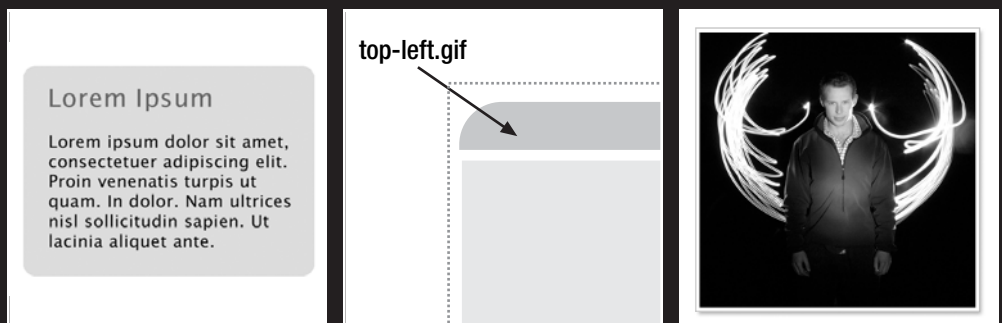


3 BACKGROUND IMAGES AND IMAGE REPLACEMENT



Now that you are all up to speed with the theory, let's start putting this into practice. Today's Web is a very visual medium. The humble image tag has allowed web designers to turn dull and uninspiring documents into graphically rich experiences. Graphic designers quickly seized on the image tag (originally intended as a way to add visual content to a website) as a way of visually embellishing a page. In fact, if it wasn't for the invention of the image tag, the profession of web designer may never have evolved.

Unfortunately, we've used the image tag to clutter our pages with purely presentational images. Luckily, CSS gives us the ability to display an image on a page without it being part of the markup. This is achieved by adding an image as a background to an existing element. Through a series of practical examples, this chapter will show you how background images can be used to create a variety of interesting and useful techniques.

In this chapter you will learn about

- Fixed- and flexible-width rounded-corner boxes
- The sliding doors technique
- Mountaintop corners
- CSS drop shadows
- PNG transparency support for Internet Explorer 5.x and above
- Image replacement

Background image basics

Applying a background image is easy. Say you want your website to have a nice tiled background. You can simply apply the image as a background to the body element:

```
body {  
    background:url(pattern.gif);  
}
```

The default browser behavior is to repeat background images horizontally and vertically so that the image tiles across the whole of the page. For more control you can choose whether your background image tiles vertically, horizontally, or not at all.

Gradients are very fashionable at the moment so you may want to apply a vertical gradient to your page instead. To do this, create a tall but narrow gradient graphic. You can then apply this graphic to the body of the page and let it tile horizontally:

```
body {  
    background: #ccc url(gradient.gif) repeat-x;  
}
```

Because the gradient has a fixed height, it will stop abruptly if the content of the page is longer than the height of the image. You could choose to create a really long image, possibly one that fades to a fixed color. However, it is always difficult to predict how long a