W3C Validator: A Spell & Grammar Checker for Website Code
By Michelle Knight
http://www.sitepronews.com/2011/08/12/w3c-validation/

To make a good customer impression on the web, businesses owners need to ensure a clean and clear website. One way is by using a W3C validator. Think of it this way; if you were writing an important report or a letter to a customer, you would want to use a spell and grammar checker to catch unintended errors. Website markup also has a syntax and grammar that needs to be checked. Business owners need to be sure that they have not overlooked potential flaws in the markup code.

Similar to word processing applications, web browsers do not distinguish invalid from valid statements. As a result, your web sites may look fine at first glance but have compromised functionality. For example, people may not be able to find information about a product because the link is missing or there is some invalid text. Using a W3C validator helps reduce this risk.

Comparing Web Markup & Web Standards Using W3C Validator

The W3C validator compares web pages and web sites that use the (X)HTML languages, with a set of standards. Led by the Web inventor Tim-Berners Lee, the W3C or World Wide Consortium sets these web coding specifications based on conversations and review from an international community of web industry leaders and public commentators. The resulting specifications represent a consensus on good web markup practices, lending itself towards well formed web pages. These rules form the backbone of the W3C validator's reports on any errors or warnings after checking web code.

Not only will the W3C validator tell you how many errors and warnings it found after checking the web language, the validator will list the line, an explanation, and recommendation for each error and warning.

If parsing through lines of markup is not an option for you, the W3C validator provides the choice to clean it up using HTML-Tidy. This is especially handy after creating a web site or web page using a third-party software application. However, W3C Validator, and related HTML-Tidy option may overlook some types of web code that are not HTML and are used to perform more complex web programming, such as Java, ASP or PHP. Also the validator may miss more complex issues caused by the relationship between different pages and content problems.
Steps to Use the W3 Validator

Open the W3C Validator. Click on http://Validator.W3.org to open the W3C Markup Validation Service.
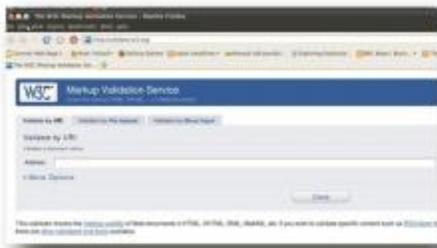
Decide where you wish to check the code. You can check your website markup directly, through a web browser. Alternatively, you can download the W3C Validator to your local machine to validate unfinished web pages not ready for the public eye or private web pages.

Enter what you wish to check. Type in the web address in the Address field. This is in the "Validate by URI" tab. Alternatively you can upload a local file through the "Validate by File Upload" tab. If you wish to check the code directly, then choose the "Validate by Direct Input Tab". Copy your HTML code and paste into the empty field below.

Choose options, as needed, to view the validation results. Select the "More Options" arrow for selections. Choices include "Character Coding" or text language (e.g. Italian), "Document Type" or type of markup, listing error messages sequentially vs by type of error, displaying the web source, displaying the web outline, cleaning the markup language, validate web pages that have a "404 not found" error or "Validate Error Pages" and "Verbose Output" or more description of the error

Press Check. The W3C validator will start and complete its check. It will report on any deviations from the standard web X(HTML) language you specified.

Don't Rely On Only the W3C Validator

While the W3C validator saves time by catching basic mistakes on websites, a W3 validator is not always a good substitute for more robust web-site testing. The W3C validator catches mistakes on the surface, but not the deeper issues.

For example, some web code may interact with applications needed for security and/or to manipulate data. Also, some websites may present different kinds of media; such as images, video and sound. A W3C validator will not judge the quality of these, other than whether the file is referred to correctly by the markup. If you are looking to validate website links or a web style sheet, the W3C validator will not fit the bill. Different web browsers may have quirks in the code that does not recognize valid HTML. Finally, the W3C validator cannot be used to validate content for mobile phones, see 9 Ways to Misunderstand Web Standards. Links to these alternative tools are available on the W3C Validator web page.

Should you forgo or supplement the W3C Validator, based on these drawbacks, for another tool? It depends how you define the quality of your website and how much chance you wish to take on how many errors appear on your website.

For example, [AboutUs](#) offers both a [free](#) and for [pay](#) check of other basic [SEO](#) web standards.