

Make it easier for your website visitors to print a screen

Websites these days are well designed for the screen. Much thought is given to the layout of main text boxes, menus, images and ads. But the article you want to read is hidden in a narrow scrolling text box, while the menus and ads take up most of the room. Long articles may be broken up into several pages that you have to click on to get to the next.

Printing from the screen

Most of us don't really enjoy reading long articles on screen. We'd rather print them off to read under more comfortable conditions. If you just click on the print button, you get a text that is designed too wide for a paper page, or the page is covered with ads and menus, leaving your article in a single narrow column down several pages. Sometimes you have to mark the text in a scrolling box to be able to print it. If the web designer has thought about her users, she may provide a separate print version that eliminates some of the ads and menus.

media="print"

There is another way to provide a print version of your website. If you specify media="print" in a link to a Print Style Sheet in the html head, the newest browsers automatically select it when printing the page.

If you are already using a Cascading Style Sheet, you're half way there. Just create a Print Style Sheet that provides positioning and color appropriate for print, leaving off the menus and ads. In the Head section of the html document, add a new style sheet tag with the media attribute set to print.

```
<link rel="stylesheet" href="print.css" type="text/css" media="print" />
```



Print Style Sheet

The print style sheet is a regular .css file that specifies styles for all the tags. The <div> tag is especially useful here.

If you do not specify width and margins, the text will fill the normal page. Otherwise you can use regular positioning attributes to set up the print page as well.

Always specify the background-color attribute as white, as this does not print. You can set some of the <div>s to a color if you want. Note that you are not limited to web-safe colors on a print style sheet. Usually, you set the color attribute for the fonts to black as well. You can change the color for headings or some of the <div>s later in the cascade. Since this is a print document, specify the body font as a serif font, instead of the sans-serif font you used on the web page.

```
body {background-color:rgb(255,255,255); color:rgb(0,0,0); font-family:georgia, serif; font-size:10pt}
```

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Set the headings to appropriate print sizes, and maybe a different color. Heading fonts are often sans-serif. Remember to use print sizes like pt, rather than pixels.

```
h1,h2, h3,
a.heading {color:darkgreen;
font-family:verdana, sans-serif;
font-weight:bold;}
h1 {font-size:14pt;}
h2 {font-size:12pt;}
```

Linked text you may want to print as normal text, rather than underlined blue.

```
a {color:black;
text-decoration:none;}
```

If you want to print the actual links, place these in a separate div that you set to no display on the screen .css as in the following sample,

```
<a href="http://www.eco-label.com"> Ecolabel
<div class="printref"> (http://www.eco-label.com)</div>
</a>
```

which prints:

Ecolabel (<http://www.eco-label.com>)

Navigational elements from the webpage that have no function in a print document can be set not to display.

```
a.back {display:none;}
div.menu {display:none;}
```

You can set images to float right or left, or give more specific placement attributes.

```
div.img {float:right;}
```

I have tried out all of this with my experimental webpage at http://www.byelverton.net/sustainable_business/. Click on Print Preview in the File menu to see how this style sheet works. You can find links to the style sheets in the About section. I've added a print style sheet to my regular website at www.byelverton.net as well. One style sheet for the entire site.

If you have already set up the site with ample tags, it is an easy matter to create a second style sheet, which will simplify the printing process for your readers. Since the concept is so new, you might mention it to them.

The media attribute is a comma-separated list of one or more types of media in which the HTML document may appear (all, aural, braille, handheld, print, projection, screen, tv, and tty). Try out some of the other versions as well if you have the proper media to view (or hear) them

Bonnie Yelverton

Inland Empire STC

Upland, CA