Basic "HTML" Guide

Helpful Tools

Word is a very bad place for creating web content. Unfortunately, there are no great free or cheap options on the Windows side. Basically, you need a text editor that does not add a lot of "junk" to your text, but keeps it clean and simple. On the Mac, the free tools I use are TextEdit, my email client and TextWrangler.

The best tool on the Windows side will probably be Notepad ++
http://www.notepad-plus.sourceforge.net

You can try things out using the W3C schools "Try It Yourself" interface:
http://www.w3schools.com/CSS/tryit.asp?filename-trycss_text-align

Important note - when you are trying things out you will always need to SAVE your file before reloading your web browser to see how the changes look.

Font Characteristics

Bold - wrap the text in either <b> tags or the more standards compliant tag:

```
<strong>this would be bold text on your page</strong>
<b>this would be bold text on your page</b>
```

Italic - wrap the text in either <i> tags or the more standards compliant (for "emphasize") tag:

```
<em>this would be bold text on your page</em>
<i>this would be bold text on your page</i>
```

Recommend avoiding underline, ~~strikethrough~~ and highlight for web use. The first has a very specific meaning (linked text) and should not be used otherwise. The latter two are difficult to look at on a screen and therefore ineffective for relaying information.

Text colors, size and alignment should be altered using "css," which can be done inline. While it is better not to use inline styles but rather to assign styles through an external stylesheet, there is a steep, long learning curve in using external styles. Inline styles can do the trick with minimal knowledge and tools.

Color - wrap the text in a tag (meaning - span this area with this style information) and include specific style information as an attribute in the span tag:

```
<span style="color:red">this would be red text</span>
<span style="color:#ff0000">this would be red text</span>
```

> *Color works in two ways: words and hexadecimal numbers. There are a lot of basic colors, such as red, yellow, green, black, white, purple, aqua, etc., that the web browser will recognize. For more color precision, however, you need to use the six digit code to describe the RGB based color. The six digits are RRGGBB. The colors operate on a scale of 0-f (0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f), with 0 being none and f being all. FFFFFF would be white, 000000 would be black. FF0000 is pure red.*

A decent color chart for the codes you might want to use (until you are ready to start figuring them out on your own):
http://www.webmonkey.com/reference/Color_Charts

Text alignment - include a style attribute in the text-block element (usually a paragraph or a div, represented by <p> and tags) separating the block of text you want to align:

```
<p style="text-align:right">this would be paragraph of text that would align to the right</p>
```

Text justification options are limited to the four basics: left (default, what you get if you don't add any alignment), right, center and justify.

Block Divisions and Headers

A page layout is made up of block divisions. There are three basic types of dividers in HTML: paragraph, div and header.

P (paragraph) -
Looks like a regular paragraph on a page, with extra space above and below the first and last line of the paragraph.

```
<p>this would be its own paragraph</p>
```

DIV -
Without careful examination, looks like a regular paragraph as well. Can be controlled in more detail, such as controlling "width" and "float." These are more advanced controls, so play with them carefully. e.g.:

```
<div style="width:200px;float:right;text-align:center;background-color:red">this would create a red box around the text you are reading now, and that box would be 200 pixels wide and would sit on the right side of the page, with the content around it wrapping under the box where the box ends</div>
```

H# (headers) ******POSSIBLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SEO TOOLS****** -

Search engines and content scanners (including screen readers) use Header tags to look for the most important content on your site. A header tag will separate out a block of text as if it were a title. Each header tag # is, by default, twice as important as the number higher than it. So - h1 is twice as important as h2, which is twice as important as h3, which is twice as important as h4. They go to 6. All header blocks of content are given more weight than paragraphs or divs. Without special styling, h1 will default to a very large font size of around 300% the size of the regular copy on the site. h2 will be half the size of h1, and so on. Un-styled headers also default to bold.

```
<h1>this would be a very large title</h1>
<h2 style="color:red">this would be a very large title in red</h2>
```


Hyperlinking

Links come in a few different forms:

Absolute - contains the full URL for the link, and is usually linked to an outside site (e.g. "http://www.grassrootsoilsandherbs.com/about")

```
<a href="http://www.grassrootoilsandherbs.com/about">this is a
link to the about page of grassroots, and the text you are
reading now is what the user will see</a>
```

Relative - usually used for linking within an internal site, assumes the base URL is the site you are on and therefore skips it (e.g. "/about")

```
<a href="/about">this is a link to the about page of grassroots,
and the text you are reading now is what the user will see --
but this will only work if the user is on the grassroots
site</a>
```

Mailto - used for linking an email address, will open an email client with the email address pre-populated on click (e.g. "info@domainname.org")

```
<a href="mailto:info@domainname.org">this opens up a mail client
with the address field pre-populated with info@domainname.org,
and the text of the link is what you are reading now</a>
```

Anchor - used for referencing other parts of a page. Requires two tag instances - once where the Anchor Link resides, and once at the target destination of the Anchor Link.

```
<a href="#anchorname">a text link that will take the user to
another place on the page</a>
<a name="anchorname" /> - the single instance placed at the
destination point on the page
```

HREF stands for Hypertext Reference. URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator.

Additional attributes can be added to anchor (a) tags to increase their performance and enhance their SEO:

Title Attribute - used for SEO, as it gives search engines more information about the nature and content of a link. Also becomes a "tool tip" when the user mouses over the link.

```
<a href="URL" title="informative text that the search engine
will see, and end user gets when they mouse over the link">link
text</a>
```

Target Attribute - enables the link to open a new browser window rather than replace the content of the current browser window.

```
<a href="URL" target="_blank">link text for a link that will
open in a new window</a>
```


Images

Unlike most HTML elements, Image tags are single instance, which means that they start and end in the same tag rather than wrap something. So instead of <tag>info</tag>, they are written as <tag />

To place an image, you need to know the exact URL to the file itself, and so the URL will end with the file name (including extension).

```
<img src="http://www.URL.tld/imagefilename.ext" />
```

Like with anchor tag references, the URL can be absolute or relative. Usually, image URLs will be relative (unless you are referencing an image from another external website).

Image Attributes:

Images have several attributes of note -

Align - specifies where the image falls in relation to the content it sits within. The image will "begin" wherever it is placed in the content, and the content will then "wrap" around it. You can align an image to the left or right.

```
<img src="URL" align="left" />
<img src="URL" align="right" />
```

There are more advanced image alignments that can be set, but usually they are not recommended. Keep it simple.

Padding an Aligned Image to give it space - sometimes you'll align your images and feel that the text wraps too tightly around the edges. The way to solve this is with an inline style called "padding":

```
<img src="URL" align="left" style="padding-right:3px" />
```

This would give an image aligned to the left a three pixel "cushion" between the image edge and the text itself. You can also use padding-top, padding-bottom and padding-left.

A simpler way to achieve a padding buffer is with hspace (horizontal space) and vspace (vertical space). The disadvantage to these is that they create space on both horizontal or vertical sides of the image.

```
<img src="URL" align="left" hspace="3" />
<img src="URL" align="left" vspace="3" />
```

Width and Height - sometimes you might want to alter the width or height of an image using the code, since you can't get to the image itself. *NOTE: this is strongly discouraged, as it will slow your site load time and Windows doesn't render resized images well.*

```
<img src="URL" height="300" /> - image will resize so it is 300
pixels heigh, and width will change proportionally
<img src="URL" height="300" width="200" /> - no matter what the
original size and proportions of the image, it will resize to
300x200
```

Border - if you want to give the image a border, you can do this with an attribute. Note that some browsers render images surrounded by <a> tags with borders by default, so if you

surround an image with <a> tags (make it a link), you may need to set the border to 0.

```
<img src="URL" border="0" /> - no border
<img src="URL" border="2" /> - a 2 pixel thick border
```

Alt Attribute - ***A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT SEO TOOL* -**
ALWAYS include an alt attribute tag in every image tag. This serves the following purposes:
tells search engines what the image is about for ranking/content purposes
replaces a broken image icon if the image is unavailable
is the tool tip copy that shows when a user mouses over the image
is what screen readers read
Missing alt tags are bad, bad news.

Make sure your alt text is useful for content seo purposes as well as for usability. Poor usability will hurt you in rankings.

```
<img src="URL" alt="" /> - use this for images for which it
doesn't make sense to have alt text, like spacer graphics
<img src="URL" alt="content of the image" /> - descriptive text
for images that do deserve alt text
```

