



Using Headers and Footers

What are headers and footers?

After browsing around our website enough, you'll probably notice that while part of the page changes (i.e. the text in the middle), other parts don't (the top bar and links to the left). In fact, if you were to look at the HTML code for each page, you'll notice that the top few lines are exactly the same.

Did we make copies of the same page for each page on our site? Not exactly, since doing that would cause all sorts of problems in the future. For example, what if we want to add/remove a link, or correct a spelling mistake we didn't catch? If we made separate copies of each page, we would have to make the corrections to every page on our site (and yes, that's a lot of pages). Not exactly my idea of fun, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels that way.

What did we do instead? We made use of what we like to call headers and footers. Recall what I said earlier about the top few lines of our page's HTML being the same on every page. If you check out the HTML again, the same holds true for the last few lines of the page as well. The static top part is called the header, and the static bottom part is called the footer.

So you're probably asking yourself "That's great, but now what?". Well, imagine if you could detach the header and footer parts of the page and put them into separate files. Then, for each page on your site, have the webserver automatically reattach the contents of the header and footer files to the pages before displaying them. That way if you wanted to update the top or bottom parts of the page, all you'd have to edit is a single file and the changes will appear on every page on your site.

How do I do it?

As it turns out, there's a variety of ways you can do this that are extremely easy once you understand what is going on. In the following example, we'll have a shot at doing this to a very simple page. Note that the majority of the templates on our site are laid out in a similar fashion to the example below, so you should be able to apply this to any template you purchase from us that doesn't use frames.

1. Divide up your page

Open up the HTML file for your page and take a look at the code. Below is our sample code:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>My page</title>
</head>
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
<h1>Welcome to my page!</h1>
<table width="100%">
```

```

<tr>
  <td valign="TOP">
    <a href="home.html">Home</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="about.html">About Me</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="links.html">Links</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="mailto:me@localhost">Contact</a>
  </td>
  <td valign="TOP">
    Hi there. You've stumbled across my
    homepage. Feel free to look around!
    Have fun!!!
  </td>
</tr>
</table>
</body>
</html>

```

We need to figure out which line ends our header, where our content area is (i.e. the part that changes), and which line starts our footer. The easiest way to figure this out is to ask yourself this question: Which part of this page would I change to change the actual content of the page? Once you figure that out, everything before the content would be your header's ending line, and everything after the content would be your footer's starting line. Look at the following highlighted version of the code above to see what we chose:

```

<html>
<head>
<title>My page</title>
</head>
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
<h1>Welcome to my page!</h1>
<table width="100%">
<tr>
  <td valign="TOP">
    <a href="home.html">Home</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="about.html">About Me</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="links.html">Links</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="mailto:me@localhost">Contact</a>
  </td>
  <td valign="TOP">
    Hi there. You've stumbled across my
    homepage. Feel free to look around!
    Have fun!!!
  </td>
</tr>
</table>
</body>
</html>

```

```
</table>
</body>
</html>
```

We see that the text beginning with "Hi there..." and ending with "...Have fun!!!" is what we'd change to change our page's content (coloured blue). Therefore the header goes from the first line of the file to the line just above our content (coloured orange), and the footer goes from the line after the content to the end of the file (coloured in green). Now that we know where both the header and footer are, we're ready for the next step.

2. Copy the header/footer text to separate files

Ok, now that we know where everything is we have to copy the appropriate lines to separate files. We'll move the lines of the header to a file named *header.html* and move the lines of the footer to a file named *footer.html*. Below are the contents of each file:

Contents of *header.html*:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>My page</title>
</head>
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
<h1>Welcome to my page!</h1>
<table width="100%">
<tr>
  <td valign="TOP">
    <a href="home.html">Home</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="about.html">About Me</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="links.html">Links</a>
    <br><br>
    <a href="mailto:me@localhost">Contact</a>
  </td>
  <td valign="TOP">
```

Contents of *footer.html*:

```
</td>
</tr>
</table>
</body>
</html>
```

We now have our header and footer files, ready to go. The next step is to tell the webserver to attach these files to each page.

3. Getting the header/footer to display on your pages

Recall from the previous step where we moved the header/footer text to separate files. This left us with *header.html*, *footer.html*, and a rather bland page with just our content:

```
Hi there. You've stumbled across my
homepage. Feel free to look around!
Have fun!!!
```

We're now going to tell the webserver to include the contents of *header.html* and *footer.html* with the above page. To do this, we place a line at the top of the page that tells the server to include *header.html*, and a line at the end of the page that tells the server to include *footer.html*. There are several ways to do this nowadays. The first is to use **Server Side Includes (SSI)**, which is demonstrated as follows:

```
<!--#include file="header.html" -->
    Hi there. You've stumbled across my
    homepage. Feel free to look around!
    Have fun!!!
<!--#include file="footer.html" -->
```

Since we're using SSI, we have to save the file with the *.shtml* extension to let the webserver know that the page uses SSI to include files.

Another way to do this is to use a scripting language like **PHP**, where including files doesn't differ too much from the SSI method. If your server supports PHP, you can do the same thing with the following code:

```
<?php include("header.html"); ?>
    Hi there. You've stumbled across my
    homepage. Feel free to look around!
    Have fun!!!
<?php include("footer.html"); ?>
```

If you use PHP for this you'll need to save each of your pages with the *.php* extension (or whatever extension your server expects for files containing PHP code -- ask your webmaster if in doubt).

If your web server runs Microsoft IIS and supports ASP, you can use the following code:

```
<!--#include file="header.html" -->
    Hi there. You've stumbled across my
    homepage. Feel free to look around!
    Have fun!!!
<!--#include file="footer.html" -->
```

Notice the code is the same as that for SSI. However, as with PHP, you'll need to save your pages with the special *.asp* extension in order for this to work.

After uploading this page and our header/footer files, taking a look at the page now shows

the whole page, complete with the contents of our header and footer files. Now for every page you want the header/footer to appear on just do as we did above. You can also edit your header.html and footer.html and have the changes affect every page on your site. Cool, eh?

If you need more help, be sure to check out our [other guides](#), our [frequently asked questions](#), or feel free to [contact us](#).