

Layout Tools

When doing page layout in Dreamweaver we don't have the flexibility you might be used to from print design. You can't select an element and just move it anywhere on the page/screen. We're going to look at the layout tools it does offer you (tracing image, layer, table).

A tracing image is a GIF or JPEG image of your full-page design (comp) that you place onto the page and use as a template for positioning individual elements. With that in place you can draw layers on the screen. Layers are absolute positioned DIV tags. Tables can also be used, as we've seen, to hold images and text in place. However, they're not very intuitive when it comes to placing elements precisely on a page.

Tracing Images


We can save our homepage comp to a JPEG and place it into an HTML file in Dreamweaver and use it as a template to build our first page. Let's get started by going to Dreamweaver, creating a New Site with **BarnSite** as the root folder, and opening **index-apdiv.htm**. This is just an empty HTML file that I've already saved.

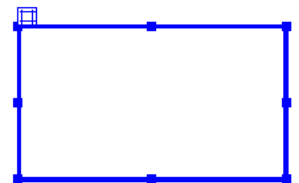
- To place this JPEG as a tracing image we need to click on the **Page Properties** button in the **Properties Inspector**
 - go to the **Tracing Image Category** on the left side and then **Browse** for the image
 - find **BarnSiteTemplate.png** in our images folder and click Choose
 - now let's set the **Transparency** to 50% (to help see elements we place on top) then click OK
- We now have a tracing image placed in our document!

You can now type right on top of that image. It's in the background. In fact, if you preview this in a browser you'll see that it doesn't even show up. It is only a tool in Dreamweaver. It uses an attribute in the code (*tracingsrc*) that only DW understands.

AP DIVs (Absolute Positioned DIV tags)

Everything we've placed on our pages up to this point have been left, center or right aligned. Those have been our only options. Now we're going to look at AP DIVs which you can place in any absolute position on your webpage.



- To insert our first AP DIV, go to the **Insert Menu**, select **Layout Objects** and then select **AP Div** from the submenu
 - this places the AP DIV, shown as a blue box with a handle in the upper left corner; you can click and hold on that handle and drag the AP DIV wherever you want it on the page
 - you can also use the arrow keys on your keyboard to nudge it a pixel at a time and you can use the corner and side handles to resize it appropriately
 - also in the **Properties Inspector** we can give it an appropriate name (it is *apDiv1* by default)
- To insert an image into the AP DIV we first click inside the blue box
 - now go to the **Insert Menu** and select **Image** (then browse for the image on your hard drive)
- If you find it challenging to align your AP DIVs, you can drag **Guidelines** out from the rulers; just click your mouse on a ruler, hold the button down and drag it to the location you want it, then let go of the mouse button
- To place our next AP DIV let's click on the **Draw AP Div button** in the **Layout Section** of the **Insert Bar**  (2nd from left)
 - this turns your cursor into a crosshair with which you can draw the size and placement of your AP DIV
 - this time let's use an AP DIV to hold our main text content
- You can also add CSS styling to your AP DIVs in the **CSS Styles Panel**; you'll notice that Dreamweaver has automatically added CSS Rules for each AP DIV which contain their size and placement info



- This is very cool (drag-and-drop placement of images), but has a major limitation. As we've looked at it everything has to be in a fixed position and all left-justified. This is very limiting because most webpages are centered in the browser window (that tends to look much better with varying widths of browser windows).
 - One small change will fix this limitation. First you have to make sure that the AP DIV(s) you are creating sit within another DIV. The easiest way to do this is to create a New HTML File and select one of the Layouts that have a large, centered DIV.
 - Now create your AP DIV within the outer DIV and place it where you want it. However, if you resize the DW window you'll see that its placement changes relative to the outer DIV.
 - To fix it, click on the outer DIV and in the CSS Panel add a new rule --> position: relative
 - The AP DIV already has a rule of position: absolute, so now it has an absolute position relative to the outer DIV; you may need to adjust its position so that it's where you want it
 - Resize your DW window and see that it holds its position

Layout Tables

Layout Tables are a simple approach to laying out webpages. We will be looking at an easier way to create them (utilizing Fireworks), but first I want you to get a basic feel for them in Dreamweaver. To get started we need to open *index-table.htm*

- To get started we need to change into Layout Mode by going to the **View menu**, selecting **Table Mode** and then selecting **Layout Mode** from the submenu. The first time you enter this mode you'll get a message explaining how to create layout tables. (*View > Table Mode > Layout Mode*)
- Now in the **Layout Section** of our **Insert Bar** we have two new buttons. **Draw Layout Table**  and **Draw Layout Cell**  (located on the far right end)
- We must have a Layout Table before we can add Layout Cells, so let's start by drawing a Layout Table.
 - click on the **Draw Layout Table button** and create a Layout Table that covers the entire area of our webpage
 - now we can click on the **Draw Layout Cell button** and draw layout cells anywhere that we want content (fortunately we don't have to figure out how many columns we need, etc. DW will do that for us)
 - we continue to select the **Draw Layout Cell button** and draw a new cell for each element until we have them all (*if you hold the Command (aka Apple) key down while you draw you won't have to reselect the button each time*)
- Dreamweaver has created a table for us with the cells sized and placed precisely where we need them
- Now we can place images or type text into the various table cells and style them appropriately
- If a cell needs to be moved, just select the edge of it and drag to its new location. If you need to adjust its size, click on one of the corner or side dots and drag to resize.