

Creating Special Characters

Introduction

When you type, word processing programs generally create the standard characters you see on your keyboard. These include the straight double quote ["], straight single quote ['], straight apostrophe (same as straight single quote), and hyphen [-]. If you want a proper (curly) double open quote [“] and double close quote [”], single open [‘] and single close quote/apostrophe [’], en dash [–], em dash [—], or other special character, you must create it with a special code. Fortunately, this is not difficult.

Caveat

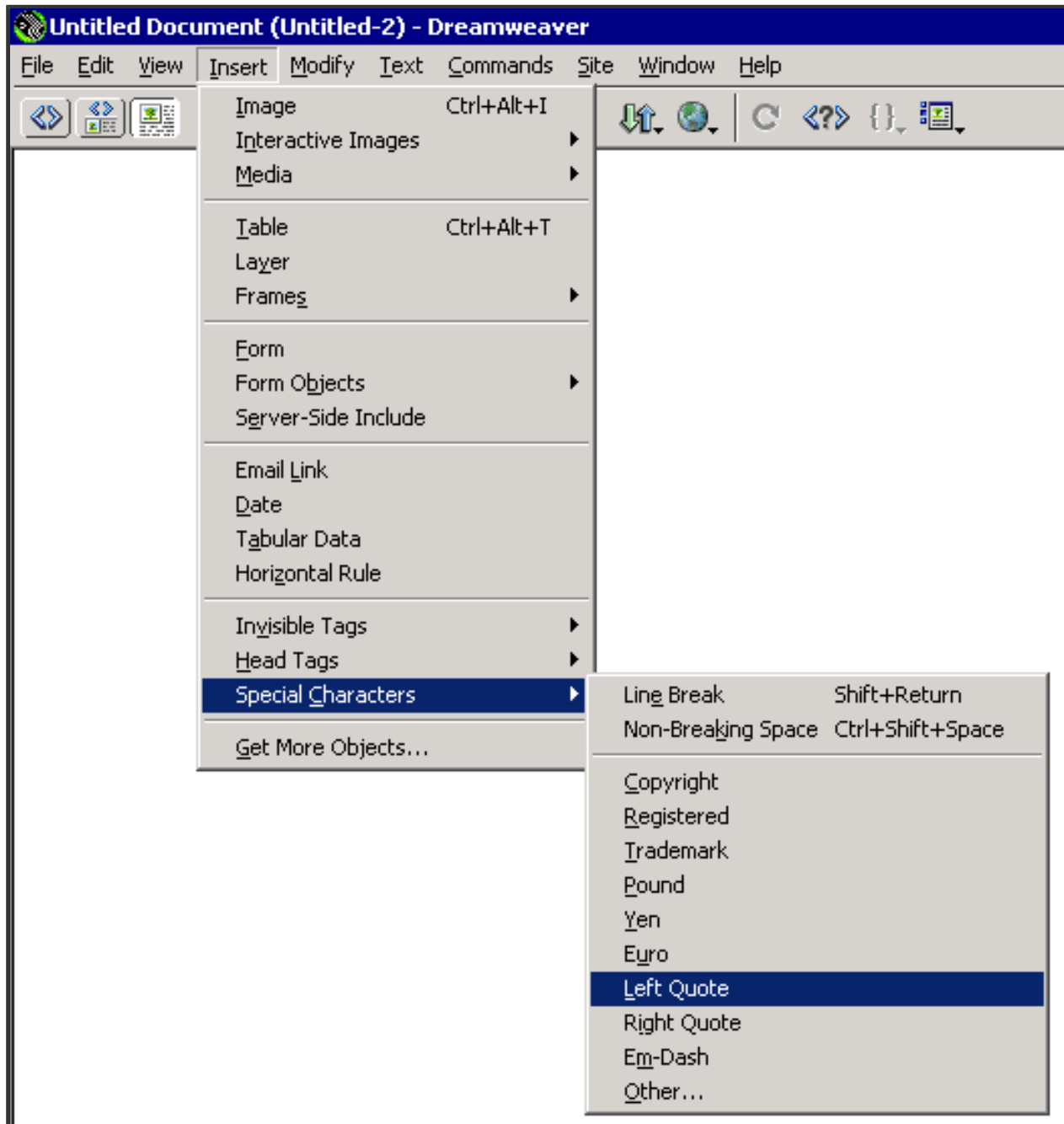
Some programs, such as Microsoft Word, can be configured to convert a quote keystroke into a curly quote automatically. Word calls this feature “smart quotes,” though in fact it isn't always so smart about implementation. This is fine for print, but if you cut text from a Word document into Dreamweaver, you might 1) lose the special character or 2) carry other formatting (font face and size, etc.) that you don't want on your Web page. So copying special characters from other programs isn't a dependable method.

Another method that seems promising on first blush is using a font that includes the special characters you want. This definitely won't work on the Web, because you never know what fonts are available to someone reading your page. So you want to stick to the standard set of characters available in HTML.

Procedures

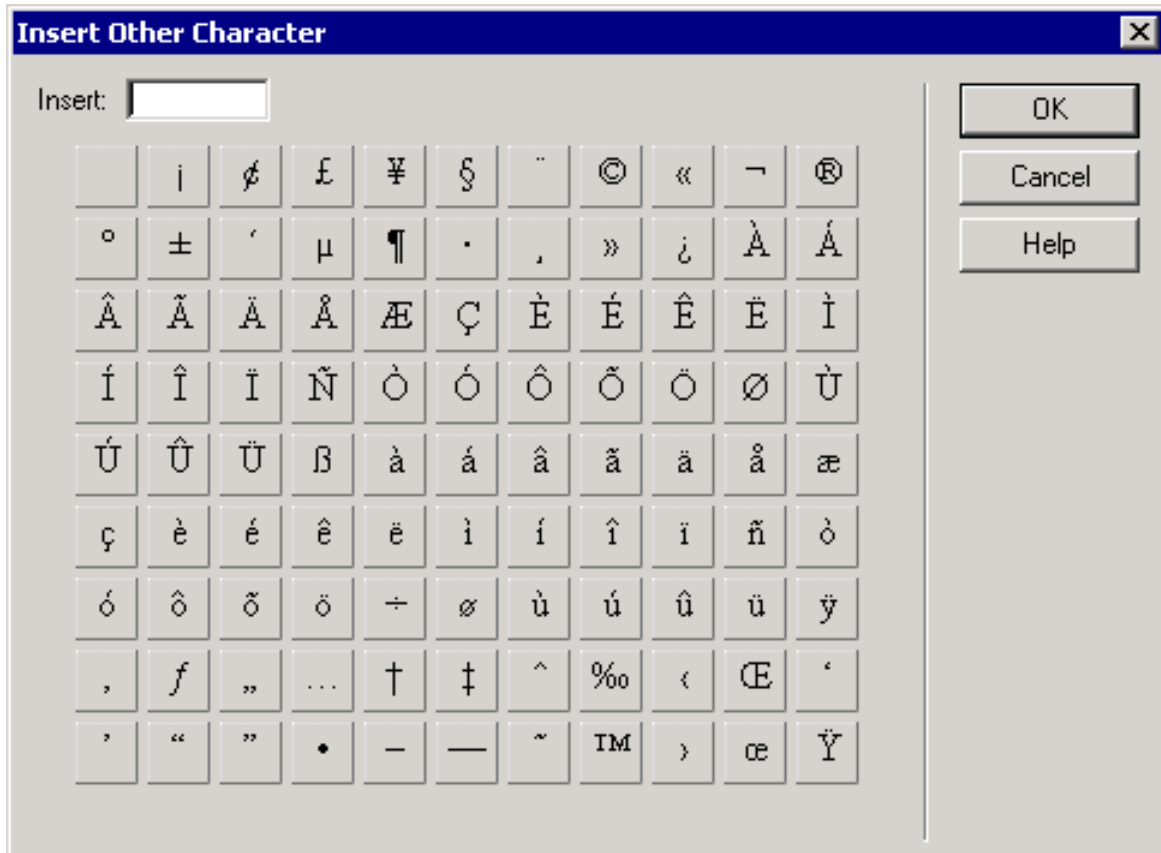
DREAMWEAVER METHOD 1 (WINDOWS AND MAC)

First, place the cursor at the point where you want the special character inserted. With the mouse or keyboard, activate the **Insert** menu, then select **Special Characters**. A list of commonly used special characters will pop out:



If this list contains the character you're looking for, choose it with the keyboard or mouse. The character will appear in your text, selected. Press the right-arrow key or click the mouse pointer to the right of the character to unselect it. Otherwise, your next keystroke will overwrite it.

If you need a character not on this list, choose **Other**. A chart will appear:



Click on the character you want (its code will appear in the “Insert:” window), and click on “OK.” The chart will disappear, and the special character will appear in your text, selected. Press the right-arrow key or click the mouse pointer to the right of the character to unselect it. Otherwise, your next keystroke will overwrite it.

DREAMWEAVER METHOD 2 (WINDOWS)

If you need a character that is not shown on the chart, use this method. In fact, this is actually a faster way to insert commonly used characters (you’ll simply have to remember a few codes).

First, make sure your Num Lock is on. Windows machines generally turn the num lock by default, and most keyboards have an indicator light to show its status (light on=Num Lock on). If it’s off, press the Num Lock key. Then place the cursor at the point where you want the special character inserted.

Now hold down the Alt key and type a four-digit code on the *numeric keypad*, then release the Alt key. To get an double open quote, for example, hold down Alt, type 0147, and release Alt. The character will then appear in your text, unselected. Note that you must use the numeric keypad (the “calculator” keypad, normally to the right of the regular keys); the numbers above the letter keys won’t work. Also, don’t forget to enter the leading zero, if there is one.

For a full list of standard special characters, see the [special characters chart](#), but here are the codes for a few common ones not found on most keyboards:

Name	Character	Key Code
Double open quote	“	Alt+0147
Double close quote	”	Alt+0148
Single open quote	`	Alt+0145
Single close quote (apostrophe)	'	Alt+0146
Em dash	—	Alt+0151
Bullet	•	Alt+0149
Dagger	†	Alt+0134
Double dagger	‡	Alt+0135
Degree	°	Alt+0186
Ellipsis	...	Alt+0133

You will find that this method also works with other word processing programs.

DREAMWEAVER METHOD 3 (MAC)

From the Apple menu, choose **Key Caps**. From the Key Caps' Font menu, choose a commonly used browser font such as Times New Roman, Arial, Courier, Helvetica, Georgia, or Geneva.

Press and hold the Option key. Most or all of the characters on the keyboard image will change. Now hold down Option and Shift. Another set of characters will appear. You can also get different characters by holding Option and Command (Apple).

Once you see the character you want, you can press the corresponding key or click on the key image with the mouse pointer. The special character will appear in the Key Caps window. You can type one character or a string of them. Now select the character(s) and copy to the clipboard.



Go back to Dreamweaver, make sure the cursor is where you want to insert the character(s), and paste.

You don't need to use Key Caps if you know the combination for the special character you want. Just put the cursor where you want the character inserted, and type the key combination. Here are the combinations for a few common special characters:

Name	Character	Key Combination		
Double open quote	“	Opt		[
Double close quote	”	Opt	Shift	[
Single open quote	`	Opt]
Single close quote (apostrophe)	'	Opt	Shift]
Em dash	—	Opt	Shift	-
Bullet	•	Opt		8
Dagger	†	Opt		t
Double dagger	‡	Opt	Shift	7
Degree	°	Opt	Shift	8
Ellipsis	...	Opt		;

You will find that this method also works with other word processing programs.

Caution

There is one limitation that Dreamweaver users should be aware of: You cannot do a search-and-replace within Dreamweaver to change, for example, straight quotes to curly quotes.

This is because Dreamweaver is smart enough to convert the actual special character into the HTML code for that character, in the format ampersand-letter-letter-letter-letter-semicolon [&abcd;] or ampersand-pound-digit-digit-digit-semicolon [{].

For example, if you look at the code inside these brackets [“], instead of seeing an actual open quote, you'll see the HTML code for that character: [“]. Meanwhile, when you type a straight quote in design mode, what's actually recorded is the HTML code for a straight quote: ["].

So when you're in design mode and you try to search for a straight quote, the Dreamweaver Code Inspector will pop up, having selected an actual straight quote *within an HTML tag*. You should never make a change inside a tag unless you're comfortable programming HTML, and you should never change a straight quote to a curly quote inside a tag anyway. So forget the search-and-replace.
