

# Web page backgrounds

The simple way to add a background to a web page is to use the Modify menu in Dreamweaver and in the Properties panel select a colour or enter an image file name.

This method works fine in many circumstances but is regarded as old-fashioned now and may offend those who prefer to see all web pages using CSS code and meeting W3C standards. There are also some other very good reasons for learning another way to do this.

## Tiling

This is the term used for the way an image is repeated across and down a web page. A texture, for example, may be just one small area that is copied across and down a page and no matter how big a page gets, the images keep on getting copied by the browser.

When you have a large image, however, maybe something more pictorial than a texture, then you really don't want it to repeat. The same would be true of the graphic image that has a gradient or any image where the left and right edges (or top and bottom edges or both) do not match. So when you place one next to another there is a clear stop-start line.

## Position

The background to a web page stretches across the whole browser area, however big or small. Even if you have a specially-sized design it cannot be positioned properly and may vary in appearance from window to window. CSS code can help fix where an image is placed.

## Gradients

Gradient backgrounds are those which fade from one colour to another, or just fade out, over a distance, either horizontally or vertically. They are achieved by tiling either a thin vertical strip across the background from left to right or a thin horizontal strip tiling down the screen. Occasionally you may encounter large, supposedly 'screen-size' images too when neither of the thin strip solutions appear to work.

The problem is that you don't know how wide or long the page will be in a browser window. Everyone has different settings, toolbars, monitor resolutions etc. You could try and cater for the 1600x1200 resolution user and for pages that might be deep, say up to 3000 pixels or so. But whilst your gradient or carefully chosen image might look fine at the high end, at lower browser window dimensions visitors may only see part of the effect. Cater for the low dimension end and you'll have those repeating edges again.

CSS offers a solution whereby you can ensure that the image is repeated just once in one direction and then you have a colour that continues thereafter. The colour, if chosen to match the final colour of the gradient will look fine. For the big image backgrounds there is not a lot of hope but you can, at least, position them, say, centrally so that there is some consistency of appearance should the browser window exceed the image dimensions.

## The CSS solution

To add any CSS code in a document, in code view add the following in the <head> section  
**<style type="text/css">**  
*your code will go between these lines*  
**</style>**

In the samples below, you would replace *bgdesert.jpg* with the appropriate image filename (and comparative location to the page. Here the file is located in the same folder as the page.

## Web page backgrounds

External urls can also be used to borrow another site's background – although there are several reasons why that may not be the best of ideas!

1 A colour or image that tiles

```
body
{
background: #00ff00
url('bgdesert.jpg')
}
```

2 A gradient that starts with one colour and fades to another vertically

```
body
{
background-image:
url('bgdesert.jpg');
background-repeat: repeat-y
}
```

3 A gradient that fades horizontally

```
body
{
background-image:
url('bgdesert.jpg');
background-repeat: repeat-x
}
```

4 An image that does not tile – either horizontally, vertically or neither, appearing just once.

```
body
{
background-image: url('bgdesert.jpg');
background-repeat: no-repeat
}
```

5 An image that stays where it is but other page content scrolls past it.

```
body
{
background-image:
url('smiley.gif');
background-repeat:
no-repeat;
background-attachment:
fixed
}
```

All properties contained in one declaration might look like this:

```
body
{
background: #00ff00 url('smiley.gif') no-repeat fixed center;
}
```

## Types of file

To be absolutely sure that the image will appear as you want across browsers you really should restrict file types to either jpg or gif. However, png files are popular and sometimes the only way to achieve what you want. The main problem with png files is that IE6 can't handle them and the transparent areas look odd, often dingy grey or brown.

## Web page backgrounds

If your image comprises just a few colours – i.e there is no gradual fade which requires lots and lots of shades – and it needs to be transparent, or have ‘see-through’ areas then a gif is likely to be the first choice. Try that and then, if that doesn’t work, try a png.

Any image requiring lots of colours – photos, gradients etc., should be a jpg or a png. The only advantage of png will be its ability to handle transparency which jpg cannot. Generally, jpg files are much smaller than png files, another reason for the jpg selection if possible.

### Sample area

At the link below there is an excellent area where you can experiment with different code and see the results instantly on-line.

[http://www.w3schools.com/css/tryit.asp?filename=trycss\\_background](http://www.w3schools.com/css/tryit.asp?filename=trycss_background)