How to troubleshoot Cascading Style Sheets

While CSS provides lots of advantages for specifying page appearance, you can run into problems with how pages appear, especially when you have multiple tags applied to the same text. This guide offers some ways to troubleshoot problems with CSS.

Using the Tag selector

The Tag selector is located in the Status bar and shows, in hierarchical order, the tags that apply to the currently selected page element. You can then click any tag in the hierarchy to see everything contained by the tag.

To use the Tag selector:

1. Select text, an image, or another page element.

   The Tag selector displays tags that apply to the selection. In the example (**Figure 1**), the selected text (interpreting the tag list from right to left) is bolded (`<strong>`), a list item (`<li>`), part of an unordered list (`<ul>`), within a div named maintext. (All page elements are contained within `<body>`.)

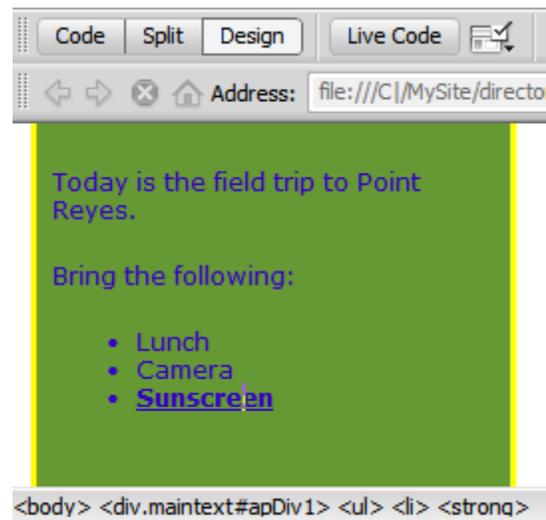2. Click one of the tags to see what it contains (**Figure 2**).

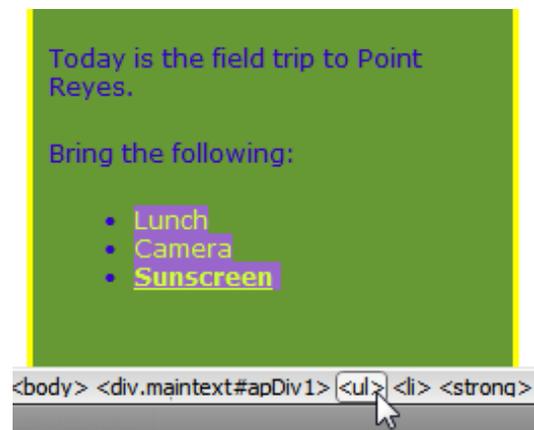**Figure 1** Tag selector in the Status bar at the bottom of the Document window

Figure 2 Contents of selected tag

This document requires Adobe Dreamweaver CS6. Technical instructions may differ depending on your version.

Coloring divs to diagnose layout problems

When you use divs for page layout, it can help to add a different background color to each element on the page. With different background colors added to each element, you can spot problems such as overlapping elements or elements that are rendering differently than you intended them to. For example, the page in the example (**Figure 3**) has text that is misaligned, gaps in the page border, and other problems. Because all elements in the middle section have the same background color (white), it is difficult to tell which div is causing the problem.
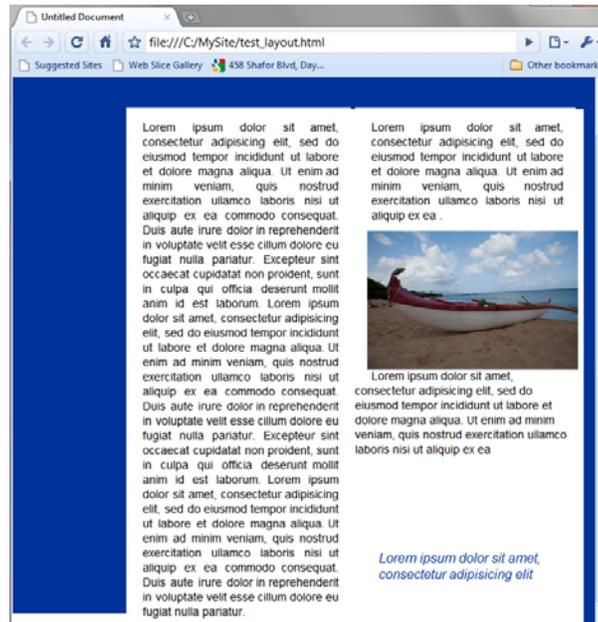

Figure 3 Page with CSS layout problems

Adding different background colors to all divs (**Figure 4**) lets you see that the div containing the image overlaps the left column of text, and is overlapped by the div below it. You can then correct the problems by changing the dimensions of the div containing the image, and making other changes.
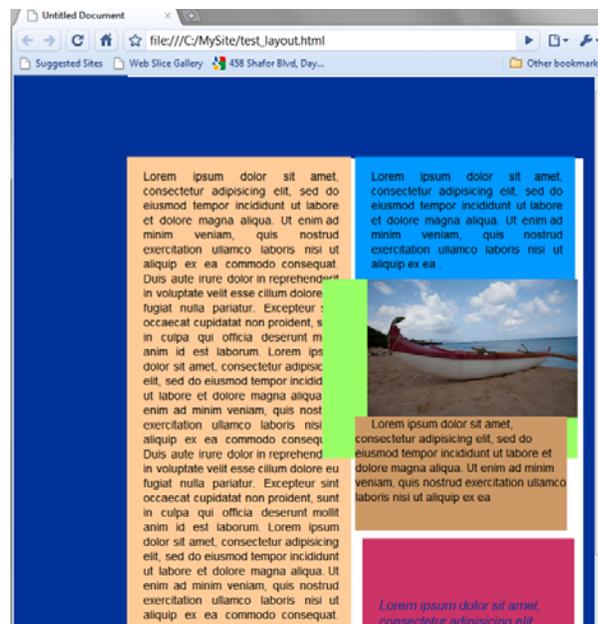

Figure 4 Background colors added to divs

This document requires Adobe Dreamweaver CS6. Technical instructions may differ depending on your version.

To add background colors to div tags:

1. Start Dreamweaver and open a file that uses CSS and absolutely positioned div elements.

2. Open the CSS Styles Panel (Window > CSS Styles).

3. Repeat the following steps for each div:

   a. Double-click the CSS rule corresponding to the div tag to open the CSS Rule Definition dialog box.

   b. Select Background in the Category pane (**Figure 5**).

   c. Select a background color from the color picker.

   d. Click OK.
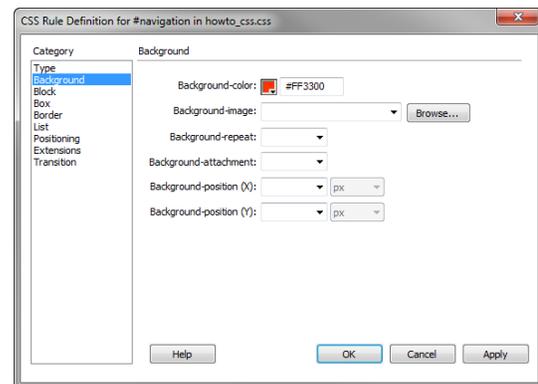
   The background color is applied to the selected div.

Figure 5 Setting background color

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