

STYLING TABLES

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Like any other text content on a web page, content within table cells can be formatted with various font, text, and background properties.

You will probably want to adjust the spacing in and around tables. To adjust the amount of space within a cell ([cell padding](#)), apply the **padding** property to the **td** or **th** element (see [Note](#)).

NOTE

Long ago, cell padding and spacing were handled by the **cellpadding** and **cellspacing** attributes in the **table** element, respectively, but they were made obsolete in HTML5 because of their presentational nature.

Spacing between cells ([cell spacing](#)) is a little more complicated and is related to how CSS handles cell borders. CSS provides two methods for displaying borders between table cells: [separated](#) or [collapsed](#). These options are specified with the table-specific **border-collapse** property with the **separate** and **collapse** values, respectively.

border-collapse

Values: separate | collapse

Default: separate

Applies to: Elements with the display type table and inline-table

Inherits: Yes

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Separated Borders

By default, borders are separated, and a border is drawn on all four sides of each cell (**border-collapse: separate**). The **border-spacing** property lets you specify the space between cell borders.

border-spacing

Values: *horizontal-length vertical-length*
Default: 0
Applies to: Elements with the display type `table` and `inline-table`
Inherits: Yes

The values for **border-spacing** are two length measurements. The horizontal value comes first and applies between columns. The second measurement is applied between rows. If you provide one value, it will be used both horizontally and vertically. The default setting is 0, causing the borders to double up on the inside grid of the table (see [Note](#)).

The table in [FIGURE 21-3](#) is set to **separate** with 15 pixels of space between columns and 5 pixels of space between rows. A purple border has been applied to the cells to make their boundaries clear:

```
td {  
    border: 3px solid purple;  
}  
table {  
    border-collapse: separate;  
    border-spacing: 15px 5px;  
    border: none;  
}
```

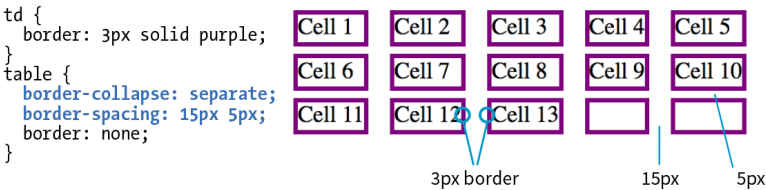


FIGURE 21-3. The separated table border model

For tables with separated borders, you can indicate whether you want empty cells to display their backgrounds and borders by using the **empty-cells** property. For a cell to be “empty,” it may not contain any text, images, or non-breaking spaces. It may contain carriage returns and space characters.

NOTE
*Although the **border-spacing** default is 0, browsers generally add 2 pixels of space for the obsolete **cellspacing** attribute by default. If you want to see the borders double up, you need to set the **cellspacing** attribute to 0 in the **table** element.*

empty-cells

Values: show | hide

Default: show

Applies to: Table cell elements

Inherits: Yes

FIGURE 21-4 shows the previous separated table border example with its empty cells (what would be Cell 14 and Cell 15) set to **hide**.

```
empty-cells: hide;
```

```
empty-cells: hide;
```

Cell 1	Cell 2	Cell 3	Cell 4	Cell 5
Cell 6	Cell 7	Cell 8	Cell 9	Cell 10
Cell 11	Cell 12	Cell 13		

FIGURE 21-4. Hiding empty cells with the **empty-cells** property

Collapsed Borders

In the collapsed border model, the borders of adjacent cells “collapse” so that only one of the borders is visible and the space is removed (**FIGURE 21-5**). In this example, although each table cell has a 3-pixel border, the borders between cells measure a total of 3 pixels, not 6 (in instances where neighboring cells have different border styles, a complicated pecking order is used to determine which border will display, which you can read about in the spec):

```
td {
  border: 3px solid purple;
}
table {
  border-collapse: collapse;
  border: none;
}
```

```
td {
  border: 3px solid purple;
}
table {
  border-collapse: collapse;
  border: none;
}
```

Cell 1	Cell 2	Cell 3	Cell 4	Cell 5
Cell 6	Cell 7	Cell 8	Cell 9	Cell 10
Cell 11	Cell 12	Cell 13		

3px border

FIGURE 21-5. The collapsed table border model

The advantage to using the collapsed table border model is that you can style the borders for **tr**, **col**, **rowgroup**, and **colgroup** elements. With the separated model, you can't. Strategic use of horizontal and vertical borders improves the readability of complicated tables, making the collapsed model an attractive choice.

Table Layout

table-layout

Values: auto | fixed

Default: auto

Applies to: table or inline-table elements

Inherits: Yes

The **table-layout** property allows authors to specify one of two methods of calculating the width of a table. The **fixed** value bases the table width on **width** values provided for the table, columns, or cells. The **auto** value bases the width of the table on the minimum width of its contents. The **auto** layout mode may display nominally more slowly because the browser must calculate the default width of every cell before arriving at the width of the table.

Pick a Side

When you use the **caption** element in a table, it will appear above the table by default. If you'd prefer it to be below the table, you can use the **caption-side** property to position it there.

caption-side

Values: top | bottom

Default: top

Applies to: Table caption element

Inherits: Yes