



## Float Images Within Text

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Before the days of CSS-based layouts, we used the `align` attribute of an image to make text wrap around it on the left or right. Now, with the separation of content and presentation, we should use the CSS `float` property to achieve this same effect. Floating images within text is one of the easiest ways to learn how floats work. Nevertheless, if you haven't already read [Float: The Theory](#) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=AC008>), you'll want to do that now. This article will show you how to apply the theory you learn in that article to a real-world content layout technique.

Note: This isn't a tutorial about creating galleries of images, but rather about floating single images within the text and having the words wrap around them. Think of a page about ABC Corporation that has a picture of the smiling CEO sitting off to one side in the text. If you already know how to do this and want to create image galleries, see [Creating a Liquid Thumbnail Gallery with Floats](#) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=D8593>) and [Creating a Captioned Floating Thumbnail Gallery](#) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=8A02E>), both by John Gallant and Holly Bergevin.

### The Markup

The key to any good CSS effect is a solid foundation of good (X)HTML. Download the support files for this article by clicking on the download link at the bottom of this page and open the file **float\_images.html** in Dreamweaver. Go into Code View and look at the XHTML markup. The content is simply a heading, two images, and two paragraphs:

```
<h1>Floating images in the text</h1>

<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet...</p>

<p>Morbi eros massa...</p>
```

Right now, because these elements do not have any presentational attributes nor CSS applied to them, each element sits on its own line (Image 1). Let's write some style rules to change that.

## Floating images in the text



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### Image 1

## Floating the Images

Still in Code View, notice that there is a `style` element containing a single rule in the head of the page. This is where we will write our style rules affecting the images. In a live page, you would keep all your style rules in an external style sheet that you link or import into the page. However, when you are first developing a page, as we are doing here, it's often easier to write the styles directly in the head so you don't have to keep switching between multiple documents.

As you know from Float: The Theory, the `float` property can have two values, `left` or `right`, each of which moves the element that the float is applied to over to the left or right, respectively, and makes the adjacent content wrap around the opposite side of that element. So, if we wanted both of the images on our page to be aligned to the left with the text wrapping around on their right, we could add the following rule:

```
img {  
  float: left;  
}
```

This is all we need to move all the images as far to the left as they can go and make the text wrap around

them to the right and below. However, we need to add a few more declarations to improve the display. First of all, the second image will "hook" on the first one and display to its right if there isn't enough text to wrap all the way down the right side of the first image (Image 2).



**Image 2**

To force it to display beneath the first one, add a clear to it:

```
img {
float: left;
clear: left;
}
```

Now each image will always display beneath any previous floated images instead of side by side.

**Warning:** Sometimes, when you have a float and a clear applied to the same element, Internet Explorer will add large gaps between pieces of content. After you're finished with this tutorial, read [Close Gaps Next to Floated Images in Internet Explorer \(http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=B03A6\)](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=B03A6) for the fix to this bug.

There's one more style issue you'll probably want to remedy: the way the text butts right up against the images (Image 2). To create space between the images and the adjacent text, assign margins to the images:

```
img {
float: left;
clear: left;
margin: 0 20px 20px 0;
}
```

The margin value shown above is a shorthand value specifying all four margin values at once, in clockwise order: top, right, bottom, left. It sets the right and bottom margins to 20 pixels while leaving off any margins from the left and top. If you were floating the images to the right instead, you'd want margin on the *left* and bottom.

## Floating images in the text



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### Image 3

With these three little declarations in a single style rule, we can successfully float all the images throughout our site. That's a heck of a lot easier and cleaner than applying the `align` attribute to every image!

## Increasing the Float Possibilities

The style rule that we've used up to this point would make all images throughout an entire site float to the left and have text wrap around on the right (provided the rule was placed in an external style sheet and linked or imported into every page). However, a much more common scenario is that throughout your site, you have some images that you want to float left and some that you want to float right, others that you don't want to float at all, and differing image sizes. The technique that I use to accommodate all these different image float needs involves creating a few different CSS classes and applying them as needed to the images.

First, I create a class for images that I want to float left:

```
.left {  
float: left;  
margin: 0 20px 20px 0;  
}
```

I create a separate class for images that I want to float right:

```
.right {  
float: right;  
margin: 0 0 20px 20px;  
}
```

In the sample page you've been working on, save a copy, then delete the `img` rule from the style section in the head. Paste in the two `.left` and `.right` rules above. If you preview your page now, you'll notice that your images are not floating any longer. You need to apply the classes to the images. At the end of the first `img` tag, before the `/>`, type `class="left"`, so it looks like this:

```

```

Repeat this same process for the second `img` tag, but this time, type `class="right"`, so it looks like this:

```

```

Note: The class attribute can appear anywhere within the `img` tag, not just at the very end. Just make sure you're consistent with where you place it so that it's easy to go back later and remove classes if you need to.

Preview your page again and now the first image will be floating left and the second floating right (Image 4).



Image 4

Another common requirement of floated images is that they have captions. In order to keep the caption with the image it is associated with, wrap the image and its caption (marked up in `p` tags) in a `div`:

```
<div class="left">

<p>This is Styx, our first cat. He is currently six years old.</p>
</div>
```

Note that I've moved the `.left` class to the opening `div` tag and taken it off of the image. This is because I want the whole `div` to float to the left, not just the image inside it. However, there's a problem:

the text of the caption doesn't start wrapping when it reaches the edge of the image. Instead, it stays all on one line, pushing the adjacent text far away from the image (Image 5).



**Image 5**

To fix this, you need to constrain the width of the `div` to the width of the image. The way I most commonly do this is to create two standard image sizes for my site, one for horizontal images and the other for vertical images. Horizontal images will usually be around 300 pixels wide, while vertical images will be around 200 pixels wide. I create two separate classes for each of these standard sizes:

```
.horizontal {  
width: 300px;  
}  
.vertical {  
width: 200px;  
}
```

Then, I apply whichever class I need to the `div` in addition to its `.left` or `.right` class. Any element can have more than one class simply by writing all the class values in a single `class` attribute, each separated by spaces:

```
<div class="left vertical">  
  
<p>This is Styx, our first cat. He is currently six years old.</p>  
</div>
```

With these changes in place, the caption now wraps when it gets to the edge of the `div`, which is sized to match the image within it (Image 6).

## Floating images in the text



This is Styx, our first cat. He is currently six years old.

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This is Poe, our second cat. He is currently four years old.

### Image 6

Now you try applying a caption to the second image. (If you're having trouble, open up [float\\_images\\_2.html](#) from the support files and take a peek.) You should end up with something that looks like Image 7:

## Floating images in the text



This is Styx, our first cat. He is currently six years old.

Sed hendrerit, tellus ut iaculis varius, velit eros gravida nunc, et gravida urna urna nec nisi. Phasellus porttitor interdum nunc. Nunc ac nunc nec velit vestibulum consectetur. Donec ultricies, tortor in volutpat gravida, metus justo dignissim massa, eget molestie turpis erat sit amet eros. Phasellus consequat auctor urna. Maecenas dolor nunc, malesuada rhoncus, fermentum vitae, tristique elementum, nulla. Phasellus lacus neque, cursus sit amet, elementum a, varius eu, dolor. Proin volutpat varius lorem. Maecenas quam. Morbi euismod egestas lorem. Proin bibendum elit at tellus. Maecenas blandit orci a ante. Class aptent taciti sociosqu ad litora torquent per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos. Sed libero dolor, vulputate aliquam, dapibus a, imperdiet lobortis, nisi. Etiam sed libero. In enim mauris, tempor vitae, auctor sit amet, varius vel, dui. Cras in metus.

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### Image 7

If you like my technique of using mix-and-match multiple classes to float images in your pages, I recommend copying the following rules and creating a Dreamweaver Snippet out of them that you can drop into all your style sheets when first starting a new site. (Not familiar with Snippets? Read [Exploring the Snippets Panel in Dreamweaver](#) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=AB7D1>) by Bill

Horvath.) You can adjust the width and margin values as needed, but these rules provide you with a good basis for creating floated images:

```
.left {
float: left;
margin: 0 20px 20px 0;
}
.right {
float: right;
margin: 0 0 20px 20px;
}
.horizontal {
width: 300px;
}
.vertical {
width: 200px;
}
```

If the images on your site don't lend themselves to just two sizes, create as many classes as needed to accommodate the different types of images you will have, giving each a class name that accurately describes what is going to be applied to (for instance, a class of `.product-thumbnail` for small images of products).

## What's Next

Once you've got the hang of basic image floating, it's time to start learning about all the other great things you can do with floats. Here's a sample of things to tackle next:

- [Do You Want To Do That With CSS? — Float Tricks](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=3017D) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=3017D>)
- [Do You Want To Do That With CSS? – Floating Clear](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=95671) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=95671>)
- [Creating a Liquid Thumbnail Gallery with Floats](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=D8593) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=D8593>)
- [Creating a Captioned Floating Thumbnail Gallery](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=8A02E) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=8A02E>)
- [Create a Teaser Thumbnail List Using CSS: Part 1](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=97480) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=97480>)
- [Do You Want To Do That With CSS? — Align Elements Left and Right](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=529B0) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=529B0>)
- [Do You Want To Do That With CSS? - Multiple Column Lists](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=27F87) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=27F87>)
- [North Pole: A Structural CSS Positioning Study](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=33662) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=33662>)
- [The Theory of CSS Column Design: Source Order](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=72426) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=72426>)

You'll probably also run into some float bugs and peculiarities along the way. Here's some ammunition to help you deal with them as they pop up:

- [Close Gaps Next to Floated Images in Internet Explorer](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=B03A6) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=B03A6>)
- [Control Block Formatting Context](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=6BC9D) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=6BC9D>)
- [Clearing Floats, the Easy Way](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=93C7A) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=93C7A>)
- [Float: The Bugs \(Part One\)](http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=AF85B1B881347F29) (<http://www.communitymx.com/abstract.cfm?cid=AF85B1B881347F29>)

Approximate download size: 292k

### **Keywords**

CSS, cascading style sheets, stylesheets, styles, styling, images, photos, floating, floats, left, right, text wrapping, captions

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