

# Dreamweaver CS4

Jorga Rigganbach

Since its initial release in 1997, Adobe *Dreamweaver* (before Adobe, it was a Macromedia product) has become the industry standard for website creation. When Adobe bought Macromedia in 2005, many hailed it as the beginning of a bright new future, full of love and harmony, between the Adobe suite of products like *Illustrator* and *Photoshop* and the former Macromedia products like *Flash*, *Fireworks* and *Dreamweaver*. Four years later, that bright new future has finally come to pass for *Dreamweaver*.

So, what does *CS4* bring to the table that we haven't seen before? The first thing long-time users will notice is that the user interface has been overhauled and now it looks much more like every other product in the Adobe suite of products. This means tabs, windows and menus all look like you would expect them to look in an Adobe-platform product.

Best of all, moving between Adobe applications feels effortless and natural, but you'll still be able to find your way around if you have been using *Dreamweaver MX*, *8* or even *CS3*. On the contrary, most features from the past versions are right where you expect them, just in a more Adobe-looking layout and interface.

Speaking of the interface, *Dreamweaver CS4* has a very cool new layout feature for getting your work environment set up just right. These new layouts, which you can get to from a tab in the upper right corner of the screen or from the Windows menu, consist of: App Developer, App Developer Plus, Classic, Coder, Coder Plus, Designer,

Designer Compact, and Dual Screen. Each one of these layouts is designed to make working on any specific task much easier by featuring the tools and features that are most relevant in a way that optimizes workflow.

Personally, I think the coolest feature is the Dual Screen layout, which as the name suggests, is a layout made specifically to take advantage of dual monitor configurations. Another excellent feature related to layout is the ability to choose between horizontal and vertical views when working in multiple views. This means that now, instead of having your code above your design, you can have it next to your design, which makes much more sense on a wide screen monitor.

Since we are talking about what makes sense, let's talk about another really fabulous feature in *CS4*. As anyone who works with modern websites knows, you don't have just an html page anymore. Oh no, nowadays, just for starters, you have your html page and your CSS (cascading style sheet) page/pages. If you're doing anything more dynamic, then you might also have some php, javascript and maybe even Ajax. In the past, you would have had to open components separately, then save and work between files in a way that was not very conducive to being cool, calm and collected.

Now, hallelujah, in *CS4* when you open a page you are working on, you get a list right below the tab of all the files that your page references. That means that you can open your CSS page on the fly from your html page and make changes without having to open the other file in another location. Also, you can open the different code-type pages in the side-by-side view so you can dynamically see what making a change in your CSS will look like on your site. This is an excellent feature and one that you will use all the time.

Also, *Dreamweaver CS4* has updated their CSS support. Most seasoned Web Masters often write their own styles but on the occasion if an older version was used to change something on the fly, it was always annoying that any small change would result in a raft of new styles. In *Dreamweaver CS4*, the CSS has been greatly improved so that when you do make changes, they are much smarter changes. Another cool feature is the



ability to Alt-click on an area with Code Navigator to see what styles are affecting that area and then click on them to edit.

Code Navigator is an exciting feature that makes quick access to server-side includes, external CSS and scripts, template and library items and i-frame source files quickly and easily available. This feature alone can reduce the most taciturn web designer to a state of giddy joy. Mouse over an item with your little steering wheel icon and viola, there's the underlying code. Click again and your split screen shows you the editable script right where you need it.

*Dreamweaver CS4* also has better *Photoshop* integration. One feature that we have all missed since the move from Adobe GoLive to *Dreamweaver* is the ability to use native *Photoshop* files and have the site images update automatically when you change the original. Well, lo and behold, this feature has returned in *CS4* as *Photoshop* Smart Objects. What this means is that now you can edit your original PSD file and an updated version of your graphic can be automatically created for your site with no hassle. This is a huge boon for the web designer.

Another stellar, new feature is the ability to create Adobe AIR applications in *Dreamweaver*. AIR is a whole review in itself, but basically Adobe AIR allows the user to create Rich Internet Applications (RIAs). You can find more out at <http://www.adobe.com/products/air/>.

But wait, there's more: the SPRY framework support and Live View. This is a feature that competes nicely with the many available content management solutions on the web. Basically, in Live View you create dynamic websites in *Dreamweaver*. Previewing changes in real time, as you work on CSS and java-based script within the *Dreamweaver* environment, is a marvelous improvement to *Dreamweaver*. You can also use the Live Code feature to easily look at live, generated code if the placeholder code doesn't show you what you need to see. You can use Code Navigator, Live Code View and split screen features to edit and coordinate external files.

CSS editing with Property Inspector is all grown up in *CS4* and working beautifully. Previously, an ugly duckling feature, PI is now a graceful swan. The dialog boxes have been improved. It's a powerful feature and using it requires your full attention—your potential for disaster is as great as your

possibilities for improving your workflow. PI doesn't replace full-blown CSS editing, but it's an amazing touchup tool for making a few, quick changes.

The JavaScript extractor feature allows you (the goal is to separate behavior, content, structure, and presentation) to take any JavaScript local to the HTML page and move it to an externally linked file. There are a couple of options and if you choose "unobtrusive," you'll add additional files.

*Dreamweaver CS4* is truly a major upgrade. The new interface slides this magnificent application comfortably onto the Adobe platform where it belongs. This really is Adobe *Dreamweaver* now and not just an Adobe-owned *Dreamweaver*.

Like most of Adobe excellent applications, *Dreamweaver* is huge and like everything else in life, what you get out of it will depend entirely on what you put into it. If you are an experienced Web professional, you'll appreciate everything *Dreamweaver* has to offer. If you are a novice, get some training. This is not an entry-level program. If you have been waiting to purchase a version of *Dreamweaver* or looking for the upgrade that is worth upgrading to, this is it. *Dreamweaver* has truly arrived.

**About:** *Dreamweaver CS4*

**Vendor:** Adobe  
[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

**Price:** Full product: \$325-400±, Upgrade \$200

**Requires:** Go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver/systemreqs/?promoid=DRHWV> for full specifics.