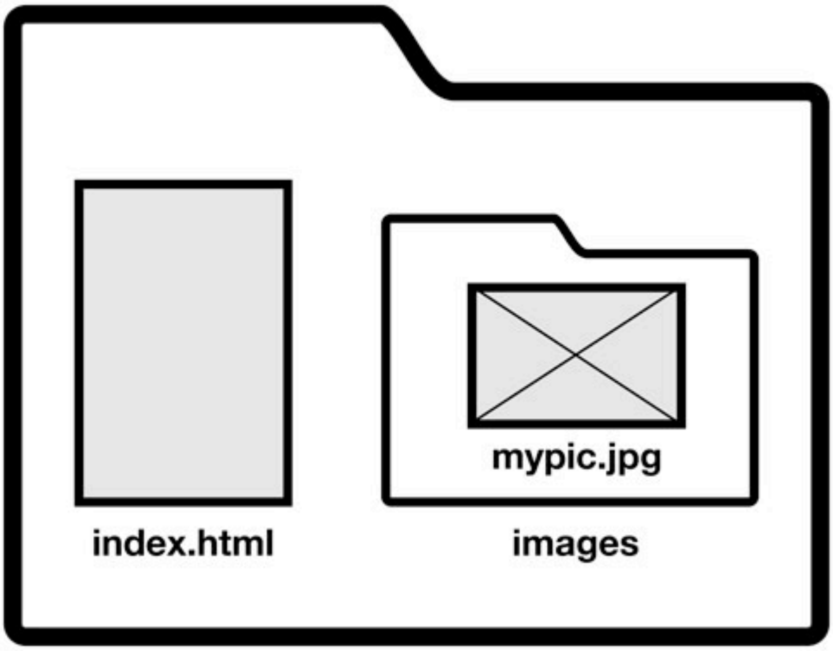
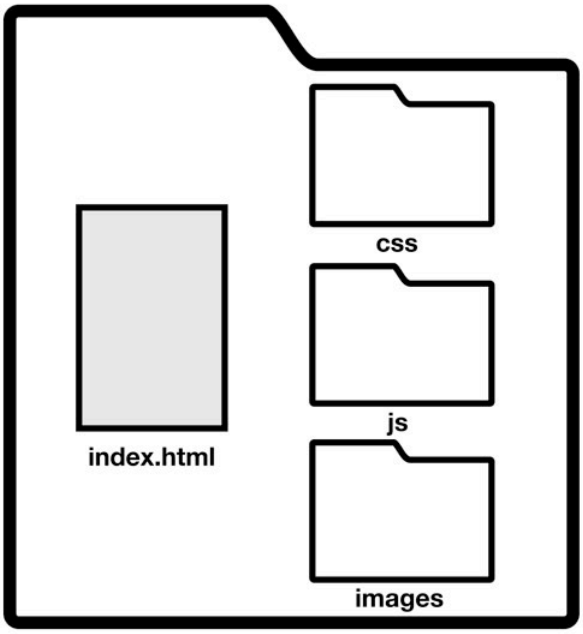
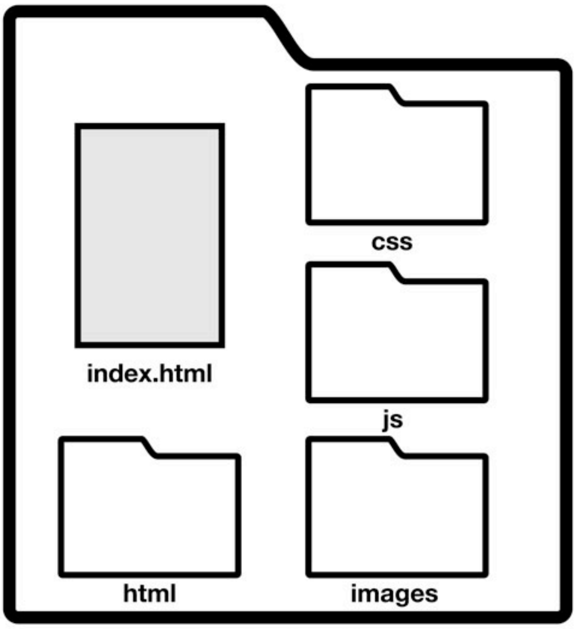
File Management for web sites



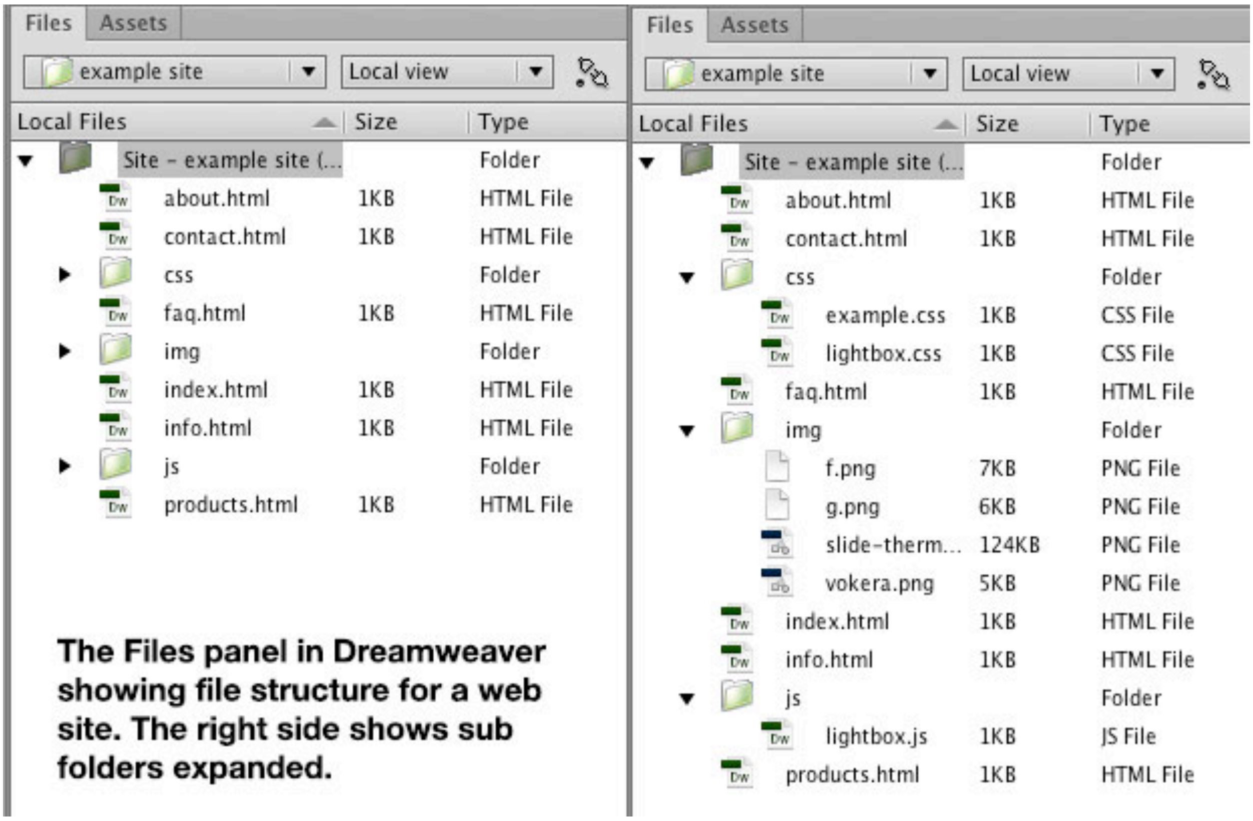
structure for a simple site



common structure for root folder



alternative structure for root folder



Local Files	Size	Type
Site - example site (...		Folder
about.html	1KB	HTML File
contact.html	1KB	HTML File
css		Folder
faq.html	1KB	HTML File
img		Folder
index.html	1KB	HTML File
info.html	1KB	HTML File
js		Folder
products.html	1KB	HTML File

Local Files	Size	Type
Site - example site (...		Folder
about.html	1KB	HTML File
contact.html	1KB	HTML File
css		Folder
example.css	1KB	CSS File
lightbox.css	1KB	CSS File
faq.html	1KB	HTML File
img		Folder
f.png	7KB	PNG File
g.png	6KB	PNG File
slide-therm...	124KB	PNG File
vokera.png	5KB	PNG File
index.html	1KB	HTML File
info.html	1KB	HTML File
js		Folder
lightbox.js	1KB	JS File
products.html	1KB	HTML File

The Files panel in Dreamweaver showing file structure for a web site. The right side shows sub folders expanded.

Outline

A web site is a collection of linked files. One web page links to another, images are not embedded in a page but are linked and style sheets and JavaScript can be linked to pages. Links are written inside the documents that point to the location of other files within the site. For this to work the respective files need to be able to find each other at those specified locations.

Good file management is essential for this process to function successfully. This requires naming files correctly and saving them into the right locations. Poor file management will result in lost files and broken links and unnecessary troubleshooting.

The principle of organizing files for a site is simply a matter of good housekeeping. For instance one would not store letters in a folder called "my pictures", the same is true when creating a web site. *There are shared conventions when managing files for web sites but ultimately your aim should be to organize them for your convenience.*

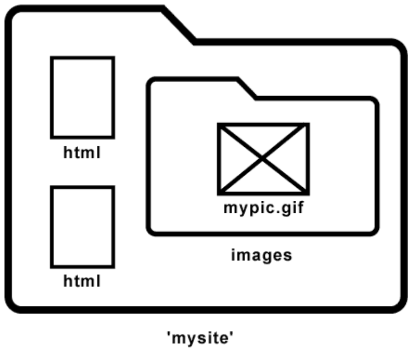
Root folder

When constructing a web site, for instance on your computer, the files necessary for the *functioning** of that site should be contained in a specific folder. This folder is referred to as a ‘root’ folder but you can name it anything you like, such as a descriptive name for the site. It will be the *contents* of this folder that will be uploaded to a hosting server to form your web presence.

Beginning a site

The first thing to do when constructing a site is to establish a root folder on your computer and then set up the files and folders inside (site structure). Pre-planning determines the structure but it can also develop organically over time.

Below is an example of the file structure for a simple site:



Here we have

- A root folder that contains the HTML files and a folder called images.
- The HTML files (web pages) stored directly inside the root folder *('root'* or *'first level').*
- Visual matter, such as graphics and photos, contained in another folder called 'images' inside the root folder.

In this example, for the HTML document to display an image, it will need to locate the image inside the 'images' folder. The code in the HTML document will look like this:
<img src="images/mypic.gif">

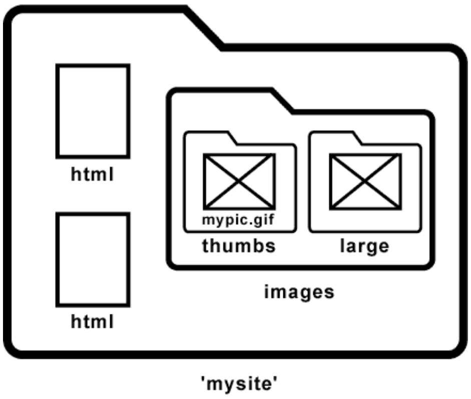
The part contained within the quotes is the file path to the image in relation to the HTML. The word *images* followed by a forward slash (**images/**) indicates a folder in the same location as the HTML document. The HTML will then look for the specified file inside that folder - in this instance called **mypic.gif.**

If your web site were to contain Flash movies, video, sound and so-on, then these should be contained in dedicated folders inside the root folder.

- **Keep root folders separate e.g. do not store one root folder within another**
- **Keep resources and source files, such as Photoshop or Word files separately from the root folder**

Other solutions

Let us consider how an image gallery may be organised. For instance there may be a page of thumbnails that, when clicked on, will display a larger version of the thumbnail. For this to happen we will need to have two versions of the same image, one small and one large. Therefore it could be advantageous, such as when batch processing with Photoshop, to split them into different folders but use the same file name for each:



In this example the *images* folder contains 2 sub folders called *thumbs* and *large.* The resulting HTML to display a thumbnail would be:
<img src="images/thumbs/mypic.gif"> .

This would display the thumbnail image in the HTML document. Then a link would need to be attached to the thumbnail so that when clicked the larger version appears:

<a href=”images/large/mypic.gif”><img src="images/thumbs/mypic.gif">**</a>**

The link <a href… also contains a file path looking for a image in the images folder but this time inside a folder called large.

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* Functioning files refers to those necessary for display, presentation and dynamic features of the web site. Typically these would be HTML, images (jpeg, png, gif), CSS, JavaScript, files for downloading and so on. It does not include, for instance, Photoshop, Illustrator or Word documents which are resource files for deriving content for the site.