

Page Layout with Layers

What is a Layer?

A layer is Dreamweaver's name for a container that can hold any element you would normally place on a web page, for example an image or a group of images. They can be positioned anywhere on screen, and give you control and flexibility over your design.

Until recently page layout was done using invisible **tables** to arrange objects on the screen, but tables can be complex and fiddly to set up and inaccessible.

Nowadays many professional websites use layers of one kind or another.

Layers are not viewable with very old browsers.

Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape 4.0 support layers, but inconsistently, and earlier versions won't show them at all! However, at the time of writing the proportion of users with these older browsers is down to about 0.5%, and falling.



Displaying the Layers Panel

The Layers panel collects all the information about the layers used on your web page. You can use it to hide layers, rename them, and change their stacking order ('Z')

Press the F2 key

The Layers panel will open on the right side of the screen

View the Rulers

The rulers will help you to line up layers properly.

1. *Click on the View menu*
2. *Choose Rulers*
3. *Choose Show*

Display a guide

Even with the rulers on it is sometimes hard to visualise your layers lining up or being in the right part of the screen, use guides to help. The guide is displayed as a line at the measured boundary – where the edge of the screen would be.


1. Click on the View menu
2. Select Guides
3. Choose Show Guides
4. Choose the size of the screen you are designing for

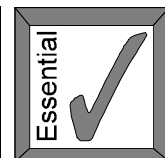
Drawing a layer

1. Click on Layout
 2. Click once on the Draw Layer icon
- 
3. Click and drag on your page
 4. The layer will be inserted and named as Layer 1 in the Layer panel on the right

A layer will appear on the screen

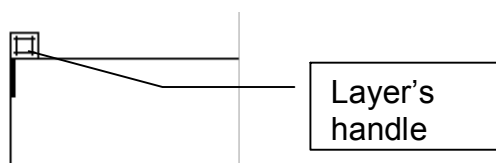
What's the icon that has appeared at the top of the page?

A layer marker  appears at the top of the window. Clicking on it shows the location of the layer in the HTML code. Will need to have Show Invisible Elements on (see page 50)
Also the <div> tag will have appeared in the Status Bar.



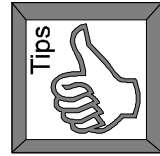
Moving a layer

Click and drag the layer's handle



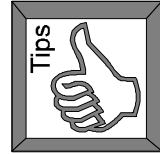
For more precise positioning...

You can type values into the L and T boxes in the Properties panel when the layer is selected. The L value represents a distance from the left side of the page, and the T value distance down from the top of the page.



Units

When typing in LTWH measurements don't leave space between the number and the measurement unit i.e. 10px as some browsers then fail to recognise the amount.



Highlighting a layer vs. highlighting content

It's important to distinguish the difference between selecting a layer and selecting its contents. Keep an eye on the Properties panel (bottom of the screen) to check what you've got highlighted.

Click on the edge of the layer or on its handle

You will see several little black boxes appear around the layer's edge

My layer does not look like this!

Make sure you have Display Styles turned on.

- 1. Click on the View menu*
- 2. Select Style Rendering*
- 3. Choose Display Styles*

