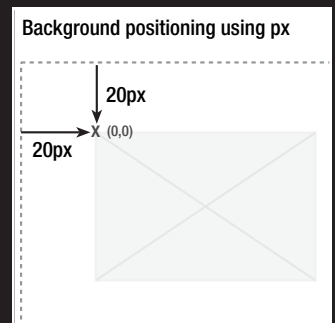


7 LAYOUT



One of the major benefits of CSS is the ability to control page layout without needing to use presentational markup. However, CSS layout has gained a rather undeserved reputation of being difficult, particularly among those new to the language. This is partly due to browser inconsistencies, but mostly due to a proliferation of different layout techniques available on the Web. It seems that every CSS author has their own technique for creating multicolumn layouts, and new CSS developers will often use a technique without really understanding how it works. This “black box” approach to CSS layout may get quick results, but ultimately stunts the developer’s understanding of the language.

All these CSS layout techniques rely on three basic concepts: positioning, floating, and margin manipulation. The different techniques really aren’t that different, and if you understand the core concepts, it is relatively easy to create your own layouts with little or no hassle.

In this chapter you will learn about

- Horizontally centering a design on a page
- Creating two- and three-column float-based layouts
- Creating fixed-width, liquid, and elastic layouts
- Making columns stretch to the full height of the available space

Centering a design

Long lines of text can be difficult and unpleasant to read. As modern monitors continue to grow in size, the issue of screen readability is becoming increasingly important. One way designers have attempted to tackle this problem is by centering their designs. Rather than spanning the full width of the screen, centered designs span only a portion of the screen, creating shorter and easier-to-read line lengths.

Centered designs are very fashionable at the moment, so learning how to center a design in CSS is one of the first things most developers want to learn. There are two basic methods for centering a design: one uses auto margins and the other uses positioning and negative margins.

Centering a design using auto margins

Say you have a typical layout where you wish to center a wrapper div horizontally on the screen:

```
<body>
  <div id="wrapper">
    </div>
</body>
```