

The Microsoft® HTML Layout Control



Create next-generation Web pages with sophisticated layout features

The Microsoft HTML Layout Control provides exciting new layout capabilities for Web pages based on new extensions to HTML style sheets recently published by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C). The HTML Layout Control allows Web developers to deliver a new generation of compelling, interactive content to users of the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 Web browser. Pages developed using the control's frame-based layout features can provide a CD-ROM-like multimedia experience.

Until recently, Web browsers have rendered HTML documents as single column scrolling windows. Authors have been limited in their ability to control the placement of features in their Web pages, which has limited their ability to create more sophisticated user interfaces for their Web sites. Such "two dimensional" (2D) layout capabilities are standard features of most traditional tools used for the print and CD-ROM media, such as Adobe™ Photoshop™, Quark Xpress®, MacroMedia® Director™, as well as development tools such as the Microsoft Visual Basic® programming system.

The advent of framesets for HTML, as supported in Web browsers such as the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape™ Navigator 2.0 has recently allowed authors to divide a single window into separate scrolling regions, each containing a single HTML document. However, framesets do not give authors precise, coordinate control over individual objects placed on a page; nor do they give authors the ability to overlap objects and frames.

Microsoft has been working closely with the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C) in order to extend HTML capabilities to include full 2D layout capabilities.

Recently, the W3C published a preliminary specification for incorporating 2D-style, frame-based layout into the HTML standard by extending style sheets and framesets (see W3C Technical Report: *Frame-based layout via Style Sheets*, Bert Bos, David Raggett and Håkon W Lie, 5th April 1996 at <http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/TR/WD-layout.html>). The HTML Layout Control provides a preliminary implementation of this specification, and is being made available as a free download for use with the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 Web browser.

The HTML Layout Control allows publishers to create more compelling Web pages by providing exact, coordinate control over object layout, layering and transparency.

HTML Layout Control Features

The HTML Layout Control supports the following features:

- ◆ **Exact 2D placement.** Objects can be placed exactly where the author intended them within a fixed, 2D region. This ensures consistency of the user interface, and enables very rich images without having to use large bitmaps.
- ◆ **Overlapping regions.** The author can also specify the exact layering (z-order) of objects on a page. This enables sophisticated interactive features such as pop-up windows and mouse roll-over effects in the HTML document.
- ◆ **Transparency effects with ActiveX Controls.** The HTML Layout Control hosts other ActiveX Controls. ActiveX Controls supporting the ActiveX Control '96 specification (published on the Microsoft Web site) can

be transparent, so that multiple images and regions can be overlapped to create compelling designs.

- ◆ **Scripting.** The HTML Layout Control also fully supports scripting, including both VB Script and JavaScript™.

Authoring Pages for the HTML Layout Control

Microsoft is supplying a free, downloadable authoring utility, the Microsoft ActiveX Control Pad, that includes WYSIWYG support for authoring 2D-style pages for the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 Web browser. Authors can use the ActiveX Control Pad 2D Page Editor to incorporate multiple ActiveX Controls and scripting into their designs with point-and-click ease.

Licensing and Availability

A beta release of the Microsoft HTML Layout Control and Microsoft ActiveX Control Pad will be available for free download from Microsoft's Web site in early June. The final release of the HTML Layout Control will be fully integrated with the final release of the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 Web browser, available to users free-of-charge.

For More Information

Stay tuned to the Microsoft Web site (<http://www.microsoft.com/ie/controls>) for the downloadable beta release, sample Web pages, and technical whitepapers with more information.

Companies, names, and/or data used in screens and sample output are fictitious, unless otherwise noted.

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