



# Tagging the body

**Nick Haines** explains how he made use of a misconception by one of his pupils to help teach the language of web page creation.

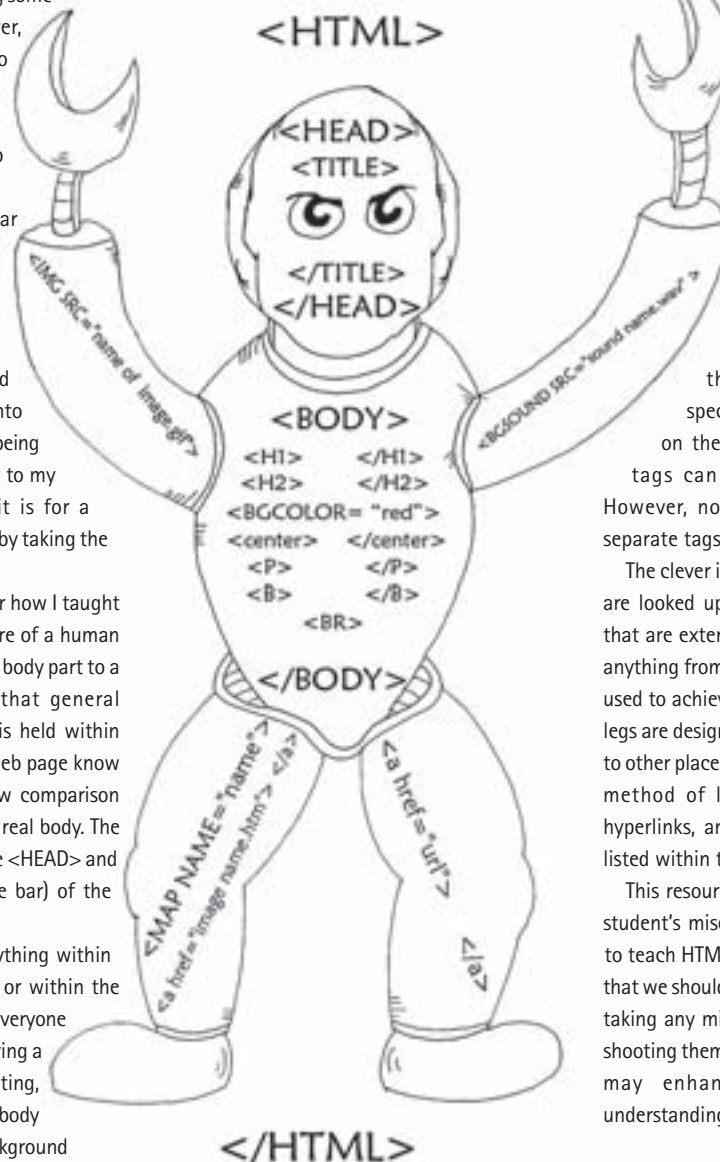
**Teaching** hypertext markup language (HTML), the language used to create pages on the World Wide Web, can involve getting some difficult concepts across. However, when one student was asked to explain the job of HTML tags, his answer made me think about how his explanation might be used to help other students.

I wanted to test this particular student's understanding of the `<HTML>` `<HEAD>` and `<BODY>` tags by asking how each tag operates. His answer reflected a misconception of the tags. He said "Does it draw a head and a body onto the web page?" Despite this answer being unreservedly inaccurate, it brought to my attention how straightforward it is for a student to misinterpret HTML code by taking the terms too literally.

I used this misconception to alter how I taught my next lessons. I sketched a picture of a human body on the board and related each body part to a web page. I told my students that general information about the web page is held within the `<HEAD>` tags, to help let the web page know some important things, and I drew comparison with the function of the brain in a real body. The `<TITLE>` tags are situated within the `<HEAD>` and will appear at the top (in the title bar) of the page like a head does on a human.

I progressed to explain how anything within the main body of a human being, or within the `<BODY>` tags, will be displayed for everyone to see. Therefore, if a person is wearing a bright green jumper with blue writing, everyone can see this. If you tell the body of the web page to have a green background with blue writing it will do this and again, everyone will see this.

Figure 1



## A teaching resource

A teaching resource was produced to help demonstrate how each part of a robot's body could be used to help develop the students' knowledge of HTML. Figure 1 illustrates an HTML robot with a head, body, arms and legs, where each part contains different examples of HTML code. The whole body falls within the main `<HTML>` tags, as does any web page. Enclosed within each part are example tags that would only be used in that specified place on a web page. As seen on the diagram, the `<H1>` or `<Centre>` tags can only appear within the body. However, nowhere in a web page are there separate tags for arms or legs.

The clever ideas behind these are that the arms are looked upon as reaching out to grab items that are external to the web page. This could be anything from an image to a sound, and the code used to achieve this is shown as an example. The legs are designed to illustrate how you may travel to other places away from the web page. The main method of leaving a web page is through hyperlinks, and example code of this has been listed within the legs of the robot.

This resource was produced from hearing one student's misconception in lesson. It has helped to teach HTML to students and should remind us that we should value the attempts of our students, taking any misconceptions and, rather than just shooting them down, using them in a manner that may enhance everyone's learning and understanding.

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