Basic Pages and Formatting

Today will be writing and formatting text, inserting images, and introduction of tables.

What is a web page?
For our purposes, a web page is a set of instructions which are downloaded from another computer (we'll call it a "server") to the computer of the person reading the web page (we'll call it a "client"). The basic pages that we use are written in a very simple programming language called "HTML", HyperText Markup Language. HTML is a stripped-down version of another language called XML which lurks behind the scenes in a lot of software.

What is Dreamweaver?
HTML can be written using any normal word processor or editor, but it can be very tedious to write:
 <bold> This is what <italic>HTML</italic> looks like.</bold></p>
when all you wanted was **This is what *HTML* looks like.**
and it would be quite prone to errors (although understanding HTML can be extremely useful for diagnosing and fixing problems).

Dreamweaver allows you to write and format HTML easily in a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) environment. Indeed, what you see on the screen is a close approximation of what the final page will look at, but it's not always perfect. The main competitor in this area is Adobe's Go Live, also an excellent piece of software but considerably more difficult to use.

What is a web browser?
Firefox, Safari, Explorer, Opera, and others are the software that receives files from a web server (such as www.uoregon.edu) and displays them on your screen. We'll call it and similar software "web browsers" or simply "browsers". We prefer Firefox and Safari, but Opera is a reasonable alternative. Internet Explorer is best avoided unless necessary for Windows updates on the Microsoft web site, whcih doesn't affect us Mac users.

Design Philosphy
Our design philosophy is to keep pages simple so that they work on all computers, all browsers, and load quickly. In a later lesson we'll look at how to optimize pages so that they load more quickly. The other advantage to this KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) philosophy is that it's very easy to maintain and modify pages without any special knowledge or tools. Furthermore, by keeping it simple and by not imposing too much control over the page, we can ensure that the page displays well on all computers.

Getting Started
After starting Dreamweaver, open a new file:
  File menu>>New...*: Basic Page - HTML >>Create [*or Command-N}
  This is the shorthand we'll use, meaning:
  In the file menu, drop down to "new file". In the dialogue box that results, pick "Basic Page" and "HTML, then and "Create".

It's good practice in all software to immediately name the file by saving it, and in this case we

want to create a new folder for this web page:
> File>>Save As*: [*or Shift-Command S]
>> "New Folder" on your desktop called "___'s web page"
>> Name the file "index.html" or "index.htm"

Entering Text
Type in a title, then return. Note that when you press the return key, Dreamweaver enters a blank line. Now type in a couple of sentences.

Formatting Text
Experiment with formatting using the Properties window at the bottom of the screen: Put the cursor anywhere in the first line that you typed, which is intended as a title. In Properties -- Format, experiment with H1, H2, H3, etc. These are all Headings of various sizes. Headings, paragraphs, alignment, etc. can only be changed for an entire paragraph.

Now try using the Bold, Italic and alignment buttons in the Properties box. They work exactly as you would expect, and work on any amount of selected text.

Fornts and Sizes
This is trickier. It is possible to specify fonts and sizes very precisely, but it is a bad idea, because the text will not display properly on some computers. I strongly recommend using only the following settings for fonts and sizes:

Fonts:
> Default Font
> Ariel, Helvetica, sans serif
> Times New Roman, Times, serif
> Courier new, Courier, mono
> Verndana, Ariel, Helvetica, sans serif

Sizes (just think shirts):
> none
> x-small
> small
> medium
> large
> x-large

> and it's best to not specify, especially size, unless needed, or use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), covered in a later lesson.

<p> and <br>, spaces
Remember that some formatting (headings, alignment) apply to the whole paragraph. Other formatting applies to just the selected text (bold, italic, fonts, etc.). An important formatting tool is the use of carriage returns and spaces. How is this accomplished in Dreamweaver?

When you hit return, Dreamweaver inserts a <p> or paragraph break in the HTML, and **two** returns (one blank line) in the display. For a single carriage return, you can use Shift-Enter or Shift-Return, which inserts an HTML
 (for Break>. However, this doesn't allow you to shift Header or Alignment settings.

Similarly, you may have noticed that Dreamweaver only allows you to enter one space character in a row. What if you want more? Simply hold down Option and type a space (Option-Space), and Dreamweaver will insert   in the HTML. (Why ? It's short for non-breaking space, if you want to know.)

Images
Images are very easy to insert and manipulate if they are in the JPEG (or .jpg) or GIF (or .gif) or PING (.png) formats and if the image is in the same folder (or a folder within) as the file you are working on.
        Insert>>Image, then choose the image file

You can manipulate the size quite easily as well by holding down the shift key and dragging the lower right corner of the image. The shift key constrains the proportions of the image to keep it from looking strange.

Lists
Enter a series of words or phrases separated by "Return".
Select all of the series.
Click on the "Ordered List" or "Unordered List" icon (right below the align left and align center icons). Cool! Now try the other one.

Tables
Just on your own, try experiementing with tables.
        Insert>>Table [or Command-Option T]

For now, leave "Header" at "None", and everything below "Header" blank. Try different settings, putting text in different boxes, and so forth. Try grabbing and dragging the separation lines between cells.

Preview in Browser
This is an essential part of web authoriing. First, save your file if you haven't do so already:
        File>>Save [or Command-S]
Then
        File>>Preview in Browser>>Firefox.app or Safari.app [or F-12]

and voila, there is how your file displays in your favorite browser.

Assignment
Your assignment for next week is to create a basic personal home page. At a minimum, it has to have a heading, two paragraphs, an image, a table, and a list. Remember that paragraphs, headings, images, and lists can be in the cells of a table! Send me the file as an e-mail attachment no later than Monday morning.