

Meteor Galleries – Template Editor v3.0

MG v2.0 introduced a new, simple way to create new templates without going through the lengthy process of coding the pages yourself. This is especially useful for those who have limited knowledge of HTML and CSS. This document will go over the various options within the template editor, as well as suggest the best way to use the Template Editor to create a template.

Before you begin, it's important to understand what a Meteor Galleries "template" is. An MG template consists of a few parts: a header, a footer, a style sheet, menus, and of course, graphics. Each template you create will have a bare minimum of 3 files: header.inc, footer.inc, and style.css. Most templates will have the menu files as well (any template made using the editor will include menu files and some images).

The template sets the visuals for a Meteor Galleries site. If you broke down every page of the site, you would see that it has a head, a body and a foot. The body, in this case, is entirely generated by the PHP files that make up Meteor Galleries. What this means for you not-so-technically inclined is that the head is literally the opening portion of the page's HTML—up to and including just past the body tag. The foot is the closing portion of the HTML, and includes the closing body and HTML tags. All of the colors, fonts, etc are set using the style sheet. Each template has it's own style sheet, and that makes the style sheet probably the most important part of an MG template. The most successful templates will likely have an extensive style sheet that takes advantage of all of the styles, classes, and more that MG has to offer. This gives you nearly total control over how your site displays your content!

For the more technically inclined: The header and footer files contain HTML and should use the XHTML 1.0 Transitional doctype. The character set should be UTF-8, and you may optionally add a favicon. Future versions of MG may include an upload option for a favicon for those unfamiliar with how to add one to a web site.

So, now that you have the basics, let's take a look at how you can use the Template Editor to create your templates (even you technically inclined may want to use it – it makes short work of getting a basic style sheet created and your header and footer files). You can always tweak your templates using the code editor once you're done.

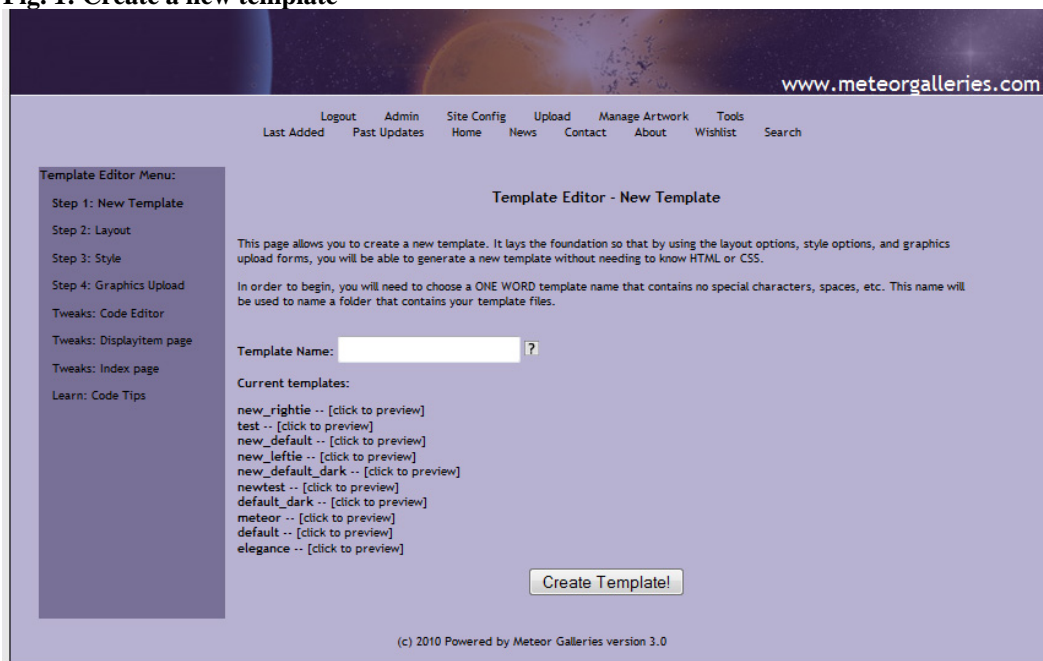
THE TEMPLATE CREATION PROCESS

Step 1: Make a New Template

To successfully create a template using the Template Editor, you must begin on the "new template" page. This page asks you to choose a template name. Once you do, it creates a folder for that template and copies some needed files to the correct places. It is VERY important that your template name contain NO SPACES or non-alphanumeric characters!

This page also lists the current set of templates installed on your MG site to help you remember what you have already. Obviously you will not want to re-use any of these names unless you wish to overwrite them.

Fig. 1: Create a new template



Step 2: Layout Options

Once you have chosen a name and have received a success message, you may move on to step 2 of the template creation process—layout options. Click the “layout options” link on the left and you will be presented with a series of options for your page. Think about how you would like your pages to appear as you go (you may even want to create a layout in Photoshop or some other image editing app before you start). Some basic layout graphics are presented here to help you get the idea.

Fig. 2: Layout Options

The screenshot shows the 'Template Editor - Layout options' page. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: Logout, Admin, Site Config, Upload, Manage Artwork, Tools, Last Added, Past Updates, Home, News, Contact, About, Wishlist, and Search. The page title is 'Template Editor - Layout options'. A sidebar on the left contains a 'Template Editor Menu' with steps: Step 1: New Template, Step 2: Layout (selected), Step 3: Style, Step 4: Graphics Upload, and various 'Tweaks' and 'Learn' links. The main content area starts with a dropdown to 'Choose the template you wish to create/edit the layout:'. Below this is a 'Page Layout Options' section with a 'Choose a basic layout:' label and three layout diagrams. The first diagram shows a 'Standard layout' with a 'HEADER' at the top, a 'MENU' on the left, and 'CONTENT' in the center. The second diagram shows a 'Vertical Left-handed Menu' with a 'HEADER' at the top, a 'MENU' on the left, and 'CONTENT' on the right. The third diagram shows a 'Vertical Right-handed Menu' with a 'HEADER' at the top, a 'CONTENT' area on the left, and a 'MENU' on the right. Below the diagrams are radio buttons for each layout. A text box explains: 'A header graphic is an image that appears at the top of the page, a footer graphic is one that appears at the bottom. Background graphics options will be presented on the style options form.' There is a 'Graphics:' dropdown menu currently set to 'no graphics'. The 'Layout Details' section includes a 'Site name:' text input, a 'Page Justification:' dropdown set to 'Center', and 'Header image type:' and 'Footer image type:' dropdowns both set to 'jpg'. The 'Link Colors' section contains a paragraph of instructions, an example of a hexadecimial color value '#000000 (black)', and three input fields for 'Link color (main links):', 'Active Link color (main links):', and 'Visited Link color (main links):', each followed by a '[choose color]' button. A 'Done!' button is at the bottom right of the form. At the very bottom, it says '(c) 2010 Powered by Meteor Galleries version 3.0'.

The layout options page, once submitted, will generate the header and footer files for your template. When those are complete and you have received the success message indicating that BOTH files were created successfully, you may move on to step 3—style options.

Step 3: Style Options

Click the “style options” link on the left and you will be presented with a series of options related to the specific appearance of your pages. Follow the instructions, read the descriptions of what everything is, and make your choices here carefully. You will have many color choices to make on this page, so be sure to read what they are for, as this will save you lots of editing later on.

This page also allows you to access and use the color chooser, a Photoshop-like Javascript-based color picker that records the hexadecimal value of the color you choose. You may also simply enter the hexadecimal value for the color you wish to use into the boxes provided, skipping the color chooser.

Before you use the style options page, you will need to create your header and footer files via the Layout Options page, or upload header and footer files manually. Your header file should include link colors in the body tag (yes, we are aware that this method for setting link colors has been deprecated in the HTML standard, but we still include it anyways). The style sheet generator will need to read these colors in your header file to be successful.

Fig. 3: Style Options

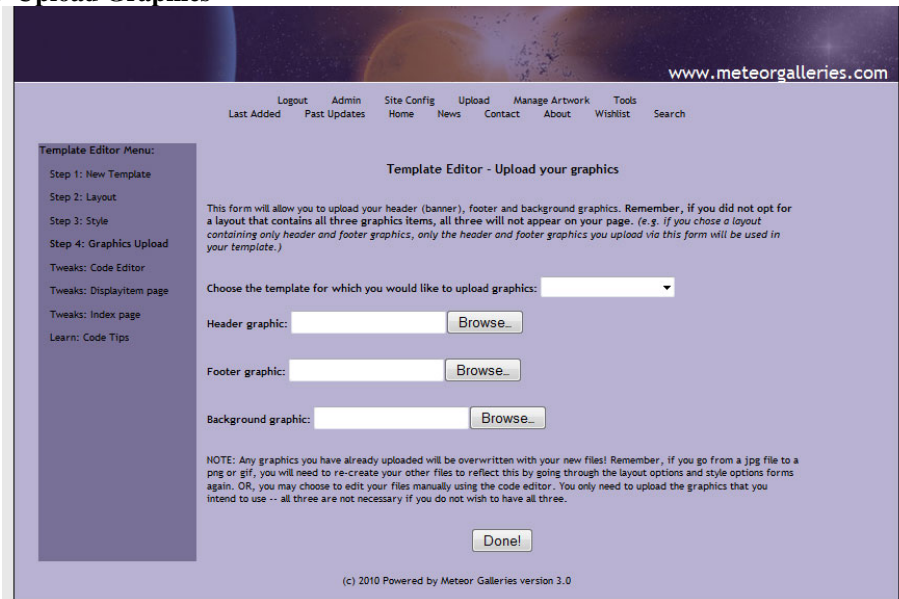


When you are done, the style options page will generate the last important piece of your template—the style sheet.

Step 4: Graphics Upload

If you have successfully completed your style sheet, you are ready for the last step—uploading your graphics! Click the “graphics upload” link on the left, and you will be presented with three upload boxes: header, footer, and background graphics. Make your choices and submit the form and you are done!

Fig. 4: Upload Graphics



Preview your Template

If you'd like to preview your new template BEFORE switching to it, simply return to the New Template page inside the Template Editor and click the preview link next to the name of your new template on the list. Your site index page will load in a new tab or window using your new template. You may feel free to return to the Layout Options and Style Options forms to make any necessary adjustments, or just go to the Code Editor to make manual code changes.

To switch to using your new template for everyone to see, you must select it inside your Site Configuration area (site config on the main menu). Click "site config" and then choose "Template Settings" at the left. Choose your new template on the drop-down menu presented, and click the "Update Template" button. This will set your new template as the one currently being displayed on your site. To change back to a previous template, simply select it from your drop-down menu and click the button again!

LAYOUT OPTIONS - DETAIL

Choose a template to edit: The first thing you must always do is select which template you wish to edit. The current list of available templates will be displayed in a drop down menu at the top of the page. Select the template you wish to edit the layout of and move on to the rest of the form. By default, no template is selected to prevent you from easily accidentally overwriting a template.

Layout graphics: This option asks you for the type of graphics you wish to use. Do you want a banner (header) graphic at the top of your pages? Do you want a footer (bottom) graphic on the bottom of all of your pages? Select the appropriate option here.

Choose a page layout: This option is basically asking where you'd like your menu to appear—top/center, left, or right. Look at the graphics depicting your choices for a better idea of what each means.

Site name: Pick a name for your site! This is the name that will display in the browser title bar where you see "Meteor Galleries". (e.g. on the index page of a new installation you will see "Meteor Galleries – Index" in your browser title bar.

Page Justification: Do you like your pages to be left justified? Center? As of now these are your only two options. Left justification might still have a few bugs.

Header Image type: What kind of image is your banner or header graphic? JPG, GIF, and PNG supported. If you aren't using one, just leave it set to the default.

Footer Image type: Same as header image, except choose the correct type for your intended footer image. If you aren't using one, just leave it set to the default.

Link colors: Next you are asked to choose three colors—these will be your primary link colors for ALL links on your site, so choose wisely! If you already know the hexadecimal value of the color you want to choose, just type it in the box (without the "#" symbol!), if not, try the color chooser to pick your colors visually!

Active links are ones that have been clicked and still open, visited links are links that have been previously clicked, and just plain links are links that have not yet been clicked by the visitor. You may wish to set these three to the same color—there are no limitations.

STYLE OPTIONS - DETAIL

Choose a template: Just like on the layout options page, you need to choose which template you'd like to create the style sheet for—and it is noteworthy that in order to create the style sheet, the template MUST have a header and footer file that contains the previously chosen link colors! If not, this page will generate an error on submission!

Font color: Use the color chooser (or enter your own hex value) for the font color for the entire site. This is the non-link TEXT color!

Primary site color (content area): Use the color chooser to select the primary color for your site (this fills the background in the content area). The content area is the lighter gray area in the default template that is bordered with thin black lines on either side.

Secondary site color (background): Use the color chooser to select the background color for your site. This color will not likely be seen if you choose a tiling background image as well, but you may wish to ensure that you choose a coordinating color here.

Accent color: The accent color will be used in places where the background of the page needs to alternate (e.g. the title bars on the wishlist page or behind the site config and template editor menus). Make sure that it coordinates with your primary color and allows your font and link colors to be easy to see/read!

Overall page width: This is used to set the overall width of your pages – not including the area covered by the background.

Content area width: This is used to set the width of the area containing your site’s content. This area must fit **INSIDE** the overall page width—it **CAN** be the same width as the overall width if you wish. To get a better idea of how these two options work together, you may wish to experiment.

Image borders? Borders around image links? Yes or no.

Border around full-size item images? Yes or no. When yes is clicked, more options (thickness, color, and style) are presented immediately below the yes/no buttons. Thickness value should be given in pixels; color should be given as a hexadecimal value (color chooser link is provided); style is selected from a drop-down menu (solid, dotted, dashed, double).

Background Image? Do you wish to use a background image of ANY kind? Click yes. When you click yes, another option will appear asking if you want it to tile horizontally, vertically, or both or not at all. If you do not wish to use a background image, you can skip this option entirely – clicking “No” is not necessary.

Left/right borders on content area? Do you wish to have colored lines on the left/right side of your content area? (Like the default template)

Top/bottom borders on content area? Do you wish to have colored lines on the top/bottom of your content area?

USING THE CODE EDITOR

Using the code editor is fairly simple, and I’ve even provided you with some basic instructions for editing your own templates. First, choose the template and file you wish to edit (each template has a header, footer, style sheet, menu files, and possible displayitem and index templates). The contents of the file will be displayed in a large text area for editing. Make your changes and click “Done!” and it will overwrite your existing file with your new changes.

For some tips, click “code tips” on the menu to the left! Ganbatte!