

## Briefing Document: How to use basic HTML

HTML stands for **H**ypertext **M**arkup **L**anguage. It is the most widely used language for writing web pages.

**Hypertext** refers to the way web pages are linked together by a navigation structure and hyperlinks. When you move from one web page to another by clicking on a link, you are using hypertext.

**Markup language** refers to how HTML actually works. When you 'mark up' a text document with special tags, this tells the web browser that will display the page how the text should appear for the user. Tags can be used to designate colour, structure, position of images and appearance of text – in fact, everything that appears on a website is dependent on the tags that are used.

When you create your website, you will probably use a web building program that works something like a word processing package. However, behind the web pages you are constructing will be the HTML code. You can usually switch between your page and the code to see how it builds the page. Two of the Flash activities in the projects you are working on also help you to understand how HTML works. Try out **Web editor** and **Website builder** to see how the changes you make on the page are reflected in the code changes. Professional web designers will use HTML to build their websites. Below is a beginner's guide to the tags used in HTML.

### Using tags in HTML

- Tags are always written within 2 angled brackets, e.g. <HEAD>. These brackets are actually 'less than' and 'greater than' symbols and are found on most keyboards on the comma and full stop keys and are produced using the Shift key.
- Most tags come in pairs and surround the material they affect. They work something like a light switch. The first tag turns the action on, and the second turns it off. There is one exception to this – the <BR> tag makes a blank line in the text and it doesn't have an off switch, so once you have made a line, you can't unmake it.

- The off switch tag always starts with a forward slash - </...>. For example, if I wanted to make a piece of text bold, I would use the on tag <B> followed by the piece of text I wanted to be bold and ending with </B>. The off tag tells the computer to turn off the bold format.
- Tags can be embedded inside each other, but you have to remember to turn them off in the right order. Supposing I want to make a title bold, I will need to use two tags – one for the title and one for the bold formatting. I will need to turn them on and off in the right order for this to work. For example, this won't work:

```
<B><TITLE>My text</B></TITLE>
```

It doesn't work because I need to turn off the title tag before the bold tag. The following example will work:

```
<B><TITLE>My text</TITLE></B>
```

- Just like most technology, HTML is always changing. Older browsers (browsers you might be familiar with include Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox) often won't recognise new tags. This means that the tag and what it encloses will be ignored. So if you code a page using new tags and someone tries to open it in an older browser version that doesn't recognise the tags, they won't be able to see the content within the new tags. This can be a problem for web developers who are trying to make sure everyone can see the content of their pages, regardless of how old their browser is!