CSS Specificity

Web Coders 12-4-13
What is it?

Specificity determines which CSS rule is applied by browsers.

- When selectors have an equal specificity value, the last rule defined overrides any previous, conflicting rules.

- If two selectors apply to the same element, the one with higher specificity wins.

- Every selector has its place in the specificity hierarchy.
How to measure specificity

- Inline style attribute
- IDs
- Class, pseudo-class, attribute
- Elements

Most specific

Least specific
Specificity Charts

Specificity Wars (Star Wars)

- a
  1 x element selector
  Sith: 0, 0, 1

- p a
  2 x element selectors
  Sith: 0, 0, 2

- p a .whatever
  2 x element selectors
  1 x class selector
  Sith: 0, 1, 2

- .whatever .whatever
  2 x class selectors
  Sith: 0, 2, 0

The Shining

- universal selector
  Sith: 0-0-0

- 1 element
  Sith: 0-0-1

- 1 class
  Sith: 0-1-0

- 1 universal selector
  1 class
  Sith: 0-1-1

- 1 element
  1 attribute
  Sith: 0-1-1

- [selector]
  Sith: 0-1-1
The universal selector (*)

*, body * and similar selectors have zero specificity.

Inherited values also have 0 specificity.
Elements and pseudo-elements

All element selectors

Includes pseudo-elements like :before and :after.

EXAMPLE:

```html
h1 { color: red }
<h1>Text is red</h1>
```
Classes, pseudo-classes and attributes

This group includes .classes, [attributes] and pseudo-classes such as :hover, :focus etc.

EXAMPLE:

.red { color: red }  
<div class="red">Text is red</div>
ID

ID is an identifier for your page elements, such as #div.

EXAMPLE:

```html
#red { color: red }<div id="red">Text is red</div>
```
An inline style lives within your HTML document. It is attached directly to the element to be styled.

EXAMPLE:

```html
<div style="color: red">
  Text is red
</div>
```
The only way an !important value can be overridden is with another !important rule declared later in the CSS or with equal or great specificity value otherwise.

**EXAMPLE:**

```css
#red { color: red }
.green { color: green !important }
<div id="red" class="blue">Text is green</div>
```
Examples

Let’s play around with this a bit in Codepen.

- [http://cdpn.io/KFzDA](http://cdpn.io/KFzDA)
Specificity Tips

- **Use LoVe HAte for link styling.**
  To ensure that you see your various link styles, put your styles in the order “link-visited-hover-active.”

- **Never use !important.**
  The !important declaration overrides normal declarations, but is unstructured and rarely required in an author’s style sheet.

- **Use an ID to make a rule more specific.**
  Replacing `a.highlight` with `ul#blogroll a.highlight` changes the specificity from 0, 0, 1, 1 to 0, 1, 1, 2.

- **Minimize the number of selectors.**
  Use the least number of selectors required to style an element.
Resources

ARTICLES

- Specifics on CSS Specificity - CSS Tricks
- CSS Specificity Things You Should Know - Smashing Magazine
- CSS Specificity Wars
- Efficiently Rendering CSS - CSS Tricks

TOOLS

- Specificity Calculator