

The Basic Rules of XHTML

As we have said before there is a definite need to write good valid code, and the W3C has made sure that this is possible. Not only should you check your overall site for spelling, grammar, but you should also make sure that you have been writing code according to the rules. But what are these rules? They are simple and few. If you can remember and stick to these rules, you will never have an invalid page.

The 6 Rules of XHTML 1.0

DTD - All valid XHTML documents must have a DTD. This will not be much of a problem since you already have a DTD done for you in your template.

Nesting - All valid XHTML documents must have their tags properly nested. There's that word again! To see how to avoid this look at the example below:

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">
<html>
  <head>
    <title>      </title>

<body>

  </head>

</body>
</html>
```

The problem here is that the tags overlap. The **<head>** tag should have been closed after the closing **</title>** tag.

Tag Case - All element tags must be in lower case. Even though in HTML 4.0 tags were not case sensitive, the W3C decided that they should be for future compatibility with a technology called XML. Your tags will still work in most browsers if they are uppercase, but to be compatible for the future better follow the specification.

Attribute Values - All attributes must have a value. It seems silly to say because most attributes should have a value anyway. If you think back to the example from the last lesson:

```
<p align="center">This text would be center aligned </p>
```

Why would you even bother putting the style attribute in there if you didn't want to specify a color? This rule is in effect since in HTML 4.0 there were some attributes that you could include to do something, and then leave them empty, and they would still do something. This will also cause problems in the future, and so the W3C has outlawed this as well.

Quotes - All attribute values must be in quotes. In HTML 4.0 quotes around a value were optional, but code could become confusing since browsers didn't know where the value name ended. With all values in quotation marks, everything would be clear.

Termination - All elements must be properly terminated. Again, in older versions of HTML, closing your tags was optional. In fact in current browsers, your page may still render properly without closing tags, but by following the rules, you can be sure that it will in all browsers. This is also true for tags that are not container tags. They must be self-terminated using a space and a closing slash before the closing wicket.

```
<p> This must be closed </p>
```

```
<br />
```