

## Javascript menus: a couple easy steps towards better webpage organization

Do you think website creation is something interesting, but complicated, skill-demanding and... just not for you? Well, it has its own complications. But what we'll tell you today is something everyone can use with javascript – but not everyone really does.

A Dynamic HTML menu is a ...-sensitive HTML object with dynamically unfolding submenu items and menu labels. What does this mean? The DHTML menu's functioning starts on a static page after the page has been fully loaded and during the viewing process. The dynamic characteristic of DHTML is applied to a single object – a menu – which makes the page easier to view and quicker to load.

A Dynamic HTML or DHTML webpage is a webpage available for client-side scripting changes. DHTML menus are made in JavaScript, which was originally created to run on client-side. Now the language is no longer limited to just client-side, because server-side JavaScript (SSJS) is also available. Client-side scripting is manageable even for those who are not proficient in scripting, but would like to create a JavaScript menu or, as it's also called, a Javascript tree.

One JavaScript menu can look very much different from another, thus the functions are about the same. You can choose from horizontal and vertical menus, dropdown menus and buttons, unfolding menus and linked texts with availability of submenus. Each kind will do the work, but remember that more formal and easy-to-use menus better suit the business purposes, when more interactive and animated objects fit the entertaining sites.

All the JavaScript menus suit the most basic purpose – navigation. The navigation interface is an important piece of any application, especially a site with many parts and single pages included. A correctly designed JavaScript menu lets users find the needed information easily and quickly.

A tree menu control, also called treeview, displays the information in a hierarchical order, with the main topic at the top and the subordinated menu items and submenu labels underneath.

This type of construction is used in websites because of its main benefits. Beginners like to use a tree of folders because it is easy to learn; experienced users like it because it reduces the number of clicks involved (and time spent).

The Plain Text Horizontal Style DHTML Menu Bar is probably the most common of all the DHTML JavaScript menus and is one that probably will be used the most frequently.

The Plain Text Horizontal Style DHTML Menu Bar is constructed according to the desired structure with or without additional options added. Then the menu is added to the web page completely independent of all other HTML objects.

Treeview JavaScript is the most popular DHTML tree on the net.

Positioning of the menu on the page is another important choice. A menu can be presented in a number of ways. Some menus consist solely of text with only the addition of a small arrow image to denote that a sub menu is available. The javascript trees are not incorporated into texts, but are also effective and add some more design features. For example, a javascript tree can be an animated figure, adding dynamics to the page and making the website memorable.

The JavaScript API (Application Programming Interface) is a core set of JavaScript functions to make DHTML programming quicker and easier.

The API performs tasks such as moving and hiding page elements (DIVs, layers or images) as well as getting and setting their attributes (such as size/position).

The API does:

- Basic Browser Sniffing - Not a complete browser sniffer, it only highlights those browsers that can cause problems in the menu system.
- Get Style Object - Returns the Style Object for a given page element.
- Change Object Visibility - Hides or shows an element.
- Find Image (NS4 only) - Used to find image objects in NS4.
- Find object (NS4 only) - Used to find other objects in NS4.
- Get Element Width/Height - Gets the width or height of any page element (not images in NS4).
- Menus drop down from the menu bar, Submenus hang from other menus.

Are you now sure that JavaScript DHTML menus are absolutely for you?

If not yet, we list the main benefits of it:

- layout flexibility
- frame-based or frame-less layouts
- optional document icons
- optional tree-state persistency across page loads
- open/close state is tracked separately for multiple trees
- fast performance
- unlimited hierarchical levels in your tree menu
- fast performance even for trees with thousands of pages
- expand/collapse does not require much time
- cross browser
- supports all major browsers/versions/platforms
- does not require Java skills
- easy configuration
- modular design: make only small, localized changes to your page and only when you need them.

### About the Author

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