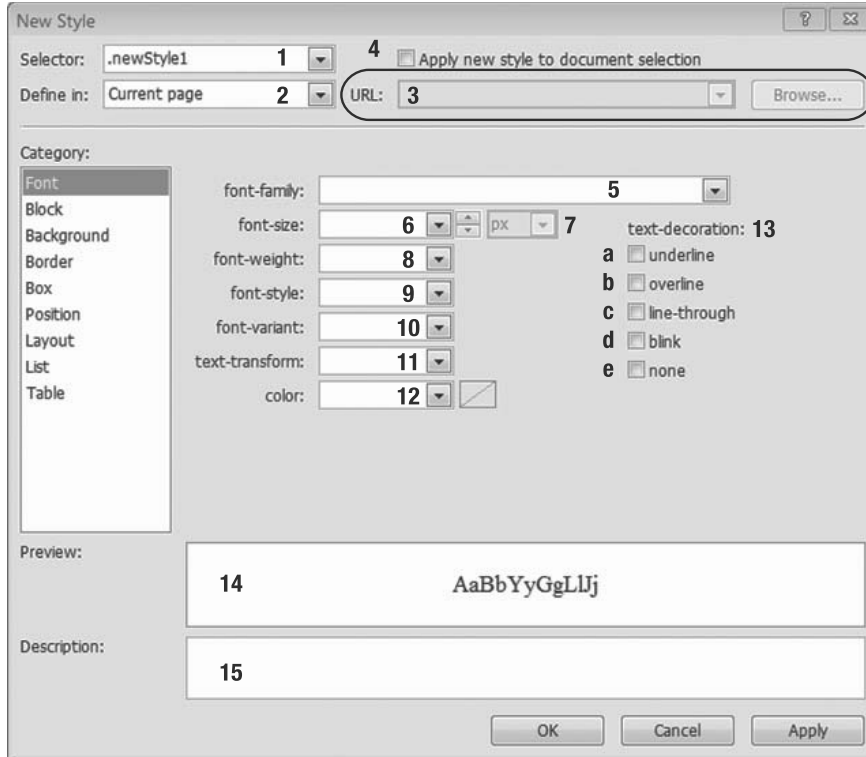

Figure 6-1. *New Style dialog box*

■Note   The numbers in parentheses in this section refer to the numbers shown in Figure 6-1.

When you open the New Style dialog box, the Font category is the default, with the new class .newStyle1 as the default in the Selector box (1). Use the drop-down arrow to expand the box, and choose h1.

■Tip   Styles created using the New Style dialog box will be newStyle1 and increment, while autogenerated styles created using the Format toolbar will use style1 and autoincrement.

You have the option to define the style in the current page, define a new stylesheet, or define an existing stylesheet depending on which choice you make in the "Define in"

drop-down box (2). For now, leave the default setting of "Current page" to create a style block in the `<head>` section of your page. If you select an external stylesheet from this drop-down box, the URL text box will become available, and you will be able to use the Browse button (3) to select the stylesheet.

The "Apply new style to document selection" option (4) applies the style created to the highlighted section of the page document. Use this option if you are creating a custom class or ID as your selector and you want to apply it to a highlighted section of your page.

If you want to use the same font family as the rest of the web page, you do not need to specify a font in the font-family drop-down list (5). In this case, you want to use the same font as the rest of your page, so don't specify a font family here in order to take advantage of inheritance.

The font-size drop-down list (6) offers a choice of CSS keywords from xx-small to xx-large or the option to specify a number. When you specify a number, you must choose the unit of measurement (7); all the available units of measurement are available in the secondary drop-down list.

■**Note** As hinted at in Chapter 5, do not use pixels or points from the drop-down list since those units of measurements do not resize in Internet Explorer using View ➤ Text Size. Inches, centimeters, and millimeters are measurements that do not translate to the Web. Use pixels for images, not text. Points, inches, and metric measurements work best in print stylesheets. For screen display, limit your choices to keywords, em, ex, and percent.

You can set the font-weight drop-down list (8) anywhere from 100 (light and thin) to 900 (heavy and bold), or you can set it to a keyword; 400 is normal, 200 is light, and 600 is bold. Light is not well supported by browsers, and bold is the default for all header elements, so you do not need to change font weight unless you want to make a heading normal weight instead of bold. Experiment with the options of italic and oblique for the font-style drop-down list (9). In most fonts, there will be no visual difference between italic and oblique. (The difference is the direction of the slant.)

The font-variant drop-down list (10) offers small fonts as an optional text format. The text-transform drop-down list (11) will change the case of your text to capitalize all letters, to capitalize no letters (lowercase), or to capitalize the first letter of every word.

You must specify the color drop-down list (12) in one of three ways: hex, RGB (red, green, blue), or a named color. As you saw in Chapter 5, hex is the preferred choice by web designers, though many who have migrated from print to the Web continue to use RGB. Named colors are not always interpreted the same from one browser to another but are generally close. There might be more color variations between the calibrations of different monitors than between different browsers.

The most commonly used text-decoration setting (13) is none (13e), which removes the default underline from hyperlinks when other styling choices fit in better with the design and make it clear that the item is a link even without underlining. Underline (13a) should be used only with links or to indicate additional information when the mouse is over the element in the form of a `title` attribute value. Overline (13b) is rarely used, while line-through (13c) should be used in limited circumstances usually to indicate editing. Blink (13d) is a nod to

the Netscape 4 element `<blink>`. I can think of no good reason to use blink because blinking text and images are annoying, they mark the creator as an amateur, and they have poor browser support.

■**Note** Underline is the default for links, so using an underline in any other context will make visitors think it is a link and that the link is broken when they attempt to use it.

The Preview section (14) allows you to see the effect of your style choices, while the code for the styles appears in the Description (15) section. Pay attention to the code written here since it will help you learn proper CSS syntax.

Click the OK button, and view your page.

Exercise 6-1 shows how to select a font category.

Exercise 6-1. Selecting a Font Category

In this exercise, you'll set the font size for the first-level headings.

1. With the `structural.html` file open, begin by launching the New Style dialog box. From the Selector drop-down list, choose h1, as shown in Figure 6-2.
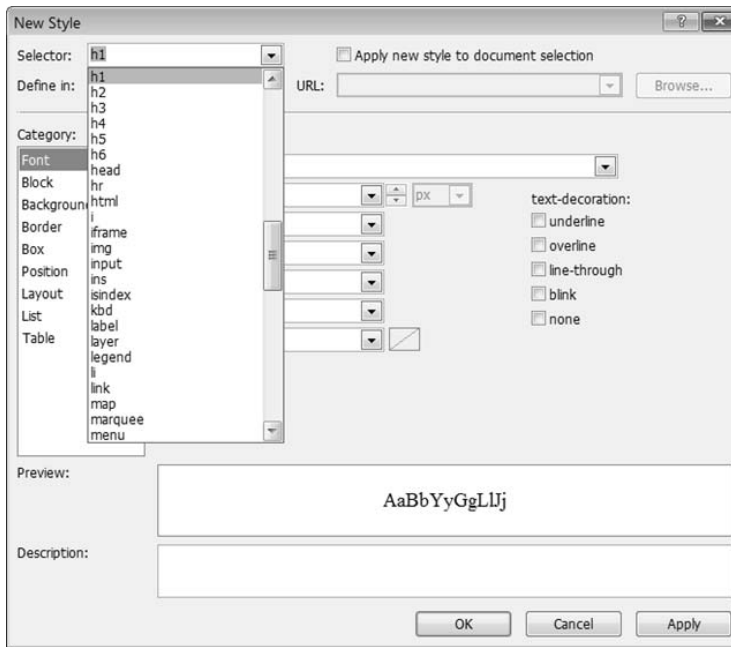

Figure 6-2. *The Selector drop-down lists all available HTML elements.*

2. Next, set the font size as shown in Figure 6-3, and use the drop-down list to select ems for the unit of measurement from the font-size drop-down list.
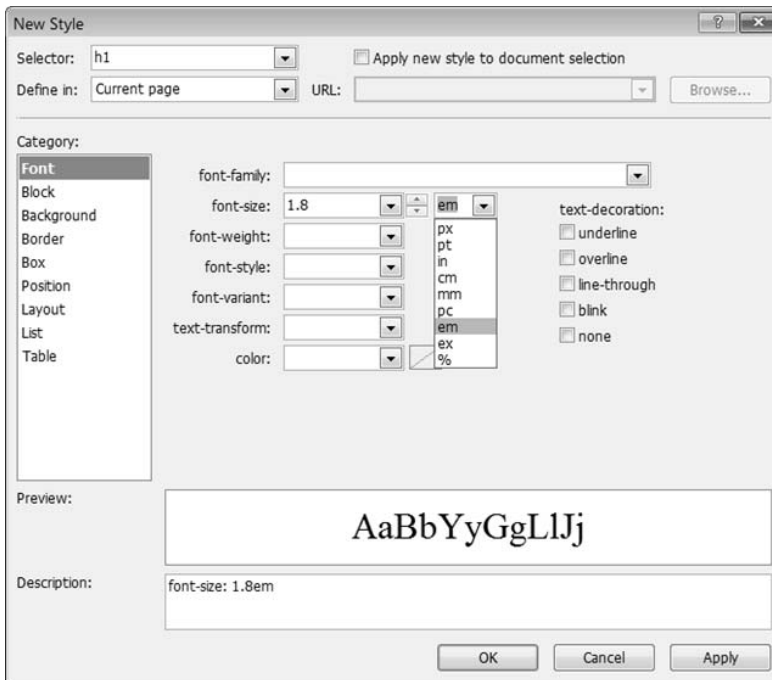

Figure 6-3. *Remember, for your fonts to scale in all browsers, you need to use em, percent, or a keyword.*

3. Finally, save your file.

You will be returning to this file in the next exercise, and after that, you'll use the color picker to select the color in the background.

Using the Block Category

Although Expression Web uses the term "block" for the next set of options, the options here are not what are usually considered to be block definitions in CSS.

As used in CSS, a block element is one that holds other elements. There is margin or padding around all block-level elements by default. If the element does not hold other items, as is the case with a line break such as `<br />` or a `<span>`, it is inline. In Figure 6-4, you see the CSS properties Expression Web has under the Block category, not all of which are traditional CSS block properties.

Figure 6-4. *The Block category*

This section of the New Style dialog box refers to inline elements such as the following (the numbers relate to Figure 6-4):

1. *line-height*: Line height allows you to determine how much space you want to have between the lines of text. The default line spacing is approximately 1.2 times the height of the text. You can change the line height to create double-spaced text or any other line spacing of your choice. You cannot have a negative value for line height.

■**Caution** Reducing line space makes the text harder to read, so be careful if you decide to use less than the default line spacing, or your text might have the ascenders and descenders cut off or overlapping.

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2. *vertical-align*: In theory, this should adjust the position of the text within the line height, but for most browsers the only time the vertical-align setting works properly is inside a table cell. Sub and super are usually supported. Testing is always required when you use the vertical-align drop-down list.

3. *text-align*: Left, right, centered, justified, or inherit are your only options. Justified should be used sparingly, if at all, since web browsers cannot use kerning to adjust letter spacing, which means spaces are added between words; the effect can be very unattractive.

4. *text-indent*: This will affect only the first line of text in a multiline paragraph or other HTML element. Not all browsers support the text-indent setting properly.

5. *white-space*: The HTML default means no matter how many spaces you have in your HTML code, only one space will be rendered in the browser. You can use either the HTML element `<pre>` or CSS to change whether additional spaces or line breaks in your code will display in the browser. The `white-space: pre` attribute is widely supported by browsers, which will cause the text to display with the same spaces as are in Code view, including multiple spaces and line wraps. Most modern browsers will honor `white-space: nowrap`, but it might not be honored by all.

6. *word-space*: This adjusts the whitespace between words.

7. *letter-space*: This spreads out the letters within a word.

Exercise 6-2 shows how you'll use the Block category in the New Style dialog box.

Exercise 6-2. Using the Block Category

In this exercise, you'll center your `<h1>` in your `structural.html` page.

1. With the `<h1>` in your `structural.html` page selected from the Apply Styles task pane, right-click, and select Modify Style, as shown in Figure 6-5.
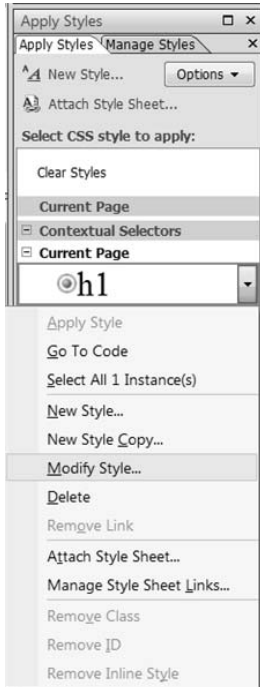

Figure 6-5. *You can right-click any style in the Apply Styles or Modify Styles task pane to edit your styles.*

2. This will launch the Modify Style dialog box. The only difference between this dialog box and the New Style dialog box is the title. Select Category ➤ Block, and use the text-align drop-down list to select the center option, as shown in Figure 6-6.
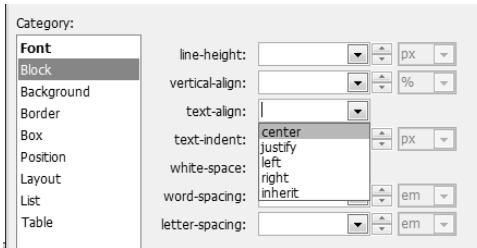

Figure 6-6. *You can use the text-align drop-down list to center inline content such as text and images.*

3. Click the OK button, and save your file before moving to the next section.

Setting the Background

Many of the options available in the Background category are more appropriate for the <body> element, classes, or IDs, as shown in Figure 6-7.

Figure 6-7. *Backgrounds can be put on any selector.*

Let's look through all the options (the numbers relate to Figure 6-7):

1. *background-color*: Expression Web uses the standard Windows color picker, but if you know the hex code for the color you want to use, you can type it, such #ECF0FB, as shown in Figure 6-8.
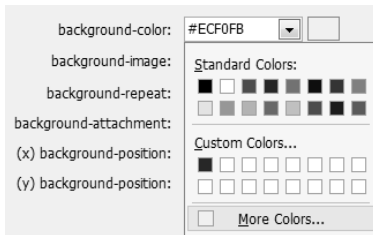

Figure 6-8. *Expression Web uses the same color picker as most Windows applications.*

2. *background-image*: By default the background image you choose will scroll with your page, but you have the option to make the background fixed and have the page scroll over it. This gives a watermark effect that was very trendy in 1999 but can still be used effectively in some cases.

3. *background-repeat*: The default is for a background image to repeat both horizontally and vertically. With this option, you can change that so it repeats horizontally (repeat-x) or vertically (repeat-y) only. You also have the option to use the background image only once on the page by selecting the norepeat option.

4. *(x) background-position*: Background position must either use a keyword or be set in pixels; x is the horizontal position from the left side of the browser window.

5. *(y) background-position*: This uses the same settings as option 4, but y sets the vertical position from the top of the browser.

Exercise 6-3 shows how to set your background and fonts for your entire web page.

Exercise 6-3. Setting Background Properties

Before you begin this exercise, you should download the `/crystal-bg.jpg` image from `http://foundationsofexpressionwb/exercises/chapter6` and import it into your practice site's image folder. Figure 6-9 shows the `crystal-bg.jpg` file.

Figure 6-9. *The crystal-bg.jpg image*

1. With your `structural.html` page open, launch the New Style dialog box again. Select body from the Selector drop-down list. Before you move to the Background category, set the font to the "Tahoma, Helvetica, Arial, sans-serif" font family group created in Chapter 3 from the font-family drop-down list (see Figure 6-10).
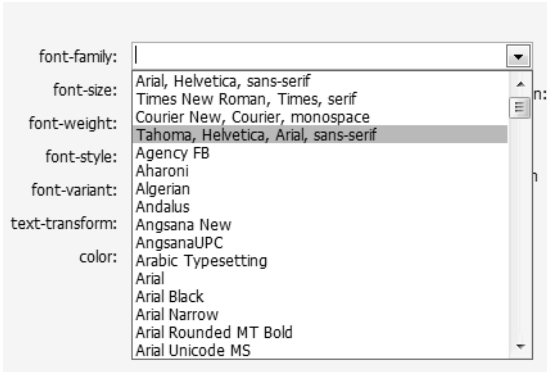

Figure 6-10. *Select the font family you created in Chapter 3 in the Font Families tab of the Page Editor Options.*

2. Make sure you set a text color; in this exercise, select black or #000000 for your font color since you know that black will provide sufficient contrast with the `crystal-bg.jpg` image.

3. Select Background from the Category list, and use the Browse button to select the `crystal-bg.jpg` file you downloaded (or another image of your choice).

4. You should see the `crystal-bg.jpg` image appear in the Preview box. It is important to select the background image before the next step because you'll match your background color to the primary color in the image. That way there will be sufficient contrast with the text that will go on top of the image.

5. To choose your background color from the background-color drop-down list, use the More Colors option to open a color picker with the 256-safe color palette. Click the Select button with the eyedropper on it to pick a background color from the Preview box, as shown in Figure 6-11.

■**Note** Before you launch the eyedropper, you might need to move the More Colors box to reveal the Preview section.

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6. Select and apply the remaining background-options as follows:

- background-repeat: no-repeat
- background-attachment: fixed
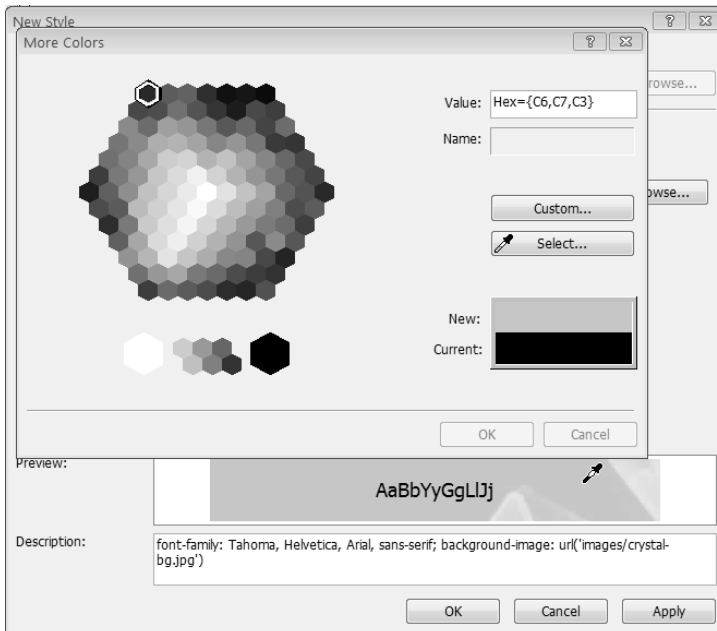- (x)background-position: center
- (y)background-position: center

Figure 6-11. *Use the eyedropper to choose the predominant color in your image.*

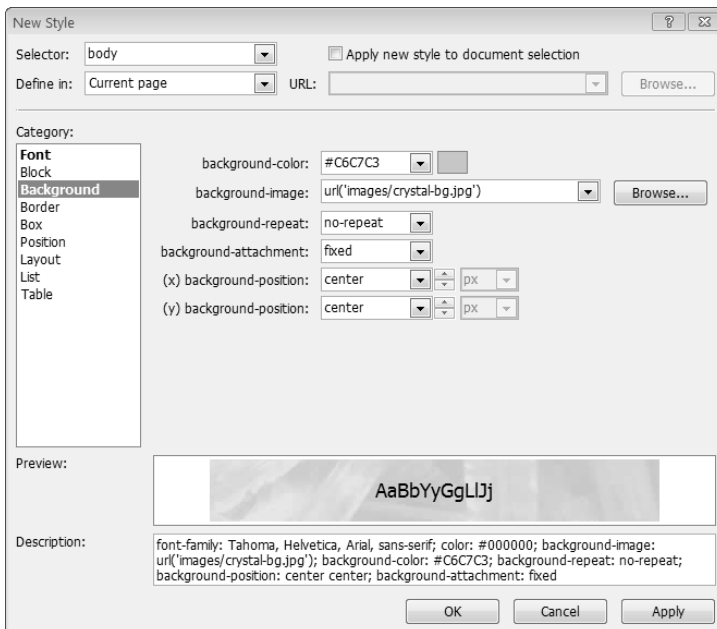**7.** Your background selections should match Figure 6-12.

Figure 6-12. *The Description box includes all the CSS properties that have been selected for the body in the completed exercises.*

8. If you chose a different image, make sure you choose a color that will have a strong contrast with the back-ground color and image you used. Save your file, and be sure you preview it in your browser at a couple of different resolutions.

Creating a Border

Now you'll return to the h1 selector to learn how to set border properties. Since you have already defined a style for the `<h1>` element, you will need to modify the current style defini-tion. Earlier you selected Modify Styles from the Apply Styles task pane with the `<h1>` element selected. This time use the Manage Styles task pane where all the styles you have created appear, as shown in Figure 6-13.
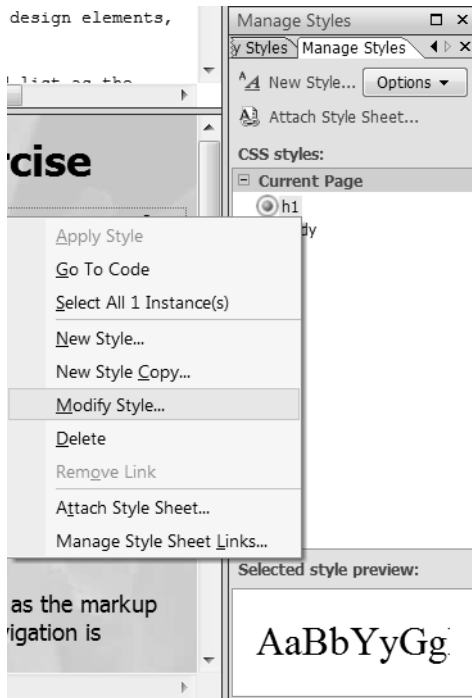

Figure 6-13. *You can select any style shown in the Manage Styles task pane to modify, even if it is not selected in Design view.*

Once the Modify Style dialog box launches, select Border from the Category section. You will see three border options each with a check box between the border property and the top drop-down list (see Figure 6-14). This option is checked by default because Expression Web assumes that you want to make the border the same on all four sides by default.

If you want to set a separate border style for each side or use a border on less than all four sides, simply remove the check mark from the "Same for all" box.
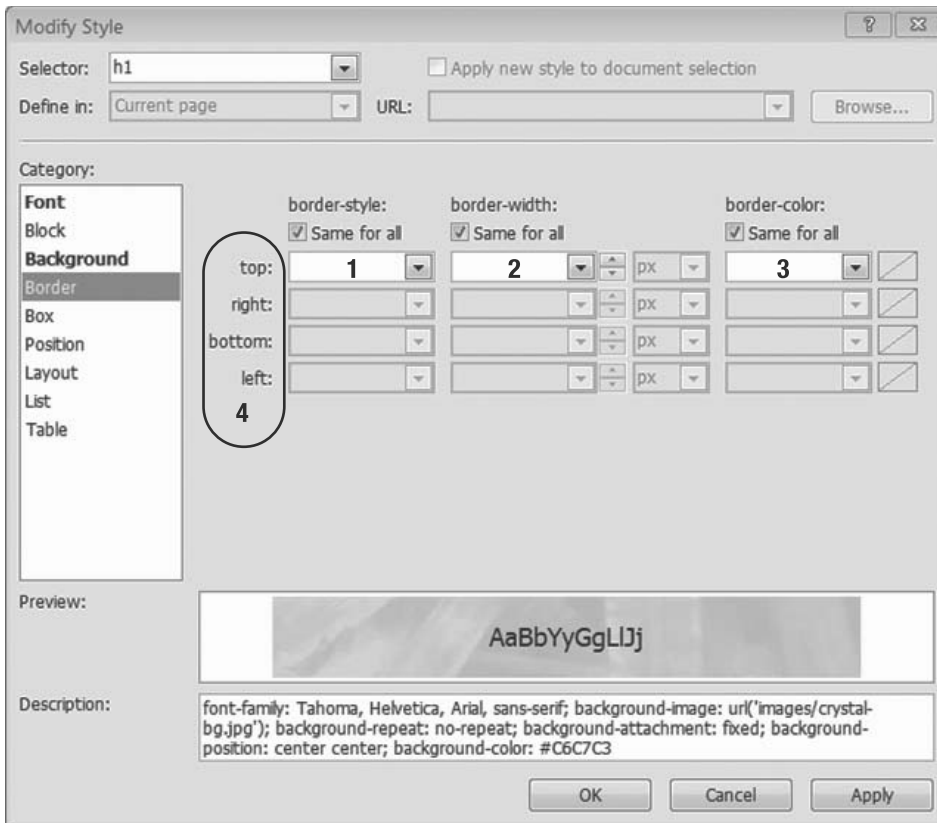
Figure 6-14. *The Modify Style and New Style dialog boxes are the same except for their titles.*

Let's look at all the options (the numbers relate to Figure 6-14):

1. *border-style*: This determines the type of border line the browser will display. Although solid is the most commonly used, you have other options such as dotted, dashed, double, ridge, inset, and outset. In Internet Explorer 6 and below, there might be no noticeable difference between dotted and dashed. Make sure you preview your border style in a variety of browsers since styles other than solid might not render the same across browsers.

2. *border-width*: You have three named options for how thick your border will be (thin, medium, and thick), or you can set a specific width. This is one place where I recommend using pixels unless you want the thickness of your border to increase with the font size.

3. *border-color*: Use this section to set the color of your border.

4. *top, right, bottom, and left*: Once you uncheck the "Same for all" box, you will have the option to set the value for each side in the boxes to the right.

Exercise 6-4 shows how to set the border properties.

Exercise 6-4. Setting Borders

In this exercise, you'll learn how to set basic box borders as well use borders for a picture frame effect.

1. Leave the checks in the "Same for all" boxes checked, and select solid, thin, and a color for your h1, as shown in Figure 6-15.

Figure 6-15. *Simple borders using the same setting for each side*

2. Previewing the page in Internet Explorer 7, the basic borders look like Figure 6-16.

Figure 6-16. *Basic border on <h1>*

3. Experiment with some of the other border styles without changing the border width. Make sure you save your changes and preview them in at least the two most common browsers, Internet Explorer and Firefox.

4. Next, change the width, and try the different browser views again. Pay attention to the differences.

Setting Borders Like a Picture Frame

Next, you'll set your borders to be a frame.

1. Change your settings to match those shown in Figure 6-17, and preview the page again.

2. Make sure that after you click OK, you preview the page in your browsers.

3. Optional: download the h1-bg.png image from http://foundationsofexpressionweb.com/ exercises/chapter6, and import it into your local site. Use the Background category to set it as the background for your image. Figure 6-18 shows the final page.
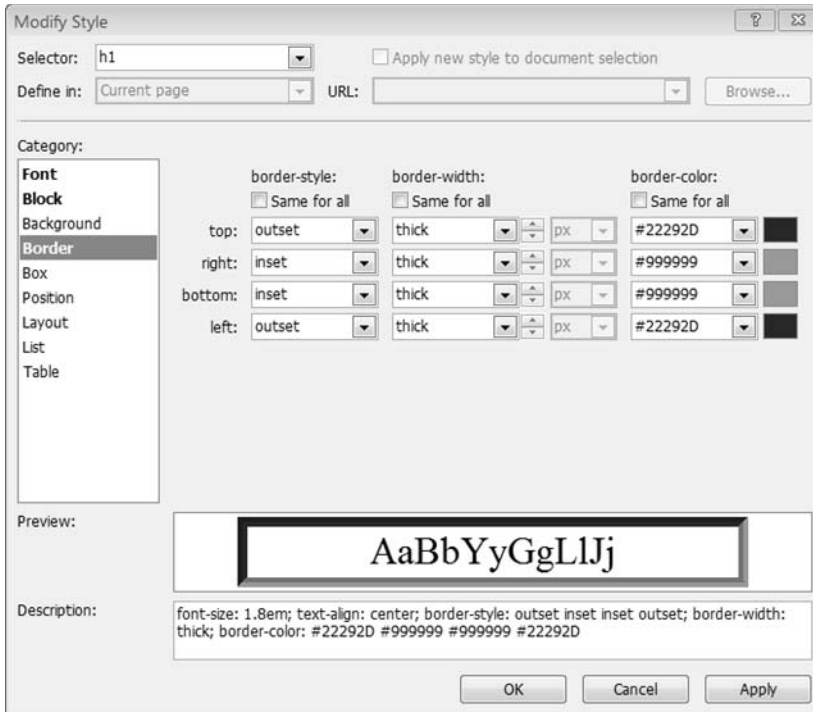
Figure 6-17. *Using a combination of inset and outset border values can give you a frame effect.*

Figure 6-18. *The image used is a PNG with transparency, which will allow the background to show through in Internet Explorer 7, Firefox, Opera, and Safari.*

You'll learn more about transparent images and their limitations in Chapter 8.

■**Tip** The only reliable method to get a vertical line is to use a left or right border, and although there is an HTML element called a horizontal rule ⟨hr /⟩, it can be difficult to style it so that Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera, and Safari all display the line with the same characteristics. Using just a top or bottom border for a horizontal line is often a better choice.

Although I have concentrated on the WYSIWYG method of creating and modifying styles, you can use two other methods. The first uses the CSS Properties task pane, and the second uses IntelliSense.

If you have been writing your own CSS or simply prefer to see all the options available in one window, use the CSS Properties task pane, where you can, with the element selected, add, remove, or change your CSS directly. By default, the CSS Properties task pane is grouped with Tag Properties for HTML elements, as shown in Figure 6-19.

Figure 6-19. *You can sort the CSS Properties task pane in different ways, but it is much easier to know which properties are defined when you have the properties that you've used at the top of the list.*

The CSS Properties task pane is divided into two sections. The top section shows you the styles that are applied to the element or class selected, and the lower section shows you all the properties available that are not applied. In Figure 6-19, the h1 was selected, and you can see

the styles applied to the h1. Once in the CSS Properties task pane, if you select an element higher up on the list, such as the body element shown in Figure 6-20, you will be able to see how inheritance and the cascade applies when the browser displays the page.
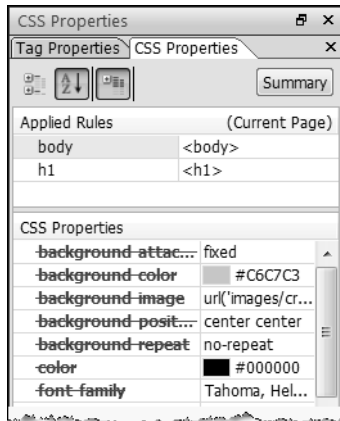

Figure 6-20. *Selecting the styles higher up in the Applied Rules section shows you what definitions were applied.*

Creating a Box

When you hear the term "box properties," it generally refers to a subset of the properties of block-level elements. The relevant properties are margin, padding, and border; how different browsers interpret these three properties is called the box model.

Box model issues arise because not all browsers use the same box model. The two models are as follows:

- *Additive*: Where the size specified is only the content width. Padding, borders, and margin are added to the specified width to obtain the size of the actual box the content occupies on the page.

- *Subtractive*: This is where the width is the size of the frame or where the border is applied and the content is the specified size minus any padding applied. The entire box is the specified width plus any margins, default or explicitly stated.

The Box category in the New Style or Modify Style dialog box refers only to the padding and margin properties. As with the border properties, you can choose to set all four sides to the same setting or set them individually. Expression Web shows an illustration in the Box section to provide you with guidance as to what the margin, border, and padding will look like Figure 6-21.
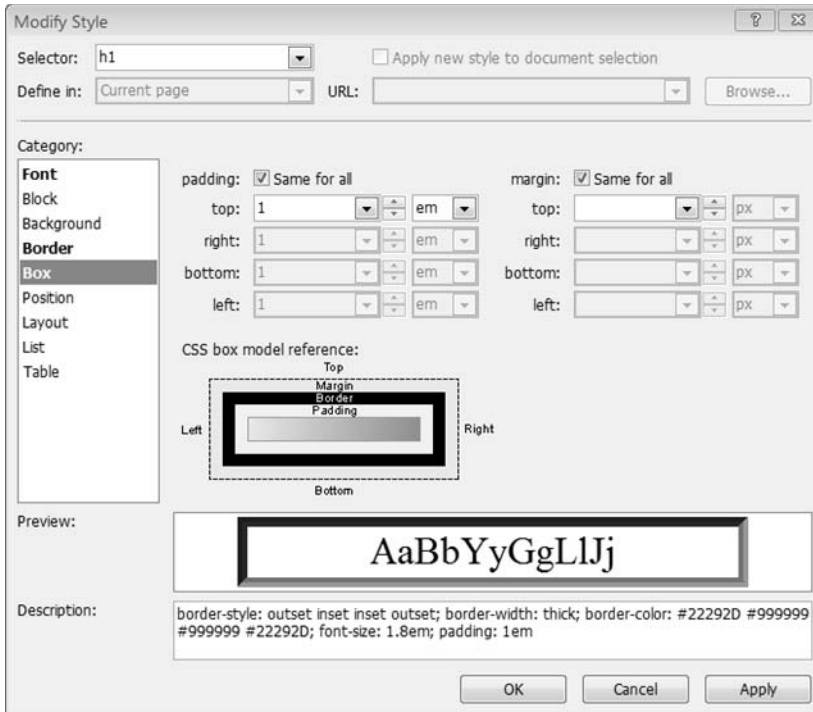
Figure 6-21. *The Box category provides you with guidance on margin and padding.*

Exercise 6-5 shows how to set box properties.

Exercise 6-5. Setting Box Properties

In Exercise 6-4, you used center for the text-align drop-down list to move the <h1> from the side borders you created. In this exercise, you'll use padding to add space between the <h1> and the borders.

1. Remove center from the text-align drop-down list for the Block category. Preview your page, and you should see Figure 6-22.
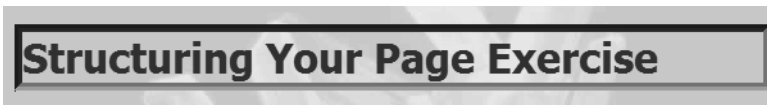

Figure 6-22. *Without padding, the <h1> will almost touch the borders.*

2. This is not very attractive. Add 1em of padding to your h1 style definition using the "Same for all" check box in the Box category, and your heading will look much better as in Figure 6-23.

Figure 6-23. *One em of padding might be more than you would like on a heading element.*

3. Experiment with less than 1em; try .5em (point five), and preview it. Try using 10px and other pixel and em measurements.

4. Save your file with the name `border2.html`. You will be reusing this file in the Chapter 7 exercises.

When you add margins and padding through the style dialog boxes, then view the result in your browser or in Design view because the result might not be what you expected. Rather than reopening the Modify Style dialog box or randomly entering values in the CSS Properties task pane, you can change the margin and padding in Design view, as explained in Exercise 6-6.

Exercise 6-6. Setting Margin and Padding in Design View

Before you begin, make sure you have the Margins and Padding visual aids turned on, as shown in Figure 6-24.
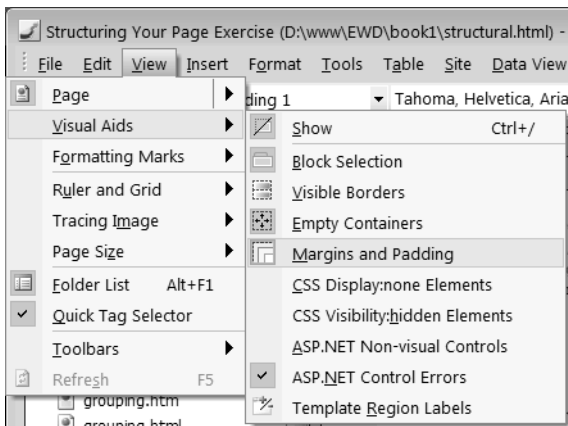

Figure 6-24. *Visual aids make working in Design view easier.*

1. Select your `<h1>` in the `structural.html` page in Design view. With the Margins and Padding visual aids enabled, you will see light blue between the `<h1>` text and the border. This represents the 1em of padding you have defined for your `<h1>`. The pink you see outside the border represents the `<h1>` default margin. To make these easier to view in Figure 6-25, I have turned off the page and `<h1>` background color and images by commenting those lines out in the code.

■**Caution**   If you drag using one of the circles shown in Figure 6-25, you will change the height, width, or both of the `<h1>` element, not the margin or padding.
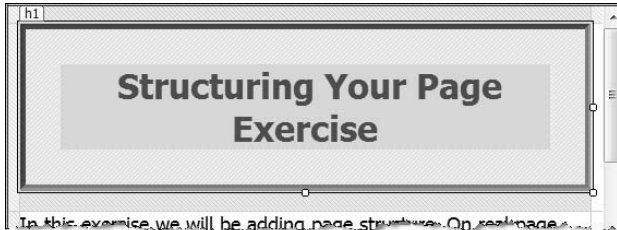

Figure 6-25. *Visual aids help you determine which property needs to be modified.*

2. Change the padding around your `<h1>` by holding the Shift key while you click, and drag anywhere on the blue lines of the bounding box, except where you see the round circles. Your cursor will change to a double-headed arrow, and you can drag padding for that side to the size of your choice. In Figure 6-26, you can see an example of resizing the bottom padding.

Figure 6-26. *Expression Web will use the same unit of measurement you specified in your h1 style when you resize in Design view.*

3. Did you notice that this method does not add the changes to your h1 style definition but creates a new style and applies it to your `<h1>` element? To change the margin, drag the pink handles that reside in each corner of the bounding box (which are faint and might be hard to see), as shown in Figure 6-27.
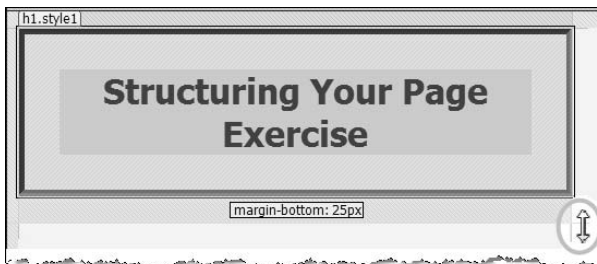

Figure 6-27. *The pink handles are for resizing the margins.*

The changes you made to the margin are added to the style class created when you modified the margin.

Up to this point, you have been following the category order used by Expression Web in the New Style and Modify Style dialog boxes. The next two categories listed relate directly to page layout, while lists are commonly used for site navigation using pseudo-classes for interactive effects such as rollovers. In Chapter 7, you will be using these three properties to provide your web page's final presentation layer. That leaves the Table category for this chapter.

Creating Tables

In Chapter 4 you created a table by converting comma-separated data into a table. At that time, you were not concerned about styling the table you created, so instead you added structure with table headers. In addition to creating a table from content you already have in a comma-separated list, you can add an empty table using the Table ➤ Insert Table menu.

If you insert a table from the menu, you will see the New Table dialog box. As with the New Style and Modify Style dialog boxes, the only difference between the Insert Table dialog box and the Table Properties dialog box is the title. Figure 6-28 shows the Table Properties box for the table you created in Chapter 4.
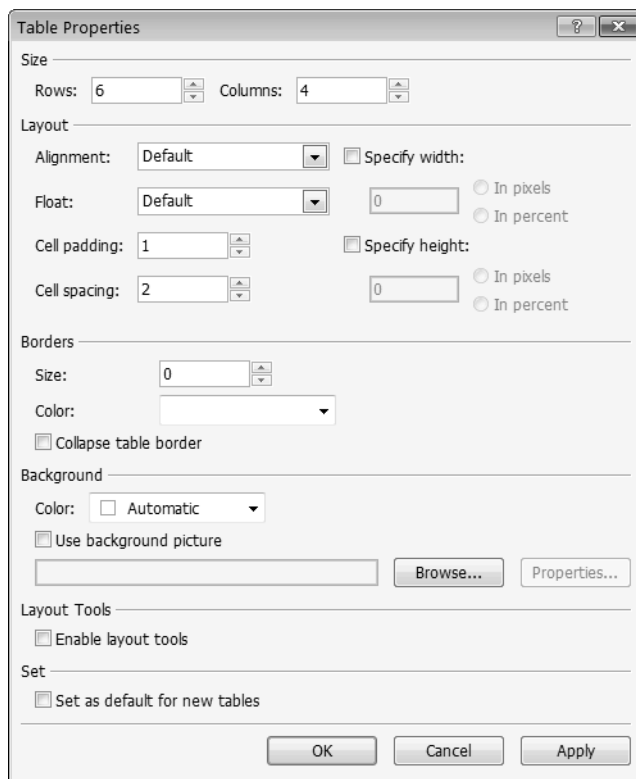

Figure 6-28. *Table Properties tells you the number or rows and columns as well as any attributes and some properties that might be applied.*

In this case, the table is devoid of any extra style. Cell padding and cell spacing are HTML attributes that should remain as HTML attributes since there is no precise CSS equivalent for cell spacing that is reliable in every browser. Expression Web knows this and will add cell spacing and cell padding to your `<table>` element. Other table properties, `height`, `width`, `borders`, and `background`, will be created as a style.

The options you select here in the Borders and Background areas will apply only to the table itself with the exception of the "Collapse table border" setting, which means that where two borders meet, such as the border for a table cell and the table border, only one border (instead of separate borders for the table and the cell) will be displayed. If you have a table style that you prefer as your default, once you have set the options for that style, you can save it as your default. I'll cover layout tools later in this chapter.

The style options available in the New Table or Table Properties dialog box are limited compared to the properties available when you use the style-related dialog boxes. In the New Style dialog box, use the Selector drop-down list to choose table, as shown in Figure 6-29. You do not need to select the "Apply new style to document selection" check box unless you are creating a custom style for your table where you would have typed in a class name instead of choosing table from the drop-down list.
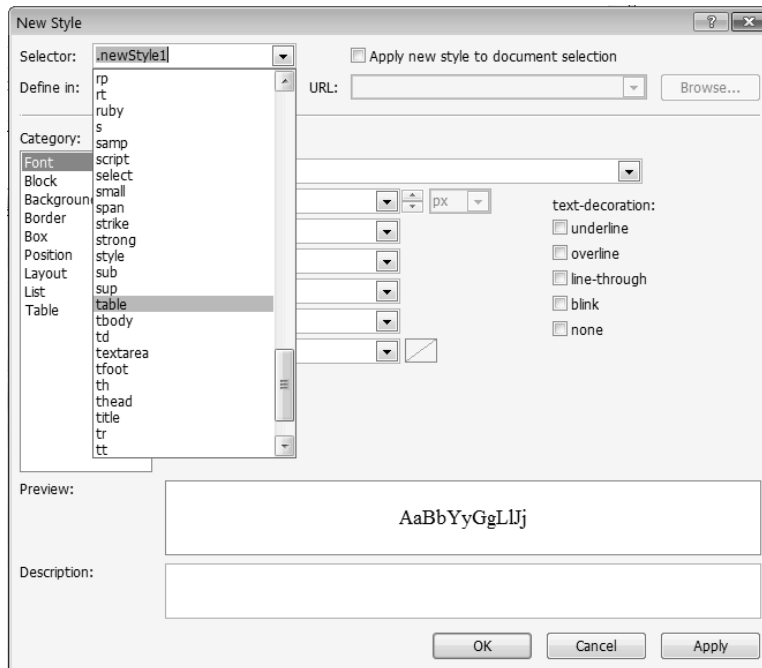

Figure 6-29. *To create a default table style for this page or website, choose table as your selector.*

In addition to the usual Font, Block, Background, Border, Box, Position, Layout, and List category options, there is a category called Table, as shown in Figure 6-30.
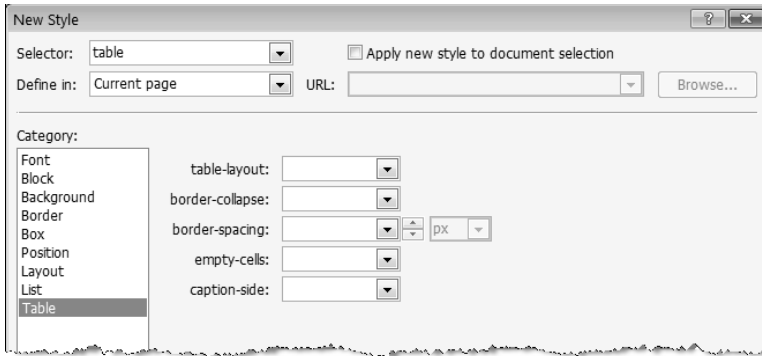
Figure 6-30. *CSS table properties in the Table category are not available on the Table Properties dialog box with the exception of border-collapse.*

You will rarely use the table-layout drop-down list since the default when you set a table width is to distribute extra space across all columns if the contents are not enough to maintain the table width specified. The border-spacing drop-down list is an attempt to replace the HTML attribute of cellspacing but is poorly supported. You might want to experiment with empty cells since the default is to not render cells that have no content. This is why most empty cells have a nonbreaking space ( ) inside them; the cell borders would not display otherwise. The caption-side drop-down list will place the content of the <caption> element at the bottom instead of above the table, which is the default.

By default, vertical alignment in table cells is set to middle. To change the vertical alignment, you would use the vertical-align setting in the Block category.

You might have noticed the check box to enable layout tools in Figure 6-28. Selecting this check box will add comment tags to your table and allow you to use the Layout Tables task pane where you can draw table cells to create a page layout, as shown in Figure 6-31.
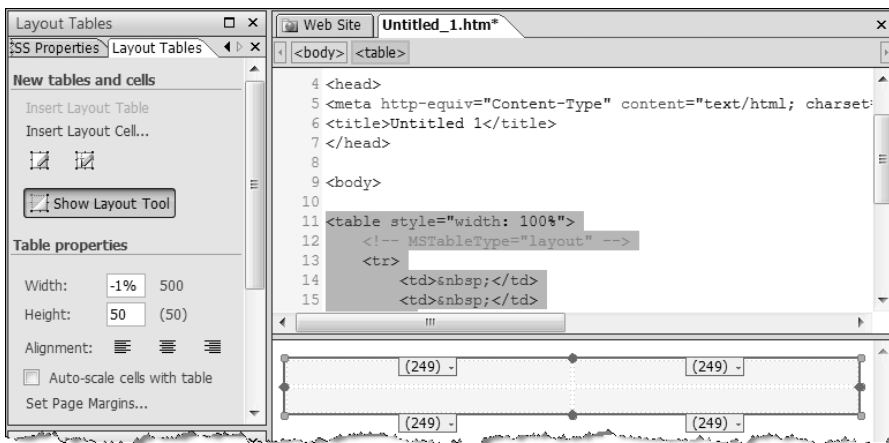

Figure 6-31. *Using Layout Tools allows you to manipulate tables used to position nontabular content in Design view.*

Using layout tables is no longer recommended, but if you are working on a legacy website that uses tables, such as one created with FrontPage 2003, you can use these tools to manipulate them. Expression Web offers you a choice of CSS-based layouts under the Page tab of the New dialog box, as shown in Figure 6-32. These are a better option for creating page layouts when you are not upgrading a legacy website.
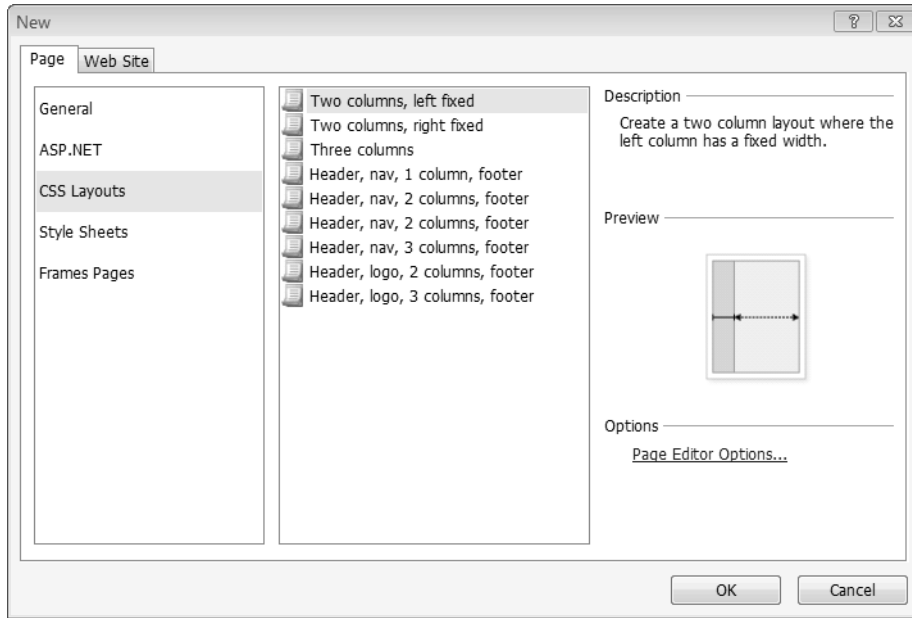

Figure 6-32. *CSS-based layouts are a better option for new web pages and websites than using table layouts.*

As you can see, no table-based layouts are included with Expression Web. This is because using tables for page layout is passé and should be used sparingly, if at all.

Summary

In this chapter, your web page is starting to look like something you would want your visitors to see when they visit your site. You have focused on the CSS properties and values that are used on every page but have stayed with the normal flow of your HTML source for page display. I touched briefly on using tables for layout and covered the better alternatives available in Expression Web.

In the following chapter, you will remove some of the content from your page so that it no longer appears in the normal document flow. You will create a basic two-column page layout with a header and footer using CSS so that you can see how CSS layouts work.