

The HTML Cheat Sheet

The HTML Cheat Sheet · WebsiteSetup.org

1. What is HTML

HTML (HyperText Markup Language) is the structure layer of every web page. A page is a three-part stack: HTML sets the structure, CSS handles style, and JavaScript adds behavior. You write elements as an opening tag, content, and a closing tag: `<p>Hello</p>`. Tags can carry attributes, like `<a href="/about">About</a>`.

2. Document structure

Every file follows the same bones: a doctype, the `<html>` root, a `<head>` for metadata, and a `<body>` for visible content.

Tag	What it does	Example
Doctype	Declares HTML5; first line	<code><!DOCTYPE html></code>
html	Root element; set language	<code><html lang="en"></code>
head	Metadata and links	<code><head>...</head></code>
meta charset	Text encoding	<code><meta charset="utf-8"></code>
meta viewport	Scales on phones	<code><meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1"></code>
title	Tab and search headline	<code><title>My Page</title></code>
body	Visible content	<code><body>...</body></code>
link	Attaches a stylesheet	<code><link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css"></code>
script	Loads JavaScript	<code><script src="app.js"></script></code>
style	Inline CSS block	<code><style>p{color:red}</style></code>

3. Text content

Text tags give words meaning and rank. Headings run from `<h1>` down to `<h6>`. Reach for the tag that matches meaning.

Tag	What it does	Example
h1 to h6	Six heading levels	<code><h1>Title</h1></code>
p	A paragraph	<code><p>Text.</p></code>
br	Line break	<code>One
Two</code>
hr	Thematic divider	<code><hr></code>
strong	Strong importance	<code>Warning</code>
em	Stress emphasis	<code>really</code>
b / i	Bold/italic, no meaning	<code>x <i>y</i></code>
mark	Highlighted text	<code><mark>found</mark></code>
small	Fine print	<code><small>terms</small></code>
sub / sup	Subscript/superscript	<code>H<sub>2</sub>O x<sup>2</sup></code>
blockquote	Block quotation	<code><blockquote>Q</blockquote></code>
q	Inline quotation	<code><q>short</q></code>
cite	Title of a work	<code><cite>Book</cite></code>
code	Inline code	<code><code>let x</code></code>
pre	Keeps spacing	<code><pre> x</pre></code>

abbr	Abbreviation tooltip	<abbr title="HyperText">HT</abbr>
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4. Lists

Use when order does not matter, when it does, and a description list for term-and-definition pairs.

Tag	What it does	Example
ul	Bulleted list	A
ol	Numbered list	First
li	A list item	Item
dl	Description list	<dl>...</dl>
dt	A term	<dt>HTML</dt>
dd	Its description	<dd>markup</dd>

5. Links and media

Links connect pages; media brings in images, sound, and video. Give images real alt text and add rel="noopener" when opening a new tab.

Tag	What it does	Example
a	A hyperlink	Go
img	Image with alt text	
picture	Responsive images	<picture><source></picture>
source	A candidate file	<source srcset="x.webp">
figure	Media unit	<figure>...</figure>
figcaption	Caption for a figure	<figcaption>Fig 1</figcaption>
video	Video player	<video controls src="v.mp4"></video>
audio	Audio player	<audio controls src="a.mp3"></audio>
iframe	Embeds another page	<iframe src="url" title="Map"></iframe>

6. Semantic layout (HTML5)

Semantic tags name the parts of a page so software understands structure. They beat nameless div soup for accessibility and SEO.

Tag	What it does	Example
header	Top banner or intro	<header>...</header>
nav	Navigation links	<nav>...</nav>
main	Primary content	<main>...</main>
section	Thematic grouping	<section>...</section>
article	Standalone content	<article>...</article>
aside	Side content	<aside>...</aside>
footer	Bottom info	<footer>...</footer>
details	Disclosure widget	<details>...</details>
summary	Label for details	<summary>More</summary>
dialog	Modal dialog box	<dialog open>Hi</dialog>

7. Tables

Use tables for real tabular data, not layout. Header cells take a scope; cells can span columns or rows.

Tag	What it does	Example
table	Wraps the table	<code><table>...</table></code>
caption	Table title	<code><caption>Prices</caption></code>
thead/tbody/tfoot	Row groups	<code><tbody>...</tbody></code>
tr	A table row	<code><tr>...</tr></code>
th	Header cell + scope	<code><th scope="col">Name</th></code>
td	Data cell; can span	<code><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">X</td></code>

8. Forms

Forms collect input. `<form>` sets where data goes; `<input>` changes with its type. Label every field and use built-in validation.

Tag	What it does	Example
form	Sets action + method	<code><form action="/x" method="post"></code>
input	A field	<code><input type="email" required></code>
input types	text, email, password, number, tel, url, date, checkbox, radio, file, range, color, search, hidden	<code><input type="date"></code>
label	Names a field	<code><label for="em">Email</label></code>
textarea	Multi-line box	<code><textarea rows="4"></textarea></code>
select/option	Dropdown + choices	<code><select><option>A</option></select></code>
button	A button	<code><button type="submit">Send</button></code>
fieldset/legend	Groups fields	<code><fieldset><legend>Info</legend></fieldset></code>
attrs	required, placeholder, pattern, min, max	<code><input min="1" max="10" required></code>

9. Global attributes and entities

Some attributes work on nearly every element. For accessibility, `aria-*` and `role` fill gaps, though a correct semantic tag beats a patched-on role. Entities print reserved characters as text.

Item	What it does	Example
id	Unique identifier	<code><div id="top"></code>
class	Reusable style hook	<code><p class="lead"></code>
style	Inline CSS	<code><p style="color:red"></code>
title	Hover tooltip	<code><abbr title="..."></code>
data-*	Custom data	<code><li data-id="42"></code>
hidden	Hides element	<code><div hidden></code>
contenteditable	Editable in place	<code><div contenteditable></code>
&amp;	Ampersand (&)	Tom & Jerry
&lt; &gt;	Less/greater than	5 < 9 > 2
&copy;	Copyright symbol	© 2026
&nbsp;	Non-breaking space	10 km

10. Copy-paste templates

Minimal valid HTML5 skeleton

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8">
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1">
  <title>My Page</title>
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Hello</h1>
</body>
</html>
```

Accessible form field

```
<label for="email">Email</label>
<input type="email" id="email" name="email" required>
```

Responsive image

```

```

Semantic page layout

```
<header>
  <nav><a href="/">Home</a></nav>
</header>
<main>
  <article>
    <h1>Post title</h1>
    <p>Body text.</p>
  </article>
</main>
<footer><p>&copy; 2026</p></footer>
```

11. Gotchas and common mistakes

- Always start with `<!DOCTYPE html>`, set lang, declare charset utf-8, add the viewport meta.
- Give every image alt text; empty `alt=""` only for decorative images.
- Label every form input. A placeholder is not a label.
- Choose semantic tags over div soup.
- `<b>/<i>` are visual; `<strong>/<em>` carry meaning.
- Void elements (`img`, `br`, `input`, `meta`, `hr`, `link`) need no closing tag.
- HTML is not case-sensitive, but lowercase is convention.
- `<center>`, `<font>`, and `bgcolor` are deprecated; use CSS.
- Add `loading="lazy"` to below-the-fold images.
- Pair `rel="noopener"` with any `target="_blank"` link.
- Use one `<h1>` per page; never skip heading levels.