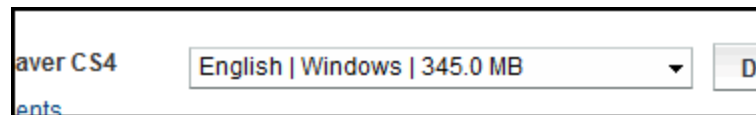


MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

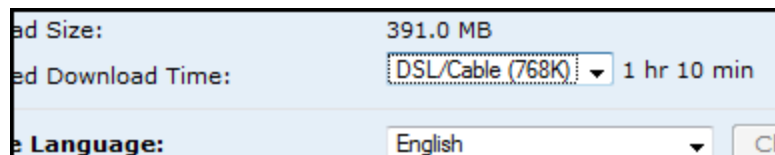
It's impossible to keep up with every single bit of software out there. Not everyone can afford the time to research everything by their lonesome. So, to help alleviate some of the incredible burden of finding the right software for your personal or professional ventures, I'm giving you a designer's perspective of two arising products. Dreamweaver CS4 and Expression Web 2

Download – Dw 1 / Ew 0

Dreamweaver



Expression Web



This will also play up later on in the review.

Install – Dw 1 / Ew 1

I've been using Dreamweaver for about 10 years. Remember that fantastic company that brought about Shockwave and Flash? Macromedia paved the way for many of us. With Dreamweaver, Fireworks, and Flash, everything just kind-of came together. Then Adobe got a hold of Macromedia, and brought many of the sweet programs we loved into the fold of the Creative Suites. Now, they've become **bloatware**. Unfortunately, Dreamweaver falls under that category.

Dreamweaver CS4 took over 5 minutes to install. I didn't time it to the second, but I was able to walk away from my machine, grab something to drink, use the restroom, and even answer a phone call, and return, to wait an additional couple of minutes before it finally finished. When I installed Expression Web 2, it took a little over a minute to finish.

MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

Startup – Ew 2/ Dw 1

I started each program 5 times, recorded using **my** stopwatch and notepad, and pasted here. This is what happened:

- **Dreamweaver: (mm:ss.msms)**
00:07:01/ 00:09:35/ 00:09:22/ 00:08:66/ 00:08:62 (Average: 8.57 seconds)
- **Expression Web: (mm:ss.msms)**
00:03:31/ 00:03:71/ 00:03:83/ 00:03:60/ 00:02:89 (Average: 3.47 seconds)

I'm certain there are better methods of recording startup times, but this was accurate to within a few milliseconds, so I think we're safe.

Footprint – Ew 3 / Dw 1

Dreamweaver

Dongold.exe	David Bi...	00	78,044 K	Adobe Dreamweaver CS4
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Expression Web

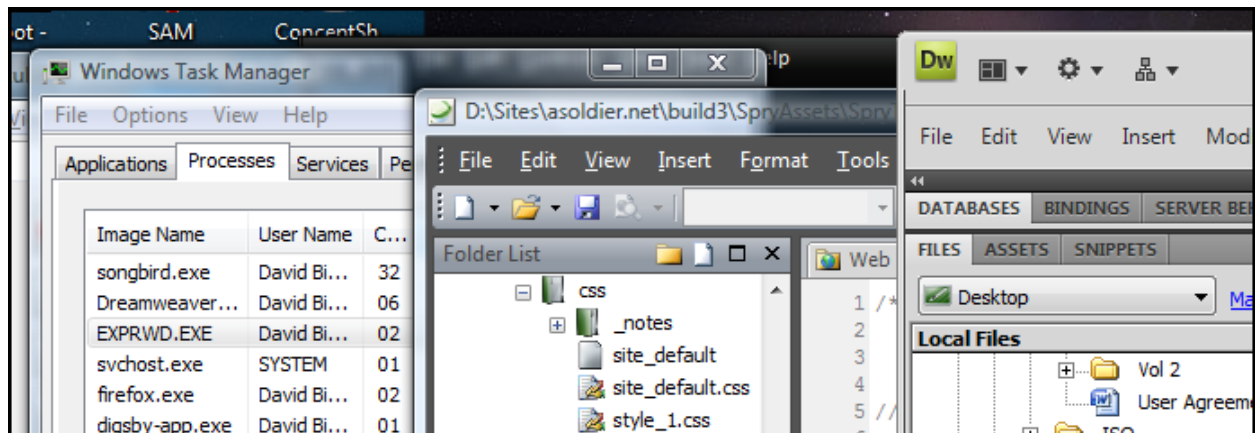
EXPRWD.EXE	David Bi...	00	2,216 K	Microsoft Expression Web 2
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Well, that's pretty obvious. The longer I let Expression Web sit there, the smaller the footprint was. Dreamweaver stays pretty steady at 78,000+K. This reading was taken with Vista's Task Manager so take your bid on the accuracy. From experience, with older versions of Dreamweaver, that's about right.

MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

Stability – Tie

I loaded down every program I could to see which program would crash first... Oddly neither crashed. In-fact, here's a screenshot.



I loaded over a dozen files in Expression Web, with a noticeable increase in memory footprint, but still managed to stay less than Dreamweaver's footprint with no files open. I loaded the same files in Dreamweaver, and then began successively loading random files in both to see if I could cause a crash. Neither one crashed. So, as it stands, both trial versions are somewhat stable.

Along side of the files being loaded within each application, I also had over a dozen other applications running as well.

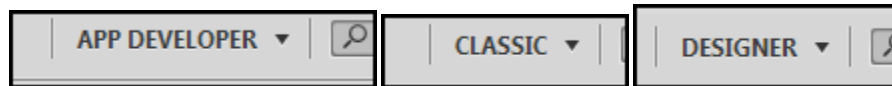


That's impressive, if you remember the days of MS FrontPage and Dreamweaver MX.

MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

GUI – Ew 3 / Dw 2

The reason Dreamweaver gets the point is that Expression Web 2 follows the path of Dreamweaver with the code/design/split views. This is old news for Dreamweaver users. On top of that, Dreamweaver now has built-in custom layouts.



I was going to give the “setup” its own portion of this review... but it’s obviously inherent of the overall GUI. Dreamweaver’s had it together for a few years now. It’s up to MS to catch up.

Intermissive notes

On a side note, consider the features of Dreamweaver. Dreamweaver is by-far a huge overachievement in comparison to its competitors. There isn’t another application that comes close to its complexity and overall power. The down side is, you get all of that power, but will you ever make use of all of it?

It’s a personal wish of mine, that Expression Web does not follow the same path as Dreamweaver. Instead, Expression should follow a modular path, allowing users to install optional components as they feel the need. The snippet/code view is ideal for a hard coder. They may not even desire the Design View. So, make the option available for download upon installation, or at a later time should the owner choose to. This will keep the download and install time, as well as the file size to an absolute minimum.

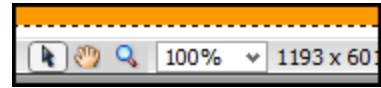
Of course some basic options would apply. Packages would be a good idea. Build one for a coder; one for a designer, one for a mix, one for an app developer, and a few other mix/matches. Have image previews for each one within the installation itself, as well as a “complete” option. This way they have a choice to get all of the insane features, or pick and choose which ones suit them best. Microsoft has ever strived to produce modular and attractive products. Here is their chance!

MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

Features

Zooming

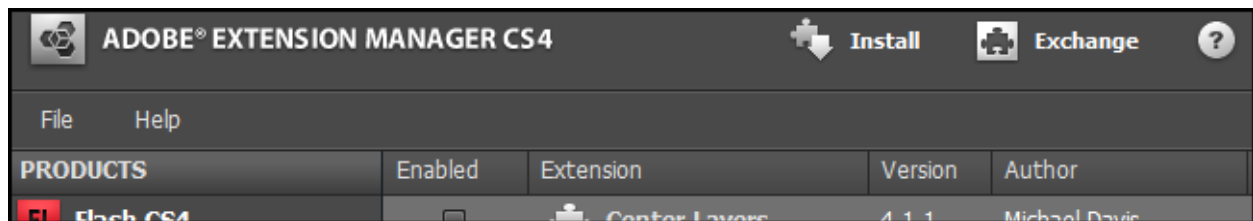
Expression Web is fairly new, even with 2 major releases. Still, there are some features it obviously lacks. For instance, a zoom feature in Design View. In Dreamweaver you can easily hold down CTRL and roll the mouse wheel and zoom in and out getting an idea of how others with smaller screens will see your designs.



Help

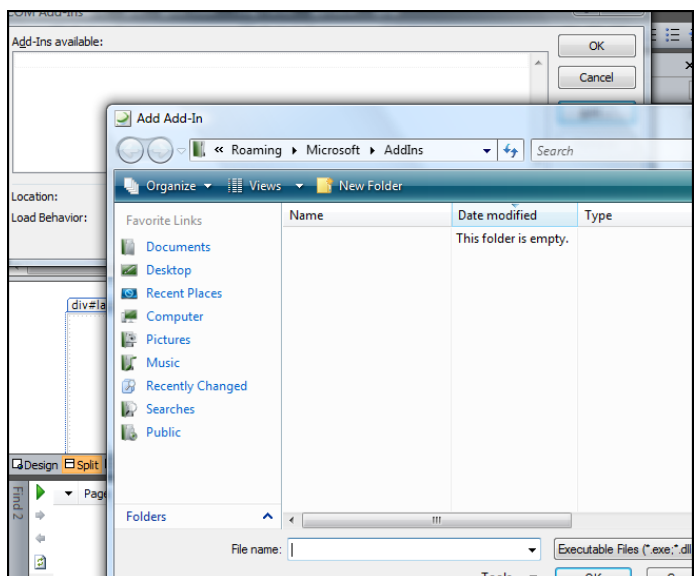
Not everyone needs it, but it's nice when it's handy. Dreamweaver's built-in walkthroughs are pretty thorough. On top of it, there's a built in search box that takes you straight to the Adobe community, finding relevant search results for your problem. Expression Web searches its on-board help directory. This is useful unless you want up-to-date information about features and problems others are having, and seeing their solutions.

Extensions



This is a field that obviously needs to be worked on for Microsoft. Adobe picked up on Macromedia's concept of extendable products, and have incorporated it into nearly every one of their products. With the insanely simple Extension Manager and the power of the entire Adobe Exchange behind it, there's not really a limit to the power you can surge into Dreamweaver.

Expression Web has made a little headway with Version 2, with support for PHP and such, but it's still lacking some of the fundamentals that make it a well-rounded product. Community-oriented development built right into the application. That's what most of the Adobe products offer. Microsoft is catching up, slowly but surely. There is some support for **Add-Ins...**. Unfortunately for the user, you've got to download the add/in, then find it on your system using a "hunt and peck" explorer window.



MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

There's a host of other features that we, as intermediate WYSIWYG users need on a regular basis, that are not available in Expression Web. Some of the features we need are available, but we've got to go find them. For the sake of GTD, Dreamweaver tops out. Spellchecking, xhtml/html conversion, AJAX and JavaScript timeline/behaviors; Dreamweaver hits it.

So, where does that leave us?

Dw 3 / Ew 3

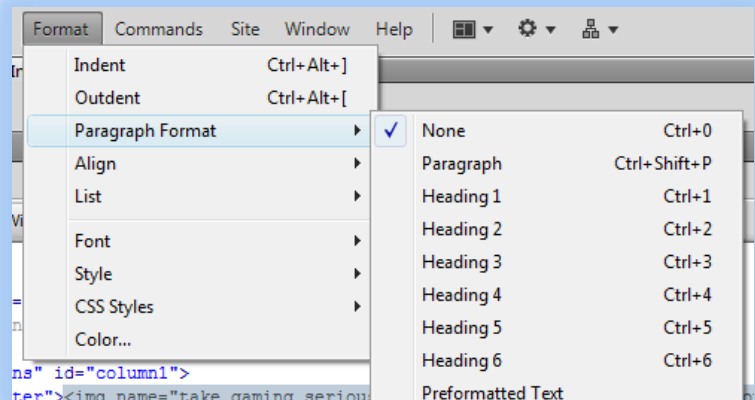
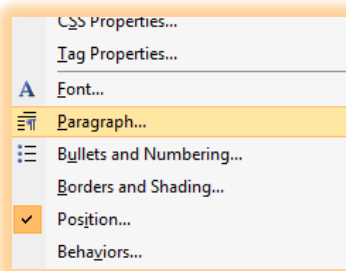
At this point you're thinking, what? How could this happen? Microsoft has their s*** together right? After doing all of this research, I've decided to stick with Dreamweaver. Here's why:

For ages we've been begging for a WYSIWYG to bring us some genuine AJAX or at least JS enabled widgets. Well, Dreamweaver CS3 came with Spry Widgets. When Dreamweaver CS4 came out, even more widgets were added to bring about a very powerful experience all based on drag and drop, type-tab-type-done procedure. Expression web has nothing of the sort... yet.



I won't fail to mention the step-by-step process of setting up a site. Although it's much easier in Expression to set up a site to manage, it's much easier to switch sites and compare projects in Dreamweaver. Dreamweaver also has a richer feature list when it comes to FTP functions and security.

Expression also falls short when it comes to shortcuts. Dreamweaver is loaded with shortcuts for most of its formatting and inserts.



MS EXPRESSION 2 VS. DREAMWEAVER CS4

Pricing – Tie

Adobe Dreamweaver CS4
Full Version \$399
Upgrade \$199

Microsoft Expression Web 2
Full Version \$299
Upgrade \$99

For the amount of features and power you're getting from each product, the prices sound about right. Expensive as they are, they're brand-name products. Even though Expression Web 2 is cheaper, and probably more attractive just because of that fact, nearly all previous Dreamweaver users will most likely pay for the upgrade, just for the new features, if nothing else.

The Results...

Dreamweaver Wins

Why? Dreamweaver and Expression both have very large file sizes, but Dreamweaver delivers. Expression lacks many of the features expected with a WYSIWYG client intended to compete with Dreamweaver and replace FrontPage, and still has an incredible 391MB download size. Microsoft needs to scale back on some of the runaway code and figure out where all of that bulk is coming from.

I am grateful for the small footprint initially, but the memory usage nearly caught up eventually. The sad part is the amount of features available at-hand didn't add up to the footprint. It just isn't worth it. It sounds redundant, but if you're a Microsoft CEO, MVP, developer, or beta tester, you need to know that Expression can seriously do better.

Side Notes:

When I downloaded the trials of both Expression Web 2 and Dreamweaver CS4, installed them, and ran them, I noticed that Expression Web 2 doesn't have that annoying BUY ME NOW box that pops up every time I load Dreamweaver CS4's trial. So, kudos on not being annoying. Unfortunately, that doesn't make the product worth it.

My name is David Bixler, you can visit my blog at <http://blog.asoldier.net>

I hope this helps you with your decision, and encourages Microsoft to improve their product.

