

# The Composer

March 2001

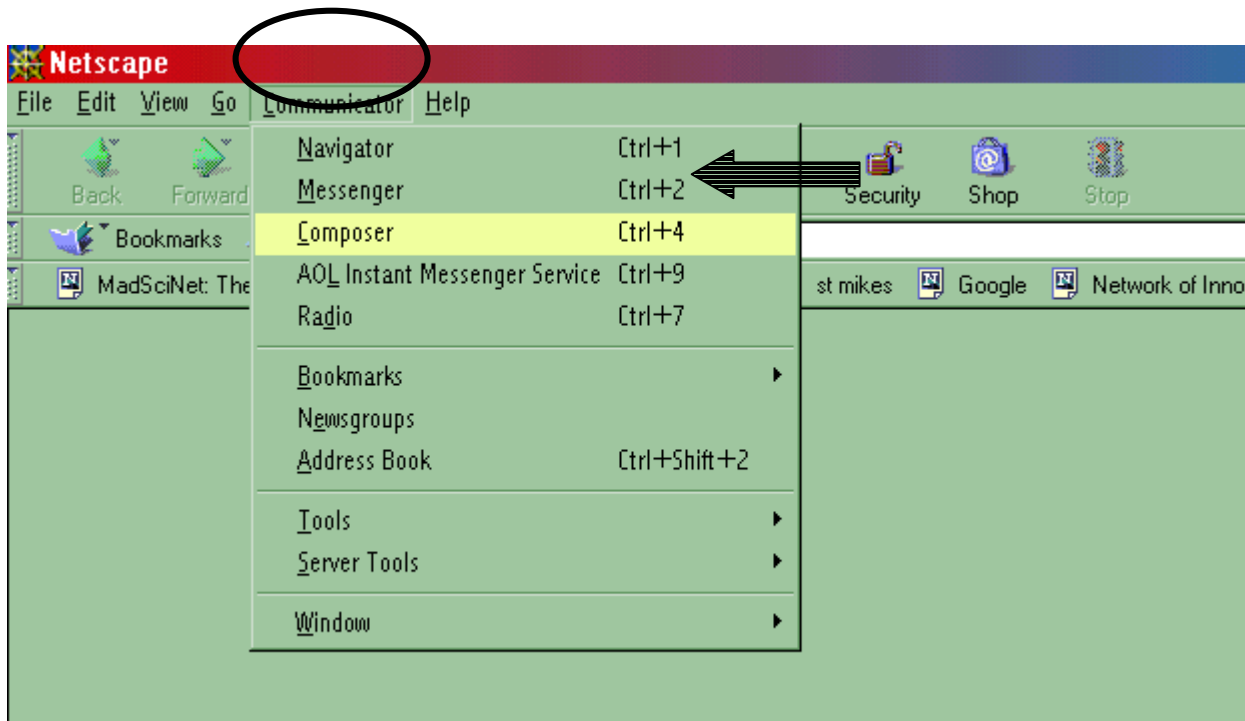
## Section C Using Netscape Composer

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**Please set your screen resolution to 800 x 600**

### 1 Getting Started

Before you can begin creating your most wonderful project you must open Netscape Navigator and within Navigator open composer. To open Composer, select **(left click on)** Composer in the Communicator drop down menu.



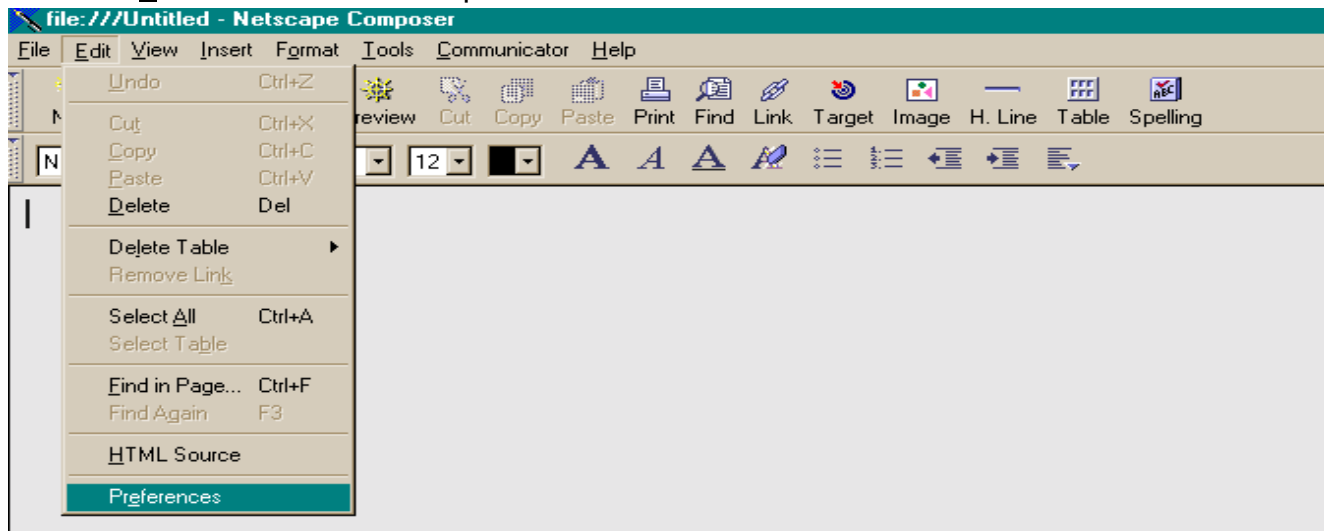
The first thing that you must do before you go any further is to set your preferences and save your page. Setting preferences allows you to include your name as the author of the page and to specify how often your page will be automatically saved. I suggest every 2 minutes as a reasonable amount of time to get enough stuff on your page that it would be tragic to lose it all due to a system failure. Not that that would ever happen!

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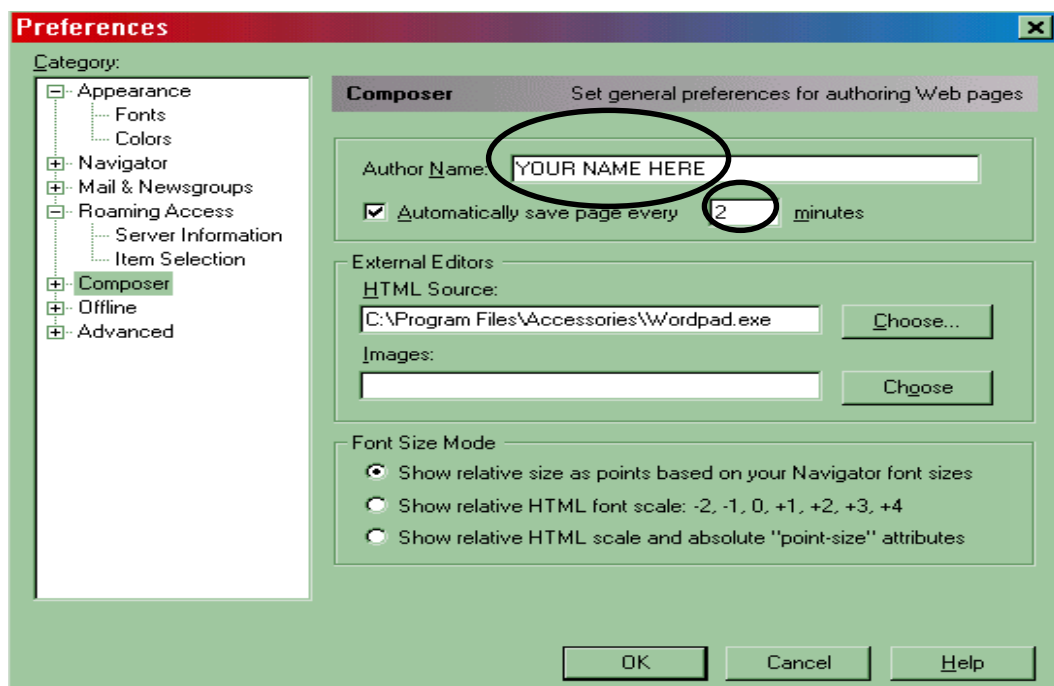
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Select **Preferences** from the drop down menu under **Edit**



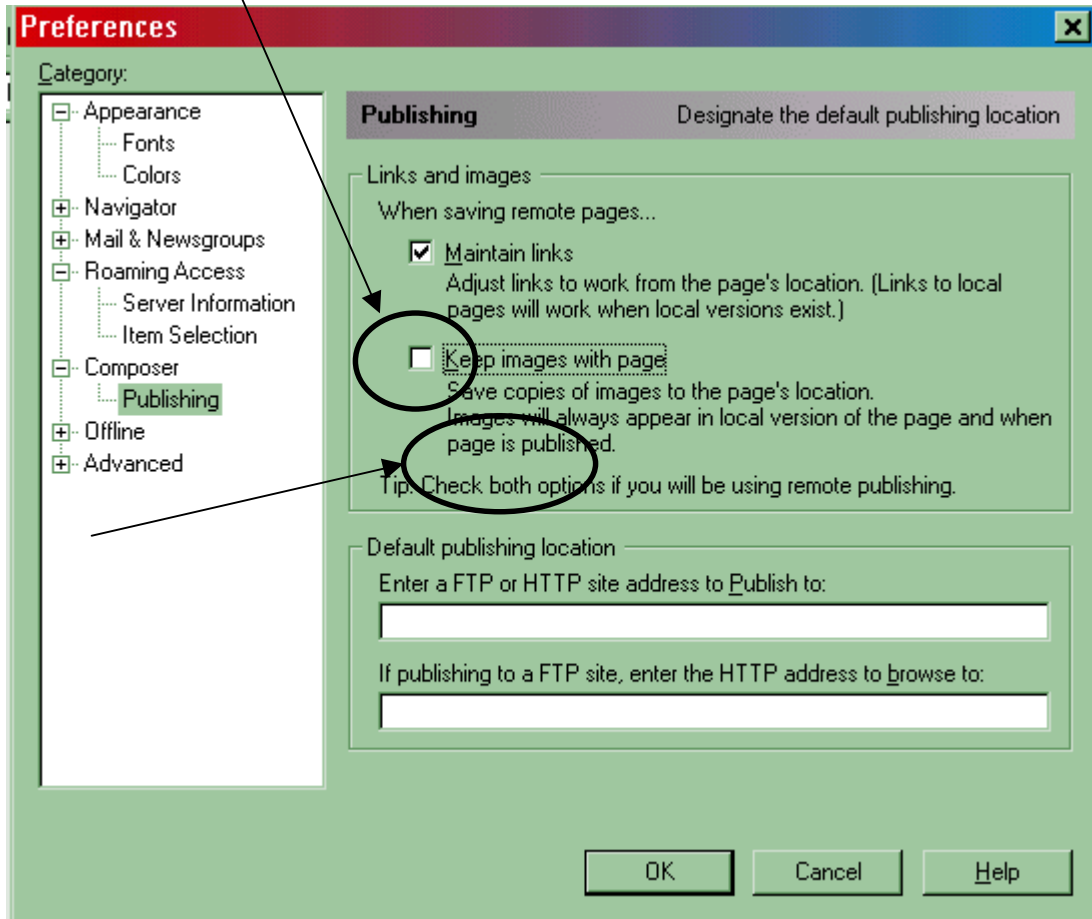
Highlight **Composer** in the list that appears by of course left clicking on it. A text box will pop up. In it you need only adjust the two settings we discussed earlier, the **author name** and **automatic save**



Select 

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In order to maintain the file structure that you set up earlier, and to save disk space you will need to change the publish preferences as well. Select publishing and in the text box that appears, deselect the **“Keep images with page”** box.



Hit the  button again to save your preferences.

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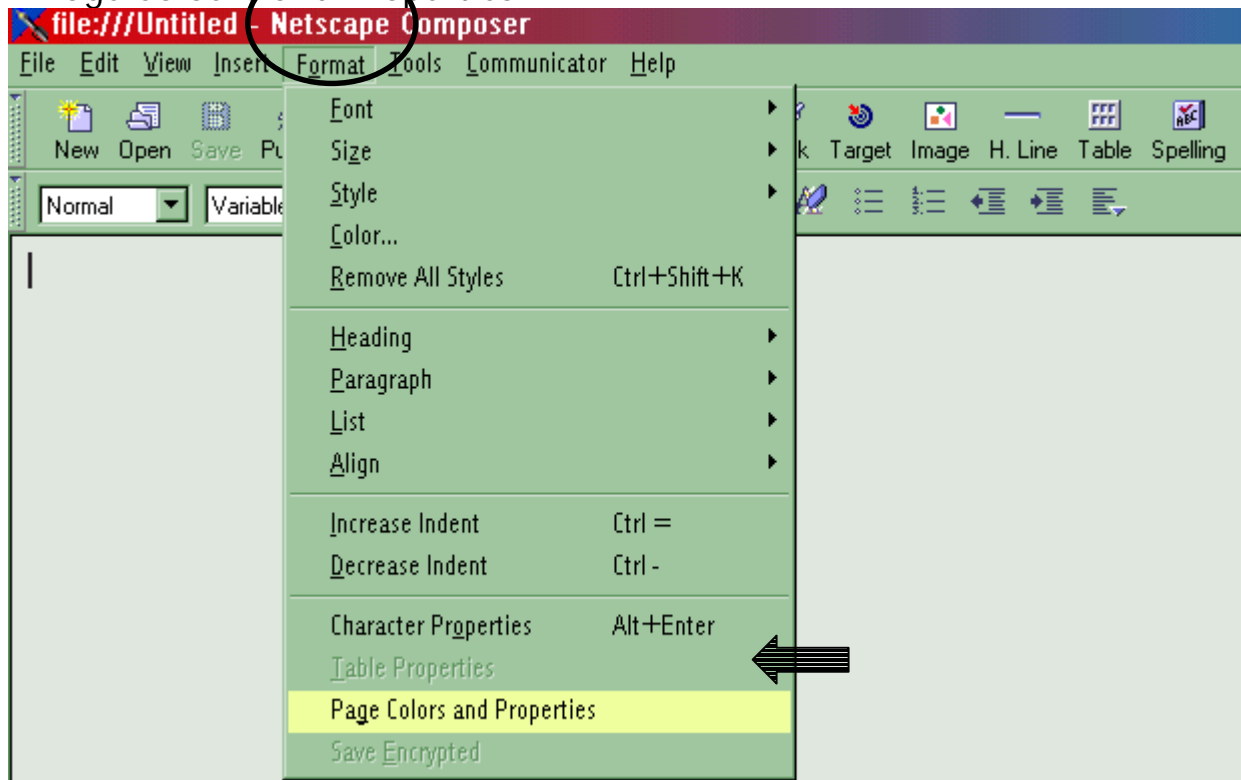
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Now, the fun part! Here is where your personal taste and style start to show. Remember though, continuity from one page to the next is essential. At the end of this session you may wish to decide what elements of layout, colour, graphics, text and background to use for your pages.

### 2 Page Colours and Properties



Select page colours and properties from the drop down menu that appears under format.

In the Page properties menu that appears you will adjust two sets of preferences;

- **General**
- **Colours and Background**

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The general properties are easy. Give your page a title and include your name as the author.

The Colours and Background choices are a bit more involved but they too are easy to use.

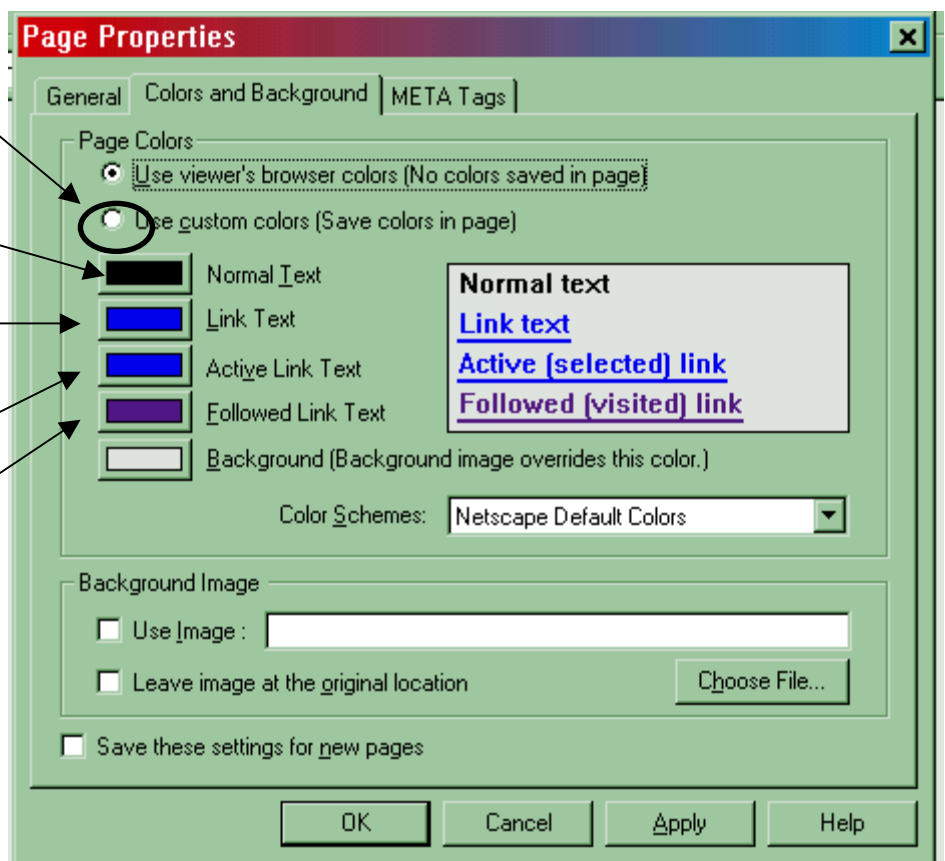
Select “**Use Custom Colours**”

**Normal text** is the colour of the text as it appears on your page.

**Link Text** is the colour of all the text links on your page.

**Active link text** is the colour of any selected link on your page.

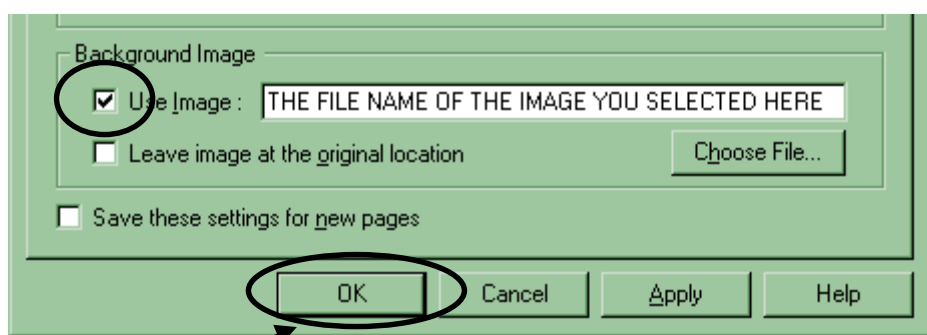
**Followed link** is the colour that a link turns after the user has visited the site linked to the text.



## Backgrounds

You can choose to select a standard background colour or you can insert a background image that you saved earlier. In the same dialogue box at the bottom you will see an area titled **Background**

**Image**. Select the check box **Use Image** and hit the **Choose File...** button.



You will see a list of available files on your hard drive. Choose one of backgrounds you saved earlier. You may have to do a bit of searching the first time but the folder

where your images are saved will become the default folder in the future.

Select 

## SAVE YOUR PAGE AS INDEX IN YOUR WWW FILE

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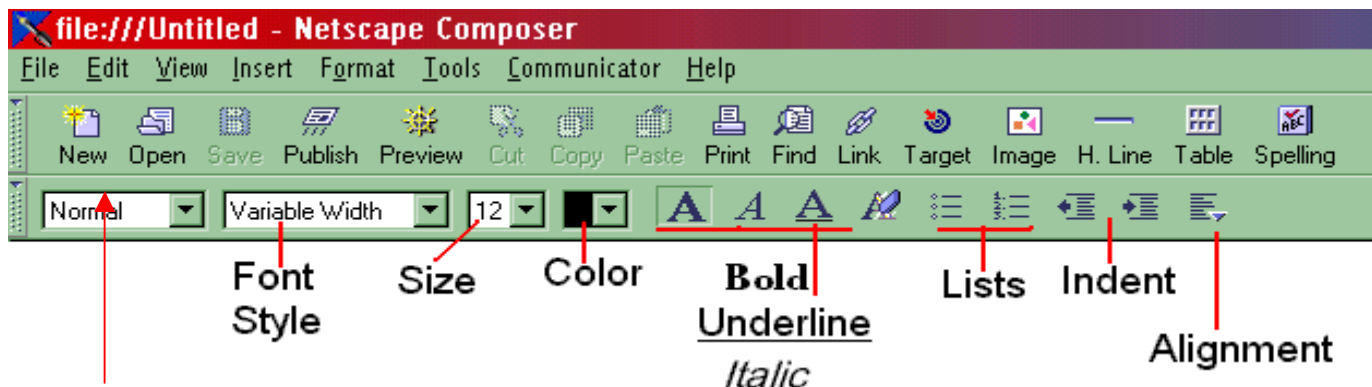
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When you use composer as a web development tool think of it as any word processing program you may have used. You will soon realize that the functions of the tools in both are very similar.

### 3 Text

Type in a few words of text.

- Highlight the text by left clicking and dragging your mouse.
- Use the tools available to change the font, size, colour, and alignment of the text.
- Make some **Bold** and underline or *italicize* some.



Experiment with the different heading sizes. Then as a final exercise, develop a list.

### A Word About Fonts

The font you choose for your page may not be the same one that show up on the web browser of all users. This is due to either the specified font not being available on the users browser or, the user has specified a default font to be used for all web pages. Stay away from fancy or uncommon font types. (This will not be much of an issue if all users are viewing your pages on the Solaris

system) The only way to be sure that the user can see the exact same font and size of text that you used is if you create your text as a graphic. The bottom line is that you have to accept the fact that you do not have control this element.

**Take a few minutes and muck about with the different elements of text, text links, and background colours**

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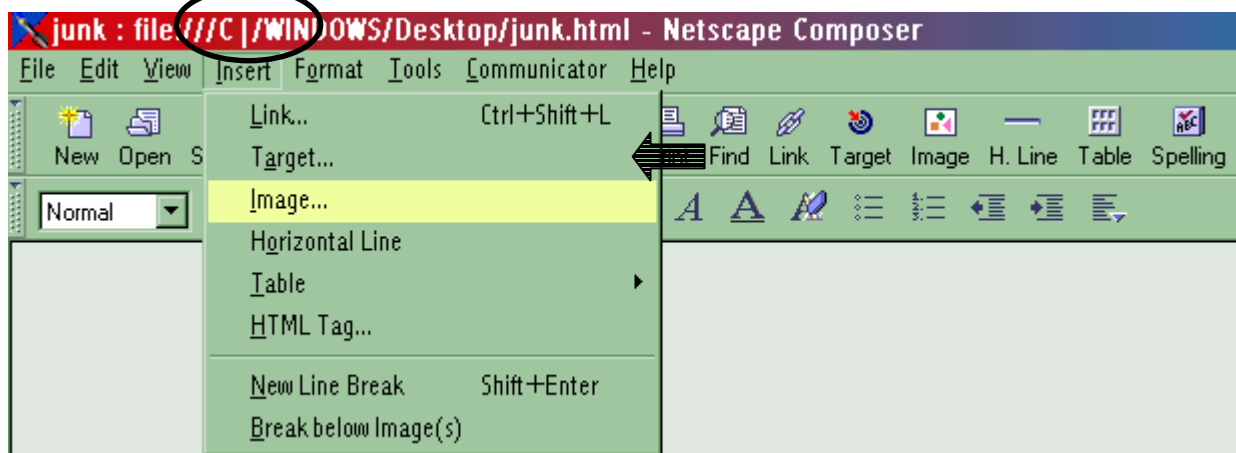
**Congratulations!** You have accomplished the most difficult tasks involved in developing a Web page with Composer. The next few sections will build on the skills you have developed. You will notice that the same basic principles of inserting and formatting elements will be used throughout the remainder of the lessons.

### 4 Inserting Graphics

Graphics, once inserted on your page act the same as a text element. That is, you can change the position and alignment of the graphic by highlighting it and using the text format tools to move it around. You can use the image properties dialogue box to determine the text alignment and wrapping around images.


**Select (left click) the area of your page that you want to insert an image on.**

Select **Image** from the drop down menu that appears under **Insert**.



The **Image Properties** dialogue box will magically appear. This box allow for several options to be applied to your selected image. We will look at each of these options individually. Remember that the general processes that apply to graphics in your familiar word processing program also apply here.

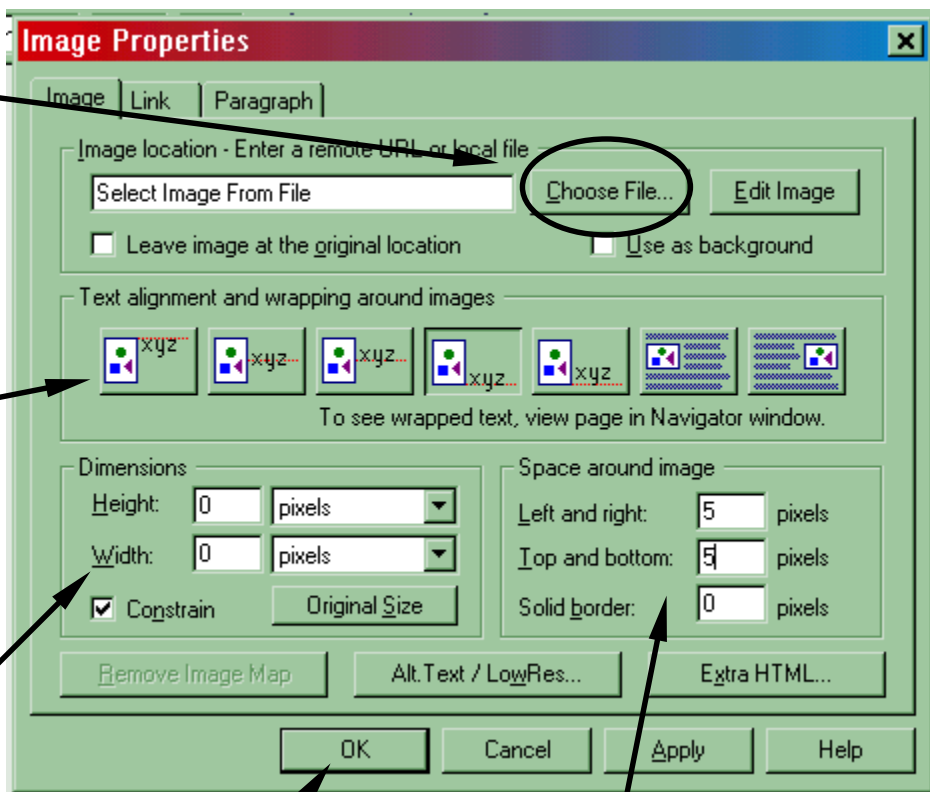
## Image Properties

Click on  in the Image Properties dialogue box and select a graphic that you saved earlier. This process is the same as you did when inserting a background image.

Experiment with the different text wrapping and alignment options. Remember that the processes used to align text to graphics are the same as you use in your familiar word processing programs.


You can adjust the overall dimensions of your image in this box if it is too large or small.


**A word of warning!** Changing the proportions of the image or extending the size constraints too large or small will degrade the quality of the image.



Select 

It is a good idea to leave a space of at least 5 pixels around your image.

In order to get a correct idea of how your finished page will look when published to the Web you must preview it. The layout of your page will look different in Preview mode than it will in edit (composer) mode. It is a good idea to save and preview your work often. To preview your page save it then select  from the composer tool bar.

If changes that you made do not show up in preview mode then try reloading the page by selecting  from the Navigator tool bar. If this does not work you will unfortunately have to shut down Navigator and re-open it.

**Take some time now to play around with the insertion of graphics and text elements!**

**Don't forget the ever popular Undo command.** Under **F**ile select **U**ndo

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People use different screen resolutions on their monitors. This may be due to vision impairment, the quality of the monitor and graphics card, or it may simply be a personal preference. Whatever the reason, this can cause problems in the way a page is viewed on different monitors. The positioning of the graphics and text will change within the page at different resolutions unless you find a way to constrain them. Tables are an effective way to contain all the images and graphics in the position and layout that you intended no matter which resolution people have set on their monitors. I recommend that you incorporate the use of tables in the basic construction of your page.

### 5 Tables

To insert a table in your page select the place on your page that you want to place the table then select the



icon from the composer tool bar.

The table properties dialogue box will magically appear. This box allow for several options to be applied to your table. We will look at each of these options individually. Again, remember that the general processes that apply to tables in your familiar word processing program also apply here.



## Table Properties Dialogue Box

Start with a simple table of 4 rows and 3 columns.

Select Center alignment.

Since the table is being used to constrain the different page elements do not include a border. **Deselect and set to 0**

Cell **spacing** and **padding** prevents contents in adjoining cells from squishing together. Set each at 2 pixels.

Deselect equal column widths.

The minimum height of the table is not real important. The **table width** should be set to **95% of page**. This allows for an area of space on each side of your page contents and helps to avoid those most annoying horizontal scroll bars.

Leave the **Table Background** blank for now.

Insert the table by selecting



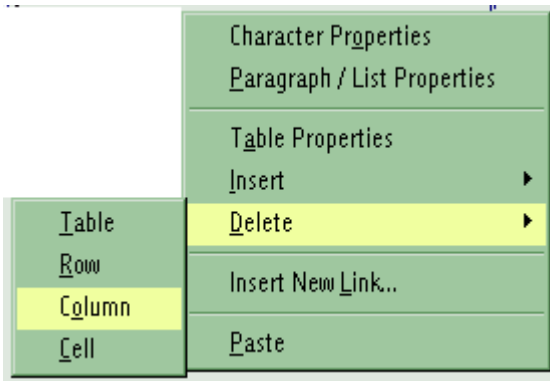
You should now have a 3 x 4 table on your page made up of broken lines.



## Deleting and inserting Cells Rows and Columns

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As you progress through your layout you may want to delete extra columns, cells, rows or even a whole table. This is really quite simple to do. Place your cursor in the area of the table that you want to adjust and **right click** your mouse. As you might have guessed a menu magically appears



Move your mouse cursor down to highlight the selection you want to make then left click. The cell, row, column or table will disappear.

The process for inserting a row, cell column or table is the same.

You can also insert a table within a cell in this way.

Why you would want to do this?

## Changing the Properties of a Cell, Row Column or Table

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Individual properties can be set for each part of a table. For example you can set the text alignment and background colour for the table as a whole to one style and then set the background and text in different tables to other styles. This is necessary so that you can add diversity to your layout rather than having one big box.

To adjust the properties place your cursor in the area of the table that you want to adjust and **right click** your mouse. The magic menu pops up again. Move your mouse cursor down to highlight **Table Properties** then left click. A dialogue box appears does this look familiar? It is the same box that was used earlier to adjust the table properties. The tabs for cell and row can be selected to set properties for each. Lets look at cell first.

### Cell Properties

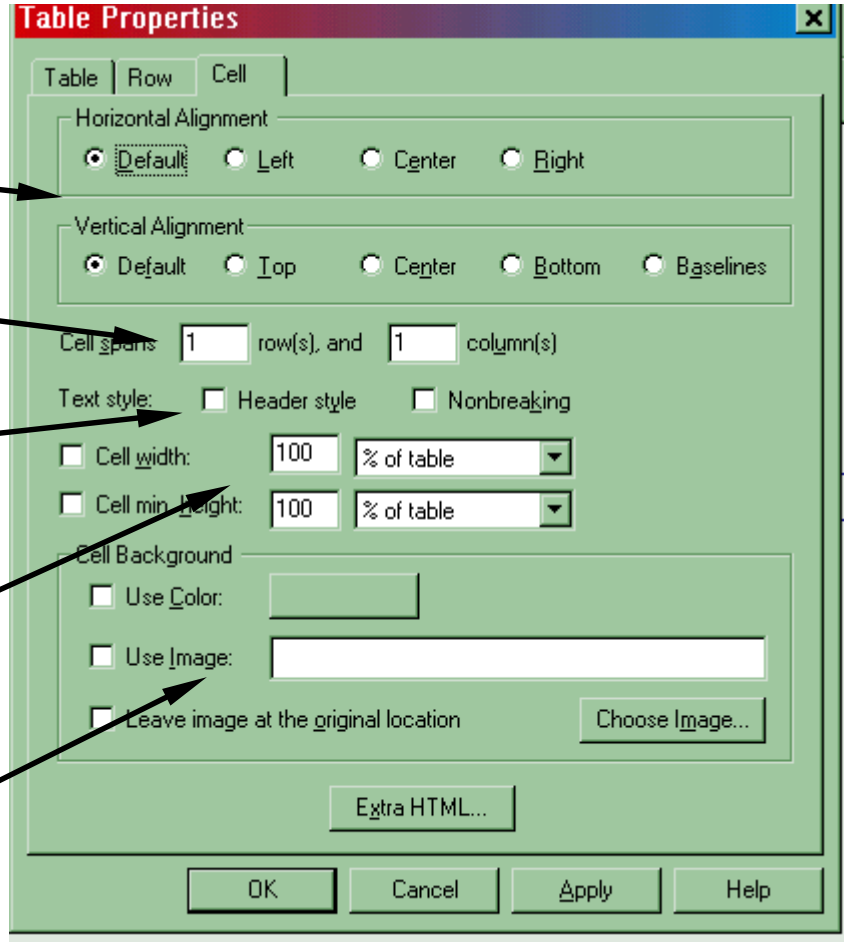
Adjust horizontal and vertical alignment of text and images within the cell.

Cell spans rows and columns is Composers way of allowing you to join cells.

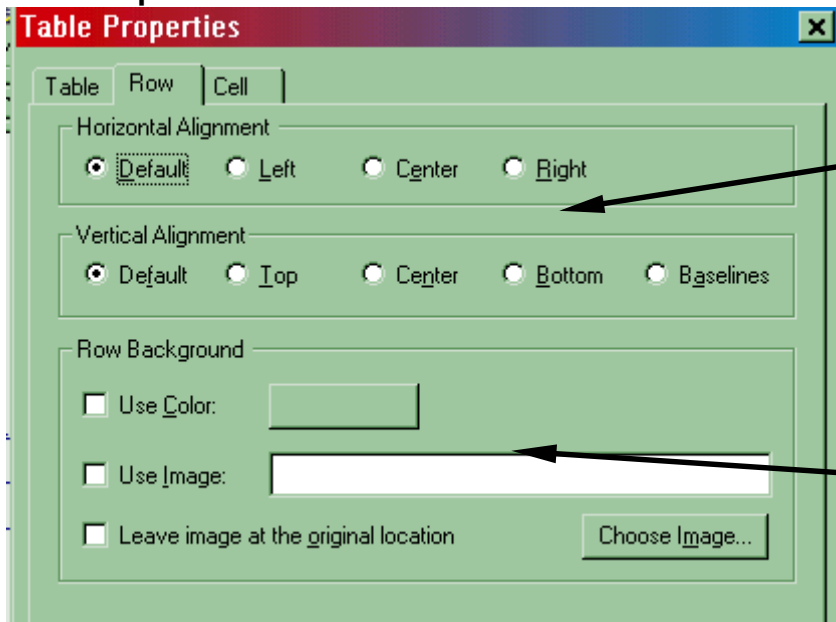
If you check Header style, the text in the cell will be aligned to centre and set to bold style. Non breaking means no text wrap.

You can adjust the size of your cell in pixels or as a percent of the whole table. Experiment to find out what works best.

Make the cell a different colour than the rest of the table, or add a background image.



### Row Properties



Again, you can adjust the horizontal and vertical alignment of text within a row.

You can select a different background colour for the specified row.

**Its time to muck about and practice again.** Try different combinations of colour and size in your table cells to create an overall page layout where you can add text and graphics to different areas.

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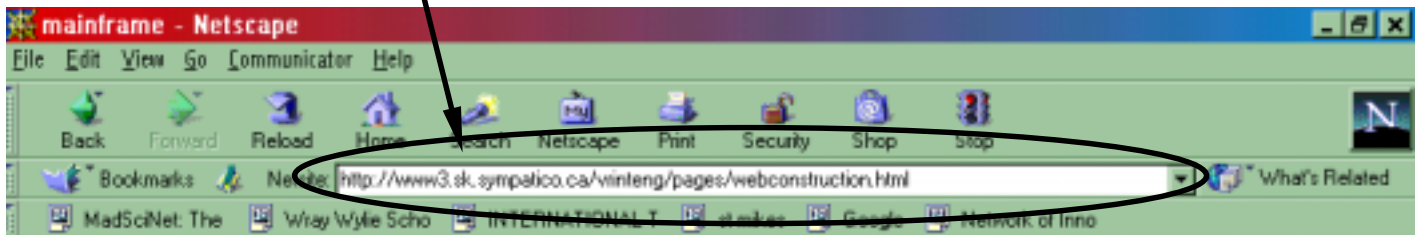
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### 6 Adding links

The final part of creating your web page is adding links to different pages within your project or to external pages on the WWW. You can provide a link to another page through a graphic or through text. Remember at the beginning of the lesson where you set the page properties for normal, active, and visited links? In this last section you will create links to different sites and if necessary you can go back and adjust the page properties.

To add a link in your page you follow 3 steps:

1. In Composer highlight the image or word that you want to create a link from by dragging your cursor over it while holding down the **Left** mouse button. Select  from the button bar. A character properties dialogue box will appear. Ignore it for now
2. Open Navigator and go to the site that you want to link to. Highlight the URL address that appears in the **location bar**. Right click and select copy.



3. Back in Composer place your cursor in the "**link to a page location or local file**" window of the character properties dialogue box. Click the Middle mouse button to paste the URL

address. **You have just created a link to a remote page!** Alternately, you can type the URL of the page you want to link to in the “**link to a page location or local file**” window of the character properties dialogue box, but you must be very accurate.