

# How to work with external Cascading Style Sheets

Many web professionals find 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. Start Dreamweaver and open the CSS Styles Panel (Window > CSS Styles) (**Figure 1**).
2. Confirm 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**).

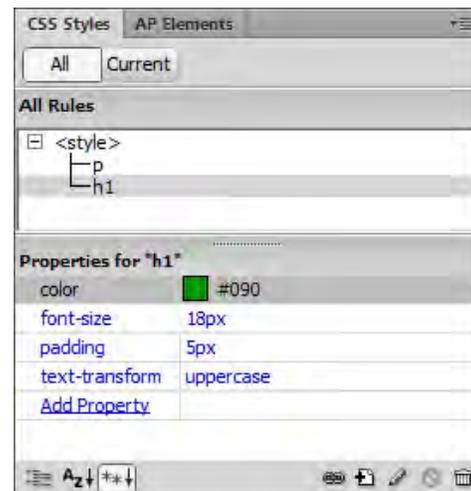


Figure 1 CSS Styles panel

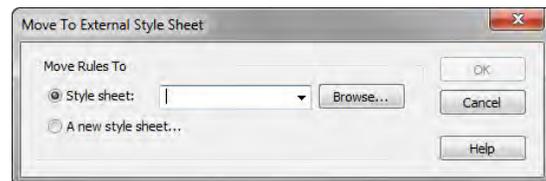


Figure 2 Move To External Style Sheet dialog box

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.

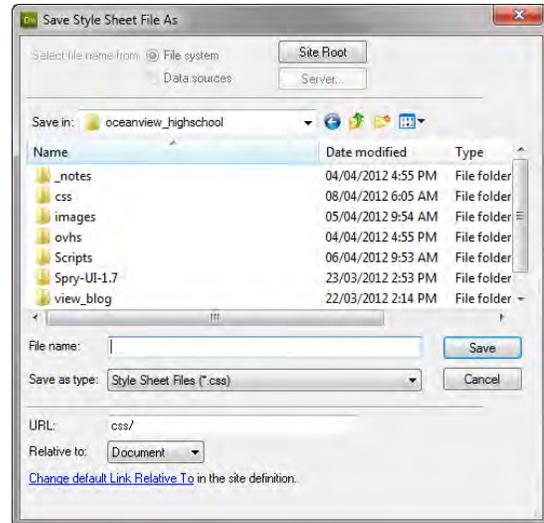
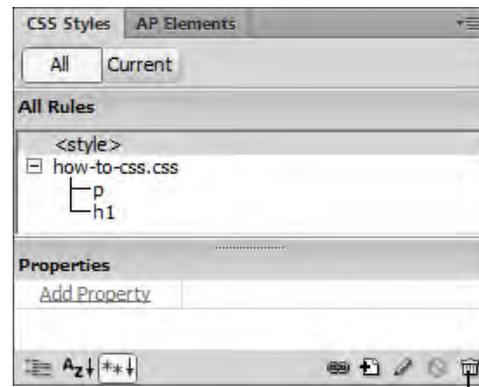


Figure 3 Save Style Sheet File As dialog box

*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 Properties panel, Dreamweaver will automatically create a new internal style sheet.

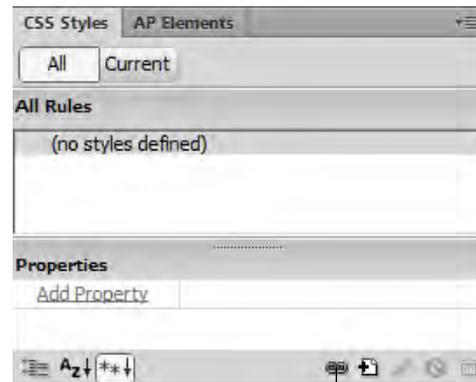
*To attach an external style sheet:*

1. Open a document in Dreamweaver.
2. Confirm that the CSS Styles panel is open.  
If it is not, select Window > CSS Styles.
3. Click the Attach Style Sheet button (**Figure 5**).
4. Click Browse, navigate to your saved style sheet, select it, and click OK.
5. In the Attach External Style Sheet dialog box, click OK.

Dreamweaver attaches the style sheet to your document (**Figure 7**).

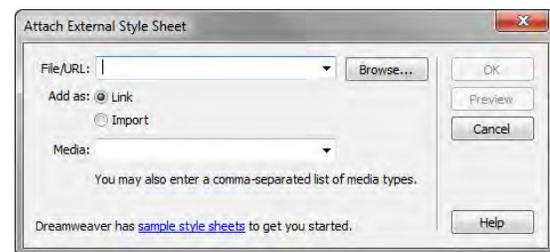
The style sheet's rules are now available in the Properties panel. You may need to expand the style sheet to see its rules.

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.

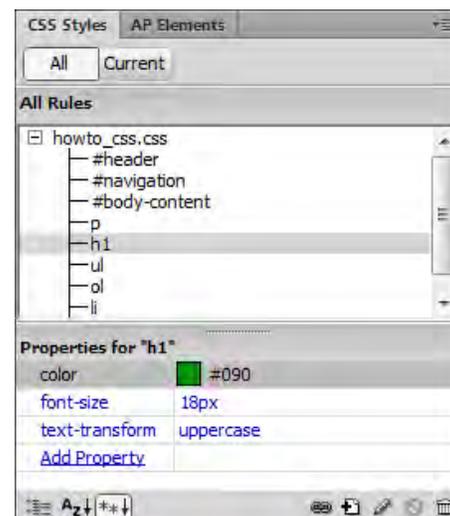


Attach Style Sheet button

**Figure 5** CSS Styles panel



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



**Figure 7** Attached style sheet

## Creating external style sheets

You can also create external style sheets directly from the New Document dialog box.

To edit create an external Style Sheet:

1. Select File > New to create a new document.

The New Document dialog box opens (**Figure 8**).

2. In the Blank Page category of the New Document dialog box, select CSS for Page Type.

3. Click Create.

The untitled CSS page opens in Dreamweaver in Code View (**Figure 9**).

4. Save the document to the site root folder.
5. Return to the HTML document in which you previously applied a style by using the CSS Styles panel.
6. In Code View, drag to select the two or more styles you previously created. Be sure to include the selectors and everything that falls between, including the braces (**Figure 10**).
7. Select Edit > Cut.
8. Click the newly-created CSS document in the Document window.

9. Place the cursor on line 4, beneath the CSS comment.

10. Select Edit > Paste.

The copied CSS styles are pasted from the Clipboard into the CSS document.

11. Select File > Save.

12. Return to the HTML document in the document window.

Notice in the Design View that all formatting for the text is gone. In the next steps, you re-apply the CSS styles by linking to the external CSS document you just created.

13. In the CSS Styles panel, click the Attach Style Sheet button in the lower-right corner of the pane (**Figure 5**).

The Attach External Style Sheet dialog box opens (**Figure 11**).

14. Click the Browse button and browse to the external CSS style sheet that you saved to your site root folder, and confirm that the Add As: Link option is selected.

15. Click OK.

A link to the CSS document is added to Head section of the file, and the CSS rules are applied to the text in the HTML document.

16. Save the file.

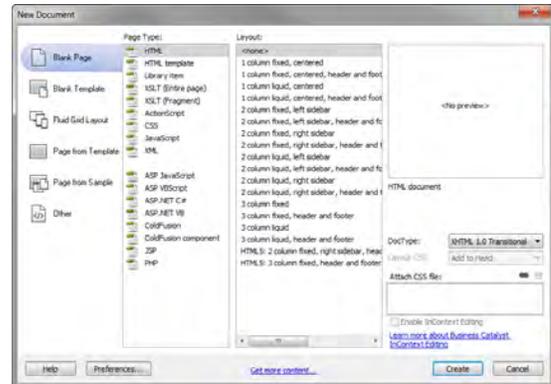


Figure 8 New Document dialog box



Figure 9 New, blank CSS document

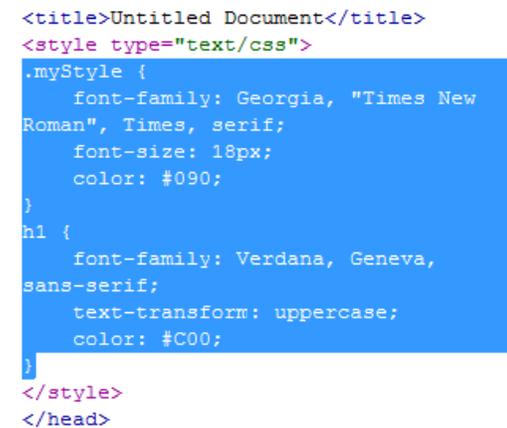


Figure 10 Selecting CSS styles

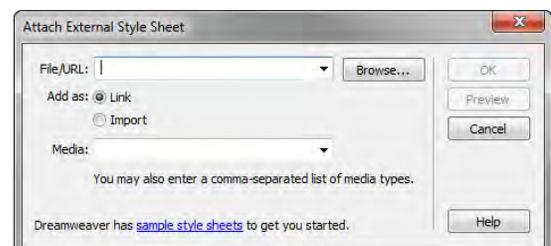


Figure 11 Attach External Style Sheet dialog box