

Using tables in the CMS:

When to use tables, how to create and change them, and best practices to follow

When should I use a table?

Tables are most useful when you have a relatively large set of “data” that needs to be displayed in a way that demonstrates organizational relationships. For example, schedules or calendars are often created in table format in order to show the relationship of events with dates and days of the week. Agendas are often organized into tables in order to clearly convey the progression of events in a day and the times associated with those events. You may also wish to use a table if you have a long list of names that would be logically divided into two or three columns to shrink the amount of space the list consumes on the page.

When considering whether to use a table on a Web page, it is important to think about other ways of displaying the same information. Often there are other more effective ways than tables. If a header and paragraph, a simple list, or even the use of a colon to associate two pieces of information, will suffice in conveying the message clearly, use of a table is not necessary or recommended. However, there are clearly a handful of cases, like the examples above, where displaying information in a table is acceptable formatting.

How to create a table

You may have noticed a few new buttons have appeared in the toolbar in the Body Copy element in your pages (Event Editors – for you this area is called “Full Event Description”). The first is the Insert Table button (📄) located to the right of the Insert/Edit Anchor button. This button is the place to get started creating a table. Click in your body copy in the location where you would like to insert a table and then click this button. The Insert/Modify table box will appear and it has two tabs (General and Advanced):

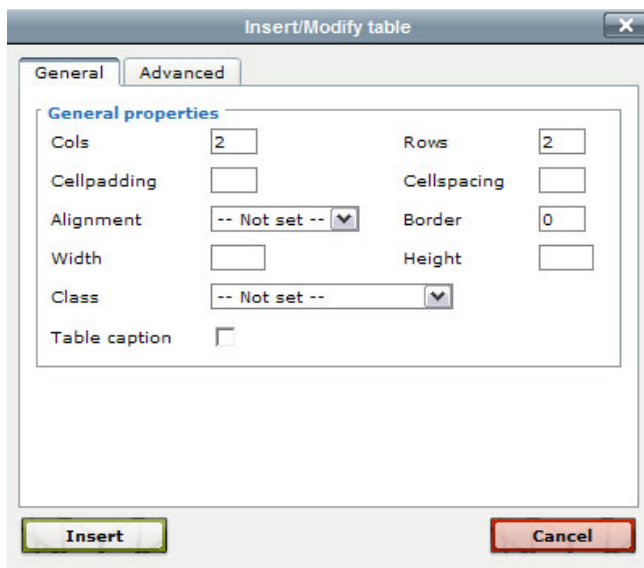


Figure 1: General tab

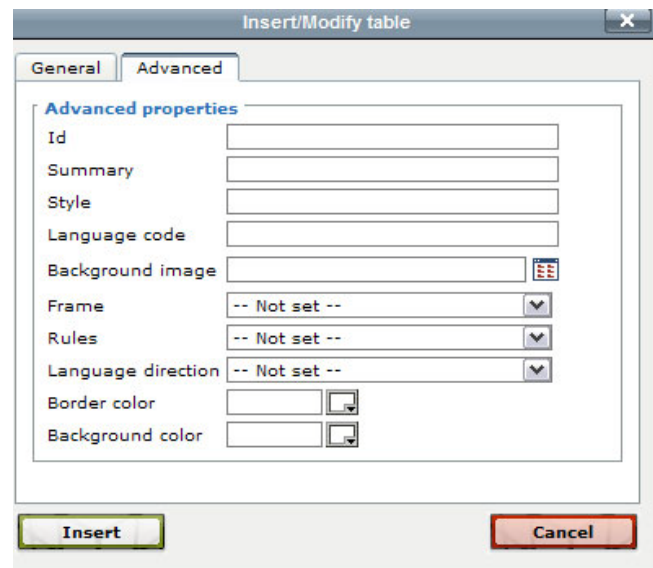


Figure 2: Advanced tab

General tab

The first details that appear are the “General Properties” of the table you are creating. By default the CMS will create a 2x2 table, unless you specify a different number of columns (Cols) or rows. There are other properties as well. These properties can be edited later if necessary (e.g.; you can add more rows later or change the cell padding).

Cellpadding

Controls the amount of space padded around the contents of each cell of the table. This field should be given a value between 0 and 5.

Cellspacing

Controls the amount of space padded between cells within the table. This field should be given a value of 0 (if cell spacing is needed, 1 or 2 is acceptable).

Alignment

Specifies whether the table should be aligned left, right or center. Note: Leave this field set to “Not set.”

Border

Controls the width of the border around the table and between cells. In almost all cases, the border should be left at 0. However, if a border is absolutely necessary, it should be set to 1 (no larger).

Width

By default tables are set to automatically fill the space available (width is set to 100% by default even if nothing is designated in the Width field). However, if you need your table to be less than 100% of the given space, designate a number of pixels in this field (e.g.; 50px) and adjust until it suits your needs.

Height

Controls the height of the table. Leave this field empty.

Class

If you would like your table to have thin horizontal lines separating each row (ideal formatting for detailed event agendas), select the “horizontal” class. Please note, if you are using the horizontal class, you should also set the cellpadding and cellspacing both to 0 for optimum use of this style class.

Table caption

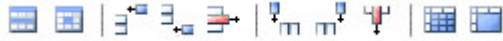
This feature is not for use. Leave it unchecked.

Advanced tab

It is recommended that you **not** use the features on the Advanced tab when setting up your table. If you feel that any of these features might enhance the appearance of your table, check with the Web Manager first to make sure you won't be violating formatting guidelines.

How to modify a table

Once you have inserted a table into your page, you can modify the table by right clicking on the table itself (editing options will appear in a context menu), or using any of the table editing buttons in your toolbar:



The buttons themselves look a little strange but if you want to read what any of them do, simply hover your mouse pointer over each one in the CMS and a description will appear. (**Note:** if the buttons are gray and appear unavailable to you, it means you are not actively editing a table or that feature is unavailable based on the current state of your table. For example, the second to last button is usually gray unless you have a set of merged cells in your table. That button would split those cells if clicked.) For the buttons to be active, you must have a table on your page and your cursor must be clicked somewhere inside the table.

To completely remove a table: Right-click on the table and select “Delete table.”

Best practices to follow

All standard formatting and style guidelines apply to text within tables (for example, use of all-caps is not acceptable, use of formatting such as bold and italics should be moderate, etc.). Use tables only when absolutely necessary.

Ideal settings when creating a table:

Border set to 0

Cellpadding set to 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 (try 0 and adjust upward if necessary)

Cellspacing set to 0

If using the horizontal class (ideal for event agendas):

Class set to horizontal

Border set to 0

Cellpadding and cellspacing set to 0

Do not:

- create a table for a small amount of information that could be more simply organized using a list or separation with a dash or colon.
- create a table with a wide or colorful border. In most cases, no border is the best option.
- create a table with a colorful background or multi-colored cells. This usually gives a table a tacky appearance. But if you have a special request, talk to the Web Manager.

Why does the text look small in some cells but larger in others? (See **Figure 3** below for example.)

You may notice that the text you type into a table cell appears very small in the edit view. When the text looks small, it means it has no paragraph or header tags applied to it. The text is simply within the HTML table cell tags. If you tap enter inside a cell after typing some text, the text will automatically have a paragraph tag applied

to it (because you've performed a hard return and the editor understands that action as starting a new paragraph). It is fine to have paragraph formatting inside a table, but please read the following caution.

It is important that you do not leave a mix of cells with unformatted text and cells with paragraph formatting around text in your table. If one or two cells have paragraph formatting, apply that formatting to the rest of the cells in your table. Paragraphs automatically have a small amount of padding around them so unformatted and formatted text within tables will cause the cells to look different from one another. It is important to make sure the appearance of your cells is consistent throughout the table.

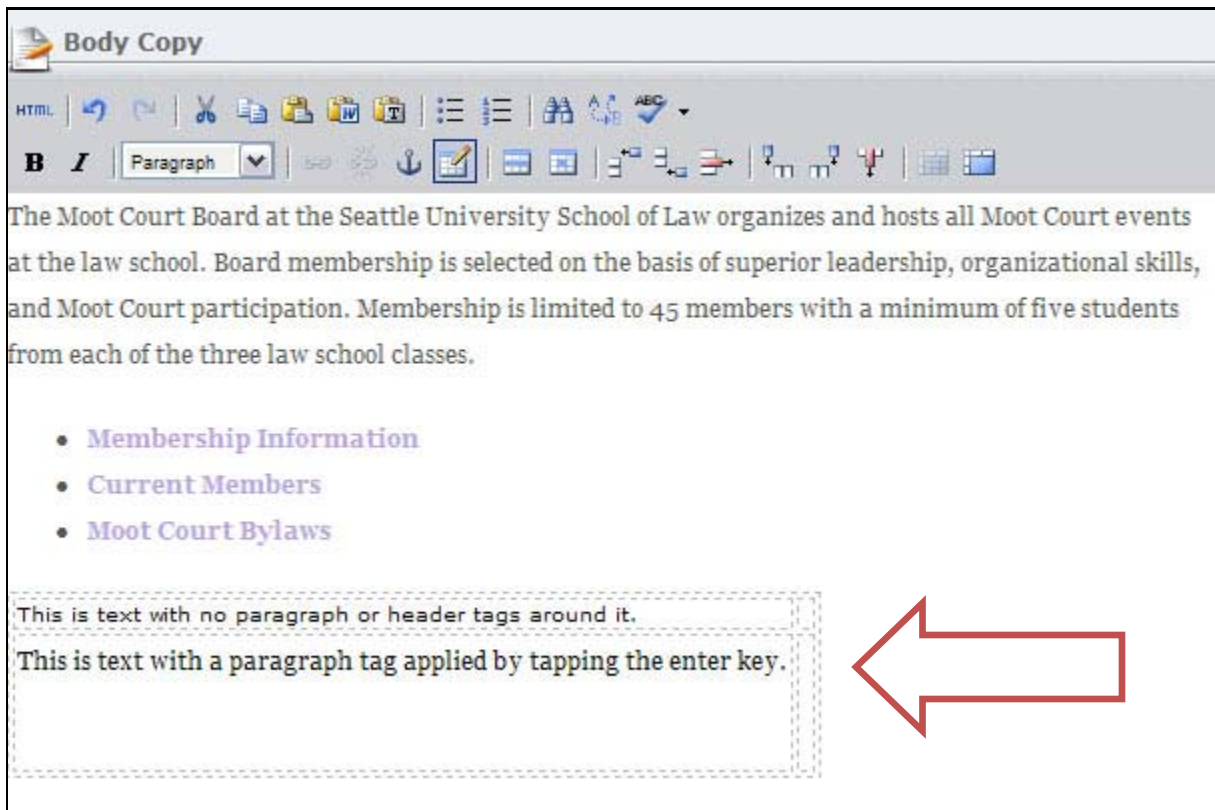


Figure 3: Demo table with unformatted text and formatted text.

Preview!

It is extremely important to **view your table in Preview**. Your table's appearance will be different from what you see in the edit view. Look at all the cells in your table and check for formatting and/or style problems before submitting your page for publish.

Check your work!

As with any other editing you do in the CMS, you must check the product of your work on the **live website** after the next publish finishes. Check for mistakes, formatting problems, or any other unexpected appearance issues.

If you have any doubt about using tables in the CMS, ask the Web Manager for help ahead of time.