Using the Faux Column Technique in CSS Sculptor

The Faux Column Technique allows you to ensure that all the columns in your design are of the same length. Without applying this technique, the appearance of your columns can look awkward and unpredictable. To avoid this, the faux column technique creates a background image that creates the illusion that all the columns extend to the bottom of your design.

What Do You Need to Start?

- Dreamweaver CS3 or CS4

- Eric Meyer's CSS Sculptor 2.0 or higher

- Site defined in Dreamweaver

Why use the faux column technique?

First, we will create a quick layout in CSS Sculptor to demonstrate the usefulness of the faux column technique.

1. From the Dreamweaver File menu, choose **New CSS Sculptor page**.

2. Choose a preferred design from the Design Type menu.

3. Select **Customize CSS**.

4. On the Layout tab, clear the **Equal column lengths** checkbox.

Note: In order to apply the faux column technique, you need to have this checkbox selected. However, we first want to create this design with this option unchecked, to display how this technique works.

5. Click **OK** when the alert displays.

6. Click **Finish** to create this basic design.

Reviewing the design

Having created a basic CSS design, let's take a look to see how the faux column technique will be useful.

With your new design open in Dreamweaver, enter text into the content area. Notice that as you add more rows of text to the content area, the left sidebar does not extend, and a white space appears below the column.

Without the faux column technique applied, the left sidebar is only as tall as is necessary to fit the content within it. Once we apply this technique, the column will maintain the height of all other columns in the design.

Applying the faux column technique

Let's now reenter the CSS Sculptor wizard and continue working on our design.

1. From the File menu, choose **New CSS Sculptor page**.

2. Choose a preferred design from the Design Type menu.

3. Select **Customize CSS**.

4. In the Layout tab, select the **Equal column lengths** option.
   If not already selected.

5. Choose **Finish** to have your design created.
   Or continue creating your design in Sculptor, then click Finish.

Note: You will be prompted to save a new preset. It is useful to save a preset as often as possible so that you can modify the design at a later date.

6. In Dreamweaver, enter more rows of text into the content area.

Notice that as you enter more content, the left sidebar also becomes larger.

How does this technique work?

This technique uses a background image that is applied to the *contentwrapper* of your CSS. More information on applying this technique can be found here http://www.alistapart.com/articles/fauxcolumns/.

This background image is automatically inserted into your Dreamweaver defined site within a folder of the layout name. If you move this file using the Dreamweaver files panel, you will have the opportunity to update the path.

What is the iepngfix.htc file?

If a PNG image file is included within your CSS Sculptor design, this file will be inserted into your defined site. This file provides a useful fix for a known issue in Internet Explorer when displaying transparencies in PNG files.