

INTERACTIVE DESIGN/ADVANCED DESIGN FOR THE WEB

NAMING CONVENTIONS

GOAL

Understanding naming conventions and file structure for websites to be able to work cross platform.

1. Do NOT use spaces in file or folder names. Spaces within file names can cause links to break in some browsers. Use an underscore or underline between words to ease readability. For example, a file name can be written as “my_file.htm”.
2. Do NOT use any punctuation. Use only alphanumeric characters, dashes, and underscores. Some characters to avoid using include:

!@#\$%&*()+|.,:“

3. Use all lowercase characters to prevent naming errors. Some web servers, like the Unix system, are case sensitive and if you type the wrong case in an HTML reference, the Web server will not find the file.
4. Start with a letter. Some interpreters do not like object names that begin with a number: (object89 is fine – 89object can cause problems with JavaScript in some browsers).
5. Keep file names as short as possible and use descriptive file names that make sense. Files names with excessively long names may cause problems; 8 characters (plus three for the extension) is ideal but not required. Although the computer will allow very long names, certain web functions truncate file names to 25 characters. If you need to refer to a file after some time has passed it is much easier to remember what is in the file or folder if the name is descriptive. It also should pass the telephone test – is the URL easy to give to someone on the phone.
6. Use the proper file type extension (typically the three characters that come after the document name) for the file type. Note: if you save an image in the JPG file format, but the file name is image.gif, visitors will see a broken image icon. By using the proper extension you will ensure that your files are able to be read cross platform. Some examples of file type extensions:

.gif .jpg .png .tif .swf .html .htm .pdf .doc .fla .psd

7. There is no difference between the .htm and the .html extension. Whichever you prefer to use you should always be consistent.
8. The name of the home page file of your site should be named index.htm or index.html. By naming your home page in this fashion, your home page URL will be shorter. Instead of users needing to type http://www.mysite.com/index.htm they will only need to type http://www.mysite.com because index.htm is automatically recognized as a home page file.

NOTE

Documents that do not follow these simple naming conventions may appear to be OK if you preview the pages in a browser from files on your local computer. The problems may occur when you upload them to your server and view them on the internet or move your documents to a different computer, server, or storage device such as a CD-ROM.

NOT RECOMMENDED

my_page
this_is_my_great_page.htm
MY_PAGE.HTM
MyPage.html

(may cause errors)
(no file extension)
(too complex)
(all caps)
(mixed case)

INVALID

my page.html
my"page".html
mypage(2).html
my#page.html

(will cause errors)
(includes space)
(quotes)
(parentheses)
(number symbol)

RECOMMENDED

my_page.html
my-page.htm
mypage.html
my_page2.htm