



# Take Control *of* Getting Started with Dreamweaver

by **Arnie Keller**

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## READ ME FIRST

Welcome to *Take Control of Getting Started with Dreamweaver*, version 1.0.

This book shows you how to use Dreamweaver 8 to create a basic Web site for small businesses and nonprofits, consultants, schools, and individuals. This book was written by Arnie Keller, edited by Lea Galanter, and published by TidBITS Electronic Publishing.

To get in touch or learn more about the Take Control books, you can:

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### Onscreen Reading Tips

We carefully designed the Take Control ebooks to be read onscreen, and although most of what you need to know is obvious, note the following for the best possible onscreen reading experience:

- Blue text indicates links. You can click any item in the Table of Contents to jump to that section. Cross-references are also links, as are URLs and email addresses.

- Work with the Bookmarks tab or drawer showing so that you can always jump to any main topic by clicking its bookmark.
- In Adobe Acrobat Pro version 6 or 7, set your preferences to view Web URLs in a Web browser: choose Acrobat > Preferences, switch to the Web Capture pane, and choose In Web Browser from the Open Web Links pop-up menu.
- Find more tips in the [Take Control FAQ](#) on the Web.

## Video Screenshots

This book uses video to animate the screenshots in some of its figures. To play the video associated with a screenshot:

- When reading from a paper version of the book, point your Web browser at <http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/dreamweaver/> for a list of all the videos and click their links to view them.
- When reading online, simply click the figure.

In either case, the video will play in your Web browser via Flash Player 8.

### **NOTE GET SET UP FOR THE VIDEO SCREENSHOTS**

To check whether you have Flash Player 8 installed, visit <http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/dreamweaver/detect/>.

If you need Flash Player 8, a link on that page directs you to the Flash player site where you can download it.

For the best playback experience, keep the videos in the front window of your computer as it plays. Otherwise, the audio may stutter.

## Printing Tips

Although our layout is aimed at making online reading an enjoyable experience, we've made sure that printing remains a reasonable option. Please review these tips before you print:

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- When printing on a color inkjet printer, to avoid using a lot of color ink (primarily on the yellow boxes we use for tips and figures), look for an option to print entirely in black-and-white.
- In the unlikely event that Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Reader cannot successfully print this PDF, try Preview; several readers have solved printing problems by using Preview.

## Basics

In reading this book, you may get stuck if you don't know certain basic facts about Dreamweaver or if you don't understand Take Control syntax for things like working with menus or finding items in the Finder. Please note the following:

- **Path syntax:** This book occasionally uses a *path* to show the location of a file or a folder in your file system. Path text is formatted in bold type. For example, Tiger stores most utilities, such as Calculator, in the *Utilities* folder. The path for Calculator is: **`/Applications/Utilities/Calculator`**.

The slash at the start of the path tells you to start from the root level of the disk.

- **Menus:** When I describe choosing a command from a menu in the menu bar, I use an abbreviated description. For example, the abbreviated description for the menu command that saves a file from Dreamweaver is "File > Save."

- **Finding Dreamweaver's Preferences:** From time to time, I refer to preferences in Dreamweaver that you may want to adjust:
  - ◇ **Macintosh:** To display Dreamweaver's preferences (not to be confused with the systemwide settings found in the System Preferences application), choose Dreamweaver > Preferences (Command-U).
  - ◇ **Windows:** On Windows, choose Edit > Preferences (Ctrl-U).

Within that dialog, click an item at the left to display a pane with that category of preferences. Instead of giving detailed directions each time, I refer to each pane using an abbreviated notation such as "go to the Accessibility preference pane."

**NOTE TRY BEFORE YOU BUY**

You can download a fully functioning, 30-day trial version of Dreamweaver 8 at <http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=dreamweaver>.

## INTRODUCTION

Dreamweaver is a *WYSIWYG*—what you see is what you get—Web development tool. That means that as you add text, graphics, and other objects, you immediately see what your page looks like on the Web. Working with Dreamweaver is a lot like working with a word processor: You enter content, arrange it, and format it. Both a word processor and Dreamweaver work behind the scenes to make what you write look as you intend. A word processor embeds invisible tags, which have meaning only within documents that the word processor creates. Dreamweaver also embeds invisible tags, but they're in *HTML* (hypertext markup language), the common language of the Web. These tags tell browsers how to display your pages.

Dreamweaver dominates the field of WYSIWYG Web development tools because it best combines power and ease of use. It can create sites ranging from those for large organizations with complex needs to those for individuals with simple needs. It can accommodate teams of designers working together or a solo designer working alone. It's flexible enough for people who want to write HTML and for people who don't.

Mastering Dreamweaver isn't trivial, but you can readily tap into much of its power. I wrote this book as a short guide to help you learn Dreamweaver's essentials, not as a huge volume that covers its every nuance and feature. I won't show you how to create an industrial-strength site; I will show you how to create a simple, attractive, helpful site. Using a tutorial, I answer the question *how do I do this?* with step-by-step instructions. But sometimes, I use the Web to provide you with video screenshots and other resources to illustrate the points I'm making. For a complete list of these resources, with links, go to <http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/dreamweaver/>. In brief, I combine what print and electronic media each do best. Let's begin.

### **NOTE DREAMWEAVER VERSIONS**

As I write, Dreamweaver 8 is the latest version available, but in most cases, I use methods that also work with the previous version, Dreamweaver MX2004. The interface may differ a bit—Adobe sometimes moves things around for reasons known only to Adobe—but the features are largely unchanged.

## DREAMWEAVER QUICK START

The text in this book is crafted tutorial-style, and you should work through the sections in sequence in order to build your skills as you proceed from creating a modest Web page to a working Web site. Here's a quick look at what you'll cover in each section:

### **Learn the basic Dreamweaver interface:**

- [Explore the Dreamweaver Interface](#) by watching video screenshots that give you a basic tour of Dreamweaver's interface and help you learn about the Property inspector, which you use to configure elements on a Web page.

### **Create your first pages:**

- Create a simple page with text, graphics, and working Web links. See [Your First Page: Text, Graphics, and Links](#).
- Your first page works okay, but the text isn't particularly attractive or helpful. Learn how to style it with Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) in [Your Second Page: Moving Beyond Bland](#).
- Your text is looking better, but your layout won't win any awards. Read [Your Third Page: Lay Out Pretty Pages](#) to learn how to use CSS to position your page elements with layers.

### **Create your first Web site:**

- Link your pages together in [Your First Web Site](#), and give your site a consistent, organized appearance.
- Provide consistent [Navigation: Learn about Navigation Bars](#); get the scoop on linking with [Absolute links](#) and [Relative links](#); and find out how to [Make a Graphical Navigation Bar](#) and how to [Design a CSS-Based Navigation Bar](#).

### **Put it out there:**

- If nobody knows that a tree falls in the forest, does it matter? If nobody can visit your Web site, does *it* matter? Learn how to [Put Your Site on the Web](#).

## EXPLORE THE DREAMWEAVER INTERFACE

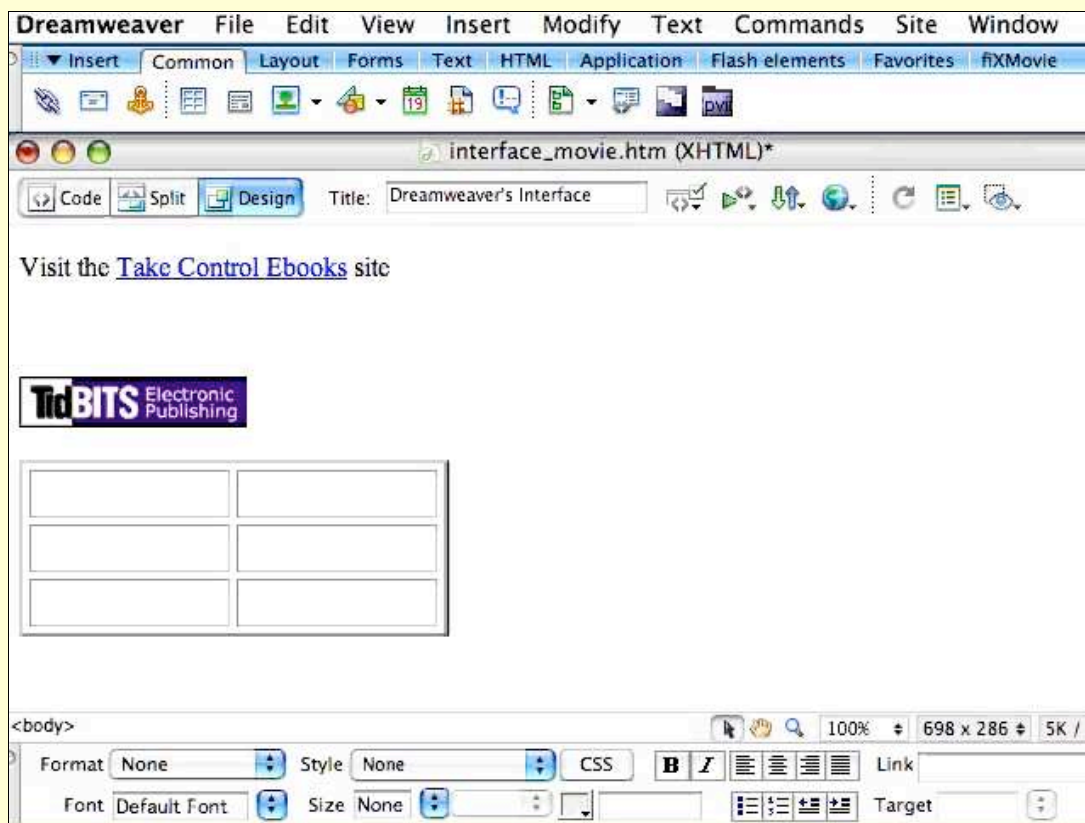
Dreamweaver is a powerful program that can do lots of things, so it follows that its interface has lots of different elements. If you are the sort of person who feels more comfortable in a program after you've spent some time learning the interface, take some time now to examine the video screenshots in this section, which guide you through learning the Dreamweaver interface.

Click the image in **Figure 1** to view a video about the menu bar, Insert toolbar, main work area, and Property inspector.

**FIGURE 1**

Click this figure to see a video screenshot in your Web browser.

If you need help viewing the video screenshot, see [Video Screenshots](#) (p. 3) for more info.



*Learn Interface Basics:* Notice, from top to bottom, the menu bar, the tabbed Insert toolbar (located inside the Insert window), the main work area, and the Property inspector.

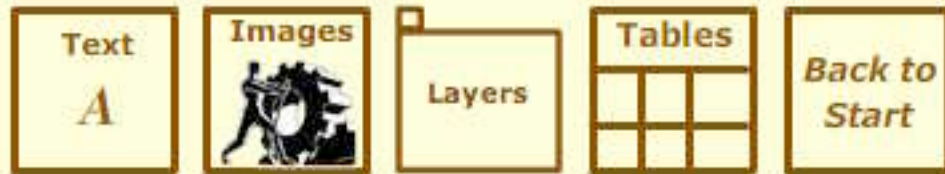
The Property inspector is where you can view and set attributes for common objects like text and graphics. When you select an object, the inspector displays settings only for that kind of object. For example, if you highlight some text, the Property inspector changes to show only the properties relevant to text, such as the font and size (**Figure 1**).

You can play with **Figure 2** in order to learn the ins and outs of four views of the Property inspector—those for text, graphics, layers, and tables—that are used most often in this book.

**FIGURE 2**

*Click this figure to see an interactive screenshot in your Web browser.*

*If you need help, see [Video Screenshots \(p. 3\)](#) for more info.*



*Meet the Property Inspector:* You spend a lot of your time working with the Property inspector, so get the most out of it by learning about four of its most important modes—text, graphics, layers, and tables.

**TIP IS YOUR AUDIO STUTTERING?**

If the audio in your video screenshot is stuttering, prevent the problem by making the playback window frontmost on your computer screen.

## YOUR FIRST PAGE: TEXT, GRAPHICS, AND LINKS

We'll begin our Dreamweaver tutorial by creating a simple Web page containing basic items—text, graphics, and a couple of links to sites already on the Web. Yet with just these elements, we'll make a real page that does—albeit in a limited way—most of what every other page on the Web can do.

### Create a Folder to Hold Your Work

It's a good habit to keep your work on a Web site in a folder. So start by creating a folder (on your Desktop or other convenient location) in which to put all your files and other folders. Name it *TakeControl* and you're ready to begin.

### Launch Dreamweaver

When you first launch Dreamweaver, if you haven't changed the default, you see the Start Page, which lets you open one of the following:

- A recent page (only, of course, if you've earlier created any)
- One of the document types that Dreamweaver knows how to create (in addition to HTML pages)
- A sample page on which to base your own

I suggest that you select the Don't Show Again checkbox in the lower left corner, so that you can create new pages without negotiating the Start Page. However, until you select Don't Show Again, you have to choose one of the options listed, so in the Create New list, click HTML to get started.

From now on, I'll assume that you've disabled the Start Page. (If you want to re-enable it, use Dreamweaver's General preference pane.)

### Build Your First Page

If you've already opened a new HTML page via the Start page, skip ahead to Step 6 in the following steps. Otherwise, to create a new page:

1. Choose File > New.

Dreamweaver opens the New Document dialog (**Figure 3**).

## YOUR SECOND PAGE: MOVING BEYOND BLAND

Although the page you've created in the previous section won't be Site of the Week anytime soon, it does have a few key Web objects—text, graphics, and links. At this point, we want to do something about the bland text and boring layout.

When your browser displayed the page you created in the previous section, it used whatever its default font happened to be. That's because you didn't specify which font the browser should use or whether the text should be “styled” in a certain color, size, or weight.

However, styling text means more than making it pretty. How text looks signals your readers about how you've structured your content. For example, readers should be able to tell at a glance what your main heading is, as well as immediately recognize your various subheadings and the main body of your page. And you definitely want them to instantly recognize a link or a warning when they see one.

This doesn't imply that attractiveness shouldn't matter but rather that how text looks carries meaning. The best tool to style text for both appearance and function is *Cascading Style Sheets* (CSS), a set of rules that all modern browsers support.

### Understand Styles

A style is a description that tells the browser how to display text. To pick up on the examples in the intro to this section, you might decide that the style for your main head should be this:

#### MAIN HEAD

That is, its font would be Arial, its weight bold, its color red, and its size large. (See the “Defining Font Sizes” note (next page) for what I mean by “large.”)

You might also decide that your first subhead should have this style:

#### Subhead

Like your main head, its font would also be Arial, its weight bold, and its color red. Its size, however, would be medium. And finally, you might want your body text to look like this:

Body text

## YOUR THIRD PAGE: LAY OUT PRETTY PAGES

Working tutorial-style in the previous sections of this book, you've barely skimmed the surface of Dreamweaver's power. Your pages are beginning to get more attractive and useful, but you're still stuck with an uninspiring layout. That's because browsers normally show text and graphics in the order they appear in an HTML file. So if you have some text, a carriage return, a graphic, another carriage return, and some more text, that's the order in which the browser shows them, going from left to right and top to bottom. That makes for a pretty boring page, and boring pages make for ex-visitors.

In fact, some research now claims that visitors make up their minds whether to stay at your site within seconds. If they don't find your site appealing—and they alone get to define *appealing*—they're gone. As they say in the dandruff commercials, you get only one chance to make a first impression.

But good layout isn't about aesthetics alone. Just as styled text helps readers see what's more or less important, layout helps them see how you've structured content. A good layout shows readers where to look and where to click, as well as makes their visit to a site more pleasing.

---

**Warning!** *Browsers for older operating systems do not support CSS well—or in some cases, at all. If a major portion of your audience consists of people running Mac OS 9, Windows 95, or Windows 98, CSS prevents them from seeing your pages as you intend.*

---

### Learn about Layers

In addition to telling browsers how to style text, CSS tells them how to position objects on the page with single-pixel precision. To accomplish that, CSS includes the `<div>` tag, which creates a self-contained rectangle that can contain any HTML object—text, graphics, media, or even another `<div>`. Dreamweaver calls that rectangle a *layer*, although more recent versions of the program also call it a `<div>`.

## YOUR FIRST WEB SITE

Just as a style sheet is a collection of styles, a Web site is a collection of pages. And just as Dreamweaver has tools that make page design easier, it also has tools that make site design easier.

For example, as soon as you start work, Dreamweaver creates and maintains a mini-database that monitors your pages, along with their links, graphics, and styles—in short, all your “assets.” That’s a powerful feature, because once you get beyond a few pages, it becomes all too easy to lose track of where things are. And because Dreamweaver continually updates this database, you can be confident that moving a file or changing a link won’t have a disastrous consequence elsewhere.

However, before we look at these site tools in more detail, let’s step back to think about sites in general. People will come to your site for a variety of reasons—information, entertainment, and commerce are three common reasons. Their focus will be on what they want to do, whether it’s finding the latest news, hearing a song, or buying a widget. They will notice the machinery of the site only if it gets in their way. (Do you remember which font your favorite magazine uses for its headers or which of its pages use four-column layouts?)

The goal of a Web site, therefore, is to serve its readers, to help them accomplish what they want to do as quickly and as easily as possible. By all means, a site can be beautiful, entertaining, or educational, but its first requirement is to be useful.

There are several ways to make a site and its content useful, but perhaps the most important is consistency.

### **Design Pages Consistently**

A site’s design should be consistent, that is, it must place the same general elements in the same place on every page. The first page your visitor sees establishes expectations about all the others: content will be here, for example, links will be there, headers will look like this. When a basic element suddenly changes, readers have to reorient themselves and relearn how to read your page. Those changes don’t have to be huge, like switching the location of the main content from the left to the right. They can be as subtle as a different font size or color, or even shifting your logo a few pixels. Because any change can distract readers from doing what they want, Web surfers won’t hang

## NAVIGATION

When you build navigation into a site, you can build it into the site's template, so it works consistently across all pages in the site, making it easy and enjoyable for visitors to find their way around on your site. Dreamweaver supports many different navigation options, including a simple list of text-based links, links that change color or animate when a user hovers over or clicks them, links in menus and submenus, links embedded in images, and animated links.

However, having many navigation options doesn't mean you should use all of them in one site—usually, you should pick one option that matches your site well and stick with that. If your site has many pages and branches, you may need a more complex navigational device, such as menus with submenus. On the other hand, for small sites—say ten or fewer pages—simpler is better. For example, just previously, in [Edit the Template to Add Links](#), you created a bulleted list that functioned quite nicely as a navigational device.

### Learn about Navigation Bars

You probably see *navigation bars* (also called *navbars*) all the time as you surf the Web. A navigation bar usually appears at the top or left side of a Web page and provides a useful grouping of links to other pages or areas of a Web site (**Figure 21**).

**FIGURE 21**

A horizontal navigation bar with a red background. It contains four text links: "Home", "Catalog", "News", and "FAQ", spaced evenly across the bar.

To ensure that readers never have to hunt for links to the main sections of your site, you may wish to place identical navigation bars in the same location on every page on your site.

Dreamweaver has several methods for creating a navbar; in this section, I first teach you how to use graphics for buttons in a navbar, and then I explain how to use CSS to make a navbar.

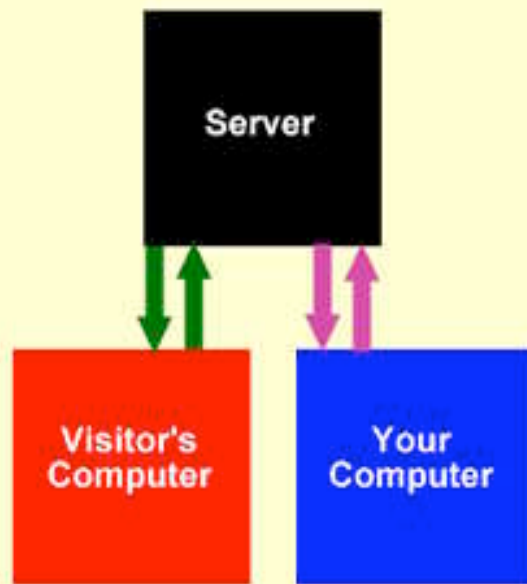
The graphical-buttons method is best if you want a visually rich look and you have graphics that support the feeling you want your site to convey. On the other hand, CSS-based navbars are particularly easy to edit, are less error-prone, and load faster in browsers.

## PUT YOUR SITE ON THE WEB

If you've been following along in this tutorial, you should have a small Web site, complete with an attached style sheet and a functional navigation system. To this point, you've been developing your site locally, creating and testing files on your hard drive. Your potential visitors, of course, most likely don't have access to your computer, so they can't see what you've produced. You're ready to publish your site by uploading it to a Web server so that the whole world can see it. Before I discuss the mechanics of that, however, let's look at the big picture.

A site on the Web usually involves three computers—yours, your visitor's, and a Web server. As **Figure 25** illustrates, there's a strict flow to the communication among these machines. Your computer (where you create and store everything for your site) speaks only to the Web server (the computer where your ISP has reserved space for you). You send copies of your site's files to that machine; you always retain the originals on your local hard drive.

**FIGURE 25**



In a typical situation, before a visitor can see your Web page, three computers must communicate:

- From your computer, you send copies of files to the server so they can be served. (Sometimes you might ask for a file back from the server—in order to edit it, or you might delete a file from the server)
- A visitor's computer requests files from the server.
- The server sends requested files to the visitor's browser.

At the other end of the process, your visitor's computer speaks only to the server, asking for and receiving copies—never the originals—of the files it wants. Your site administrator manages the technical infrastructure that makes these exchanges possible; unless you are the administrator, it's a black box that just works.

## LEARN MORE

There's no shortage of books and Web sites about Dreamweaver and Web design, and here are some of my favorites. They offer more comprehensive information than what's possible here.

### Books

- *Dreamweaver 8: The Missing Manual*  
by David McFarland, published by Pogue Press  
Like everything in the Missing Manual series, this book is thorough, well written, and well presented.
- *Dreamweaver 8 Bible*  
by Joseph W. Lowery, published by Wiley  
For sheer coverage, you can't beat the Bible series, and this volume is no exception.
- *Macromedia Dreamweaver 8 for Windows and Macintosh: Visual QuickStart Guide*  
by Tom Negrino and Dori Smith, published by Peachpit Press  
Both visually attractive and clearly written, this book keeps a sharp focus on current Web standards and best practices.
- *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*  
by Steve Krug, published by New Riders Press  
The title is bang-on—common sense suggestions for testing that your site's design helps, not hinders, your visitors.

### Web Sites

- **Dreamweaver Support Center:** This site has the latest updates, technical notes, and links to the Dreamweaver Exchange. It's not the fastest site you've ever been to—its slowness has been known to cause cerebral hemorrhages—but it's an essential source.  
<http://www.adobe.com/support/dreamweaver/>
- **Project Seven:** If these guys don't produce the best Dreamweaver extensions on the planet, they're close. Not only are their commercial products rock-solid and easy to use, their freebies are

## ABOUT THIS EBOOK

In contrast to traditional print books, Take Control ebooks offer clickable links, full-text searching, and free minor updates. We hope you find them both useful and enjoyable to read.

### About the Author

Arnie Keller has been writing about technology and education for more than 20 years. He's the author of several books on educational computing, professional writing, and grammar.

He has also designed and maintained many Web sites, including Polly Horvath: Novels and Stories (<http://www.pollyhorvath.com/>), the Web home of his wife, Polly Horvath, the National Book Award-winning author of novels and stories for young people. In addition, he runs The Electronic Rhetoric (<http://www.electrict rhetoric.com/>), where he tries out ideas about electronic documents.

His journalism has appeared in *MacWEEK*, *MacUser*, *PC World*, and the *Globe and Mail* (Canada), among other publications; he's written on topics ranging from Apple Computer to Leonard Cohen. In addition, he has consulted for government and co-developed DynaMark, software that helps instructors mark student essays.

He now teaches Web design and electronic expression at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, where he also directs the Professional Writing program.

You can send him email at [akeller@uvic.ca](mailto:akeller@uvic.ca) or visit his home page at <http://web.uvic.ca/akeller/>.

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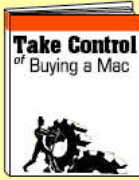
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by Steve Sande



Have you ever wondered what your iPod could do beyond playing music? Find out in this engaging compendium!

\$10

### Take Control of Mac OS X Backups

by Joe Kissell



Create a rock-solid backup strategy so you can restore quickly and completely, no matter what the catastrophe.

\$10

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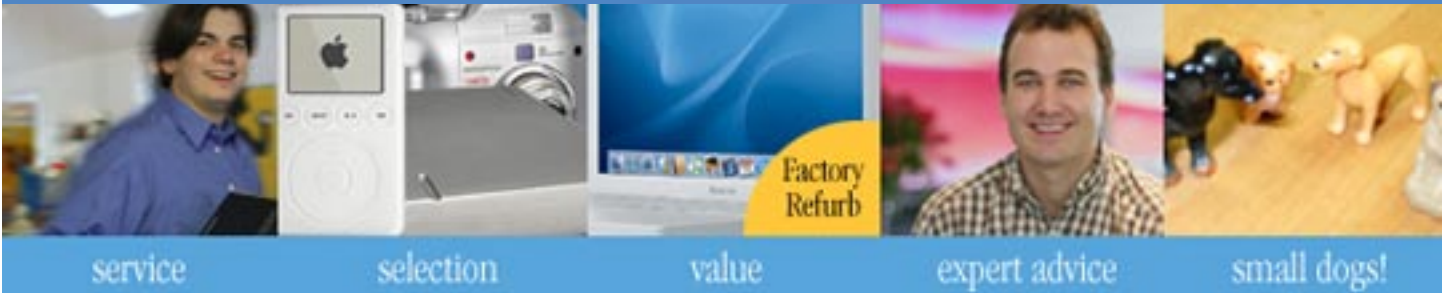
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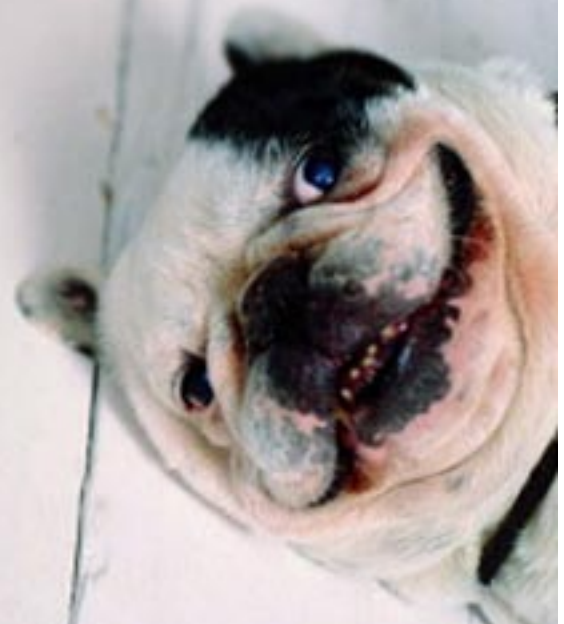
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