

Microsoft Expression Web - PC

Can Microsoft offer a cheaper alternative to Dreamweaver?

by Stephen Patrick published on 10 April 2007

Microsoft FrontPage had many fans but it was never one of the most flexible or user-friendly of pages. Well, for the most part if you're looking to develop a web page or whole site, you can put that behind you as Expression Web is a whole new ball game.

The idea behind this version was to create a set of tools that adhered to standard-based instructions, so regardless of what you wanted to achieve, it would be compatible across the board.

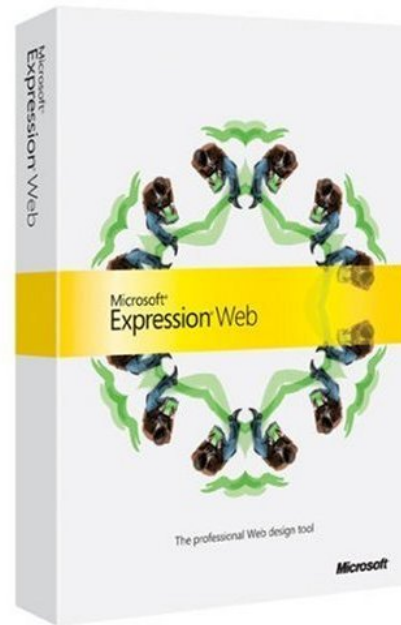
This package isn't for the casual user, and you'll need to be fairly versed in both CSS standards as well as the .NET platform. Rather than go for a complete overall and forget that FrontPage ever existed, this Expression moves the old version on.

So, when you load the program up you'll still find the Folder List along the left-hand side of the page. However, while FrontPage buried your code away, thereby your actions too, you can now see any tag's properties in a series of new panes. This means you don't have to root around in order to change things.

Mirrored on the right-hand side of the screen are the building commands. You'll find the Toolbox task pane that lists HTML tags that you can simply drag and drop into the document window.

Alongside this you have Style and Apply windows that have their own preview panes, so you can see what you're about to do before you apply it directly to the page. This leaves the middle of the screen open to a large document page where you build up the work space.

In order to take advantage of CSS layout layers, you'll find they now have their own control pane. It



...cont.

acts in much the same way as we've seen it work in Dreamweaver but with one big difference: you can visually alter effects in the document window and apply CSS properties and styles.

As you would expect, most of the new tools work natively in Internet Explorer but there are also a range of tools under the Accessibility and Browser Compatibility feature, to make sure that your code works with others browsers. At least that is the idea, as our version only supported legacy versions of IE and didn't list Firefox or Opera as being supported, which are IE's largest competitors.

VERDICT

Microsoft has done a great job with Expression Web. So much so, we feel it may well be in with a chance of knocking the more standards-based tools of the top spot, simply by ease of use and implementations. It's not without its flaws, the lack of full-support being the main problem, but as this is the first suite of many to come, it sets a great new market standard.

At a glance

What is it?

Webpage design tool

Good

Easy to get to grips with

Bad

Doesn't support all browsers

Verdict

It's here to replace FrontPage and bring standards-based control to web-design, which it does with some accuracy, making it a serious contender for web developers

Price £260

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10