

**W**hy start a book on Web design secrets with tools? Shouldn't that be something left for an appendix, perhaps? After all, you want to get right down to the nitty-gritty, and I appreciate that.

As any working Web designer knows, the master designer really needs very few tools at hand to create the ultimate Web design toolbox. A great designer can make do with a text editor, a Web browser, an imaging software program, and an FTP client.

So why all the fuss?

Well, for one thing, in today's busy, mobile world, most Web designers' work requires a range of specialty tools to help make life easier.

This chapter comes first because I have an agenda. My goal is to celebrate the ideologies of the Web itself: open standards, cross-platform interoperability, accessibility, and portability.

So while you'll find plenty of familiar commercial tools in this chapter, what you'll also find is a range of alternatives that are designed under open source licenses and that are available across platforms.

In today's economic environment, many professional programs can cost significant money, making a comprehensive toolbox seem at first glance to be cost-prohibitive. Yet the Web is filled with alternative software that is either distributed under GNU open source licensing, as freeware, or as low-cost shareware. While typically the open source tools were in use on UNIX and related open source platforms such as the many variants of Linux, there have been many recent ports to Windows and Mac OS X. As a result, a world of free or very low-cost tools has opened up to the Web designer. This chapter points you to those resources wherever available.

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**note**

**GNU licensing refers to licenses distributed under the GNU project, which first emerged as an alternative to UNIX systems, resulting in the now very popular Linux program, and related operating systems. The GNU project is part of the Free Software Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and promote free software. More information on this important alternative form of software distribution can be found at [www.gnu.org/](http://www.gnu.org/).**

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The tools in this chapter help you to do the following:

- ♦ Author markup and CSS with ease
- ♦ Create great Web graphics
- ♦ Validate pages
- ♦ Test sites in a range of Web browsers
- ♦ Draw in vector-based environments
- ♦ Use bitmap imaging tools for Web graphic production
- ♦ Design animations
- ♦ Use plug-ins for video and audio
- ♦ Convert and clean up documents
- ♦ Compress documents