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## Best HTML Editors

One of a series of free  
articles from Plain Words



## Web Design (3)

### Best HTML Editors

When you're building websites, an HTML editor is a boon. You can certainly use a plain text editor like Notepad, which comes free with Windows, but to do it that way can be laborious to the point of torture — although it is a good way of learning HTML (the code behind web pages). Similar alternatives like Edit Plus (from [www.editplus.com](http://www.editplus.com)) are slightly more HTML-friendly, and are very quick and efficient.

The debate surrounding HTML editors is whether to use one that edits HTML code directly — much like a plain text editor, but with lots of automation and various high-end features; or to use a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor, which operates very much like a standard word processor.

Basically, the jury is out on this issue. One camp swears by straight HTML editors, arguing that they create clean and precise code that will work well on any browser (presuming, of course, you know your HTML inside out). In addition, remember that What You See Is What You Get is not the same as What You See Is What They Get. The other camp is happier using WYSIWYG editors (despite that fact that they can sometimes “chew” code), insisting they are a faster and more convenient way of creating websites.

In the end, you have to make up your own mind which type of editor to use. Most editors can be downloaded from the Internet for a free evaluation period (usually 30 days). You then buy the one you like best. To help you make a decision on which ones to try out, let's look at a selection of the HTML and WYSIWYG editors generally considered the best by Web developers.

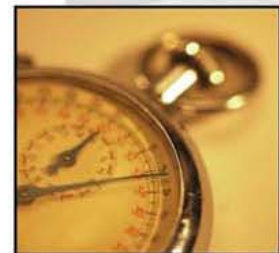
### Macromedia's Dreamweaver

[www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com)

Top-flight web designers and new media agencies tend to use Dreamweaver. It's a WYSIWYG editor, but has ample provision for editing HTML code directly. You can either use the internal editor for this, or use the more powerful Allaire's Homesite editor, bundled with Dreamweaver. The great strength of Dreamweaver is it won't interfere if you edit the HTML code yourself. Most WYSIWYG editors tend to chew up any code you've altered or inserted.

Dreamweaver also has a split-screen option that simultaneously displays the HTML code and the WYSIWYG layout - satisfying HTML purists and a useful feature for those learning HTML.

Another bonus of Dreamweaver is it has a built-in Reference panel, providing context-sensitive information about the proper use of HTML,



Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), and JavaScript. It's very extensive and would prove invaluable to beginner and veteran designers alike.

We mostly use Dreamweaver for "quick and dirty" rapid development of prototype web sites, but it is also useful for developing a template-based system of web page development. You can create a design, and lock it down so that inexperienced users can maintain the content without endangering the design.

### Macromedia's HomeSite

[www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com)

This is a text editor with bells and whistles designed to make hand-coding HTML easy. HomeSite is the tool used to develop the Plain Words web site.

It features a text editor with almost all the extras you would want to efficiently write web pages, and a preview tab that lets you look at the results.

One of HomeSite's strengths is its ability to search and replace across multiple files. Now owned by Macromedia, it was originally developed by a web page designer, and it shows!

HomeSite has a pseudo-WYSIWYG editor that is awful (and is removed from version 5), but otherwise it helps you do the job efficiently, and encourages you to learn what you are doing. It integrates well with Dreamweaver, allowing you to switch between programs "on the fly".

### Evrsoft's 1<sup>st</sup> Page 2000

[www.evrsoft.com](http://www.evrsoft.com)

This seems a shameless copy of HomeSite's functional design, but has one special advantage: it is free!

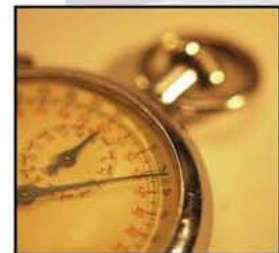
Although there are a few differences, most of the comments about HomeSite apply to 1<sup>st</sup> Page 2000. Unbeatable value for money, and no real drawbacks.

### Hippie 98

[www.troutsoft.com/hippie/](http://www.troutsoft.com/hippie/)

Hippie 98 is an easy-to-use, straight HTML editor - which includes an optional "side-by-side" WYSIWYG style format (you type in the HTML code in one screen and see the result in the screen next to it). Hippie 98 has a big following amongst web developers. Go to the Hippie 98 site and read the customer testimonials to see the level of devotion this HTML editor inspires.

This is not surprising as Hippie 98 is a truly powerful editor. Particularly helpful is its range of wizards that guide you through the creation of tables, forms, JavaScript, style sheets (CSS), image maps, and more. There's also built in FTP software and you can double-check your HTML syntax with the integrated HTML validator screen.



The latest version — Hippy 2001 — will be out sometime this year.

## Microsoft FrontPage 2002

(Comes as part of the Microsoft XP package or can be purchased as standalone)

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/evaluation/guide.htm>

Microsoft FrontPage is a powerful WYSIWYG editor. Most HTML purists loathe FrontPage because it interferes with any code you put in by hand — though the latest 2002 version is less guilty of this. One of FrontPage's main strengths is newbie website builders can create sophisticated sites with little or no knowledge of HTML or other specialist coding. Setting up databases and discussion boards, for example, is simple - you're walked through the whole process.

Unfortunately, all this hand-holding stops you learning how to do it without FrontPage's help, and if you know what you're doing, typing the raw HTML is easier than using the Front Page wizards and menus.

Beware that it is harder to create web pages in Front Page that will work well with browsers other than Microsoft's Internet Explorer, and to make the most of its features you need special features installed on the web server.

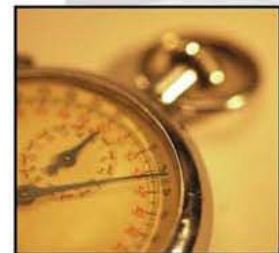
Small to medium-sized business owners, with little or no time to learn HTML, would benefit from FrontPage. It has many sophisticated ecommerce features built in — including the bCentral Commerce Manager (actually an add-in). With a bCentral account, you can create an online product catalogue, process credit card orders, and track your orders through its Order Manager. Another bonus is the Sharepoint Team Services feature, which is essentially an "Intranet in a box". Once you get it up and running, your team members can share information and documents with each other. Plus they can add and edit content straight from within their web browsers — which is a definite boon to any business.

Professional web designers and new media agencies, however, will probably prefer other tools.

## HotDog Professional

[www.sausage.com](http://www.sausage.com)

HotDog is a straight HTML editor, used by many top web designers who are HTML purists. HotDog supports a raft of popular web languages, including HTML, JavaScript, CSS, ASP and VBScript. It also includes a handy HTML Navigation View feature, which is very useful when trying to find your way through large and complex HTML documents. You can view your document as a simplified "tree" structure. This can then be filtered to show all tags, specific tag types, or just major HTML objects.



You can also easily create and edit Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) - and apply them to your web pages. Once you've built up a library of style sheets, you can test them out on new sites as you develop them. Entire sites can be styled with just a point and click.

All in all, if you're an HTML purist, HotDog is very good value for money.

## NetObjects Fusion

[www.netobjects.com](http://www.netobjects.com)

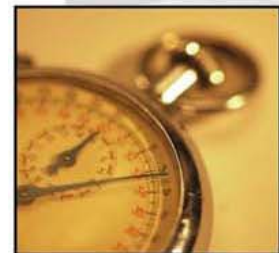
NetObjects Fusion is a WYSIWYG editor - but one that allows you to edit and paste in your own HTML code as well. NetObjects Fusion is very strong on the visual and ecommerce end of websites. You can get an impressive, order-taking site up very quickly. It also has seamless integration with Microsoft Word - you can import Word documents into NetObjects Fusion without losing any formatting, which saves a lot of time.

The novice website builder is also catered for: a whole host of wizards are included, plus there are built in site management tools and an FTP client that lets you transfer your website to a remote server or view it without having to use a separate piece of software.

NetObjects Fusion is a popular choice amongst small businesses, which want to market their products or services online, with minimum hassle.

If anyone has a favourite HTML editor they would like to see mentioned on this page, e-mail me and tell me the reasons why you like it.

[feedback@plainwords.co.uk](mailto:feedback@plainwords.co.uk)



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