

Setting Up Your Development Environment

Building your web pages doesn't require expensive software or hardware. For a small or home based business, you can set up a **simple development environment** that consists of a folder and files on your own computer and free tools that can be easily downloaded. Setting up and organizing your development environment makes for a much smoother development process. The development environment includes:

1. A main folder and possibly sub folders in your directory where you put all the files needed by the web site. You create these files as you go through the development process. These files become the Master files for your web site. Any changes to your web pages must be done using the Master files and then uploaded to the web site host.
2. Tools (software) to edit HTML files, validate source code, edit graphics, and pick color codes.

Tools

Following are some good (and free) web page development tools you can easily download:

HTML Editors – An HTML file is simply a text file, with an .html extension, that a browser can format into a web page. There a number of “HTML” editors that can be used to edit these text files. Following are examples of nice, free, editors that can be downloaded:

- **Notepad ++** (<http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/uk/site.htm>) -- a free HTML source code editor and Notepad replacement. Notepad ++ is easy to use. I especially like it when making quick changes to a web site.
- **AceHTML** (<http://software.visicommedia.com/en/products/acehtmlfreeware/>) -- A powerful, free HTML editor, AceHTML comes packed with outstanding features. Although this Web page software is completely free, it offers a solid collection of tools to help novices and professional webmasters build Web sites with speed, ease, and convenience. When building web sites, I use the professional version, but this free version does the job just fine.

HTML Validators – You can have coding errors in your HTML source file and the page still looks ok in the browser. But, it might work in all browsers. Before going live with your web site, you should validate your HTML code to make sure that it is error free.

- **AceHTML** editor -- also contains contains a source code validator and spell checker.
- **CSE Validator Lite** (<http://www.htmlvalidator.com/lite/>) -- an award winning free HTML editor and basic syntax checker
- **WDG HTML Validator** (<http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/upload.html.en>) – an online HTML validator.

CSS Validators – As with HTML, you should validate your CSS code before going live.

- **CSS checkup** (<http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/csscheck/upload.html>) – an online CSS validator.

File Transfer Program (FTP) – You will need to move (upload) the web site files from your computer (development environment) to a web site host.

- **FileZilla** (<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type=client>) -- FileZilla is an FTP program for file uploading and downloading to and from your FTP site, server, or host. The program lets you transfer files and navigate among folders, Web sites, and your computer. This software enables you to perform multiple file transfers simultaneously.

Graphics / Image Optimizer and Editor

- **Paint Studio Lite 1.2** (<http://www.safesite.com/product.php%5Bid%5D53141%5Bcid%5D137%5BsiteID%5Ddigibuy>) -- PaintStudio Lite is an attractive and easy to use freeware image viewer and editor. With PaintStudio Lite 1.2 you can enhance the look and optimize the size and appearance of images for use in document, presentation, homepage and others.

Picking Colors

- **Pixie** (<http://www.nattyware.com/pixie.html>) -- Pixie is an easy-to-use, fast and tiny utility designed especially to fit the needs of Webmasters and Designers. Its a colour picker that includes a mouse tracker.

Setting Up The Environment – A Short Story

The following short story is just an example of how a person might go about setting up their web site development environment. Ken plans to build a web site for his small business. He has taken some classes and he has an understanding of basic HTML and CSS. He has completed the planning, sketched out his overall design, and determined the navigation structure. Now, he is eager to start developing the source code.

(1) First, Ken sets up a folder on his computer where he will put all the HTML pages. He calls the folder Business Web Site and creates a sub folder, called images, for his graphics and images. Note: when Ken references a file in the images folder from a web page, he must specify the right path. If everything is contained on the main folder (Business Web Site), he doesn't need to worry about the path, all he needs to use is the file name.

(2) Now, Ken downloads some tools to this computer.

- He chooses the AceHTML editor. He can edit both HTML and CSS files with this editor. He can also validate his HTML source code with AceHTML.
- He downloads FileZilla to upload his web pages once they are completed and validated.
- He downloads Paint Studio Lite 1.2 to optimize and resize his images, if necessary.
- And finally, he downloads Pixie. If he sees a color on another web page that he wants to use on his page, he can use Pixie to find the hex code for the color.

(3) Ken creates two files in his main folder (Business Web Site). One file is named index.html and the other file is named style.css. Using AceHTML, Ken creates the source code for the home page in index.html. The CSS code is placed in style.css. Any images used on the web site are placed in the images folder.

(4) When the index.html file has been coded and validated, Ken uses it as a template and “Save As” the file to create and name the other web page files. At first, all the pages look the same, but as Ken goes into each page (file) and changes the content to reflect the purpose of the page.

(5) All the pages are validated and then uploaded to the web site host using FileZilla. Any images are also uploaded to the host in the appropriate folder.