Dreamweaver Basics

Mindy McAdams, Professor, Knight Chair in Journalism
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

E-mail: mmcadams@jou.ufl.edu
Home page: http://mindymcadams.com/

If you use a good HTML editor program such as Macromedia Dreamweaver, you can build Web pages that look great and conform to current professional guidelines. You can also use Dreamweaver to declare and apply CSS styles.

Getting Dreamweaver

You can download a free 30-day trial version of Dreamweaver from the [Macromedia Web site](#). (**Note:** The newest version is Dreamweaver 8.) The program includes tutorial "movies" and also some good interactive lessons to help you learn how to use the software. If you decide to buy Dreamweaver, check the price for Macromedia Studio: It includes Dreamweaver and several other programs, including Flash Professional. The educational pricing is *excellent*. (Check prices at [JourneyEd.com](#).)

Elements of Dreamweaver

You should be comfortable finding and using these tools and objects in Dreamweaver (there are many more, but these are essential):

CSS Styles: A *panel* that allows you to apply styles (fonts, colors, alignment) to your Web page. Part of the **Design** panel group in older versions of Dreamweaver; part of the **CSS** panel group in Dreamweaver 8.

Document toolbar: Above the *document window*. Buttons on the left side allow you to show and hide (Code View/Design View) the HTML code for the page, and a button farther to the right allows you to preview your new Web page in the browser(s) of your choice.

Document window: The large window in which you create a Web page. At the top of this window, you can see tabs for each document (Web page or CSS file) you have open—very convenient when you are working with many documents open at one time.

Files panel: This is where you manage your local and remote Web pages and other Web files. Part of the **Files** panel group. It is crucial that you "define a site" properly (see below) in Dreamweaver before you start to create pages. The contents of the defined site are visible in this panel.

Insert bar: A row of icons between the menu bar and the *document toolbar* that let you insert objects into your Web page without typing code. Use these to

insert a new table, a new image, or an e-mail link, for example. A drop-down menu provide access to different sets of icons. Normally, the open menu is "Common."

Panels: Small, detachable windows, like the "palettes" in Photoshop. Panels are clumped into panel groups. If you can't find a panel group, use the Window menu to open the panel group.

Properties panel: A *panel* (usually near the bottom of the screen) that lets you set attributes for objects, such as images, and also create new links in your text. You can use it to change the attributes of a table. It shows the attributes of whatever object is selected in the *document window*.

Tag selector: Click a tag here to edit it in the *Properties panel.* The tag selector appears on the bottom edge of the *document window,* on the left side. Always use this for precise control in applying CSS styles to an element.
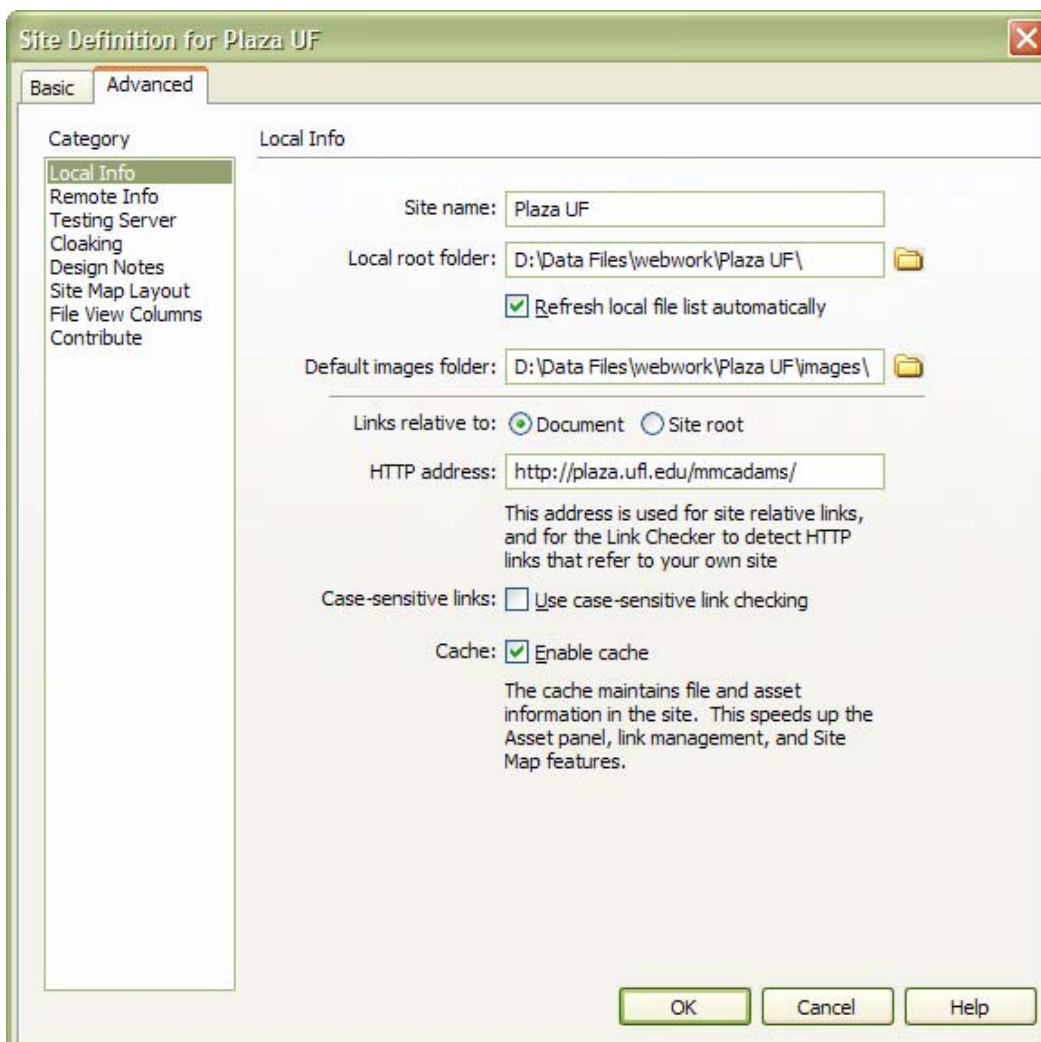
Setting Up Dreamweaver

First, create or decide on a *single folder* on your hard drive that will contain ALL your Web site files. In the lab, create a folder for yourself on the network drive.

Most beginners have only one Web site. Only *one folder* on your hard drive should contain *all of the folders and files* for that Web site.
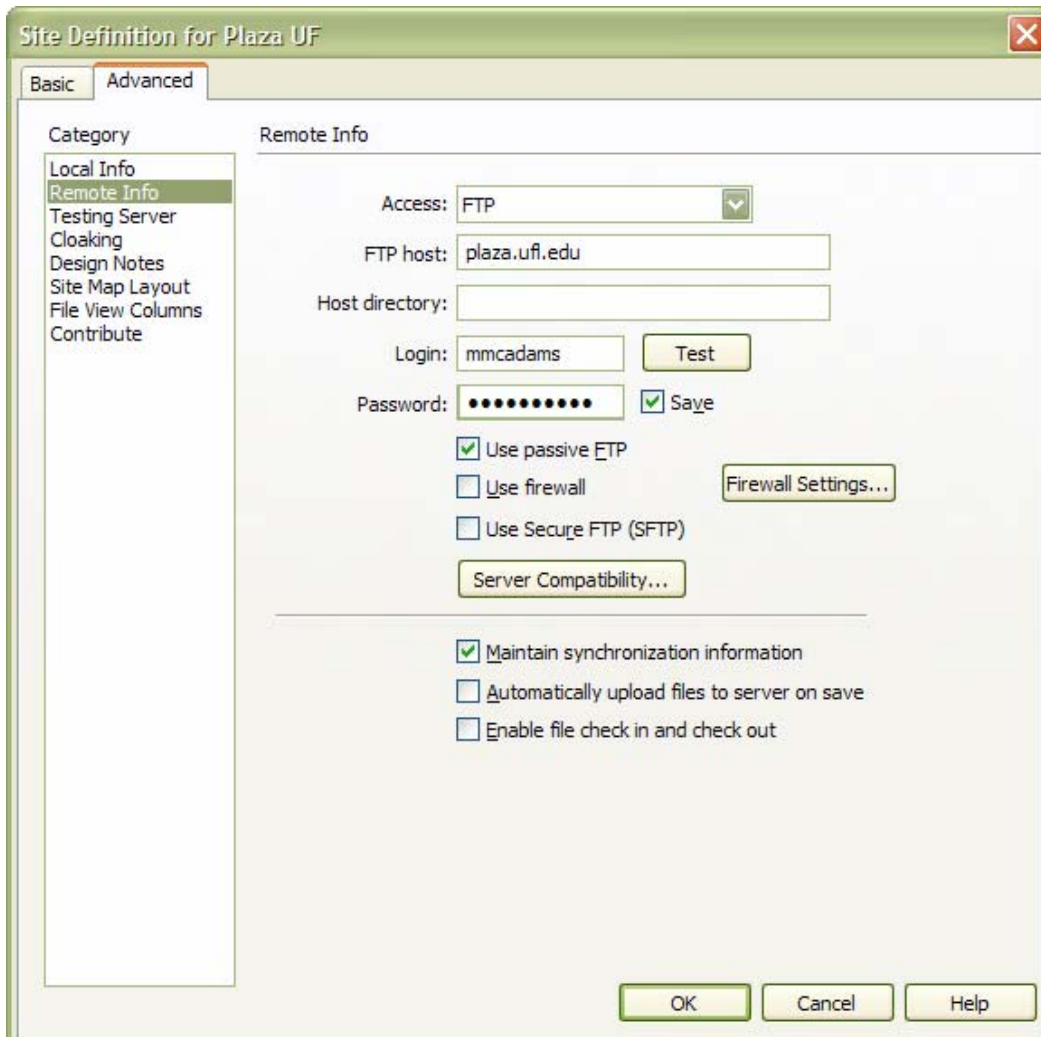
1. **Define a new site** (Site menu > Manage Sites). This step is *essential* to making your links work properly. In a campus computer lab, you must *always* define your site *before* you begin to work in Dreamweaver. However, at home, *on your own computer,* you define a site only *once* and never again.
    a. Click the <u>New</u> button; select "Site."
    b. Always use the "Advanced" tab, *not* "Basic." Did you select the "Advanced" tab? If not, do it now.
2. **Local Info**
    a. "Site Name" can be anything.
    b. "Local Root Folder" is the most important thing in the whole process: Select the *one folder* on your drive that contains ALL THE FILES for the Web site you are working on. The folder and file structure *within* this folder should *exactly match* the structure of folders and files on your Web server.
3. **Remote Info**
    a. "Access" should be FTP. You must set this if you are going to send any files to the Web server.
    b. "FTP Host" is the domain name of your host, with any prefixes required (e.g., *plaza.ufl.edu*).
    c. "Host Directory" is left blank for some servers (including Plaza), but not for all.
    d. "Login" and "Password" must be filled in. Check "Save" at your peril.
    e. Check "Use Passive FTP" for most servers.

4. **Test your site connection** by clicking the Test button. If Dreamweaver connects to your site successfully, all is well. If not, you did something wrong. Check all the steps above.
5. **Click OK.** That returns you to the Manage Sites dialog box.
6. **Click Done.** That closes the Manage Sites dialog box. Now your site is defined.

Please remember that if you are working in a campus computer lab, you must go through all these steps EVERY TIME you open Dreamweaver, because the lab computer will erase all your settings each time you log off. On your own home computer or laptop, the settings will remain set after the first time, and so you need do this *only once* on your own computer.

My computer's hard drive has a partition, so instead of the normal C:\ — which you probably have — my files are stored on D:\
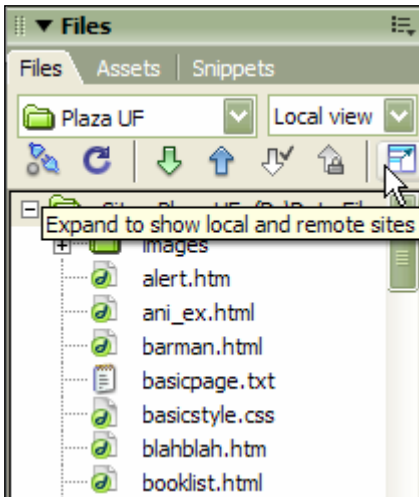
My Plaza login name is "mmcadams" — this is the same as my Gatorlink e-mail address name, i.e., *mmcadams@ufl.edu*. Your Plaza login is also your Gatorlink address e-mail name. The password is the one you use for Gatorlink.

(If you're not at the University of Florida, references to "Plaza" and "Gatorlink" do not refer to you.)

Uploading Files with Dreamweaver

I'm assuming you already know how to create Web pages. Once you have finished a page and you're ready to upload it, Dreamweaver gives you a really clear way to manage your files, both on your local computer and on the Web server.
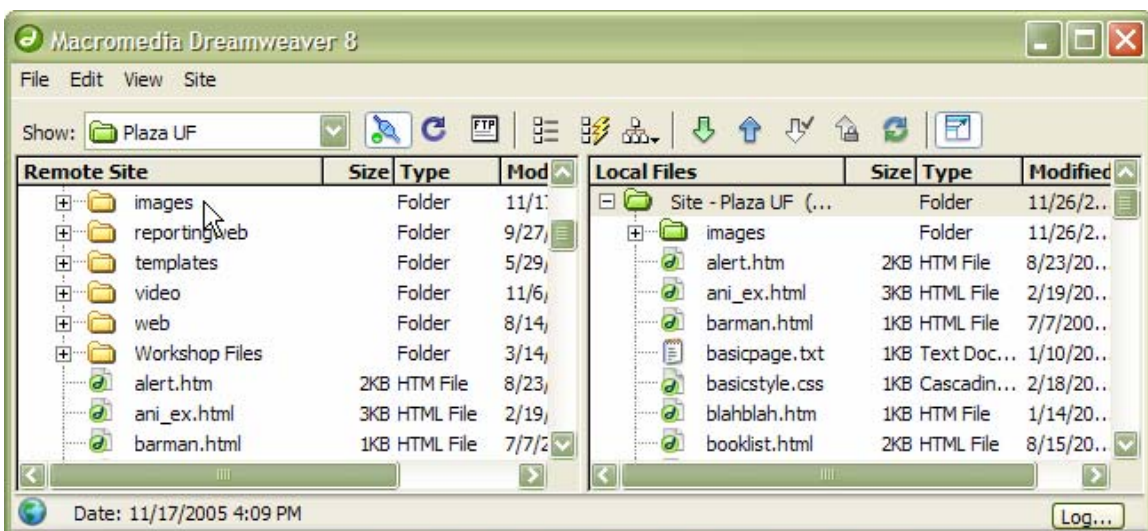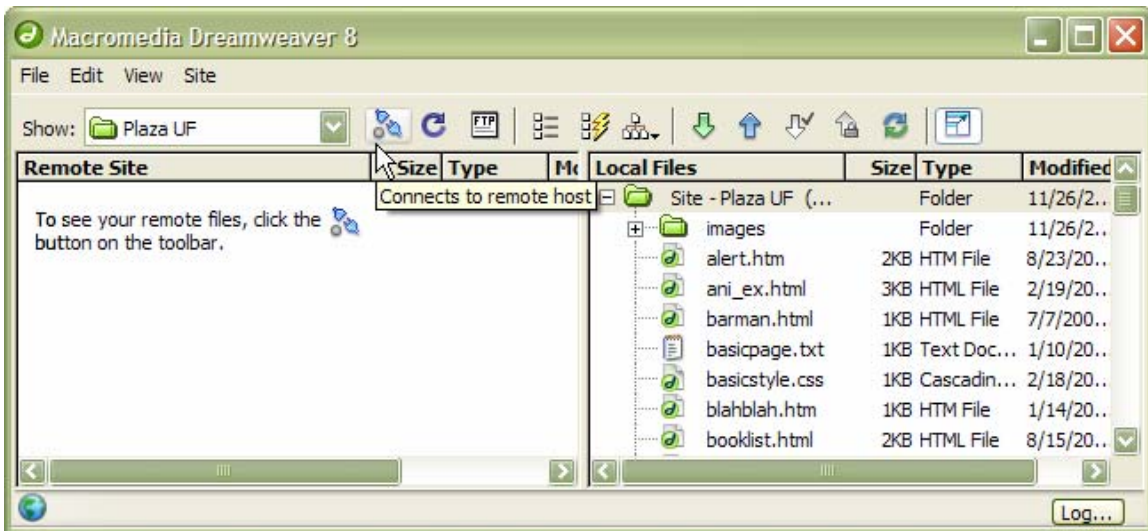
To see both your Web server (which is located somewhere you have probably never been, so please think of it as "remote") and your own *site folder* on your own "local" computer, do this:
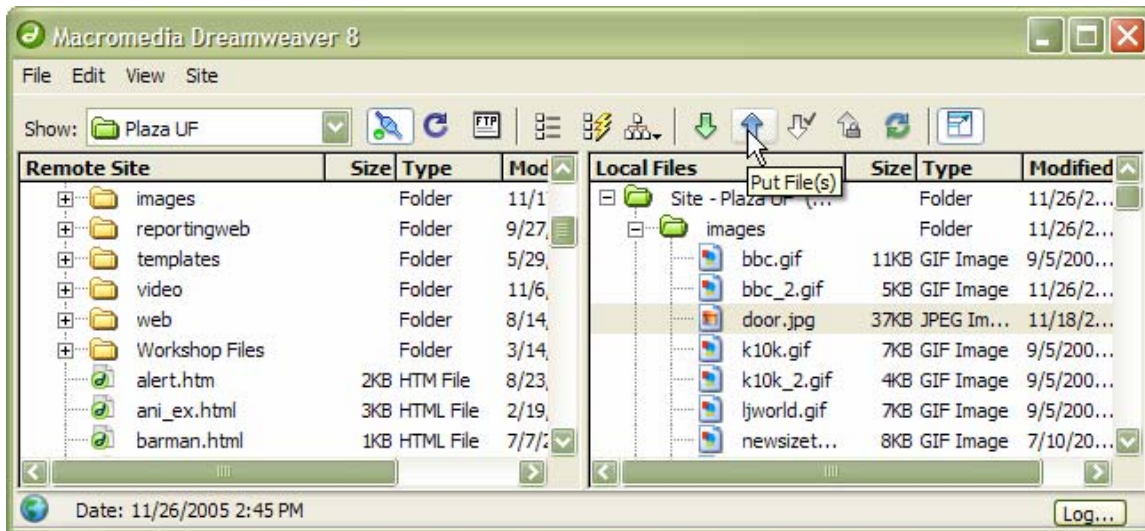
Find the icon indicated in this illustration in the **Files** panel in Dreamweaver. If your Files panel is not open, or if you can't see it, find it on the Window menu in Dreamweaver.

After you click that icon, you'll switch to the view of Dreamweaver shown below. In that view, your *site folder* on your local computer (and all its contents) appears on the right-hand side.
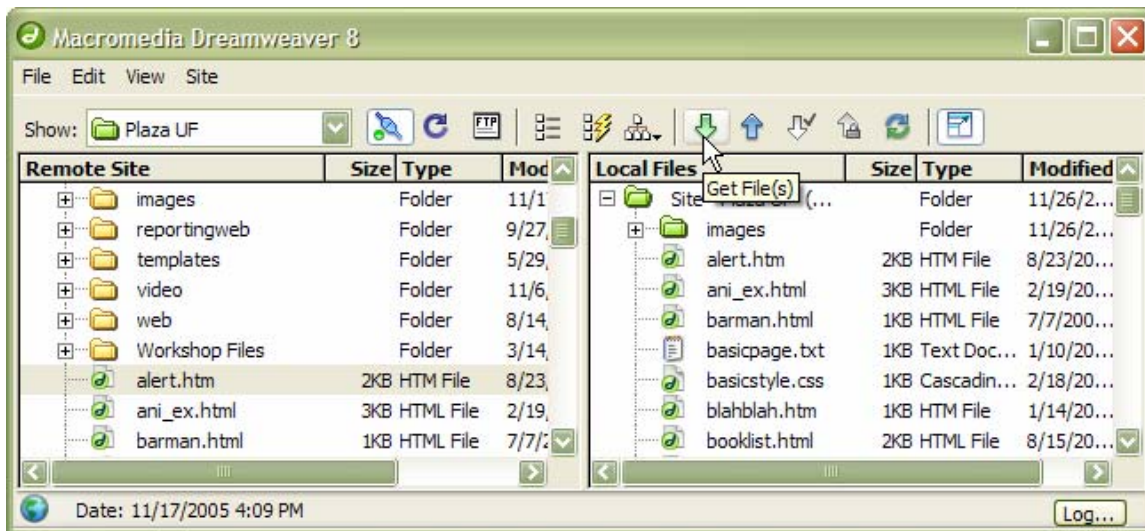
Now find the icon indicated below. It looks like two plugs, or connectors, that are not (yet) connected to each other. When you click that icon, Dreamweaver will connect you to the "remote" Web server you put into your site definition. The files on your Web server will appear on the left-hand side.

How to upload one file to your "remote" host computer: Remember that your local files are on the right side. So *select* (click ONCE) a file on the right that you want to upload. Then click the "Put" icon as shown above. You can select more than one file to upload by Control-clicking several files.

(You can see that my "remote" host has extra files that I do not have on the local hard drive of my laptop computer. That is because sometimes I upload files from my desktop computer at the office.)

How to download one file to your local computer: Remember that your "remote" files are on the left side. So *select* (click ONCE) a file on the left that you want to download. Then click the "Get" icon as shown above. You can select more than one file to download by Control-clicking several files.

To return to the normal Dreamweaver editing environment, click the "Collapse" icon at the far right-hand side of the icon bar at the top of the window.