Understanding HTML Structure

Introduction

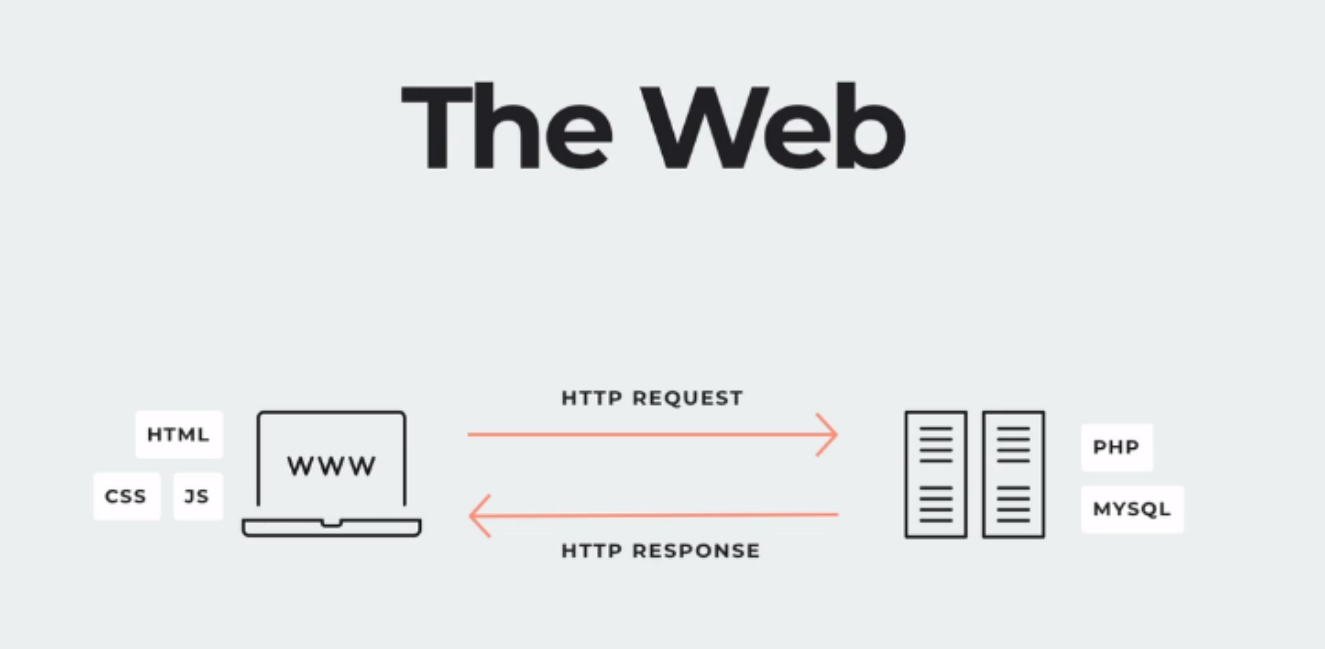
Welcome to the first lesson of the Divi Stylist Academy Module 3. In this module, we will start to learn how to write our custom CSS code. However, it is not possible to learn CSS properly without understanding the HTML language structure. So that is what we are going to focus on in this lesson.

HTML - the foundation of every website

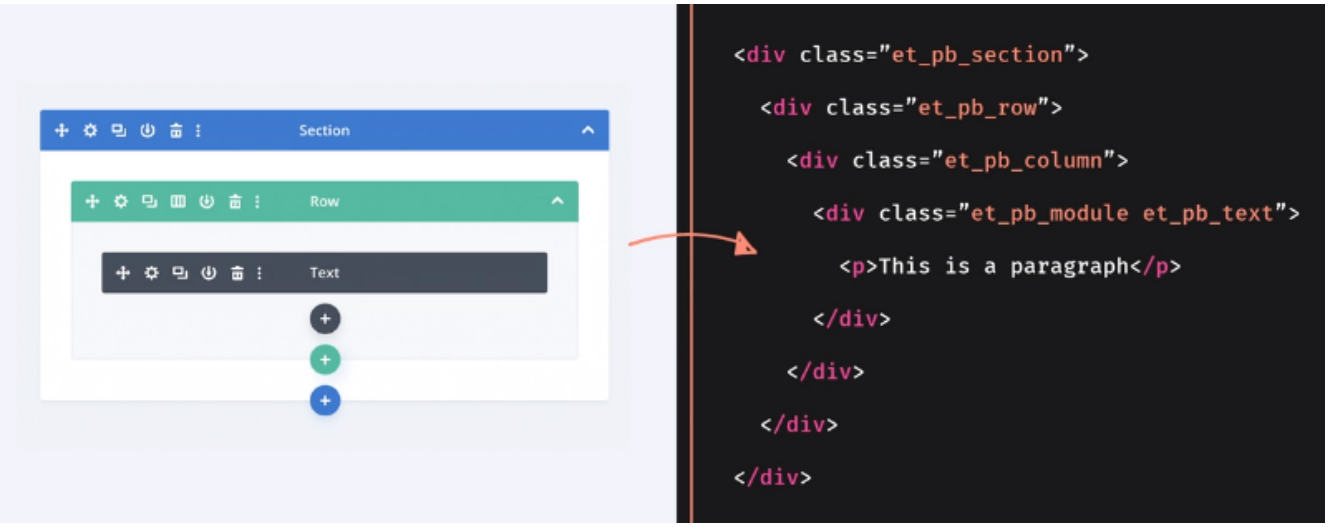
So first, it may seem obvious to some of you, but I do need to make it clear: HTML is the foundation of every website you see online. No matter the tool or the way it has been built.

So if we are using WordPress and Divi, we are using HTML. But let's just take a tiny step back and see how the process works.

When we enter the domain name in the browser, the browser connects with the server. And on the server, we have our PHP code, all the files used to build the website, so PHP WordPress functions, Divi PHP templates, our database, MySQL database - all that PHP code is handled by our servers. These are the server-side languages. And once the server figures out what we ask it to do with the PHP, it outputs the HTML version of the code and sends it to our browser.



Now, the browser is responsible for reading that HTML - and CSS and JavaScript code the HTML may include - and these are client-side languages. In other words: when we are using the Builder, we are basically asking Divi (and WordPress) to generate that HTML code for us.



Let's take a look at this layout. This would be a simplified HTML version of it. A div with an et_pb_module class, which is inside a div with an et_pb_column, which is inside et_pb_row, and so on. I know that looking at the code for the first time might be a bit overwhelming, but don't worry, we'll figure it out step by step.

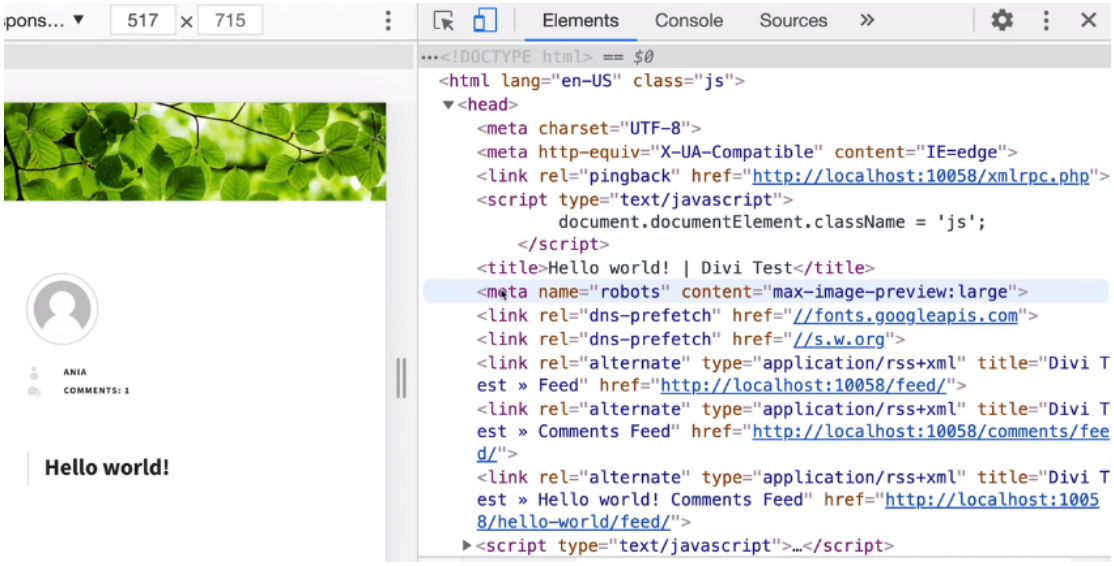
HTML document structure

We want to understand the HTML version of your page that is rendered by the browser. You don't need to know how to write what I'm showing you, but you will find it helpful if you can see it clearly and understand what is what.

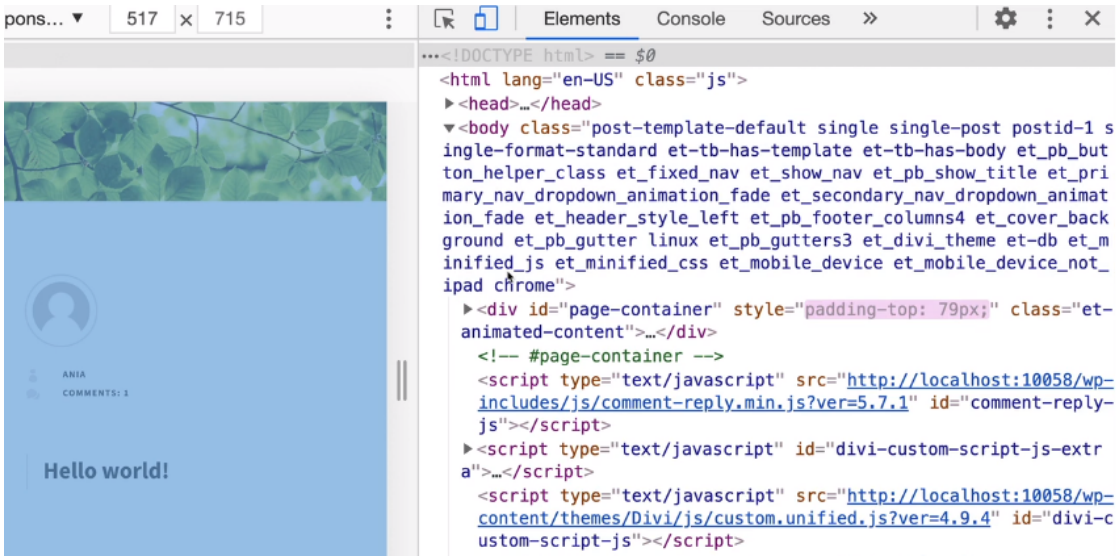
```
<!DOCTYPE html>

<html>

    <head>

        <title>My Website</title>

    </head>

    <body>

        <h1>Hello!</h1>
        <p>Welcome to my website</p>

    </body>

</html>
```

So this is a base structure for any HTML document. HTML uses a sandwich-like structure. The main <HTML> tag holds two elements: the <head> and the <body> tag.

The <head> of the document is where you'll see your website title and everything that needs to be rendered first, so links to scripts, styles, tracking code (like Google Analytics or FB pixel), and also <meta> tags, which hold information visible only to search engines, like your website title and description.



Now the <body> tag contains all the content that is displayed on the page, including text, images, videos, or whatever else.



HTML5 introduced a lot of new semantic tags, like <nav>, <article>, <header>, <section>, or a <footer> tag, and you might see them when you inspect your Divi website, but what you see the most is probably a non-semantic tag.

HTML tag

Looking closer at the HTML tag, we have the opening tag, which consists of the name of the element (in this example, p for paragraph), and it's wrapped in opening and closing angle brackets.

This opening tag marks where the element begins or starts to take effect. In this example, it precedes the start of the paragraph text.

Next, we have the content: this is the content of the element. In this example, it is the paragraph text. And lastly - the closing tag: this is the same as the opening tag, except that it includes a forward slash / before the element name. This marks where the element ends.

```
<p>Welcome to my website</p>
```

Failing to include a closing tag is a common beginner error that can produce peculiar results. So to recap: an HTML element is the opening tag, followed by content, followed by the closing tag.

HTML nesting

And like I said: HTML uses the sandwich-like structure, and elements can be placed within other elements. This is called **nesting**. If we wanted to state: "The Divi Theme is **very** cool", we could wrap the word "very" in a element, which means that the word is to have strong(er) text formatting: Divi Theme isvery cool

```
<p>Divi Theme is <strong>very</strong> cool</p>
```

There is a right and a wrong way to do nesting. In the above example, we opened the p element first, then we opened the strong element. For proper nesting, we should close the strong element first, before closing the p.

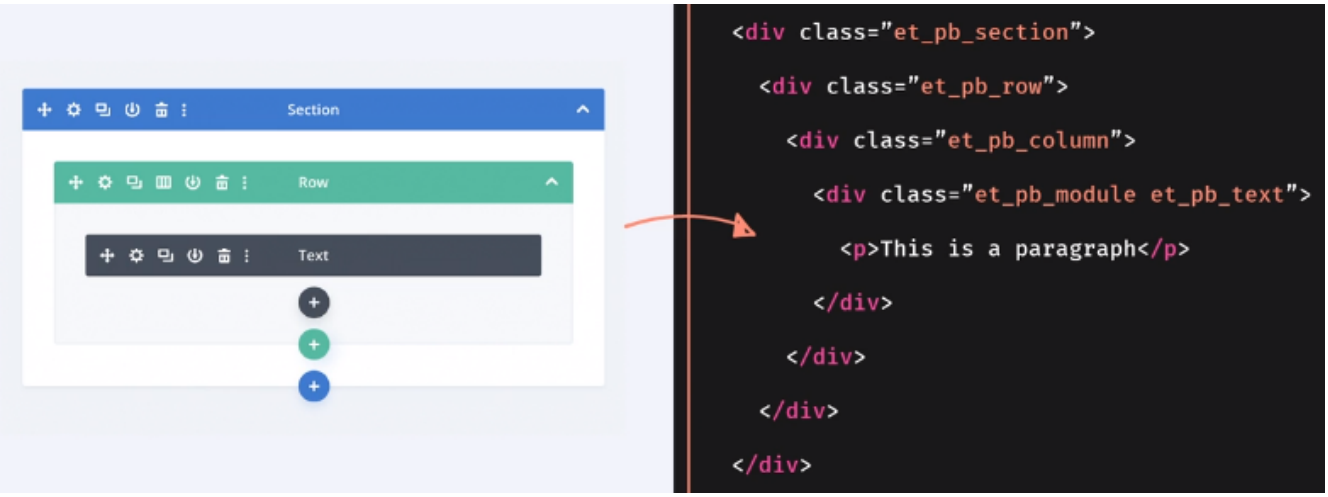
And the following would be an example of the wrong way to do nesting: Divi Theme isvery cool

```
<p>Divi Theme is <strong>very cool</p></strong>
```

The tags have to open and close in a way that they are inside or outside one another. With the kind of overlap in the example here, the browser has to guess what your intent was. This kind of guessing can result in unexpected results.

Simplified HTML generated by Divi

Now, if we go back to the HTML generated by Divi, I think it should look much clearer. Let's take a look at it again.



We have a div with an et_pb_section, that is a parent container, a parent div of an element div with a class et_pb_row. And inside the row, we have a div element for our column with the class et_pb_column, and there is a div module inside holding the <p> tag with paragraph text.

So hopefully that is helpful, and in the next lesson we'll look into HTML tags in more detail.

Resources

FREE CODE EDITORS:

Visual Studio

Sublime Text

Action Items

- ☐ Install a code editor to use for writing custom code if you don't have one already installed.