

Choosing an HTML Editor

In the early days of the Web, everyone was stuck with just one option: creating HTML with plain old text editors. These are simple word-processing programs designed for writing software. This was, of course, part of the appeal of HTML; it could be created in a text editor, such as vi, WinVile, or Notepad. Compared to word processors, text editors are small, fast programs optimized for writing programming code. Although many people still prefer to write HTML using a text editor, those no-choice days are gone. Today you can choose from many HTML-creation programs.

The program choices are full of cool, new options for developing Web sites. This chapter uses the term *HTML editor* to describe *any* program that includes at least some features that help you write HTML, however simple or complex. The simplest programs are text editors souped up with a few HTML-savvy features. At the other extreme are expensive, big-ticket programs that enable you to create your pages in an entirely visual environment. Pros and cons exist to each approach. For a beginner, the visual environment is often the most painless way to get started.

This chapter discusses the features good Web-page-development software has, and then moves on to review the gamut of programs. Included are both the HTML editors that provide a graphical environment for Web page creation, and those that give you a place to type your HTML and content, providing a variety of cues and programs to assist with the HTML creation.



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To WYSIWYG or Not to WYSIWYG?

That's the question, and it's a biggie. On the one hand, you find *graphical environments*, which enable you to create fantastic-looking Web pages without writing any HTML code. These programs enable you to see your Web page just the way it looks in the browser; that's why these programs are called *What You See Is What You Get* (WYSIWYG, pronounced wiz-ee-wig).

On the other hand, *tag-based editors* force you to edit HTML code directly. These programs enable you to enter and modify HTML tags, but you'll need to know HTML.

WYSIWYG editors: Easy to use, but hands-off

WYSIWYG programs give you a visual drag-and-drop environment for Web-page creation. They are well suited for beginners or for people who don't plan to use more advanced features. Using Netscape Composer, the WYSIWYG editor that comes with Netscape Communicator, you can quickly and easily create a nice-looking Web page.

But WYSIWYG editors exact a price for their ease of use:

- ♦ Often, they don't include advanced features. For example, Netscape Composer doesn't handle frames. That's ironic, because Netscape invented frames in the first place.
- ♦ They often don't let you edit the HTML directly. If you don't know HTML, that's a plus. However, experienced HTML authors know few WYSIWYG programs generate wholly satisfactory output. Often, they require some HTML tweaking to get everything working, and looking great.
- ♦ They may introduce proprietary extensions that prevent your pages from working with all browsers. If you can't see the HTML, you don't know what code is written. Microsoft's FrontPage Express, supplied gratis with Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0, enables you to create scrolling marquees — but what you don't know is Netscape Navigator (and most other browsers except Internet Explorer) doesn't recognize the `MARQUEE` element, one of Microsoft's unilaterally introduced extensions. However, FrontPage Express does allow you to alter your HTML code manually.
- ♦ The bottom line: For advanced HTML coding, WYSIWYG editors won't cut it. Sooner or later, you realize you need to dive into the underlying HTML. At this point, you need a program that enables you to edit your HTML code directly.

Getting serious: Tag-based programs

Tag-based editors don't hide the underlying HTML; instead, they stick it in your face. That's uncomfortable for beginners, but it's heaven for experienced HTML authors. Sooner or later, you need to see and directly edit the code — and this is

particularly true if you want to write “real” HTML 4, as this book advocates. You could use a simple text editor, such as the Windows Notepad utility, but you might wind up using a tag-based editor for ease of use.

These programs are called *tag-based* because they provide easy-to-use tools for entering tags with a click of the mouse. For example, to code a heading, you select the heading text and click one of the heading buttons. The program automatically enters the HTML tags. This is easier, and less prone to error, than typing tags yourself. There is also an added plus: You can manually tweak the underlying HTML. And, more to this book’s point, you can also make sure the code conforms to the HTML 4 Way.

XHTML 1.0 is the W3C’s recommendation for the latest version of HTML, following on from earlier work on HTML 4.01, HTML 4.0, HTML 3.2, and HTML 2.0. With a wealth of features, XHTML 1.0 is a reformulation of HTML 4.01 in XML, and combines the strength of HTML 4 with the power of XML. XHTML 1.0 can be put to immediate use with existing browsers by following a few simple guidelines. Even though this new recommendation occurred in January 2000, for our purposes we are creating HTML the 4.01 way.

What’s the downside of a tag-based editor? You can’t look at your page the way browsers display it. This makes it tough to enter and proofread text because all those HTML tags get in the way. Also, you can’t immediately see the results of your coding. To see what your page looks like you have to click an option that sends the page to a browser. If you find a mistake, you have to go back to the editor and make the change. Tag-based editors, in short, aren’t very interactive.

What’s the difference?

Want to see the difference between a WYSIWYG program and a tag-based editor? Look at Figure 8-1, which shows a WYSIWYG editor, and Figure 8-2, which shows a tag-based editor.

For example, if you’re working in a WYSIWYG program, like the one shown in Figure 8-1, and you want to add a horizontal line in the middle of your page, you would place the cursor where you want the line to appear and then click the horizontal line tool. The program automatically enters the horizontal line and you see it right away on your page, just the way it’s going to look when displayed by a browser.

In a tag-based editor, you would scroll through your HTML to the point where you want to place a horizontal line and either type `<HR>` (that’s the HTML tag that enters a horizontal line), or click a button indicating a horizontal rule tag should be added at that point in the page. You would then have to take the extra step of viewing your page in a browser (or a browser facsimile that’s built into the editor) to see your horizontal line.

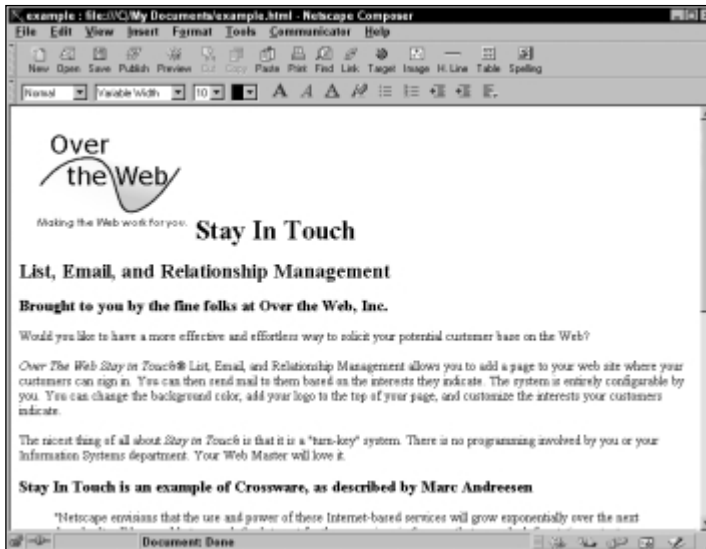


Figure 8-1: A simple Web page in a WYSIWYG program (Netscape Communicator 4.7)

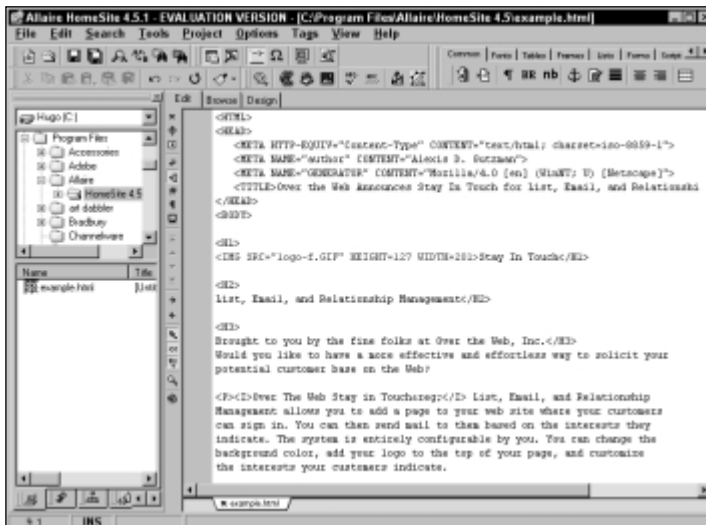


Figure 8-2: The same simple Web page in a tag-based editor (HomeSite 4.5)

Exploring HTML Editor Features

Whether you choose a WYSIWYG or a tag-based editor to create your HTML, you'll be wise to spend some time exploring the various features offered by the current crop of HTML software. Depending on your needs, some of them may offer features and programs that may make you work more efficiently. If you don't choose carefully, you might get stuck with a program that doesn't do something you need — and this means more tedious, manual work for you.

Work-wise, creating and launching your Web site is just the beginning of a creative adventure. All sites should take their guests on an interesting journey, and the first visit should offer a reason to return, and on subsequent visits, the guest needs to experience a site that grows and evolves over time. Web sites are living, dynamic documents. For this reason, you'll want a program that makes updating them easy. WYSIWYG HTML editors make producing your initial site easy, but often come up short when it's time to update. Whichever route you take, WYSIWYG or tag-based, you need to be able to make changes to your pages frequently.

The following sections explore some of the features found in today's HTML editors. To select the right features for your needs, consider what you're planning to do. You won't necessarily need all the features listed. If you want to create a few simple pages, for instance, you won't need site maintenance features. But you won't want to live without those features if you plan to create a huge, complex site with dozens, or even hundreds, of Web pages.

Considerations

Before you can select the right program, you must decide what features you need. This section explains all the features considered valuable in an HTML-development program.



Note

Colored tags is a valuable feature to have in your HTML editor. With colored tags, each type of tag is displayed in a different color. For example, comments might be gray, tags related to tables might be green, script tags might be red, and so forth. This way, if you forget to close your comment, the rest of the code will be colored gray — a useful visual cue.

Some features, however, are absolutely essential. These include the capability to have multiple pages open for editing at the same time, the capability to do multiple-file search-and-replace, tag cues to tell you what attributes are available to the tag you are editing, colored tags, and the capability to add custom tags so you don't need to add or cut and paste sequences of tags you use frequently.

Note

Why will you fail to see your scripting if you open files with server-side scripting from the Web? Server-side scripting has already executed by the time you see the page. If you go to a page with server-side scripting (CGI scripts, server-side JavaScript, server-side Java, server-side includes, or Cold Fusion) and view the source, you won't see any of the code. Unlike client-side JavaScript—what most people think of when they think of JavaScript—and VBScript, these other types of scripts are interpreted on the server. This means you only see the results of what the script told the server to do, not the actual instructions, or script.

HTML 4 support

The HTML 4 Way separates presentation from structure. This is different from previous versions of HTML. Not all HTML-development programs encourage this dichotomy. Most development programs available at publication are not well suited to the HTML dichotomy between structure and content. Even if you are happy with your HTML-development program, you might want to evaluate it in light of how well it supports this dichotomy.

Simple migration between editors

One of the nice things about HTML is, even if you create it in one tag-based editor, you can easily edit it in another one. This means you can move between tag-based editors without having to perform file conversions, the way you would have to if you moved between word processing packages.

Many of the programs discussed in this chapter provide the capability to import your entire site. This means you can open the site you created with one program in a different program. If you are managing a growing site, this is a definite feature to remember.

One drawback of importing a site into a WYSIWYG editor is that it often uses its own rules to make your HTML more cumbersome. When you evaluate HTML editors, be sure to open some of your existing pages in them to see what, if anything, each one does to the readability of your HTML. At the least, most of them add a `<META>` tag to the top of the document, claiming credit for generating it.

On the CD-ROM

Most of the editors discussed in this chapter are on the CD-ROM at the back of this book.

Wizards: A quick start

Some elements of Web pages—those that come in groups—are best created with wizards. Wizards, tools, dialog boxes, or whatever the marketing department wants to call them, are a great way to get something done quickly and accurately. The HTML page structure, tables, forms, style sheets, and channels fall into this category. The best programs give you the option of completing a simple dialog box or a series of simple dialog boxes to define these elements and then create the HTML for you.



Definition Channels. One of the interesting features most browsers permit is the creation of “subscription to channels.” Channels are basically a feature you can define in your page that enables visitors to indicate they want to receive any updates to your page or your site in the background. This means people who *subscribe* to your channel will always have a completely current version of your page loaded locally on their own clients.

Of all these wizards, the style-sheet wizard is the most essential. Figure 8-3 shows the Bradsoft TopStyle Lite 1.51 style-sheet wizard, which was included with HomeSite 4.5. You shouldn’t be creating that many style sheets, because the point of the style sheet is to apply the same one to your entire site. Still, you definitely won’t want to memorize or look up the syntax every time. Each program handles style sheets differently; some have wizards and some have entire applications dedicated to the creation of CSS.

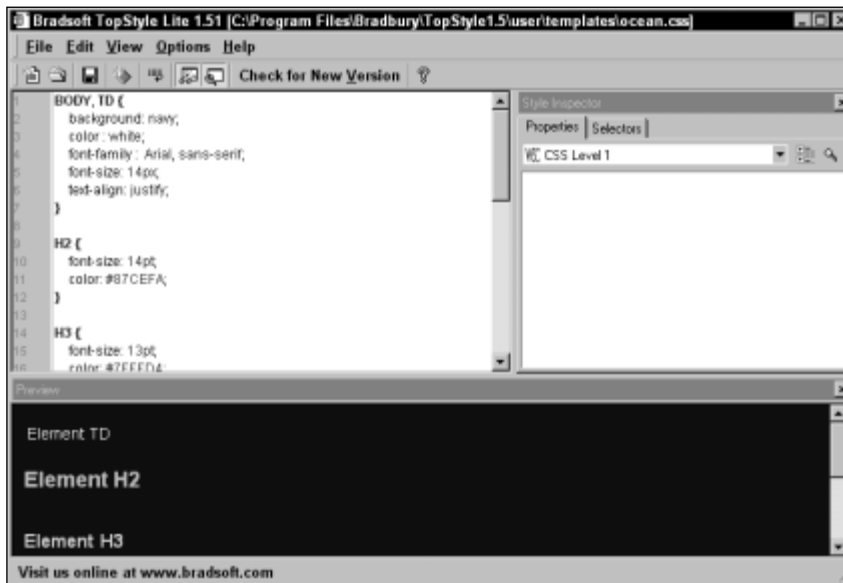


Figure 8-3: Useful dialog box in a style-sheet wizard (Bradsoft TopStyle Lite 1.51)

Version control

Even the most organized Webmaster appreciates support for version control, a feature that automatically assigns version numbers to each modified version of your pages. Before too long, you may find your mirror site (a copy of your site located elsewhere) doesn’t perfectly mirror the source site (where the original version is stored). You might have made just one small change to a file on the server or from someone else’s workstation. However you arrive at this moment of panic, version control can help you identify the most recent version of your HTML file.

**Definition**

Mirror site. A *mirror site* is either a place where you test your pages before publishing them to the public site or a copy of your public site. In either case, it's easy to find that your mirror site is not identical to your public site. Keeping the two in sync is facilitated by version-control software.

Unfortunately, few programs support this feature. One of the few that does is NetObjects Team Fusion. NetObjects Fusion 5.0 is discussed later in this chapter. Team Fusion is an add-on to this application, which is actually a collaborative development tool. You can purchase third-party products to fill the version-control need, if you purchase a program that doesn't offer this valuable feature.

Group collaboration programs

Only a lucky few get to make all decisions related to their Web sites. Most Web developers have to work with a team at some point. If you have a number of individuals working on your site, then this feature will ease your task. Group collaboration programs can make the process of team Web-site building easier.

Starbase offers a complete family of user-friendly software products that enable teams of people to collaborate in the production of Web sites, e-commerce applications, and other mission-critical applications. The Starbase technology provides a framework for digital asset management. This framework supports integration of products like StarTeam Enterprise, which provides collaboration and configuration management across the whole project life cycle. The Starbase Server and the StarGate SDK enable you to "plug in" other life cycle development products to the framework and bring the deliverables under StarTeam control. These applications are available from the Starbase Web site (www.starbase.com).

Make yourself right at home: Customization

Any good Web-page-development program enables you to customize it extensively. You should be able to see only the program bars you need. If you don't create forms, you don't need all the tags related to forms represented on your screen. These take up valuable space that could be used for the editor. You should also be able to create a custom color palette and be able to view or hide it, according to your preferences.

You may have strings of HTML you use frequently in combination. Wouldn't it be nice to click one button and have all those tags pasted right into your document? Whether this feature is marketed as *tag snippets* or *custom tags*, this is a nice feature to have.

Finally, the capability to create custom templates that provide the shell of your document without any additional typing — say, to provide metadata — is also a nice feature to have. Fortunately, customization is widely available.

Open sesame

Where are your HTML files located? For most Webmasters, files are located on a remote server and are only available via FTP. For this reason, an integrated FTP client is usually essential to enhancing your productivity. If your server is NT, you

can easily access the remote directory by mapping a drive letter to it. You'll be able to access your Web files by the mapped drive's letter, just like your local drives. If you have trouble accessing the files, ask your administrator for help.

Tip

Mapping a local drive to your NT server. To do this, you have to be running Windows 95/98/2000/NT, or Mac OS. You also need access privileges to the server. Talk to your server administrator about getting these privileges and setting up your LMHOSTS and HOSTS files (not required for Mac OS) so you can save your files to your server as easily as you save them to a floppy disk. Licensing issues are also related to using this approach, but once you're set up, it does make things easier.

If you don't use server-side scripting or you don't know what it is, you might also want to take advantage of the "Open from the Web" feature. This enables you to open the page you want to edit without having to use FTP or sign onto your Web server. You get exactly what you would get if you opened the page with your browser and saved the source. Because you need FTP to save your files when you are done editing, this feature isn't as valuable as an integrated FTP client.

Caution

If you are taking advantage of the "Open from the Web" feature, remember: You should make backup copies of all files before working. This way, if a program bombs, you can still retrieve the original file from the Web server.

Speaking of saving files, you might need the capability to save your files as either DOS, Mac, or UNIX files. The difference among these formats is the presence or absence of carriage returns (CR) or line feeds (LF). If you save the files in one format and open them in another, either you will have no end-line markers or you will have extra characters (^M) at the beginning of each line. If you develop your files on a PC and publish them to an NT server, this won't be an issue for you.

You also need the capability to have more than one page open at once. Fortunately, support for multiple open documents is part of several of the programs.

Syntax compliance: How much is too much?

When selecting a Web-page creation program, you will find various levels of *syntax checking* (a feature that scrutinizes your code to make sure it's free from errors and conforms to HTML standards):

- ♦ **None.** The program makes no attempt to check whether your HTML code conforms to HTML standards.
- ♦ **Continuous.** Syntax checking can be turned on or off. When it is on, any errors or incomplete tags are marked in color, whether or not you are done with them.
- ♦ **On-demand built in.** Syntax checking is only a click away. When you are ready to have your syntax checked, you can request it.
- ♦ **On-demand as a plug-in.** After you install a plug-in (which may or may not cost more money), syntax checking is only a click away.

- ♦ **Forced continuous.** Syntax checking is always, annoyingly, on.
- ♦ **Forced on-save.** When you try to save, it forces you to correct any errors it finds.

The only unacceptable levels are “continuous” and “forced” anything. Can you imagine a word processor that wouldn’t let you save a file that had a word it didn’t recognize? This is the mentality behind forced syntax compliance. Continuous syntax checking is a waste of your processor. What is the point of telling you that you need a `</CENTER>` tag while you are still in the middle of typing the content you want centered? This feature is a lot like Microsoft Word’s continuous spelling checker (offered in Versions 6, 7, 97, and 2000), which, gratefully, you can turn off.

You will want to check your syntax to make sure you comply with the latest set of rules, but you will want to do it on your schedule, not your editor’s.

Another nice feature beginning to appear in these programs is support for browser-specific tags. Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator are not perfectly in synch when it comes to tag support. If you know your visitors are running a certain browser (for example, in an intranet) and that browser supports extra tags, it is nice to use those tags without being hassled by the syntax checker.

Tag assistance

A good HTML-development program helps you out with your tags — letting you know which attributes are available to the tag you are using — without imposing itself on you. Some editors provide *tag completion*, automatically filling in a `</CENTER>`, when you finish typing `<CENTER>`. Some editors offer visual assistance by color-coding the tags by type. While this may sound annoying, once you know what to look for, you will appreciate it.

Some editors provide dialog boxes, enabling you to fill in values for the attributes you want to include. The only truly time-wasting tag assistance in this set of programs is the “feature” that automatically inserts every attribute for the tag you select with the values of the attributes set to blank.

Viewing your work in progress

While you work in a tag-based editor, you will probably want to see how your page is developing. It is convenient, but not essential, to have an internal browser in your development program. The alternative is to save your file and open it locally from your browser or publish it to your Web site and view it in your regular browser. If there is an internal browser, it should be accurate. An inaccurate internal browser is as bad as none at all. Best of all is the capability to select more than one internal browser of your choice.

Tip

To open a page on your local computer from your browser without publishing it to your remote server, select *Open* or *Open Page* from the File menu, select the file you want to view, and click Open.

Support for advanced tags

Server-side scripting may become a part of your Web site before you know it. If you want your visitors to be able to sign into your database to enter a contest on your site or to complete a survey, you need to use Cold Fusion, Active Server Pages (ASP), CGI, server-side Java, or server-side JavaScript.

If you are going to use JavaScript, applets, style sheets, or ActiveX controls, you want a development program that facilitates the use of these tags. You will get frustrated fast if you have to wrestle with your editor every time you want to use one of these tools. Figure 8-4 shows the HoTMetal PRO Wizard for adding ActiveX controls.

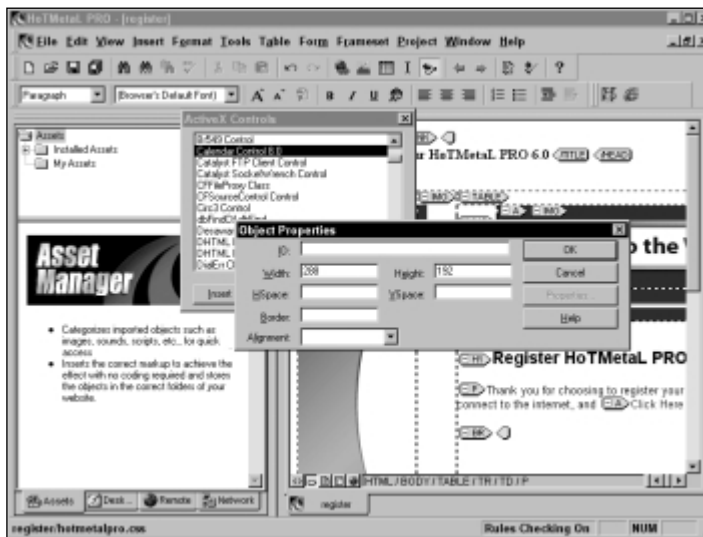


Figure 8-4: Inserting an ActiveX Control (made easy with HoTMetal PRO 6.0)

Other niceties

Most programs offer the following features:

- ♦ **Automatic word wrapping.** With this feature — a no-brainer, you would think — you can see your entire paragraph of text or all the attributes of your tag without having to scroll right.

- ♦ **Global find and replace.** This feature searches all the files in your project or your site and makes changes. If you don't use style sheets, this is the only practical way you can make formatting changes that affect large numbers of pages, that is, unless you want to go into each one and make all the changes manually. This feature isn't as important if you're using style sheets, which enable you to define presentation styles for all the documents you link to it, but it is nice if you find you've been spelling the president's name wrong.
- ♦ **Link checking.** Confirms all your links work.
- ♦ **Link manager.** Gives you some sort of graphical representation of the relationship between your pages.
- ♦ **Link repair.** Automatically attempts to repair links that get broken from moving pages around in your directory tree.
- ♦ **Spell checking.** Essential and, fortunately, universally available in these programs.
- ♦ **Site Manager.** Shows you all the pages in your site in some graphically meaningful way.

Comparing HTML editors

By now you should have an idea of what features you need in an HTML editor. In the following table, use the column on the left to mark your needs and then compare your needs with what is available. All the programs listed in Table 8-1 can be downloaded from the Web for 15- to 45-day evaluations. Take advantage of these downloads to find the program that works best for you.

The rest of this chapter discusses each of the programs in Table 8-1 in brief. Each description includes information on evaluation downloads, URLs for each company, and pricing.



Tip

While you might be tempted to go down Table 8-1 looking for the program with the most yeses under it, realize not all features are essential or even good. For example, if you are maintaining a site alone, collaborative development tools probably aren't necessary. If you publish your pages to an NT server and you have the NT drive on which you publish files mapped locally, then an integrated FTP client won't matter. If you use any server-side includes or scripting that is interpreted on the server, you can't use the "Open from the Web" feature without losing your scripting. Finally, an example of a downright annoying feature of some programs is *forced syntax compliance*. While you might want to enforce syntax compliance on others, you won't enjoy having it forced on you. The HTML standard is constantly evolving. If you are working with an editor that enforces compliance to a fixed HTML set of tags, then you will need to upgrade the editor to work with the newest HTML standard.

Table 8-1
Comparison of HTML-Development Programs

	Hot Dog Pro 6.0	HomeSite 4.5	HotMetal 6.0	CoffeeCup	Dream- weaver	FrontPage 2000	PageMill 3.0	HTML- Kit 1.0	NetObjects Fusion 3 with TeamFusion
WYSIWYG	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
View source	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Supports HTML 4.0 dichotomy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imports a Web site	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Web page importing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wizards	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tables Wizard	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Frames Wizard	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Form Wizard	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Style-sheets Wizard	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Channel Wizard	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Imagemap creation	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Version control	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Continued

Table 8-1 (continued)

	TextPad 4.2	Hot Dog Pro 6.0	HomeSite 4.5	HotMetal 6.0	CoffeeCup	Dream- weaver	FrontPage 2000	PageMill 3.0	HTML- Kit 1.0	NetObjects Fusion 3 with TeamFusion
Collaborative site-creation tools	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
File Manager	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Project Manager	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Custom tags	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Customizable interface	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Customizable templates	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Integrated FTP client	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Open files from Web	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Multiple pages open at once	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Save files in multiple formats	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Integrated syntax checker	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

	TextPad 4.2	Hot Dog Pro 6.0	HomeSite 4.5	HotMetal 6.0	CoffeeCup	Dream- weaver	FrontPage 2000	PageMill 3.0	HTML- Kit 1.0	NetObjects Fusion 3 with TeamFusion
Forced syntax compliance	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Browser-specific tags	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Tag cues	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Tag completion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Colored tags	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Auto-detection of width and height for images	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internal browser	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Define multiple internal browsers	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Accurate internal browser	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
External browser required	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
JavaScript	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Continued

Looking at HTML Editors

Now that you've examined the features HTML editors offer, take a look at some of the most popular programs. There's no such thing as a "best" HTML editor — but you should be able to find one just right for you.

TextPad 4.2.1

Available for Windows 3.1/95/98/2000/NT, this is the most basic of text editors that supports HTML. If you want to write your own HTML from the ground up, this is your program — but it's strictly no frills. Without any wizards, syntax checking, integrated FTP client, or site-management programs, you are truly on your own. But that's just where expert HTML coders want to be. In some of the highest-powered Web production workshops, most expert HTML coders are using the lowest-powered software. For example, the Windows Notepad utility is the program of choice for those who want to take the minimalist route to the max.

Note

What does TextPad offer that the Windows Notepad doesn't? For one thing, an integrated spell checker. That's a real benefit for professional Web publishing, in which spelling mistakes can't be tolerated. Also, you can create files larger than 32K, the current Notepad limit.

TextPad comes with several clip libraries, its lists of HTML tags or JavaScript properties. Unfortunately, when you select a tag from the clip library, you get every attribute for that tag, with the value of the attribute blank, or a question mark where you might want to insert a value (see Figure 8-5). This feature is confusing unless you know what you're doing — and what's worse, it enters a lot of code into your documents you don't really need. Still, TextPad is fast and stable, and it's a genuine improvement over non-HTML-savvy text editors.

To get your copy of TextPad, access the program's Web site at www.textpad.com. A shareware product, TextPad, at the time of this writing, costs \$27 for the downloadable version and \$15 for the floppy disks. It also requires licenses for multiple users; the cost for 5 users is \$120, and goes up incrementally depending on the number of users.

HotDog Professional 6.0

The nicest thing about this program is that things work the way you expect them to work. Available for Windows 95/98/2000/NT, this impressive text-based HTML-development environment includes such features as page-building wizards, extensive customization, a channel definition wizard (see Figure 8-6), support for tables, frames, and style sheets, split-screen view of the HTML and the page concurrently, and the capability to use HTML 4 the way it was intended to be used. You can also implement ASP, JavaScript, and VBScript with this tool. HotDog Professional also uses something called *SuperToolz*, which is their marketing name for downloadable plug-ins, which are usually free. All the wizards are installed this way. This is a great feature if space is tight on your system.

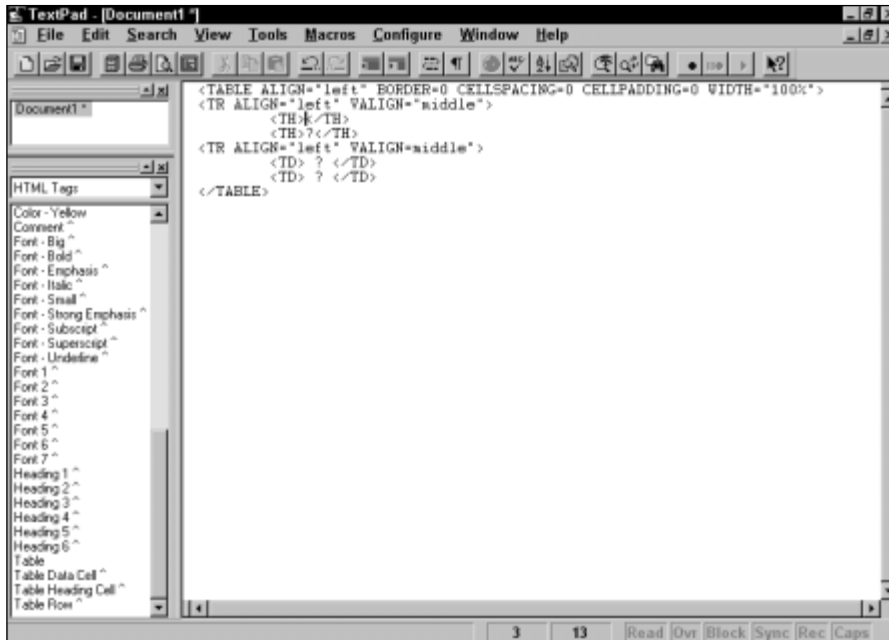


Figure 8-5: TextPad using the HTML-Forms clip library; notice the question marks for the <TABLE> tag.



Figure 8-6: HotDog PRO makes creating a channel simple with a Channel Wizard.

Who fits the HotDog profile? Somebody who really wants to get into the nitty-gritty of actual HTML code, but doesn't want to hassle with tables, frames, forms, and other hard-to-code HTML elements. An additional benefit is the program's interactive split-screen browser, which dynamically displays your changes. This feature alone makes HotDog a real plus when you're learning HTML; you see the results of your changes immediately, without having to switch to your browser.

HotDog Professional sells for \$99.95. You can purchase additional SuperToolz, all 17 of them for \$99.95, such as Java applets that you can use without learning Java, or the Smartlinks SuperTool that adds the power of the LookSmart Search Engine onto your Web page. Check out the Web site at www.sausage.com/.

HomeSite 4.5

Perhaps the most full-featured of HTML tag-based editors, HomeSite started off as shareware. It complements Allaire's Cold Fusion Web-to-database engine very well. HomeSite is also the text editor for the PC version of Macromedia's Dreamweaver. Useful features include

- ♦ Powerful wizards — HTML structure, style sheets, tables, and forms
- ♦ An internal, accurate, user-definable browser
- ♦ Tag coloring, tag completion, and tag cues (an irresistible threesome)
- ♦ Extensive customization of interface, templates, and tags
- ♦ Integrated on-demand syntax checking
- ♦ An integrated FTP client, with browsing of FTP directories with the FTP and Site Deployment Wizard to easily deploy your site while creating a reusable, shareable deployment script

Who might enjoy using HomeSite? Someone who wants to see the HTML without having to endure the tedium of coding tables, form elements, and frames (see Figure 8-7). Also anyone who wants to use style sheets, but isn't familiar with all the properties that comprise them. The extensively customizable interface makes it user-friendly for you in a matter of minutes.

This invaluable program, which runs on Windows 95/98/2000/NT, is priced at \$89 for the electronic download and \$99 for the CD-ROM — what a deal! Once again, HomeSite utilizes licenses for extra copies of their software, so if you have multiple users your price goes up. HomeSite is available from Allaire at www.allaire.com.

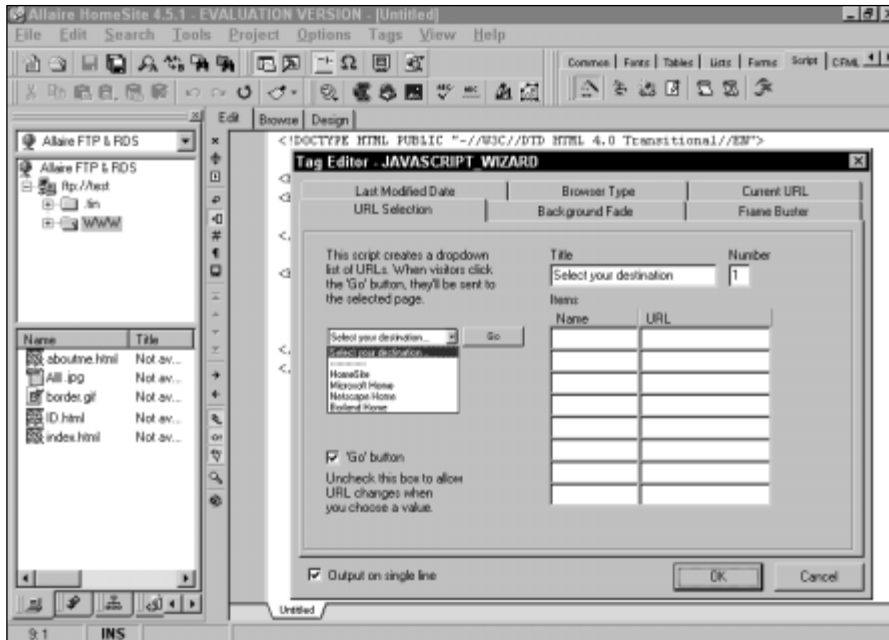


Figure 8-7: HomeSite 4.5 with the JavaScript wizard open

HoTMetal PRO 6.0

The folks at SoftQuad must develop a lot of Web sites, because they seem to have thought of about everything. HoTMetal PRO 6.0 for Windows 95/98/2000/NT includes nearly every type of wizard:

- ♦ ActiveX Wizard
- ♦ Database Import Wizard
- ♦ Dynamic Button Maker
- ♦ Form Wizard
- ♦ Frames Editor
- ♦ Integrated Site Management
- ♦ Site Wizard
- ♦ Style-sheets Wizard
- ♦ Table Wizard

The *tags-on view* is a great way to see your content without being overwhelmed by the HTML (see Figure 8-8). You can easily switch between WYSIWYG view, tags-on view, and HTML editing. Syntax checking, which defaults to continuous, can be set to on-demand.



Figure 8-8: HoTMetal PRO 6.0 in tags-on view

If you want the best of both worlds, WYSIWYG and text editing, HoTMetal may be the way to go. HoTMetal, the annoying capitalization aside, is available from the SoftQuad Web site at www.hotmetalpro.com for \$129, or \$59.95 for the upgrade.

CoffeeCup 8.2

CoffeeCup (see Figure 8-9) is being touted about as one of the new, great HTML editors. The CoffeeCup HTML Editor is fast, easy-to-use, and full of features. CoffeeCup has a split-screen preview for you to see your page change as you edit. Adding your pages to your Web site is just a right-mouse-click away.

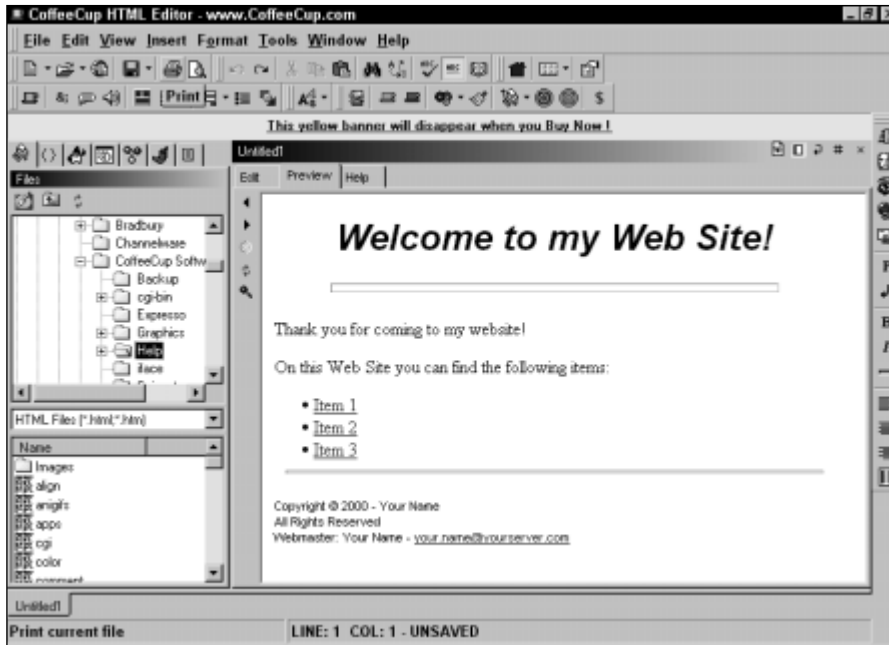


Figure 8-9: The CoffeeCup HTML Editor

Following are some of the most important features CoffeeCup has to offer:

- ♦ Easily upload pages and images directly to your server.
- ♦ Edit your Web site by simply entering the URL.
- ♦ Editing is facilitated by a global search and replace function.
- ♦ Imagemap creation with the built-in Image Slicer.
- ♦ No need to create your own JavaScript, there are 100 ready-made scripts for you to use.
- ♦ Validate your code with Code Cleaner.
- ♦ Verify your spelling as you type.
- ♦ View your edits as you make them with the Split-Screen Live Preview Edit Mode.

Who will like CoffeeCup? People who like to muck around in their HTML code, as well as having fancy things, such as the split screen preview, or the snippets editor that enables you to insert custom code with ease. CoffeeCup 8.2 sells for \$49 and is available from CoffeeCup at www.coffeecup.com.

Dreamweaver

This program is, indeed, a dream. You almost can't imagine a tool, system, or convention that isn't included in this incredible package. Dreamweaver was built with the HTML 4 model in mind and cleverly uses HomeSite 4.5 on the PC and BBEdit on the Mac as the text-editing programs for the WYSIWYG interface Macromedia provides. This results in a program that does everything it does well — whether on Windows 95/98/2000/NT, or the Mac. But what would you expect from Macromedia, the company that brings you Shockwave, Flash, Director, and Authorware, all multimedia development tools.

Dreamweaver has support for XML, JavaScript, and CSS. Dreamweaver 3 (see Figure 8-10) is a professional Web developer's program, as demonstrated by the price: \$299 full featured, \$129 if you're upgrading, but this is one spiffy program. It includes a library where you can store scripts, HTML tag combinations, images, imagemaps, or whatever you need for use in all the other pages in your site. Making a change to the library item automatically changes the item in all the pages where it appears, working like a server-side include.

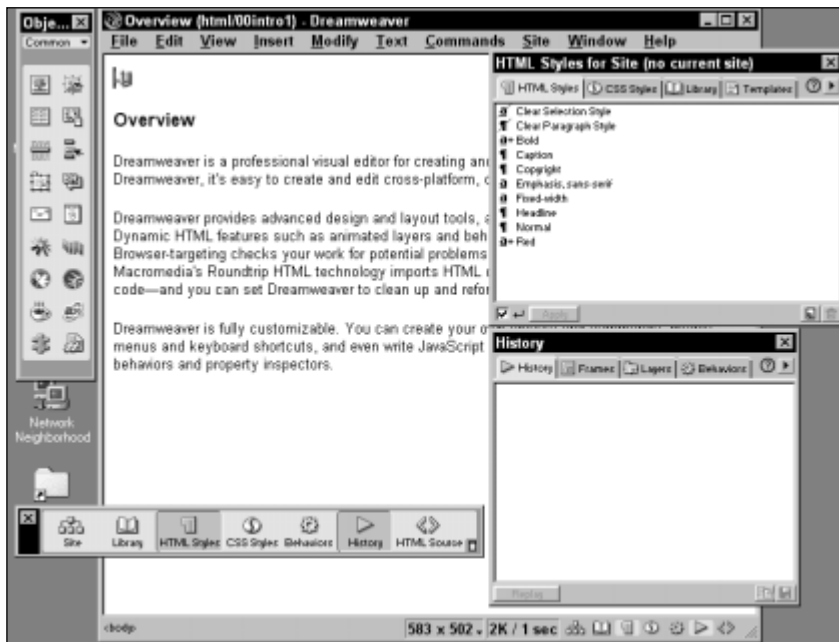


Figure 8-10: Dreamweaver may well be the ultimate Web development program.

To support animations and the Macromedia suite of programs (Director, Flash, Authorware, and Fireworks), Dreamweaver includes a timeline feature.

This program is one of only three of the programs reviewed here that includes useful group collaboration tools. Entire books are devoted to this package — and they should be. It is available from Macromedia (www.macromedia.com). Macromedia's site provides a downloadable 30-day trial of the software, although the downloadable version doesn't include BBEdit/HomeSite. Purchasing from the demo is as easy as clicking a button and entering your billing information.

FrontPage 2000

FrontPage 2000 gives you both WYSIWYG and text-based editing, on Windows 95/98/2000/NT or the Mac. You can use Dynamic HTML to animate, use CSS 2.0 to wrap or layer text and images, and get just the colors you want with enhanced color tools. In addition, FrontPage 2000 makes site management easy. FrontPage automatically fixes hyperlinks when files are renamed or moved, and 13 new management reports summarize the status of a site at a glance.

You can define multiple internal browsers, including Netscape Navigator! The getting started wizards are powerful, and the HTML they produce is legible. There are several useful tools, such as site management, link management, and project management — including the capability to assign tasks to project team members. The nicest part of all is that FrontPage 2000 relies on the HTML 4 Way of doing things, rather than tables, for attractive layout of pages.

FrontPage 2000 appeals to both the beginning and the professional Web developer. It has a steep learning curve, but once you know it, you'll be very productive. And if you use Microsoft Office, FrontPage 2000 makes creating a Web site easier than ever because it shares toolbars, menus, themes, background spell checking, and Format Painter with Microsoft Office.

FrontPage also includes plenty of interactive features, such as database interaction, animation tools, a JavaScript Wizard, and an ActiveX Wizard. FrontPage 2000 is available for \$149, but the upgrade is \$59.95, and available from Microsoft (www.microsoft.com).

HTML-Kit 1.0

HTML-Kit (see Figure 8-11) is designed to help HTML, XML, and script authors to edit, format, validate, preview, and publish Web pages. HTML authors of all experience levels will enjoy HTML-Kit. It can benefit beginners by pointing out errors and suggesting improvements to their code.

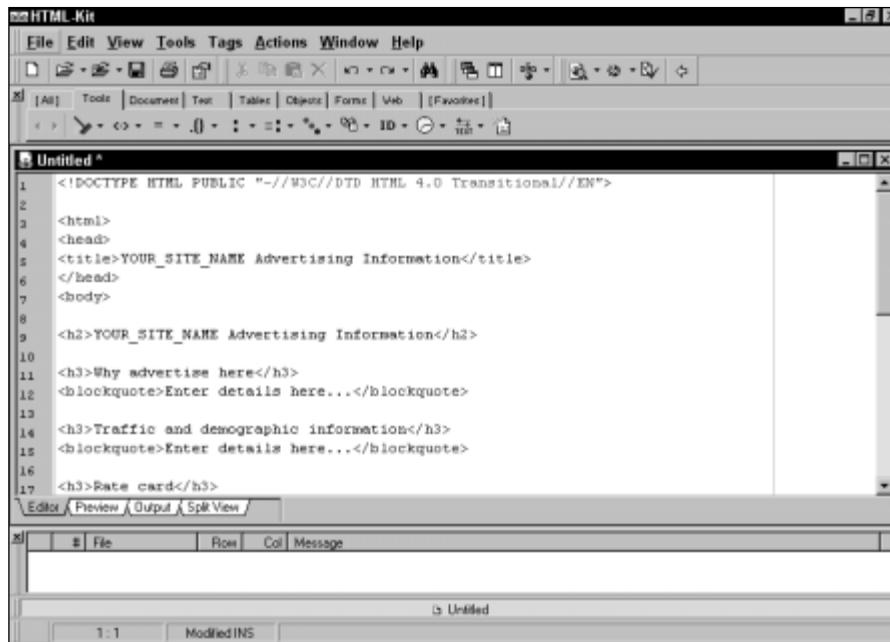


Figure 8-11: HTML-Kit in the Tools view

Some of the HTML-Kit features are as follows:

- ♦ Full-featured drag-and-drop enabled editor
- ♦ With syntax highlighter you can read code more easily by customizing colors and font styles.
- ♦ HTML-Kit also supports validation for HTML, XML, and CSS using W3C's HTML Tidy. Check out Chapter 24 for more information about this helpful feature.

Who would groove with the HTML-Kit program? Someone who wants a lot of capability from his or her software and doesn't want to spend any money. Yes, you read that right, the download is free, and works with Windows 95/98/2000/NT. You can try it out from Chami.com's Web site at www.chami.com/html-kit/.

PageMill 3.0

PageMill 3.0 (see Figure 8-12) is a big improvement over 2.0. You can place and preview Java applets and ActiveX controls (Windows only) directly in your PageMill pages. It includes an enhanced site/file manager that gives you a graphical view of your site. At \$99 for either the PC or the Mac from the Adobe Web site

(www.adobe.com), it is competitively priced. PageMill 3.0 also works seamlessly with Photoshop and Illustrator, two of the most commonly used image manipulation packages.

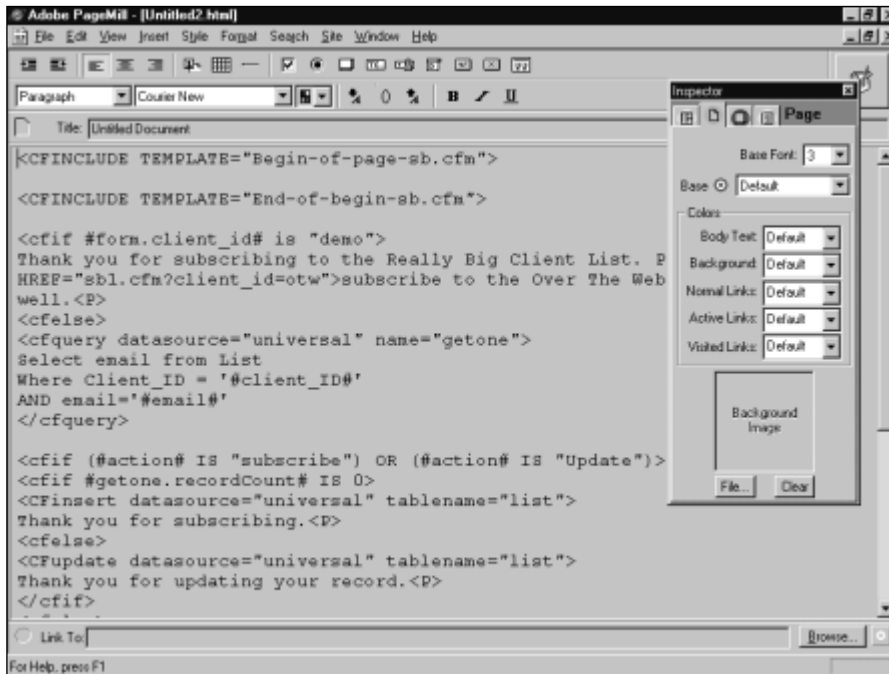


Figure 8-12: Adobe PageMill 3.0

NetObjects Fusion 5.0

NetObjects Fusion 5.0 (shown in Figure 8-13) is an excellent product. Fusion may be the most popular tool on the market for maintaining huge, distributed Web sites. There are many great new features that make using NetObjects Fusion 5.0 the best bet. You can

- ♦ Quickly plan and build an entire site, with a consistent theme and formatting.
- ♦ Manage, promote, and grow your e-business; there is a new online guide that shows you how to do this.
- ♦ Automatically create and update navigation and links, without writing any HTML code.
- ♦ Choose from dozens of professional, customizable SiteStyles or create your own, with drag-and-drop simplicity.
- ♦ Connect with databases for interactive Web applications.

Supported features are team collaboration tools, version control, a WYSIWYG editing environment, and a tag-based editing environment, the most intuitive drag-and-drop editing environment of all the tools reviewed.

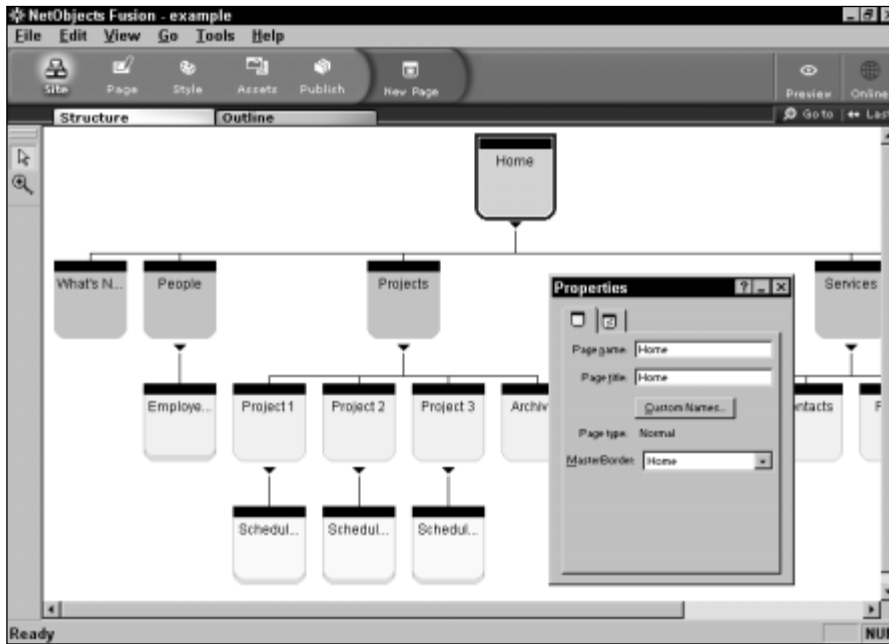


Figure 8-13: NetObjects Fusion with the Properties dialog box displayed – NetObjects Fusion is available for both the Mac and PC platforms for \$299.95 or \$99 for the upgrade.

From Here



Cross-Reference

Ready to dive into HTML 4? Flip to Chapter 12, which explores the fundamentals of HTML document architecture. You'll learn some important distinctions to help you grasp HTML more quickly.

Want to see some CSS now? Jump to Chapter 25.

With your HTML-development program in hand, you can proceed to develop your site's style and content. Before you jump ahead, though, take a moment to read about your Web server: what it does, what kind you have, and what you can make it do with server-side scripting, all in Chapter 11.

Summary

Before you can select the best Web page creation and editing program for you, you need to understand what features are available and which ones you need. Once you have your list of required features in hand, you can start to investigate the programs on the market. It is well worth your time to download and test a program before you purchase it so you know it works the way you expect it to work. All the programs profiled in this chapter have free evaluation software, except for Microsoft's FrontPage 2000.

Whatever program you select, you want to be sure it provides the functionality that makes you work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

