

The use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) for purposes of Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

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What is CSS?

First introduced in 1996, CSS did not become truly standardized until the introduction of CSS2.1 in 2003.

Prior to CSS, web designers had little control over the way browsers interpreted HTML tags. (i.e. [links](#))

CSS allows for the creation of global “classes” and “id” elements that define display properties which can be easily applied to an entire website.

“Style” can be applied in 2 ways

Inline tags

```
<a href="linkpage.htm" style="color: red; text-decoration: none;">link</a>
```

Through definitions in stylesheet (e.g. style.css)

```
.linkstyle {  
    color: red;  
    text-decoration: none; }
```

```
...  
<a href="linkpage.htm" class="linkstyle">link</a>
```

Result:

link

Using a stylesheet

A stylesheet is a textfile, usually named style.css, which is referenced using a <link> tag in the <head> section of each page.

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

It is generally preferred to only use one stylesheet throughout the entire website, to maximize ones ability make global changes to a site with a single modification.

Implications for SEO

The most powerful aspect of CSS for SEO purposes is its ability to separate ***content information from display information.*** ***Pages that are developed (or rewritten) using CSS load significantly faster.*** ***Such pages have a source code that is much simpler to read, by humans as well as search engines.*** ***CSS allows you to display elements on the page in any order, allowing you to place the most important content at the top of the source code.***

1.1 sample header before CSS.

```
<table width="100%" height="76" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" style="border-collapse: collapse"> <tr><td width="231" height="76"
background="https://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/header-bg_02.gif"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/index.htm">
</a></td> <td width="100%" height="76" background="https://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/header-bg_02.gif" valign="top"><table
width="100%" height="76" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0"> <tr> <td align="right" valign="top"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-
design.com/store/showcart.asp"> </a><a href="http://www.residential-
landscape-lighting-design.com/store/order_status_form.asp"></a><a
href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Sitemap.htm"></a> <br> <a
href=""> </a><a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-
design.com/store/onsale_categories.asp"></a><a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/login.asp"></a> </td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> </table><table width="100%" height="1" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0">
<tr> <td width="100%" height="1"></td> </tr> </table> <table
width="100%" height="24" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0"> <tr> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="30" height="24"
bgcolor="#333366"><a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/index.htm"></a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td>
<td width="49" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/about_us.htm"></a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td>
<td width="83" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/ask_the_experts.htm"></a></td> <td width="10%" height="24"
bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="29" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">
<a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/FAQs.htm"></a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="66" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a
href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Client_testimonials.htm"> </a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="38"
height="24" bgcolor="#333366"><a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/galleries.asp">
</a></td>
<td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="43" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-
design.com/returns.htm"> </a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> <td width="56" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a href="http://www.residential-
landscape-lighting-design.com/Resources.htm"> </a></td> <td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td>
<td width="58" height="24" bgcolor="#333366"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/contactus.htm">
</a></td>
<td width="10%" height="24" bgcolor="#333366">&nbsp;</td> </tr></table><table width="100%" height="1" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0">
<tr> <td width="100%" height="1"></td>
</tr></table><table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" background="https://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/search-bg_48.gif">
<tr> <td width="63"></td>
<td width="9"></td>
<td width="200" valign="middle"> <table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0"> <form name="quicksearch" method="POST"
action="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/product_search.asp" style="margin-top: 0; margin-bottom: 0"> <tr> <td width="100%" height="40"><input
type="text" name="strsearch"> <input type="image" src="https://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/search-go.gif" width="31" height="24"
align="absmiddle"></td></tr><tr><td width="100%"></td> </tr> </form> </table></td> <td width="100%" valign="top"> <a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/">
</a><br>
<a href="http://www.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/storefront.asp"></a><br> <a href=""> </a></td> <td width="184" valign="bottom" align="right"> <b><font face="Arial" size="2">
```

Same header after CSS

```
<div>
<div id="top">
<div id="logo"></div>
<div id="line1">
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Sitemap.htm"><div id="sitemap"></div></a>
<div id="line-spacer"></div>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/order_status_form.asp"><div id="orderstatus"></div></a>
<div id="line-spacer"></div>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/showcart.asp"><div id="viewcart"></div></a>
</div>
<div id="line2">
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/login.asp"><div id="customerlogin"></div></a>
<div id="line-spacer"></div>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/onsale_categories.asp"><div id="specials"></div></a>
<div id="line-spacer"></div>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/add_link.htm"><div id="addlink"></div></a>
</div>
</div>

<div id="middle">
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/index.html"><div id="home"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/about_us.htm"><div id="aboutus"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/ask_the_experts.htm"><div id="experts"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/FAQs.htm"><div id="faq"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Client_testimonials.htm"><div id="testimonials"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/galleries.asp"><div id="gallery"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/returns.htm"><div id="returns"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Resources.htm"><div id="resources"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/contactus.htm"><div id="contactus"></div></a>
</div>

<div id="bottom">
<div id="keywordsearch"></div>
<div id="searchbox">
<form name="quicksearch" method="POST" action="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/search/product_search2.asp?zoom_query=RLLD" style="margin-top: 0; margin-bottom: 0">
  <input type="text" name="strsearch" size="25"></div>
<div id="searchgo"><input type="image" src="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/search-go.gif" align="absmiddle" width="31" height="24"></div>
</form>
<div id="searchbuttons">
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/search/search_advanced.asp"><div id="advanced"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/storefront.asp"><div id="alphabetic"></div></a>
<a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/manufactureer_search.htm"><div id="manufacturer"></div></a>
</div>
<div id="phonenummer"></div>
</div>
</div>
```

What's the difference?

Before

Residential
Landscape
Lighting & *Design*

[VIEW CART](#) | [ORDER STATUS](#) | [SITE MAP](#)
[ADD A LINK](#) | [ON SALE](#) | [CUSTOMER LOGIN](#)

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Ask the Experts](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Testimonials](#) | [Gallery](#) | [Returns](#) | [Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#)

KEYWORD
SEARCH

GO

[> BROWSE OUR STORE](#)
[> ALPHABETIC PRODUCT LIST](#)
[> SEARCH BY MANUFACTURER](#)

TOLL FREE: 800-239-2939

After

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GO

[> ADVANCED SEARCH](#)
[> ALPHABETIC PRODUCT LIST](#)
[> SEARCH BY MANUFACTURER](#)

TOLL FREE: 800-239-2939

The difference...

Before: header.htm

page size: 23253 bytes

load time (28.8k): 8.46 seconds

graphics: 13374 bytes - 24 images

After: header.htm

page size: 3377 bytes

load time (28.8k): 2.94 seconds

graphics: 267 bytes - 1 image

What will Google think?

.CSS pages are not indexed by Google. They are used only by the client browser to interpret the display of the page. Using CSS, the elements of the page (header, content, navigation bar, footer, etc.) can be displayed in any order. Tags weighed heavily by Google, such as `<h1>` (which few people use because it appears too large in the browser) can be recuperated through style definitions.

New Home Page

```
001 <html>
002 <head>
003 <title>Outdoor lighting, light fixtures, landscape lighting, Online Store</title>
004 <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=windows-1252">
005 <meta name="DESCRIPTION" content="Residential Landscape Lighting & Design offers discount sales and
instilation of Home Garden & Outdoor Lighting Products & Accessories.">
006 <meta name="KEYWORDS" content="landscape lighting, residential & cove lighting, garden, under cabinet light, art,
low voltage and strip lights">
007 <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="style.css" />
008 </head>
009 <body>
010 <div style="position: absolute; top: 170px;">
011 <div id="welcome">
012     <h1>Welcome to Residential Landscape Lighting & Design!</h1>
013     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/43/products.asp">Low Voltage</a>,
014     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/39/products.asp">Outdoor Lighting Fixtures</a>,
015     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/67/products.asp">Recessed</a>,
016     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/86/products.asp">Art</a>,
017     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/159/products.asp">Under Cabinet Lights</a>,
018     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/176/products.asp">Home Lighting Fixtures</a>,
019     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/166/products.asp">Lutron Dimmers,</a>
020     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/490/products.asp">Barbeque Lights</a>,
021     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/538/products.asp">Christmas Lights</a>,
022     <a class="category" href="store/PPF/Category_ID/456/products.asp">Tennis Court Lighting</a>,
.
.
.
```

First content read by Search Engine is <h1> tag, which contains key terms for site/page.

```
345 <!--webbot bot="Include" U-Include="header.html" TAG="BODY" startspan -->
346 <div style="position: absolute; top: 0px;">
347 <div id="top">
348 <div id="logo"></div>
349 <div id="line1">
350 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Sitemap.htm"><div id="sitemap"></div></a>
351 <div id="line-spacer"></div>
352 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/order_status_form.asp"><div id="orderstatus"></div></a>
353 <div id="line-spacer"></div>
354 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/showcart.asp"><div id="viewcart"></div></a>
355 </div>
356 <div id="line2">
357 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/login.asp"><div id="customerlogin"></div></a>
358 <div id="line-spacer"></div>
359 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/onsale_categories.asp"><div id="specials"></div></a>
360 <div id="line-spacer"></div>
361 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/add_link.htm"><div id="addlink"></div></a>
362 </div>
363 </div>
364 <div id="middle">
365 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/index.html"><div id="home"></div></a>
366 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/about_us.htm"><div id="aboutus"></div></a>
367 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/ask_the_experts.htm"><div id="experts"></div></a>
368 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/FAQs.htm"><div id="faq"></div></a>
369 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Client_testimonials.htm"><div id="testimonials"></div></a>
370 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/galleries.asp"><div id="gallery"></div></a>
371 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/returns.htm"><div id="returns"></div></a>
372 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/Resources.htm"><div id="resources"></div></a>
373 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/contactus.htm"><div id="contactus"></div></a>
374 </div>
375 <div id="bottom">
376 <div id="keywordsearch"></div>
377 <div id="searchbox">
378 <form name="quicksearch" method="POST" action="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/search/product_search2.asp?zoom_query=RLLD" style="margin-
top: 0; margin-bottom: 0">
379 <input type="text" name="strsearch" size="25"></div>
380 <div id="searchgo"><input type="image" src="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/images/search-go.gif" align="absmiddle" width="31"
height="24"></div>
381 </form>
382 <div id="searchbuttons">
383 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/search/search_advanced.asp"><div id="advanced"></div></a>
384 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/store/storefront.asp"><div id="alphabetic"></div></a>
385 <a href="http://beta.residential-landscape-lighting-design.com/manufactureer_search.htm"><div id="manufacturer"></div></a>
386 </div>
387 <div id="phonenumber"></div>
388 </div>
389 </div>
390 <!--webbot bot="Include" i-checksum="4597" endspan -->
390 </body>
```

Summary: Benefits of CSS for SEO

Reduce page size and load time.

Limit the use of extraneous `<font>`, `<p>`, and `<table>` tags to get the search engines where you want them, on your *textual content*.

Re-order your source code such that the most important aspects are seen first.

Redundant elements like header nav bars can be pushed to the bottom of the page.

Free your creative potential while remaining search engine friendly!

Can you think of any other way CSS can be used for SEO?

Feel free to email me with any comments, suggestions or questions.

Aaron Lozier
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