Grouping Elements with DIV and SPAN

This chapter discusses DIV and SPAN. In Chapters 15 and 17 you learned how to group block-level and inline elements with DIV and SPAN. In Chapter 25 you learn more about defining classes within style sheets. Here you get in-depth coverage of DIV, SPAN, **and** CLASS.

What Is CLASS?

Classes enable you to assign a name to a group of formatting declarations. This enables you to create a specific class, such as intro, and reuse it several times without retyping. Class is an attribute of DIV, SPAN, **and other elements. For example, if you always want your first paragraphs to have the same appearance on your Web page, you can define a paragraph intro style:**

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<STYLE TYPE="text/css">
<!--
        P.intro {background:lime}
-->
</STYLE>
</HEAD>
```

You can then reference the style:

```
</HEAD>
<BODY>
```

```
<P CLASS=intro> This is the first sentence of this simple
example. Here is the first supporting sentence. This is the
second supporting sentence. </P>
<P> This is the next paragraph. It's not introductory so it
doesn't use the class. </P>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

The output of this example (see Figure 23-1) displays the first paragraph with a lime background. The class makes changing the appearance of the intro paragraphs easy because you only need to change the definition of the class in one place, not within each intro paragraph.
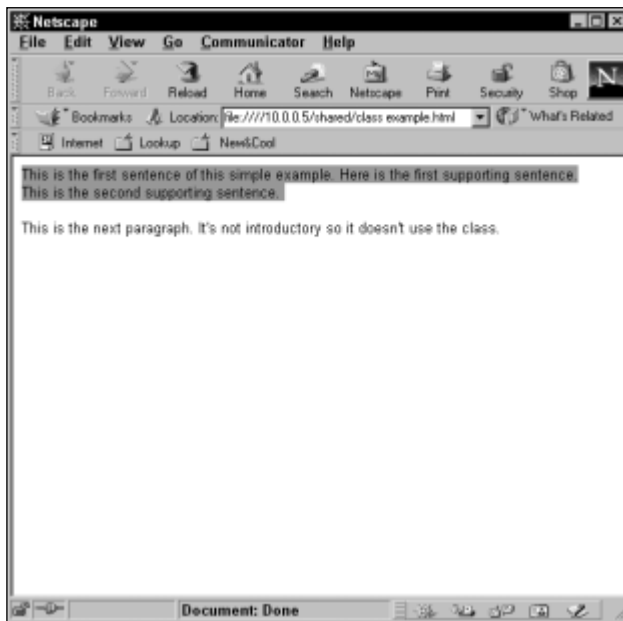

Figure 23-1: The results of the previous example in Netscape

Tip   Classes may be assigned anywhere a declaration can be used, such as where block and inline elements are defined using the DIV and SPAN elements.

Introducing DIV

DIV stands for *logical DIVision.* This tag is often used to divide a Web page into sections. Each section has its own style. The DIV element is used to mark up divisions

in a document. `DIV` is called a block-level element because you use it to affect a complete block of text. It can enclose headers, paragraphs, tables and other block-level elements, and any combination of these elements. Therefore you can, for example, use the `DIV` element to mark up both headers and paragraphs at the same time.

Tip `DIV` tags are ideal for dividing your Web pages into themes (thematic sections).

As part of the `DIV` element, you include either declarations or a class name to define the appearance of the elements contained in your `DIV` block.

Introducing SPAN

If you only want to apply styles to a few words or letters, you use the `SPAN` element. You can think of the `SPAN` element as spanning a few words or characters. You would use the `SPAN` element in the same way as the `DIV` element, except that you use the word `SPAN` instead of the word `DIV`.

Note You use `DIV` and `SPAN` instead of applying a style directly to an element when you wish to apply the style to more than one element or less than one element, respectively.

As part of the `SPAN` element, you include either declarations or a class name to define the appearance of the words or characters contained in your `SPAN` block.

Here is an example of `DIV`, `SPAN`, and `CLASS` at work:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<STYLE TYPE="text/css">
<!--
      SPAN.big {color:green; background:black; font:20pt
Helvetica}
-->
</STYLE>
</HEAD>

<BODY>
<P STYLE="color:red; background:black; font:14pt Helvetica">
You can apply styles to a single paragraph. This paragraph
displays with red lettering on a black background. The font is
14-point Helvetica. It gets its style attributes from the
declarations after STYLE=.</P>
<P STYLE="color:red; background:black; font:14pt Helvetica"> To
start another paragraph of the same style without using a class
you need to repeat all of the declarations.</P>
```

```
<DIV STYLE="color:yellow; background:black; font:14pt
Helvetica">
<P> This paragraph appears in yellow lettering on a black
background. The font is 14-point Helvetica.</P>
This text is also inside of the DIV block, so it displays in
yellow on black 14-point Helvetica too.
</DIV>
This text displays normally, except for the words <SPAN CLASS=
big>big</SPAN> and <SPAN CLASS=big>green</SPAN>, which are
within two SPAN blocks that use the class big. The class big
specifies that the words big and green display as green
20-point Helvetica on a black background.
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

In the DIV STYLE example block, the first two sentences display in a Web browser as text highlighted in black, with a text color of yellow and a font size of 14.

From Here

Cross-Reference   Jump to Chapter 25 to start learning about Cascading Style Sheets.

Turn to Chapter 24 to start testing and validating your HTML.

Summary

In this chapter you learned the basics of `CLASS`, `DIV`, and `SPAN`. Now you can apply separate formatting declarations from characters to even multiple paragraphs.

✦   ✦   ✦