

Site Design & Dreamweaver 3



Utah Education Network
Staff Development

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SOME BASICS OF SITE DESIGN

Thoughts About File Structure

When designing your web site, it is important to think about how web files relate to each other, how they can be accessed by other documents, and who needs to have access to what folders and files.

A typical school web site might have pages for administration, calendars, and events, pages for departments and clubs, and pages for individual teachers. Each of these pages may or may not be modified by a single individual (web master), they may or may not share a look and feel, and they may or may not have been maintained coherently previously. It is useful to think about these issues when deciding what the file structure for our site is or should be.

Root Directory

When creating a File Structure you have to think initially about what will be the root directory of your web site. The UEN Professional Development web site, for example, is accessed on the Internet by going to <http://www.uensd.org>. When someone enters this address, it really refers to a folder or file on our web server (a computer running web server software). This folder is the root directory for your site. While it is possible to add files and folder to this file, it is not wise to place any of the files (graphics or HTML files) associated with the site outside this root folder. In the case of our server, this file is d:\uensd. Thus we might have folders like d:\uensd\images or d:\uensd.default.htm, but we wouldn't have a file d:\images\.

Within the Root Directory

Within the root directory you have many options for laying out the files in your site. One option is to have no file structure, but simply place all HTML and graphics files in the root folder. This works for small sites, but is generally not suitable for large sites. Other file structures would be more useful.

The next level of complexity in terms of file structure is to have folders representing types of files. To illustrate we might have one folder for HTML files, one for images, one for .PDF files, and another for movies or Flash animations. This type of file structure works when there are slightly more pages than the first example. It helps weed out the growing numbers of support files so you can find the files you need to work with.

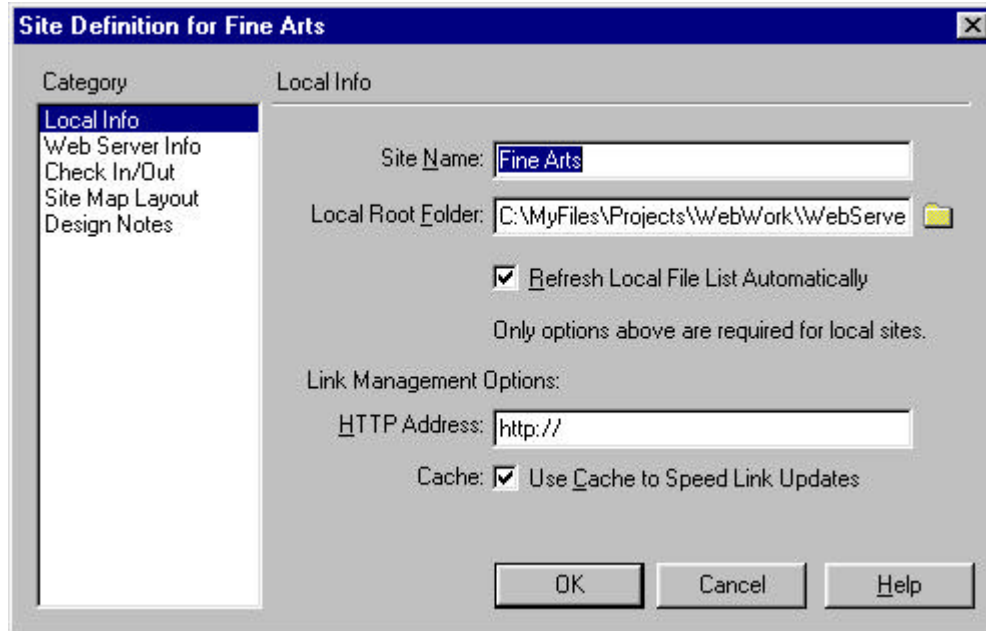
Another structure that, though complex, helps to manage sites is to break each subsection down into the structure mentioned above. In other words, you might have the previous structure at the root level for pages and support files that refer to the site in its entirety, but then have sub files (for administration, clubs, calendar, phone list, teachers) each with its own set of images, movies, and other folders to house files specific to that subset of the web page.

This final structure requires some work to set up, but when finished, allows for the greatest flexibility in terms of site management (individual teachers, for example, could have total control of items within their own folder, but be unable to access other people's files). It also allows files to be accessed with the greatest speed in terms of finding specific files.

When Designing a Site with Dreamweaver

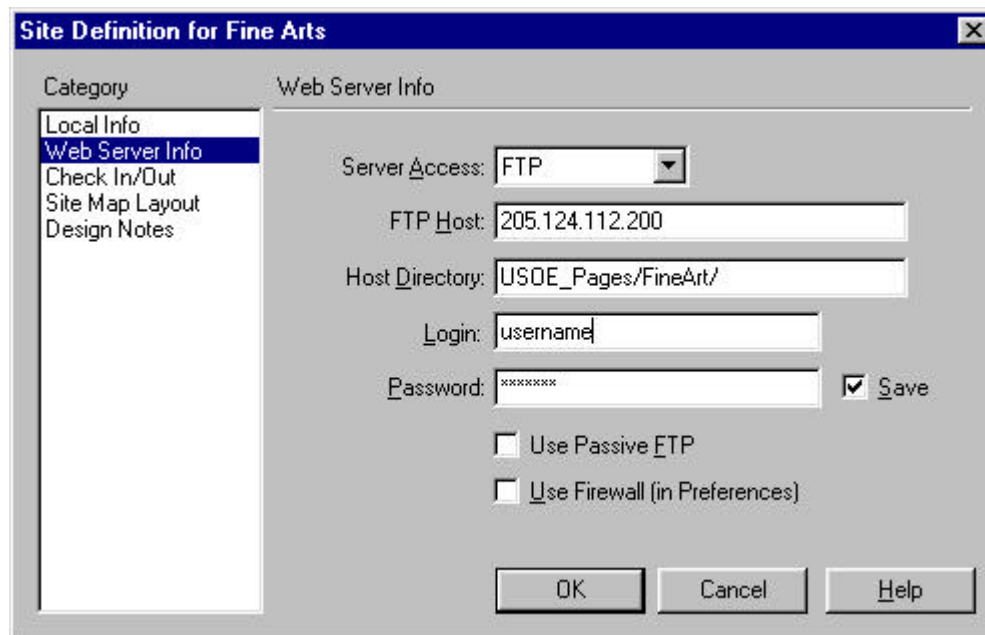
Site Design with Dreamweaver begins right when you launch the program for the first time. To set up your first site, you have to give it a name, and then point the program at the file on your machine that will serve as the Local Directory. Generally it's a good idea to have created that folder prior to launching the program.

The window that is launched looks something like this:



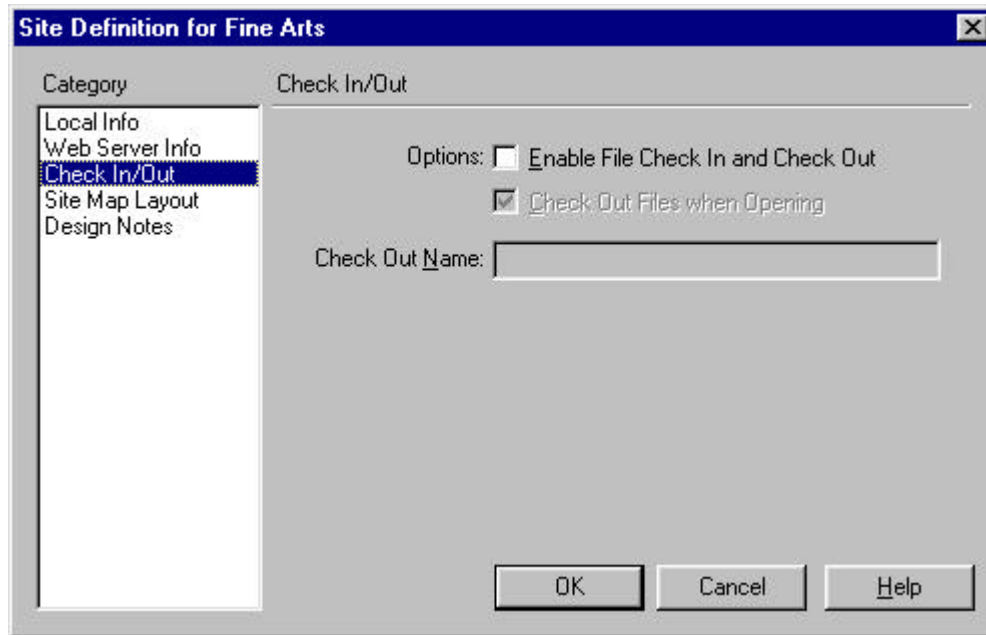
Web Server Info

The information under Web Server info refers to the actual web server that will host your web page. For most people the development machine and the web server are two different computers. When you click on the Web Server Category, it brings up the following dialogue box.



The Server Access pull-down menu will have to be changed to FTP before the rest of the dialogue fields will appear. Enter your host IP or Domain Name. And, if you're working in a subdirectory, place that information in the Host Directory Field. If you don't enter a username and password, you will be asked for one when you connect.

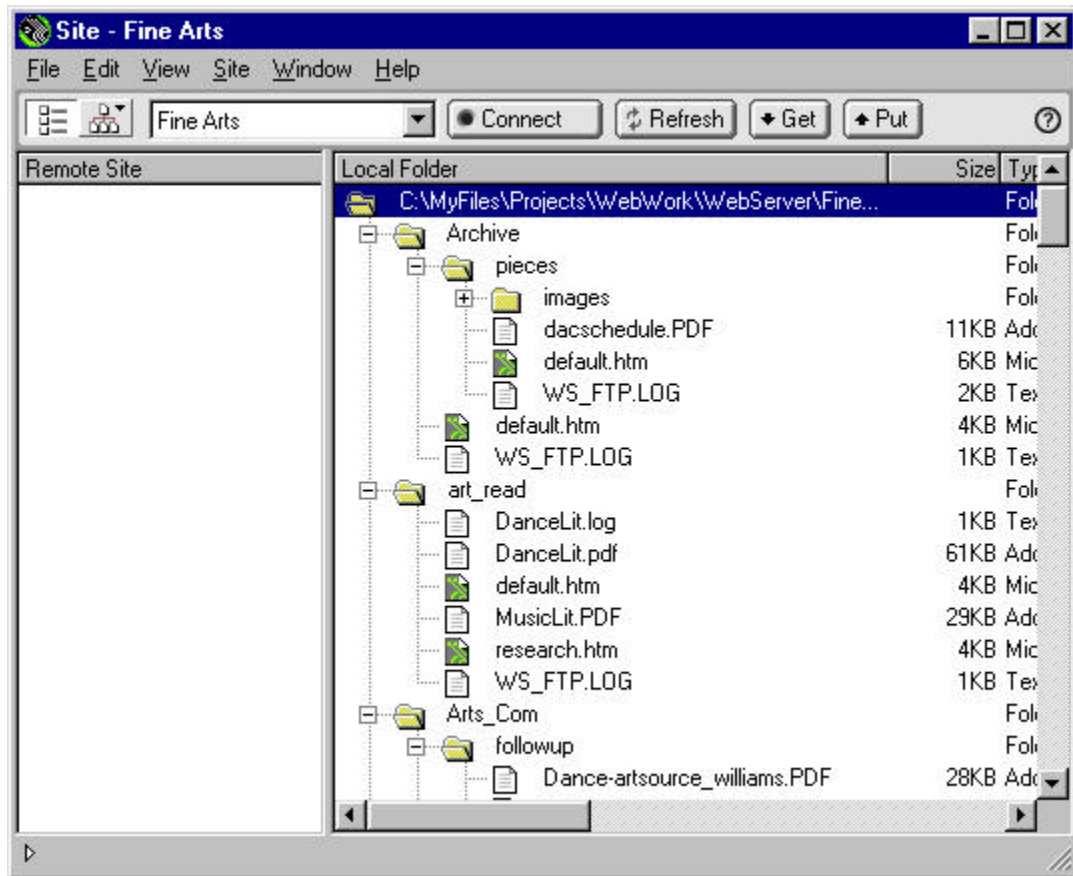
Check In/Out



This function makes it possible for a site to be edited by a number of people. If you check out a file, it cannot be edited by another user until it has again been checked in.

Other Tricks

There are other items in the Site Map which can be accessed from the pull-down menus within the Site Map.



Site Menu—Change/Check Links Sitewide: this function gives you control of links in the site. If, for example a number of pages refer to the page <http://www.usayesterday.com> and the address changes to <http://www.usatoday.com> you can make the change here.

Site Menu—Synchronize: A great one-button update feature which allows you to change the local site after someone else has edited the page on the server or to change only those files on the server that have been edited locally.

Window Menu—Site Map: if you want to see a flow diagram of your site, this is where you find it. Sometimes it gets rather large, but it helps with conceptualizing your site.

Other helpful options

Templates, CSS, and Libraries are other Dreamweaver tools that help you manage your site with Dreamweaver. These items control looks and feels of the site in different ways, but all can be helpful. For more information on these items, please join us at one of our professional development workshops. Information can be found at www.uen.org/development.