

Different versions of CSS

CSS1

¹The first CSS specification, CSS1, became a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recommendation in December 1996. It included properties for controlling typography, such as fonts, text alignment, spacing, margins, and list formatting. It allowed the designer to specify the dimensions of block-level boxes and to surround boxes with borders. Yet, when it came to layout and design, CSS1 didn't have much to offer: you could specify foreground and background colors and background images, and you could float a box to the left or to the right and make text flow around it.

CSS2

CSS2 came out in 1998, and contained a lot of the features that designers had been longing for. Boxes could be made to behave like HTML table cells, or they could be positioned in different ways; more powerful selectors were available; style sheets could be imported into other style sheets; style rules could be specific to certain output media; and so on. Vast improvements had also been made in the areas of paged media (printing), and the generation of content from the style sheet.

As it turned out, some parts of CSS2 were very difficult to implement, so the W3C decided to revise the specification and adapt it to real-world situations. Most of the special features for paged media were removed. The creation of generated content was restricted to the :before and :after pseudo-elements, and restrictions were placed on how generated content could be styled.

CSS3

The work on CSS3 has been going on for years, but seems to advance very slowly. CSS3 is divided into modules, and the idea is that each module can become a recommendation independently from the others. No module has reached that stage, but some parts of the CSS3 specification have already been implemented by browsers.

Some features in the CSS3 working drafts that have already been implemented include multi-column output of text, rounded corners on borders, opacity control, HSL/HSLA/RGBA colors, and text shadows (a part of CSS2 that was removed in CSS2.1).

The CSS3 selectors module will be released separately from the rest of CSS3. Some of those selectors are already implemented in modern browsers.

²Useful cross browser compatibility table available from <http://caniuse.com/>

¹ <http://reference.sitepoint.com/css/csshistory>

² <http://caniuse.com/>