

WebMerge Tutorial for Affiliate Website Marketers

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Introduction

WebMerge is an application created by Fourth World technologies, allowing users to convert database records to HTML. Many thousands of web pages can be created in a few seconds with WebMerge. WebMerge is available for Microsoft Windows and Mac.

This tutorial will walk you through the steps required to generate web pages, with a special focus on pages created for affiliate marketers, who need to present product information, including descriptions, customer reviews, up to date pricing and images of the product.

WebMerge works with any database or spreadsheet output, including FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Access, Excel, and AppleWorks. WebMerge takes the output from any application or database that provides an export in tab-delimited, pipe-delimited, comma-delimited, or other tabular format.

Customizing the look and feel of finished web pages is simple and straightforward. Building the final web pages is uncomplicated and automated. Templates are designed by users, and can provide for customization on many levels by adding images and scripting ability like JavaScript, and interactive content like AJAX and customized SEO ready text. The final, formatted pages are ready to upload, based on the content you choose, with information consistently and accurately supplied by your database. Whatever one can imagine for a series of web pages, can be realized using WebMerge, giving the web page designer plenty of room for SEO enhanced content.

WebMerge also creates index pages with links to each detail page further down the link structure. Generated pages can be hosted on any web server, without the need for a specialized database hosting solution. No scripts need to be uploaded to your web site to allow WebMerge to function and generate pages.

WebMerge generates pages immediately, using built-in templates. However, this tutorial has been published to help you customize your own pages with the look and feel of your web site. You can utilize your existing web site HTML, by adding a few WebMerge **Tags**, or start from scratch. In fact, virtually any HTML document can be used as a template for WebMerge to ensure the look and feel required.

Multi-tiered affiliate web sites can easily be built with WebMerge. This tutorial, will guide you through every step of the process in creating a fully navigable affiliate web site utilizing a **data feed** from a merchant. **Multi-Tiered** web sites for affiliates, allow users to “drill down” into lower categories of products, providing paths for search engine spiders follow to your content.

New features in WebMerge, include support for multi-column index page layouts, a new **WM-FieldInclude** tag which lets you insert a text file or HTML file referenced by a path in your field



data, a **Tag Maker** allowing you to visually choose the tag you need - then paste it directly into your template. Enhanced support for JavaScript and CSS are also new.

WebMerge requires no DLLs, extensions, CGIs, or other components. Everything needed to start generating pages is included in one easy-to-install, and use application. Again, no scripts need to be uploaded to your web server to build great content for the web.

A wide variety of businesses, universities, and other organizations rely on WebMerge daily, ranging from Web designers to the US Library of Congress. Affiliates have begun using WebMerge to handle the ever-changing requirements of merchant data feeds. Most customers tell us that WebMerge paid for itself with the first month's earnings.

What is a data feed?

For our purposes, * a **data feed** is a large file filled with lots of information about a merchant's products. A data feed is also referred to as a *database*. Data feeds can contain anywhere from a handful of products, to tens of thousands of products. File sizes vary, and in uncompressed form can be anywhere from 500k up to 250MB or more. So those wanting to use data feeds for their affiliate sites must be prepared to handle these large files effectively.

*A data feed is simply a database containing information relevant to affiliate marketers. The data feed format is usually in the form of a large flat file, but may also be divided into more files if a merchant wants to categorize by products or some other reason.

Datafeed Standard

The affiliate marketing community, through consensus, developed a standard format for affiliate data feeds. Affiliates can use the standard to set expectations for the use of feeds in their web site process. Merchants are not bound by the standard, and the content of manufacturer feeds varies. However, the standard provides a guideline for affiliates and merchants to work with, simplifying process and workload.

What are affiliate data feeds used for?

Affiliate data feeds are provided by merchants to affiliates to better promote and sell their products. Data feeds are converted into individual products and include descriptions, links for images, links for visitors to click, pricing and more. The affiliate can take the information in the feed and build individual pages for each product, or put multiple products on each page. Additionally, the customization offered by WebMerge, affiliates can utilize some or all of the information (records) in the data feed.

An affiliate data feed may also enhance a site that already has some sort of specific content. Utilizing an affiliate data feed, means your site will have more exposure on the web through search engine results, and the higher number of pages published.

How are data feeds delivered to an affiliate?

Data feeds can be delivered a number of ways, but usually involve the use of **File Transfer Protocol** (FTP). For example, many merchants have the affiliate log in to the merchant's server and download the feed. Some networks or merchants actually deliver your feeds directly to your server via FTP. Still other programs may e-mail the feed to affiliates, helping to ensure fresh content is being published on the web. It is in both the affiliate's and merchant's interest to have "fresh" feeds published. Updating a feed every day is not an uncommon expectation.

What is actually in the data feed?

Records

Remember, the feed is filled with products. Each product in the data feed (or database) is called a **Record**. For example, if there are 3,500 products in the feed, then there are 3,500 records – one for each product. When viewed in a spreadsheet, these records are presented in rows, in MS Excel, this would be 1, 2, 3 etc.

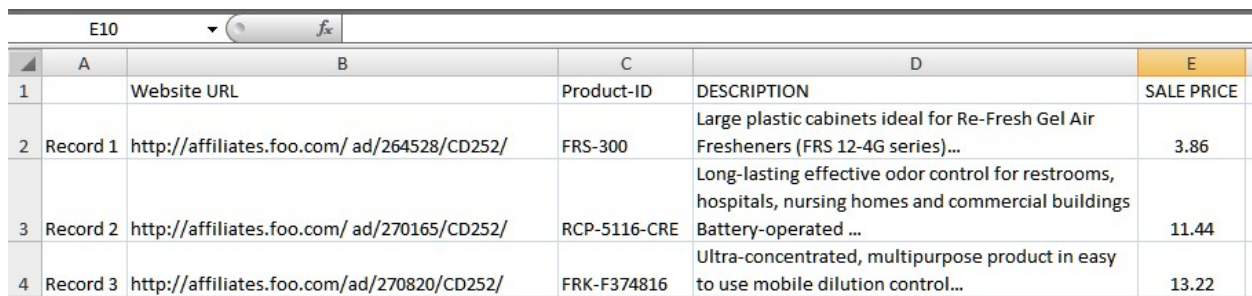
Fields

Each record (product) has information associated with it. This information is found in individual **fields**. A field, when viewed in MS Excel, is represented as a column (or **category**), and is denoted as A, B, C etc. For example, in viewing the product from the xyz-merchant data feed (foo.com); we see a couple of fields, like the URL for the product’s image location “<http://www.foo.com/store/images/product/CFRS2786.JPG>”, and the main category for the product, for example “Air Freshener & Odor.” Most data feeds contain many more fields, and sadly not all of them are the same. Some feeds may have twenty or twenty-five different Field names.

Field names

We also need a name to call the fields, these are called **Field Names**, and may look like this: “Website_URL,” “Product-ID,” and “SALE_PRICE.”

To summarize, there are **records, fields, and field names**. These can be organized into a table, so it can be viewed like a spreadsheet. One of the tools needed, is a tool to view the information in the data feed. For example, MS Excel or other programs work well. But to give you a sneak-peak, demonstrating what the feed looks like once loaded into Excel:



	A	B	C	D	E
1		Website URL	Product-ID	DESCRIPTION	SALE PRICE
2	Record 1	http://affiliates.foo.com/ad/264528/CD252/	FRS-300	Large plastic cabinets ideal for Re-Fresh Gel Air Fresheners (FRS 12-4G series)...	3.86
3	Record 2	http://affiliates.foo.com/ad/270165/CD252/	RCP-5116-CRE	Long-lasting effective odor control for restrooms, hospitals, nursing homes and commercial buildings Battery-operated ...	11.44
4	Record 3	http://affiliates.foo.com/ad/270820/CD252/	FRK-F374816	Ultra-concentrated, multipurpose product in easy to use mobile dilution control...	13.22

Figure 1 - Delimited data feed displayed in MS Excel.

Note: Only four **field names** are shown (they will not all display on this page). The field names are Website URL, Product-ID, DESCRIPTION, and SALE PRICE. There are three **records** displayed above.

How is the data in the feed separated?

If you open the data feed in an application such as WordPad, Textpad or your favorite text editor, all of the fields appear jammed together in one long string. Looking at just the *first record* from the spreadsheet above (figure. 1) in a text editor, would appear like this:

```
http://affiliates.foo.com/ad/264528/CD252/ | FRS-300 |  
Large, plastic cabinets ideal for Re-Fresh Gel Air  
Fresheners (FRS 12-4G series) | 3.86
```

Viewing the raw data in this manner can be confusing. Fortunately, data feeds are formatted or **delimited**, where each field is separated by something called a **delimiter**. Many data feeds are **pipe, tab**, or **comma** delimited. Pipe delimited data is *preferred* and is the most reliable, because the ANSI pipe character will never be part of the data used, unlike the comma delimiter. Looking closely, one can see the little vertical pipes between the different fields, they look like this | The pipe character should be on your keyboard at the extreme right, above the **Enter** key.

How a data feed is *delimited* is very important when importing into Excel in order to clean it up, or when using WebMerge to make our HTML files.

How to turn data into web pages

Turning data feed information into a web page that visitors can view, deliver value to the visitor, and be found in search results at major search engines, can be accomplished at least two different ways. One way is to utilize a script located on the web server to convert the information "*on the fly*." This method, utilizing scripting languages like PHP, Perl, or CGI is very fluid and configurable, but requires programming knowledge. As a logical alternative, this tutorial utilizes another method, a tool called WebMerge. WebMerge builds what are called static web pages that are uploaded to your server complete and ready to be spidered by appropriate search engines. One does not need to write any script to create web pages with WebMerge.

What Should I do to prepare the Feed?

Once the data feed file is saved on your desktop computer, you will need to determine if it is in a **compressed** format. Many feeds are uncompressed, and come in a file with a **.TXT** or **.CSV** extension.

With compressed feeds, the file extension is **.ZIP**, or **.GZIP**. GZIP files can be decompressed with a program like WinZip. Also, files with the "ZIP" extension can be decompressed by WinZip, or natively in Windows 7 or 8 (this capability is built-in with Windows Explorer). Once you have established the file is no longer compressed, it is ready further formatting.

Note: "comma" delimited or files with a ".csv" extension have a greater rate of errors. Given a choice between types of delimited files, choose pipe or tab delimited formats, using *comma* delimited as the last choice. The choice of formats may be available, when you initially select a feed from a merchant or network. By the same reasoning, it is a good idea *not* to save your cleaned up feed in the "comma" delimited format. The comma delimited format can be converted to other delimited formats, with MS Excel or a good text editor such as Textpad, by using the search and replace feature in these applications.

The next step is to open the file in a program like Microsoft Excel. There are similar applications, but Excel is used in our example. When opening any text file (or any file that isn't a bona fide Excel file with an "XLSX" extension), by selecting **All Files (*.*)** in the Excel dialog box. Once the data feed file is selected, a new dialog box will appear, with the **Text Import Wizard** asking how Excel wants to handle the file. Select the radio button marked **Delimited**, then click **Next**.

Choose Your Delimiter

You must know how your file is delimited. This information should be known going forward, and can check the appropriate box in the Text Import Wizard, for example "*Tab*" (*Excel's default delimiter*). If the data is **Pipe delimited**, all one has to do is type in the Pipe character in the "*Other*" box, or select it. Once the selection is completed, there is an immediate change in the way the data looks in the **Data Preview** window. If the correct *delimiter* has been selected, the data will appear organized with neat vertical lines outlining the columns.

Usually, the **text qualifier** can be left at the default – **double quotes**. Leave the **Treat consecutive delimiters as one** checkbox **un-checked**. At this point the file and data are ready for the next step. There is **no** reason to click **Next**, simply click **Finish**. The data feed should now load properly into Excel.

Cleaning up the data feed.

Unfortunately, many merchants don't provide perfect data. Many feeds contain illegal characters, or other things that may cause WebMerge to either stop or perform erratically. There are a couple ways to correct this situation. One can clean them up in a program like Excel, a good text editor or work with them in WebMerge.

One issue to be aware of is the creation of file names or directories based on information in the data feed. Interestingly, when building file names based on **categories** in the data feed, and there are forward slashes / in **category name** fields, WebMerge will likely read the forward slash as an instruction to create a directory. WebMerge acts this way, because it thinks there might be a **Path** there (as in path to a **directory** or URL). This is actually an advantage if used correctly, as any directory structure required can be created with the forward-slash character in the data. However, the slashes will need to be removed if they are not wanted in your directory structure.

Search and Replace

The solution is to perform a **Search and Replace**. It is advantageous to get very familiar with this functionality in Excel in order to create a really effective data feed file. It also takes a little imagination as to the consequences of replacing characters in the data. For example, when replacing the slashes in the **Main_Category field** names, another character needs to be substituted or the forward-slashes removed completely.

If the slashes are present in the data to separate a group of numbers, then replacing the slashes with a dash “-“ can be used. The replacement character does not have to be a dash, it can be anything that will work with your scheme. For example, a space or other character can be inserted. See the example below where *the existing slash / is replaced by a dash*.

Original **Field** (Before Search and Replace):
Cleaner 1/5/10 gallon sizes

New **Field** (After Search and Replace):
Cleaner 1-5-10 gallon sizes

WebMerge will make an **index filename** that looks like this: *
Cleaner_1-5-10_gallon_sizes.html

In order to successfully complete the search and replace operation, it will be necessary to highlight the entire column by clicking on the appropriate column letter at the top of your spreadsheet, and have the search and replace function fix the entire column at one time. In Excel 2003 and later, the **Find & Select** function can be found on the **Home** tab on the ribbon, or by pressing **CTRL+H** on your keyboard.

* The current version of WebMerge allows the user to make filenames with either **underscores** “_” or **dashes** “-“ in place of spaces in the proposed filename. Underscores were used in this example.

TIP: *What if you made a mistake?* It is always a good idea to check the results right away, if there was a mistake, pressing **CTRL+Z** will undo the entire Search and Replace operation you just performed. The CTRL+Z undo will work for all major operations in excel, and can undo the entire operation (not simply one cell at a time).



TIP: Be careful when selecting data. All of a column must be selected in order to avoid mixing **fields** between **records**.

Text to Columns

If the merchant that created the data feed has a **field name** (Column header in Excel) called **Category**, but the display reveals there is actually more than one category (or **sub-categories**) in each column separated by **slashes**, then it may be a good idea to separate the categories, and make new **Field names** (columns) based on these new splits. This is an example of category data prior to splitting:

Original **Field** called **Category** (Before *Text to Column* Operation)
Cleaning & Sanitation/Cleaning Chemicals/Lubricants/Wd40

One may ask why the merchant who created the data did not make different **field names** (column headers) for each **category** and **sub-category** and separate them? Regretfully, expanding the number of **sub-categories** is usually the job of the affiliate. Some feeds have different **categories** already separated.

New columns need to be created for new **Field names** used. If this is not accomplished during the *Text to Column* Operation, Excel will ask an important question. “Do you want to replace the contents of the destination cells?” It is important to click **Cancel**. If you do not click Cancel, Excel replaces the contents of these columns and the information in adjoining columns is deleted! What Excel is trying to indicate, is that there *is* information in the columns to the right or left of the column you are trying to break apart (split). Excel is really saying that the spreadsheet needs more room.

TIP: Not all versions of Excel may exhibit this behavior.

The Correct Procedure

Click the letter of the column adjacent and to the right of the **Category** column that will be separated. Use the **Insert** menu item, and click on **Columns**. Excel makes a new empty column just to the right of your original **Category** column. This step should be repeated several times, depending on how many **sub-categories** exist in the original **Category** column in the original data feed file. We have rarely encountered more than six, but there may be feeds that have more sub-categories.

Once the new columns have been created, highlight the **Category** column. Next, go to the **Data** tab then to the **Data Tools** area on the Excel ribbon, and click on **Text to columns...** The **Convert text to Columns Wizard** is displayed, asking if the information is **Delimited**. Click this radio button and then click **Next**. The arrangement of data should all look very familiar, with check boxes for different **delimiters** (Similar to the appearance when initially opening the file in Excel). The **delimiter** may already be checked, in case it is not, type the character in, or choose one of the defaults that match the type used normally.

In our example, there are slashes – type or select. The information should appear immediately, separated for you in the **Data Preview Window**. Click **Finish**, to make the conversion. Important, if the following is displayed, “Do you want to replace the contents of the destination cells?” then there were not enough blank columns created to the right of the existing column for Excel to put the separated data in. Again, to avoid overwriting the data, click **Cancel**. More columns need to be created at this time.

Finally, several new columns populated with **sub-category** information should be displayed. **Field names** need to be assigned to the columns, so that WebMerge will have some way to recognize the data properly. Some examples of **sub-category names** to be typed-in for the new columns include **sub-category1** and **sub-category2**, and/or logical progressions. These names can be anything you choose; however it is always a good idea to be consistent.

Before *Text to Columns* Operation as displayed in Excel:

Category
 Cleaning & Sanitation/Cleaning Chemicals/Lubricants/WD40

Figure 2 - Category listing prior to separation into multiple columns.

After a successful *Text to Columns* Operation (with Field names (*column headers*) added):

Category	sub-category1	sub-category2	sub-category3
Cleaning & Sanitation	Cleaning Chemicals	Lubricants	WD40

Figure 3 - Category listing after separating data into multiple columns.

Other considerations

Before finishing cleaning up the feed, determine if all of the fields created are actually needed. If some are not required, think about removing them by clicking on the letter for the column you intend to remove, and click on **Delete** in the **Edit** or **right-click** context menu. This action will result in a smaller file size for the data feed, and may speed up the processing and creation of files.

After completing the templates, compare the fields you have chosen to use in the data, and the WM-Tags written into the templates. If there are other fields in the feed that are not used, it will be more efficient to delete them.

TIP: You may also want to sort your data in order to view it in a more organized fashion. For example, the data can sorted by the category intend for use in building *index pages*. When sorting in Excel, be sure to highlight everything except the **Field names** (column headers) at the top. Mixing data among different records is disastrous, causing one to start from the beginning.



Designing Your Web Site and Templates

After the data feed has been cleaned up and is ready to be used to make pages, the appropriate detail template, and Index Template need to be designed.

WebMerge Templates

A WebMerge template is an HTML file you use and design to work with your web site, the application WebMerge, and the merchant data feed. A *template* is required for both the [index pages](#) and the [detail pages](#), the two types of web pages created by the WebMerge application.

Most WebMerge users utilize an existing page from their site to start the process of creating a template. The reasons are logical, as the template should resemble pages on your own web site, and are a good starting point. Building templates only requires small modifications to your existing web page design.

This process requires placement of information from the data feed using “Placeholders,” referred to as WebMerge Tags **WM-Tags** in the template. WebMerge reads the template, looking for placeholders, so that WebMerge can insert information from the data feed. Typical information to place in the template is, for example the price or description.

WebMerge can also generate a set of web pages based on templates included with the application. However, the pages generated will be very plain, without your logo or any customization or personalization. The affiliate marketer will not be successful, without using a customized template of their own design.

Detail Pages and Template

[Detail pages](#) are generated by WebMerge, and feature information on every individual product in the data feed file. This is accomplished by WebMerge when it reads the data feed. Each time WebMerge finds a new record in the data feed, it creates a new detail page, populating areas of the page with information from the data feed, and the next individual record in the data file.

Detail Template

Detail pages produced by WebMerge, are dependent on how you design the **detail template** for each web site. Detail templates can be set up to display one product per page, or multiple products on each *detail page*. The area for configuring detail pages in WebMerge can be found on the [detail pages](#) tab in the WebMerge interface.

Index Page and Template

[Index pages](#) are generated by WebMerge, and feature links to *detail pages* created by WebMerge. Think of *index pages* as a way for web site visitors to navigate to your [detail pages](#). In a “Tree” like structure similar to what one finds with folders and subfolders in Windows Explorer, *index pages* are the documents above detail pages in the final uploaded web site design. (See Figure 4 below)

A typical data feed driven site design might incorporate more than one tier of *index pages*, corresponding to a *main category*, then *sub-categories* – and finally *detail pages*. If the merchant has a complex or comprehensive data feed and product structure, more than one level of *index pages* will likely be required to help site visitors more easily navigate your web site. Additionally, search engine spiders will want to see proper linking and “drill-down” capability that can only help a site’s SEO rankings.

Index Template

As mentioned above, some data feeds have so many products; it is impractical to have a simple **two-tier** structure. An example of this is where there are three hundred “cleaner” products, and each of those might end up being a link on the main *index page*. This is completely impractical, the file size will be excessive, take forever to load in the user’s browser, and impractical for the user to read or navigate down the page to all of the links. For a proper design, sub-category indexes are needed as well.

Organizing File Locations on the Local Computer for Completed Pages

WebMerge requires the location of files it generates on your local computer or server. Some thought should be put into this selection prior to generating pages. Some data feeds are quite large, and it is a good idea to have at least two separate folders. For example, one folder (*directory*) for the *detail pages*, and one for the *index pages*. A wise designer will not mix the generated pages with any other types of files.

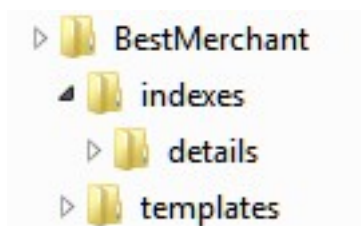


Figure 4 - Locations on local PC, MAC or Server to store HTML files (pages) created by WebMerge.

Keeping file types separate will allow viewing the pages created in Windows Explorer without being confusing, and will allow comparison between different generations of pages more easily. For example, pages built on July 1st for xyz merchant, and receive an update from the merchant two months later, and generate a new build, it is important to know which are the original pages at the web site. A simple comparison can be made on your local hard drive, by checking the dates of the files generated.

Note: The terms Directory and Folder are considered interchangeable for the purposes of this tutorial. In terms of web servers, the term Directory is generally accepted, and will be used here predominantly.

Out of date pages

WebMerge will overwrite existing files if they have the same name as previously generated files. This comes in handy when making redirect pages, from *out of date detail pages*. For example, if a visitor lands on a page that was valid a month ago featuring a “2GHz Desktop Computer” that is now out of stock, a redirect page can be generated to redirect the user to a search page or your main computer page (to make another selection). It may be a good idea to let your site visitor choose whether or not to move on to another page in your site, or go directly to the merchant via an affiliate link.

Automatic redirects directly to the merchant site are not recommended, as this may be considered un-ethical, and may actually violate the terms of service for many merchants. Do not risk your relationship with a merchant, because you wish to drive traffic this way. Give the visitor a choice, or direct him to a relevant page inside your site.

Manual redirect pages are particularly useful if pages have been spidered and indexed by a search engine, and you don’t want to lose the traffic sent to the old page. In order to generate redirect pages, it will be necessary to make a record of the files that were not over-written in the latest build.

Detail templates

Detail templates are used by WebMerge to generate detail pages, and feature information on the individual products in your data feed. More specifically, the information in the data feed is written in each of the completed detail pages by WebMerge.

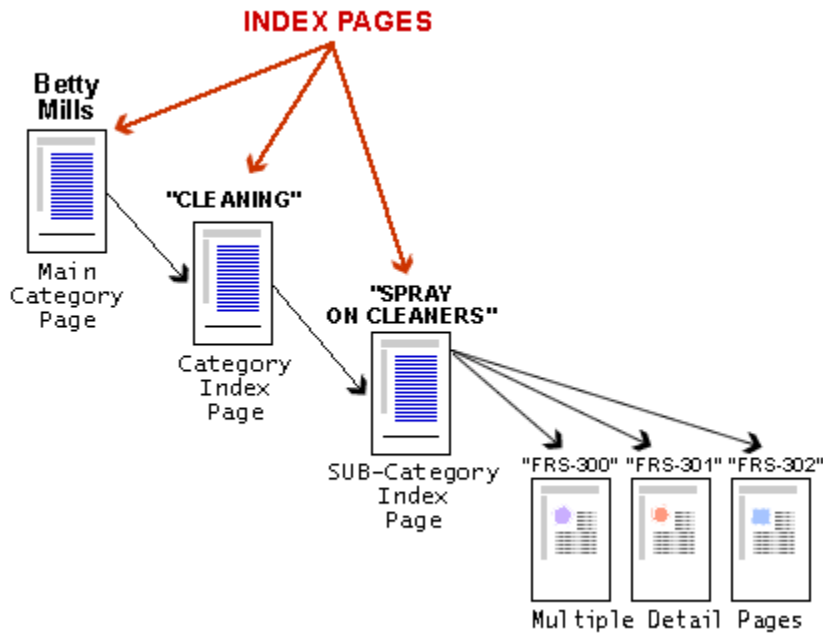


Figure 5 - Examples of detail pages in the hierarchy

Detail Template Design

The design of the **detail pages** produced by WebMerge is governed by how you design the **detail template**. If the **detail template** is set up to display one product per page, then WebMerge will generate one page for each product (record) in the data feed. When using WebMerge, selecting the **detail template** you designed for a particular data feed, is found on the **“Detail Pages”** tab in WebMerge.

Laying Out the Detail Template

WebMerge can generate a set of pages using a default template, however to be effective, a custom template should be designed and used.

A lot of time can be saved by utilizing a blank page from your web site. This page should have all of the formatting and customization needed to have the look and feel of your existing web site. For example, logos, navigation, and anything else that is particular to your web site is already designed (and written). All that is required to modify the template, is to insert the WebMerge Tags in the place needed to display the information.

WM-Tags

WebMerge Tags (**WM-Tags**) used with standard HTML or PHP are used in the *Detail and Index Templates* in order for WebMerge to put information into the pages it builds.

WM-Tags look like this:

```
[WM-Field: field_name (option)]
```

When WebMerge builds pages, it reads the template you have created, and looks specifically for whatever **WM-Tags** that have been inserted into the HTML code. Once WebMerge reads a tag, it then looks into the data feed file to find a match in the first record of the data feed.

Once the fields are found in the first record that match the WM-Tags in the template, WebMerge writes (generates or builds) a new page. This process is repeated for every record in the feed, and a new file (page) gets written (generated or built) for each successive record. Another way to think about the WM-Tags, is that they are similar to placeholders (for data), with the information in the data feed file as variables. The WM-Tags do not get written into any of the completed files, and therefore will not be displayed to the site visitor, or indexed by a search engine spider.

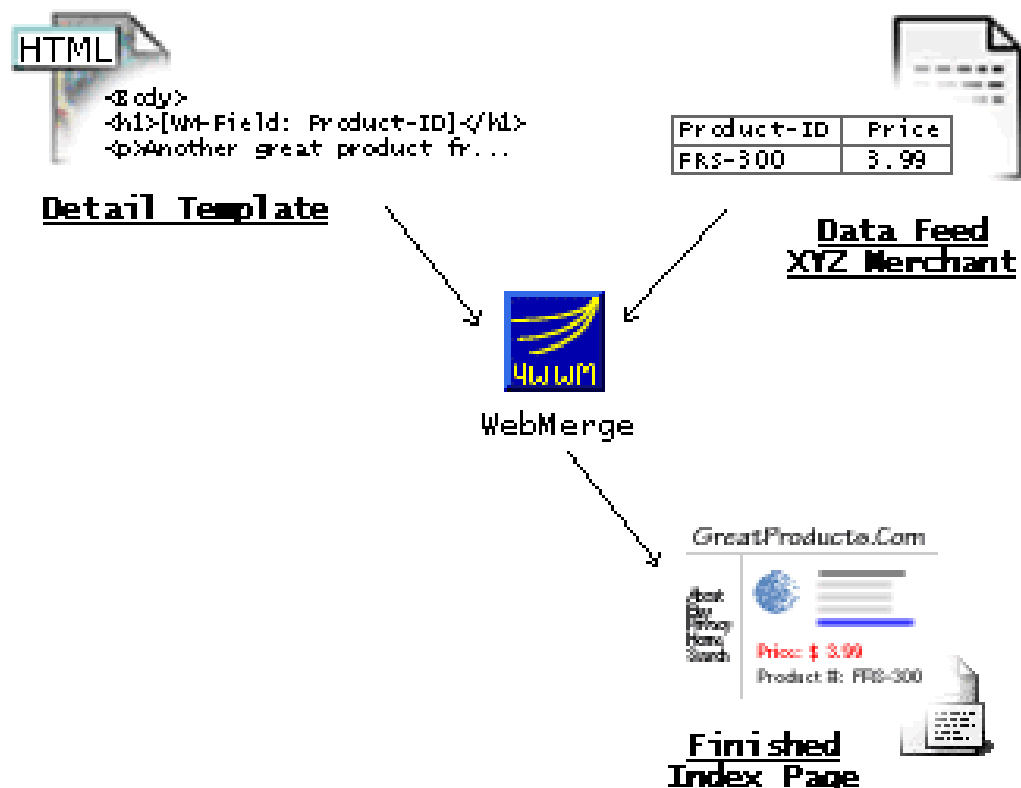


Figure 6 - WebMerge process simplified.

Template Example with WM-Tags

The HTML code in the detail template might look like this including the **WM-Tags**:

```
<html>
<body>

    <h1>[WM-Field: Product-ID]</h1>

    <p>This is another trusted product from XYZ Merchant. They
    have a great selection of cleaning products, including the
    [WM-Field: Product-ID] highlighted on this page.</p>

    <p>Here is a basic description of the [WM-Field:
    NAME]:</p>

    <p>[WM-Field: DESCRIPTION]</p>

    <p>Your Cost: $[WM-Field: SALE_PRICE]</p>

    <p><a href="[WM-Field: BUYURL]">Click Here</a> to purchase
    the [WM-Field: Product-ID] now!</p>

    <a href="[WM-Field: BUY_URL]"></a>

    <p>Thank you for visiting our site!</p>

</body>
</html>
```

The **WM-Tags** above can look confusing, but will become easier to understand after working with WebMerge a little.

What Happens When WebMerge Runs?

WebMerge will use the WM-Tag for product-ID and will insert the Product-ID for one of the records in the data feed file. In this case “FRS-300.” The same goes for all of the **WM-Tags** in the above code, they all correspond to data in the data feed file (see below for example).

The last line with **WM-Tags** in the above code does a little more than a simple replacement. This will insert an image using the “IMAGEURL” from a record in the data feed file, the “BUY_URL” will make the image something the site visitor can click on to purchase. Lastly the “NAME” tag will insert the product name into an *html alt tag* on the image, this means that when a site visitor hovers their mouse over the image, the name of that particular product will appear.

When looking back to the process for a minute, one can see where the information comes from in the *data feed file*:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	<i>Product-ID</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<i>BUY_URL</i>	<i>SALE PRICE</i>	<i>IMAGEURL</i>	<i>NAME</i>
2	FRS-300	This cleaner gets everything clean as a whistle...	http://www.xyz-merchant.com/?cgi=4-3556/id-blah-blah	3.99	http://xyz-merchant.com/images/frs-300_sm_image.jpg	Acid Blaster Cleaner

Figure 7 - Data feed file information that is read by WebMerge as it appears in MS Excel. Note: The top row contains the **Field name(s)**, and the second row is the first of many Records.

This above image is a record number one with Field names highlighted in yellow. Some of the fields have been abbreviated. Again, there are many records in the feed, WebMerge simply repeats this process over and over, moving to the next record when it is finished building a page with record one.

The finished detail page generated by this record would look like this in the browser:

FRS-300

This is another trusted product from XYZ Merchant. They have a great selection of cleaning products, including the FRS-300 highlighted on this page. Here is a basic description of the Acid Blaster Cleaner:

This Cleaner gets everything clean as a whistle, so clean you'll want to alert the neighbors. Scrubbing foam means the Acid Blaster Cleaner is eating everything away, leaving only a slight residue that you can wipe or feed to your neighbor's cat.

Your Cost: \$ 3.99

[Click here to purchase the FRS-300 now!](#)



Thank you for visiting our site!



Take a close look at the content in the finished page above, and compare it to the HTML template code. You can see where WebMerge inserted information from the data feed file into the document. WebMerge will do this for every record in the data feed file, and build a page for each product in your feed!

The real trick is to simply add this type of code to your existing site design. This way you'll have whatever normally appears on your pages, including your logo, and navigation with (as an example) links to your *privacy* and *about* pages, and a link to the main page for the xyz merchant. It's all customizable by you - the web designer.

WM-Tags in the Header

Designers are not limited to placing **WM-Tags** in the body of the web page; you can also use them in the header as well. Basically anywhere it makes sense in the document. From our example, the *Title* would get the *WM-Tag* [**WM-Field: NAME**].

Some data feeds have a keyword Field name – and records that actually contain keywords. If so, you can use a *WM-Tag* to populate the *keywords meta tag*. There are ways to build keywords from names, descriptions, and categories in your feed if you don't have one.

Index Templates

How Does the Index Template Work with WebMerge?

Index Templates are used by WebMerge to generate all higher level hierarchy pages. Index Templates are pages that have links to detail pages, or other (lower level) *index pages*. See figure 8, below.

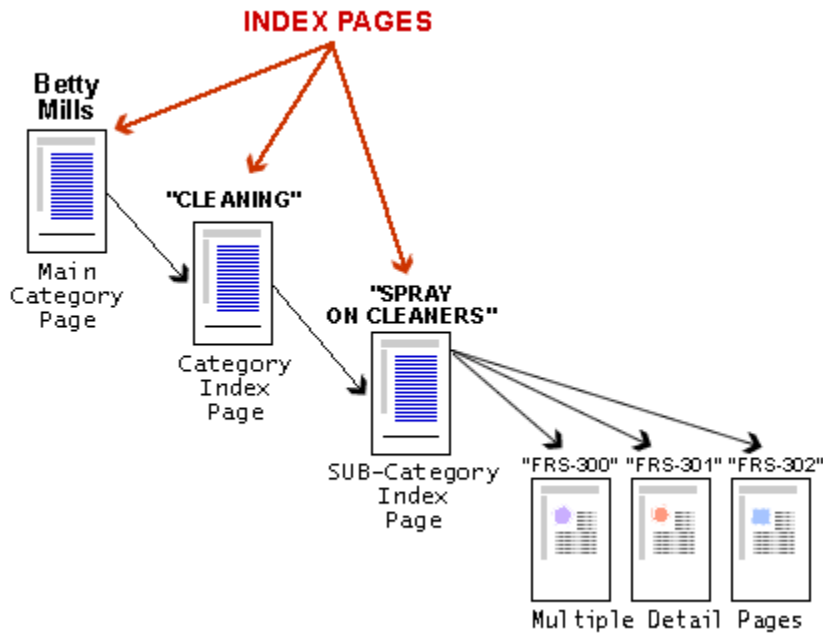


Figure 8 - Examples of *index pages* in the hierarchy

WebMerge can generate a set of pages using a built-in default *Index Template*, however to be effective, a custom template should be designed and used.

Similar to the detail template, time can be saved by utilizing a blank page from your web site that already has all of the formatting included. For example, your logo, navigation, banner/text ads, and anything else that is particular to your web site will have already been created by you. The only requirement is to insert the WebMerge Tags in the right places to complete the Index Template.

WM-Tags

WebMerge Tags (*WM-Tags*) used with standard HTML or PHP are used in the *Detail and Index Templates* in order for WebMerge to write information into the pages it builds. When WebMerge builds *index pages*, it reads the *Index Template* you have created, and looks specifically for *WM-Tags* inserted into the template's HTML code.

Main Category or Highest Category Index Pages

Once WebMerge finds the fields in the data feed that match the **WM-Tags** in the *Index Template*, WebMerge acts depending on how you have configured the items on the *index pages* tab in WebMerge. For example, WebMerge may be configured to place a new link on the index page only after the "Main Category" in the feed changes from "Cleaners" to "Boxes" to "Brushes" and so on, *See Figure 9, below*. WebMerge examines every record one-at-a-time, accordingly it may go through many records before it adds the next link on the index page. See the "Main Category (Index) Page" in figure 9, below.

Sub-Category or Lowest Category Index Pages

The lowest tier index page will contain links to individual *detail pages*. In this case, a link will be placed on the index page for every record listed in the last (or lowest by directory) category in the data feed file. *See the "Sub-Category (Index) Page" in figure 9, below*.

As an example, this works well for a three-tier web-site that might have ten or twenty Main Categories ("Cleaners," "Boxes," "Brushes" etc.) found on the Main Category index page. These link to the *index pages* called Sub-Category *index pages* and contain sub-category links (for example "FRS-300," "FRS-301," "FRS-302" etc.), these final links point to individual *detail pages*. See Figure 9 below.

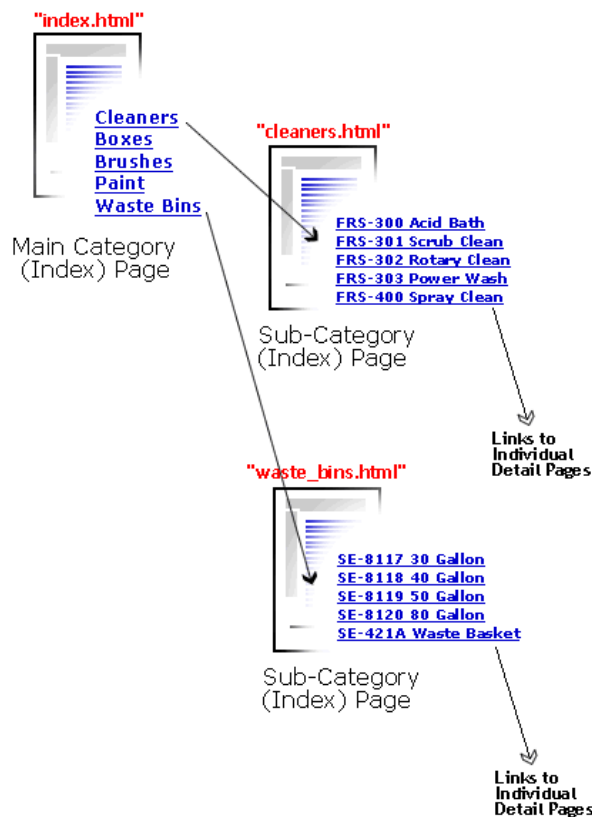


Figure 9 - Link relationships in *index pages*



Laying Out Your Index Template

Basic or Bottom Level index page

As mentioned above, once the basic Index Template with your web site's formatting has been completed, you need to add the appropriate **WM-Tags**. The most important tags for an *Index Template* are the [WM-Record] and [/WM-Record] tags. Each time WebMerge looks at a record in the data feed file, it matches the data you specified *between* these *Record* tags. An example of this code follows:

```
[WM-Record]

<a href="http://www.yoursite.net/betty_mills/[WM-Field:
Product_ID nolink].htm" title="[WM-Field: Description
nolink]">[WM-Field: Product_Name nolink]</a>

[/WM-Record]
```

Note: The code above (Between [WM-Record] tags) is actually one single line of code, without <CR> (carriage returns).

WM-Tags Placed Between Record Tags

The above code includes Record tags, with the other **WM-Tags** placed between them. The field names chosen for the **WM-Tags** above, link to individual product pages.

In the example above, file names for the product (*Detail*) pages will be based on the field name **Product_ID**. Link text (displayed in the browser), are based on the Field name called **Product_Name**. Lastly, the "title" (HTML tag) has also been included, and is based on the Field name **Description**.

These **WM-Tags** are the same as used in the detail template, except that we will be adding more options to the tags placed in the template. For example, the "noindex" option is mandatory for all **WM-Tags** (except "*Record*" and "*Index Label*" tags) in all *index pages*. Eliminating these tags, usually results in odd links or code being displayed in the browser. If these are present, re-check the "noindex" option in your tags.

The code between the Record tags is a standard HTML **<HREF>** tag, similar to what is used in the detail template. The Title tag is optional on your part, but including it is good practice.

TIP: The **title** HTML tag can be read by text-readers (used by the visually impaired). If you put the right information in it, everyone can benefit. For example, the product description can be included in the title tag. This will allow a visitor to your bottom level index page to hover their mouse over the product link, and see the product description. Also a benefit if several of your product descriptions, loaded with keywords were included in every index page.

Top Level index pages

The topmost level index page is the place where many visitors can start drilling down into product categories, looking for what they need. This will also make a great landing page for a particular merchant. Adding a little flair and ad-copy to this page is also a good idea.

The top-level index page tags are a little different than those for other *index pages*. The objective is not to build a page that will lead visitors to individual product pages, but other *index pages*, (specifically, Sub-Categories). Importantly, only one top-level index page will be created.

WM-Record Tags are still required (as for any index page), however an additional tag needs to be added - the "IndexLabel" tag.

The IndexLabel Tag

Using the [WM-IndexLabel] tag results in only a portion of an index page being written, and only when the value in the specified field changes between records. In the example below, "All_Products" is used as the value for the IndexLabel tag, and "All_Products" is the Field name for the Main Category

Using Figure 9 (above), *All_Products* will produce links on the index page such as *Cleaners*, *Boxes*, *Brushes* and so on. For example, on the completed index page there will be a link to "Cleaners.html." Below is the code used in the tags for this Top Level index page:

```
[WM-Record]
  [WM-IndexLabel: All_Products]

  <a href="http://www.yoursite.net/best-merchant/[WM-Field:
All_Products nolink].htm" title="[WM-Field: All_Products
nolink]">[WM-Field: All_Products nolink]</a>

  [/WM-IndexLabel]
[/WM-Record]
```

Note: The above code is actually one single line of code, without carriage returns <CR>.

The above code includes Record tags, with the other **WM-Tags** placed between them – identical to the bottom level index page. Please remember to place the IndexLabel tags just like the example above, preferably without any carriage returns.

The Field names chosen for the **WM-Tags** in the example above, link to a lower-level document (Sub-Category index page). Please notice these Field names do not link to a product detail page, but link to a page based on the Sub-Category, in this case "Cleaners." Because the Top-Level index page is being created, WebMerge needs to be set to only build one page. On the index page Tab, click the radio button for "Make Only One index page," and type a name in the box that you want to use.



TIP: You may want to name it the same as the merchant or similar ("BestMerchant.htm" for example).

Remember, the "noindex" option is *mandatory* for all **WM-Tags** (except "Record" and "Index Label" tags) in all *index pages*. Leaving out the "noindex" tag, usually results in odd links and code being displayed in the browser window after loading the completed index page. If these are present, re-check the **WM-Tags** in the Index Template.

The code between the Record tags is a standard HTML *<HREF>* tag; similar to what is used in the detail template. The Title tag is optional on your part, but including it is good practice. The title tag can be read by text-readers (used by the visually impaired).

Other places for WM-Tags in the Index Template

WM-Tags used to build links from the *index pages*, are not the only use of **WM-Tags** in the Template. **WM-Tags** can also be used in the header, for example to add the name of the *category* between the `<title></title>` HTML tags. Remember, there are lots of creative ways in which one can use the information in the data feed. Another example might be where the *category name* is inserted at the top of the HTML code displayed in the user's web browser between `<h1>` tags. This is another way to help one's search engine rankings. Once the Detail and Index templates are designed, and saved, you can then begin saving the settings for WebMerge

Setting Up WebMerge to Build Affiliate Web Sites

Setting up WebMerge to build pages can be challenging the first time. Once the first successful run is accomplished, things get a lot easier, and you can concentrate on the smaller details. WebMerge will do all of the page building work for you once the *detail template*, and *index template* are setup and the WebMerge *settings* file has been saved.

Two-Tiered Hierarchy

Starting with the simplest design, a two-tiered hierarchy will help with understanding the concept of tiered site/navigation design. A two-tiered design results in **only one index page**. A two-tiered site utilizes detail pages for individual products, and an index page for category navigation. This single index page can serve as the main landing page for visitors, or be merchant specific and linked from your main landing page.

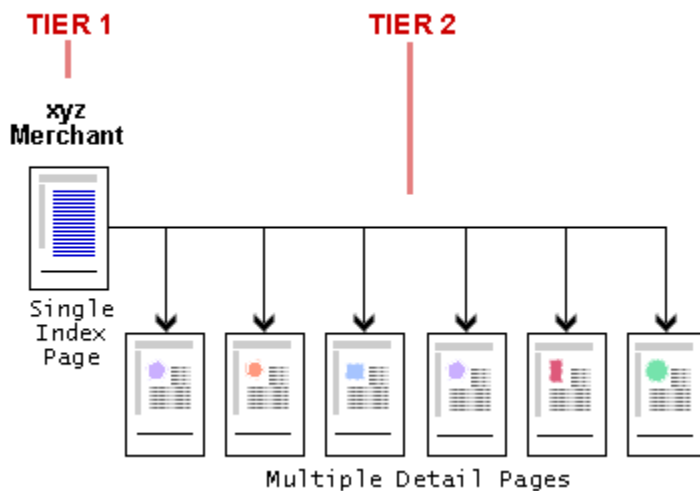


Figure 10 - Two-tiered web site hierarchy.

Where things go – planning your site

The following are important items, and should be well thought out prior to building anything:

- Site navigation for published pages.
- What directories (folders) at the web host will contain index and detail pages?

And on your local desktop computer, the locations of the following:

- Data feed file (Received from the Merchant)
- Index Template
- detail template
- Settings File
- *Detail pages*
- *Index pages*

Once this is completed, these files can be used repeatedly, in order to be better organized. A faster workflow and process will result after creating a couple of sites. Consistency will mean a faster and easier process for all additional builds.

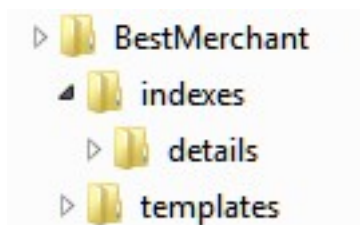


Figure 11 - Directory (Folder) examples for storing settings, template, and completed files.

Data Feed File (Exported File)

After starting the WebMerge application, the **first task is to select the data feed file**. This is the file already formatted, cleaned up, and ready to build pages. In order to select the file, click on “**Exported File...**” on the **Sources tab** in WebMerge.

TIP: In WebMerge, when locating the directory where your data feed file is located, and the file is not visible, it may be necessary to click on the “**Files of type...**” selector, and select “**All files...**” This action should display all files in the directory.

Settings File

The WebMerge **settings file** is the file used to save the configuration for a single data feed in WebMerge. The settings file contains information including; the locations where WebMerge writes completed **Index** and **detail** pages, the location of the **data feed file**, and other configuration information specific to a particular data feed. Some site designs like **three** and **four-tier** hierarchies require more than one settings file. Conversely, a **two-tiered** site requires only one settings file.

After selecting the data feed file in WebMerge, save the settings file. This is accomplished from the “**File**” pull down menu. Some thought should be given to the name, as future names for a particular merchant’s data feed will be easier to track. Additionally, you may wish to make redirect pages, or build a three or four-tiered site later with this merchant’s data feed file. As stated above, three and four-tiered and redirect designs will require separate settings files.



Note: The current file extension for WebMerge settings files is “.4WW” For example, naming settings files as “xyz-merchant_2tier.4ww” or “xyz-merchant_redirect.4ww” is possible.

Remember, when building or updating many data driven web sites, a well thought out scheme for naming and saving files is always a good idea. The settings files required for a particular merchant should all be saved in the same folder. For example, you can always use the same directory (folder) name in each merchant's main folder for the settings file - naming it "settings," or put it in a folder with your templates, called "templates." Use any name, but the naming convention should be consistent.

TIP: WebMerge has a feature called *favorites* in the **File** pull down menu. With the favorites menu, one can save settings files, so that they can be loaded by simply selecting them from the Favorites list instead of hunting for them in different directories. Favorites need to be added manually through the menu, and are a real time saver.

Completing the configuration in WebMerge is the next step in building sites.

Sources Tab

Once the **data feed file** has been selected and the **settings file** named and saved, WebMerge needs to understand the best way to read the data feed file information. This is a simple process handled from the **Sources** tab in WebMerge. The *Sources tab* in WebMerge is the interface to specify which exported data file to use and how that file is to be read.

Select the **Exported File** first or the user choices will be grayed out.

"First line of file contains Field names"

This box should be checked by default, if not go ahead and check it. If your feed does not contain Field names, WebMerge can add them for you automatically, however this is not recommended for affiliate web sites.

Presets:

The **presets** drop-down menu is provided so that you can identify the type of data feed file you are using for WebMerge. If you select the correct type, you can avoid manually setting the delimiter and quoted text value options.

TIP: After selecting the type of file preset, you must change the *delimiter or quoted text value option*, the preset then resets itself to "none." This is normal behavior; those other options can be manipulated manually. You may skip the preset selection option entirely and tell WebMerge what type of delimiter is represented in the data feed file, and adjust the setting manually (see below). WebMerge should recognize the type of delimiter used in the file automatically.

Delimiter:

First identify the type of **delimiter** used. For example, if the data feed file was saved earlier as a **pipe** delimited file in MS Excel, then selecting "**pipe**" in both of the "Delimiters" is necessary. Similar to MS Excel, the data should be neatly organized in the preview window. If the proper delimiter is not selected, the data in the preview window will appear on a single-line, instead of appearing as rows, with a Field name for each row.

Text Values are in Quotes:

It is very likely that most or all of the text values in the data feed file are in quotes. Accordingly, the "**Text Values are in Quotes**" box should be checked. This can be confirmed by checking and un-checking the box, while viewing the description field in the preview window. The double-quotes should appear and disappear, as the boxes are checked and unchecked. If a box is left un-checked, and WebMerge runs, building pages, double-quotation marks will be present in the description fields of the completed web pages.

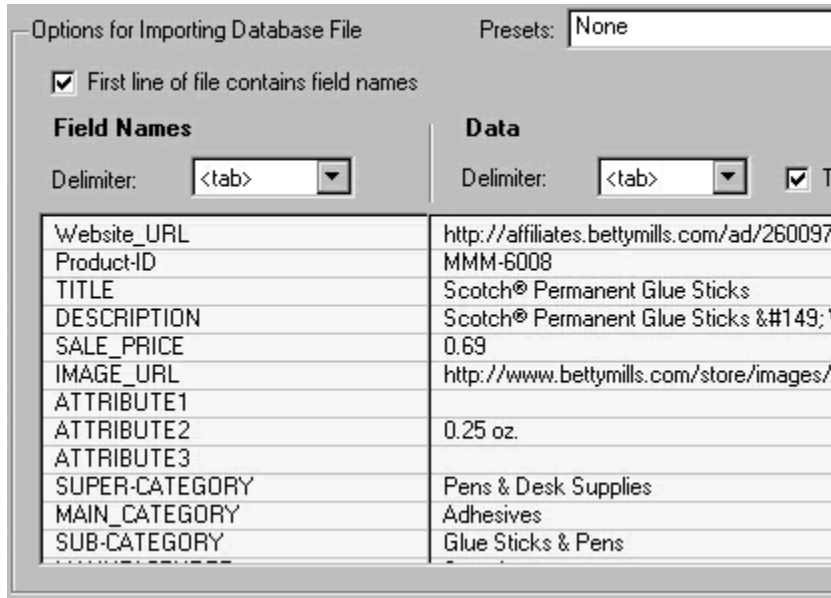


Figure 12 - Preview window on the Sources Tab in WebMerge.

Sorting your data:

WebMerge can optionally sort the data before generating pages, with the “**Sort Records by field**” check box, and menus (See Figure 13, below). This is useful if the contents of an index page need to be in a particular order (for example alphabetical). It will be easier for your site visitors to navigate or “look up” product information if it is in some kind of order.



Figure 13 - “Sort Records by...” (selection), on the Sources Tab.

For example, sorting the records by “NAMES” (or whatever the product name field is named in the data feed file) would mean *index pages* will display products in order alphabetically by the name of the product.

Index pages Tab

Settings on the **index pages Tab** control where the **index pages** will be written to, where the index template is located, how the new **index pages** will be named, the type of file extension, and more.

Assigning a destination folder:

By checking the **Create index pages in** checkbox, a dialog box appears asking in what directory (folder) WebMerge should create the new index pages in. This should be a directory used only for the index pages. The files will be easier to keep track of if they are in a location without other files.

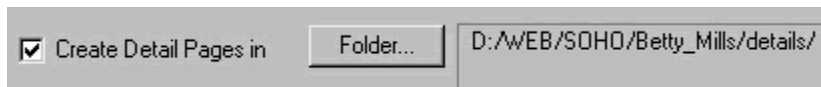


Figure 14 - "Create **index pages** in" dialog.

Index Template

Affiliates normally need to use the **"Use one template file for index pages:"** radio button. When selected, a dialog box appears asking where WebMerge can find the **index template** already designed for this data feed. A more detailed explanation of the other choices in this area can be found in the documentation accompanying the WebMerge application help files.

Generated File Names

Naming Generated index pages:

How do you want to name the **index pages**? The first choice concerns what file extension should be used. The default is **.html**. This can easily be changed to **.htm** if this is the standard naming convention for the web site.

Page names based on a category can also be used. If this is selected, then the **Base Name:** field will be grayed out. After selecting either **Make only one index page**, or **Serialized names starting with:** the **Base name** should be typed in.

Avoiding Too Many Links on an Index Page:

In most cases, a two-tier site design will not support the number of links to detail pages that will need to reside on the index page. As an example; if there are 500 records in the feed, then there will be 500 links on the index page. This is impractical. A three or four-tiered site design should be considered when utilizing a data feed with more than eighty records. Using a large feed in a two-tiered design may result in a page that visitors will have trouble navigating, and will take an extremely long time to load.

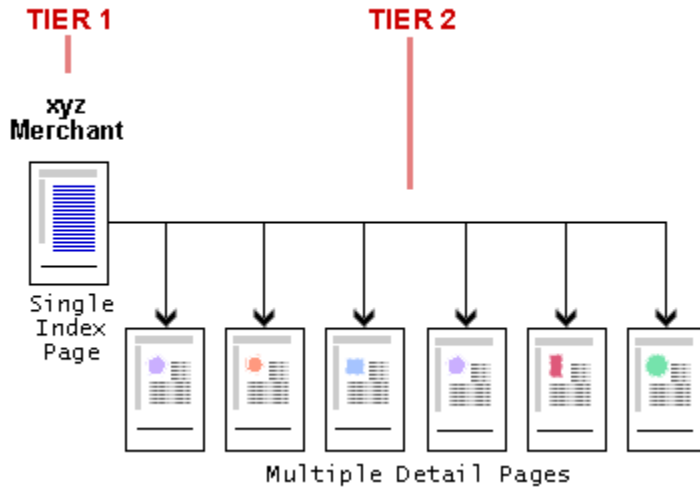


Figure 15 - Two-Tier design, with a single index page.

Three or Four-Tiered Site Design Required:

Part of the process in creating a multiple tiered site, is to use a single index file for the main category page (Tier 1 in figure 15). The main category page has links to index pages based on sub-categories (Tier 2 in figure 15). The category-based index pages have in-turn, links to individual detail pages (Multiple detail pages in figure 15).

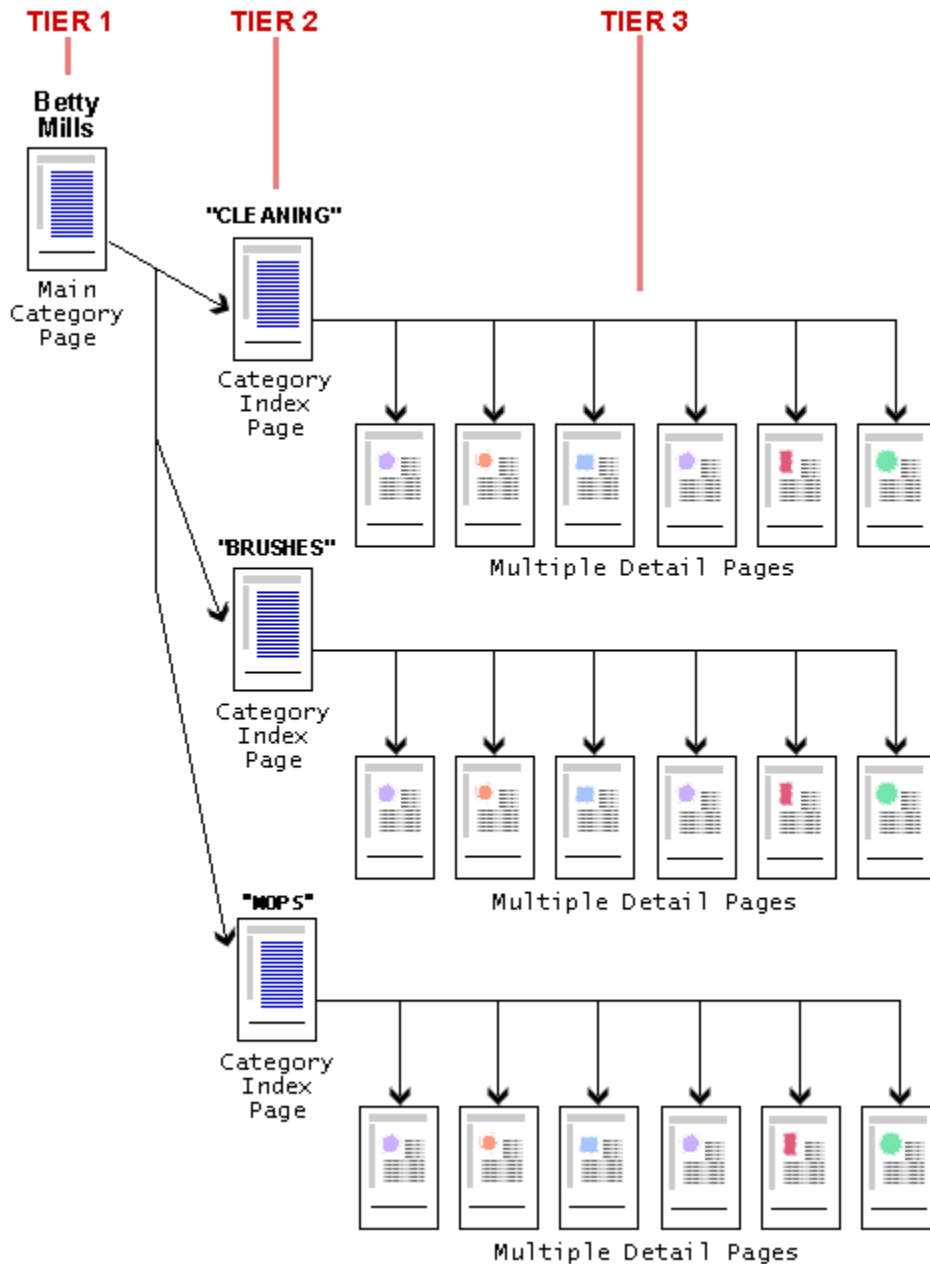


Figure 16 - Three-tier design with multiple index pages linked from a single "main Category" index page.

Serialized Names:

Building pages based on a numbering scheme is simple. If this works for your data feed, then check the **Serialized names starting with #:** radio button. This is another place where good advance planning comes in.



Figure 17 - "Generated File Names" (Serialized names) selected.

For example, if the **base name "index"** is used, and type in **001** (the default), index pages will start with name **index0001.htm**. These sequentially numbered names will continue until WebMerge reaches the number of different categories in the feed. This varies according to the merchant, and can be as few as ten, or as many as 300 - or more. With 300 categories, a decision should be made as to whether these can be broken down further if there are sub-categories in the feed.

Name Based on Contents of Field:

As with the **serialized names** option above, this option allows the use of many index pages, based on category (or other) names. This method can be more challenging to keep track of, but has other benefits, including possible Search Engine results. The practical result is the naming of index files so that they resemble things like the products found in categories, instead of numbers that do not hint at the contents of an HTML file.

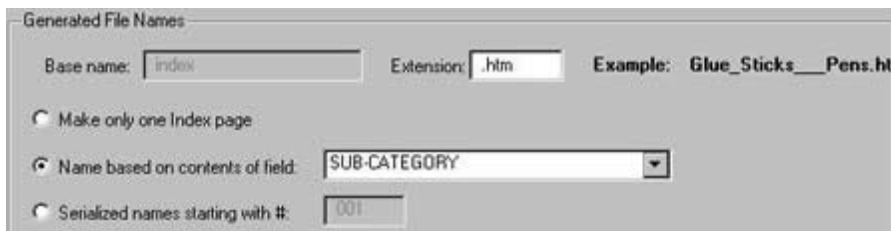


Figure 18 - "Generated File Names" (Name Based) selected.

Regardless of your selection, WebMerge provides an example of the index file name displayed in the upper right (see figure 18). If you have selected the **contents** option, then the first record is displayed in the example. *Please note where WebMerge inserts underscores between words in the file name.*

Test Mode:

The **detail pages tab** has the same checkbox that is displayed in other tabs, allowing a test to be completed, limited by the number of records you wish to process. For example, a test run can be completed by building the site based on a limited number of records (for example: 50 or 100). This is a time saver, as WebMerge only needs to complete a few records, instead of the entire data feed file. The completed pages can then be examined to see if they are being built as planned.



Settings File:

Save the Settings File according to the type of web site to be built, and the tier that is being built.

Detail pages Tab

Settings on the **detail pages tab** control where the **detail pages** will be written, where the **detail template** is located, how the new detail pages will be named, the type of **file extension**, and more.

Assigning a Destination Folder:

By checking **Create detail pages in** a dialog box appears asking what directory (folder) WebMerge should create the new detail pages in. This should be a directory used **only for the detail pages**. The files are easier to keep track of when they are in a location by themselves.

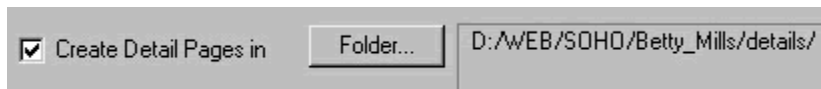


Figure 19 - "Create Detail Pages in" dialog.

Detail template

Affiliates webmasters normally need to use the **Use One Template File for Detail Pages:** radio button. When selected, a dialog box appears, asking where WebMerge can find the **detail template** already designed for this data feed. A more detailed explanation of the other choices in this area can be found in the help files that are part of the WebMerge application.

Generated File Names

Naming Generated detail pages:

The first choice is **Name Based on Contents of Field**. This is what many Affiliates prefer to use, as the file name will have a closer relationship with the actual product name, will be easier to keep track of, and may be better for Search Engine ranking.

When page names are based on the contents of a field like **Product_ID** for example, then the **Base name:** field will be grayed-out. If you select **Serialized names starting with #:** the **Base Name** can then be typed in.

The file extension also needs to be typed in, unless using the default **.html**. This can be changed to **.htm**. Choose a file extension that works for your web site, and is consistent with other existing file extension.



Figure 20 - Generated File Names area.

WebMerge provides an example of the detail file name displayed in the upper-right. If you have selected the **contents** option, then the first record is displayed in the example.

Last Tier to be built

When building a web site based on an affiliate data feed, there are usually one or more Tiers above the **detail pages**. These higher tiers are all **index pages**, and get built before the detail pages. This means that the detail pages are the last to be configured and built. Accordingly, the settings file for this part of the build (**Step Two** in figure 21) contains information for *both* the detail pages, and the index pages (“Cleaning” in figure 21) for the Tier directly above the detail pages (“FRS-300” in figure 21).

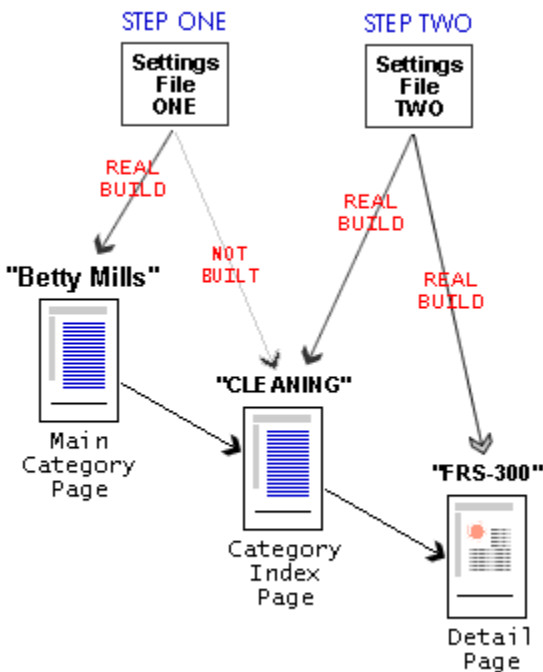


Figure 21 - Steps for building a multi-tiered web site.

Test Mode:

The **detail pages tab** has the same Test Mode checkbox that is displayed in other tabs, allowing a test to be made, limited by the number of records you wish to process. For example, a test



run can be completed by building the site based on a limited number of records (for example: 50 or 100). This is a time saver, as WebMerge only needs to complete a few records, instead of the entire data feed file. The completed pages can then be examined to see if they are being built as planned.

Settings File

Save the Settings File according to the type of web site to be built, and the tier that is being built.

WebMerge Generation Tab

Settings on the WebMerge Generation tab allow automation of many tasks in building a web site. For example, WebMerge can automatically upload the completed files to your web server.

FTP

WebMerge can automatically upload the completed files to your web server. To enable this feature, check the box **FTP Files to Server**. Then select **Edit List...** from the drop down menu.

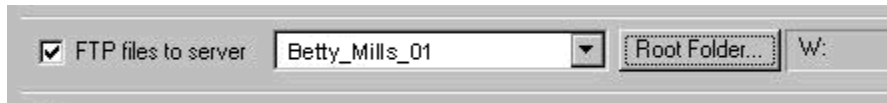


Figure 22 - FTP Dialog.

Once selected, the FTP server settings box appears, allowing changes to the settings required to upload files to your web server. After WebMerge builds the site specified in the main settings file, it will automatically log in and upload the files specified in the **Root Folder** selection. Some experimentation may be required to fine tune the settings for the web site and server.

Automating the Multi-Tier Process

When building a **three-tier** web site, **two** settings files are required. One can run these manually, and separately by selecting the first settings file, and have WebMerge complete the first tier index page(s), then by manually selecting the second settings file, and complete the last index tier, and detail pages.

However, WebMerge provides an automated way to accomplish this task. On the **Generation tab** in WebMerge, click on **Run Other WebMerge Files After This One Completes**, and select the next settings file, WebMerge will run the first settings file one time to start the process, and automatically run the next Settings File. This tool's true value really comes out when it is time to make your process run quickly each time you need to build the site.

More than one additional settings file can be selected to be run automatically, if an unusual configuration is required, or you are building additional tiers (four, five or more).

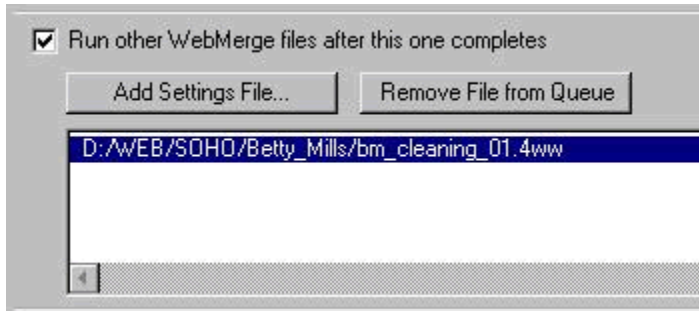


Figure 23 - Run other WebMerge files.

Building a Two-Tiered Affiliate Web Site

Setting up two-tiered affiliate site templates

A **two-tiered** site is the simplest of designs utilizing detail pages for individual products, and a **single index page** for category navigation from the main page.

Normally, one would build an index page containing links to all of the detail pages. WebMerge does all of this for you once you have set up your **detail template**, **index template**, and saved the WebMerge **settings file**. The use of two-tier design is rather limited for affiliate use, as only the smallest of feeds should be attempted. This is because the index page simply grows too large, having to contain links to all of the **detail** pages.

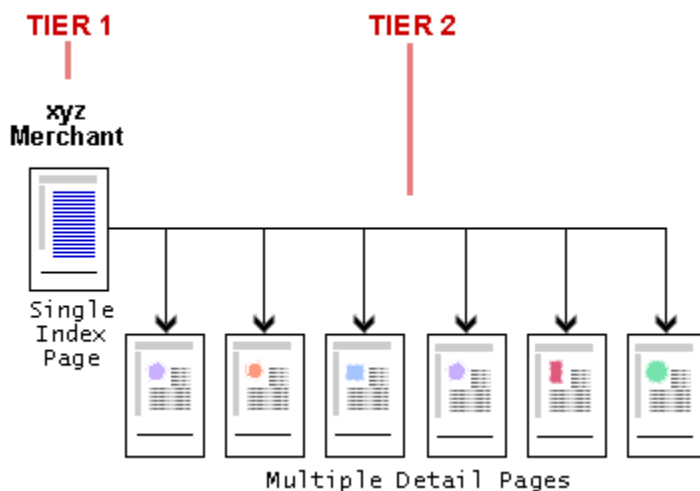


Figure 24 - Two-Tiered Site Hierarchy.

One each, of the **setting**, **detail**, and **index** file are required to create this type of site structure.

TIP: Please see the required file matrix for files and categories required for the Two-Tier design.

Three Tiered Affiliate Web Site Design

Tiers, Categories, and Detail Pages:

This design is nearly identical to the two-tier design. The three-tier design utilizes the following:

1. A *Main Category Page* for visitors to start "drilling down" into categories and products (Tier 1).
2. A set of major *Category index pages* for category navigation (Tier 2).
3. Detail pages for individual products (Tier 3).

Please see fig.25 below to better understand the hierarchy to be built.

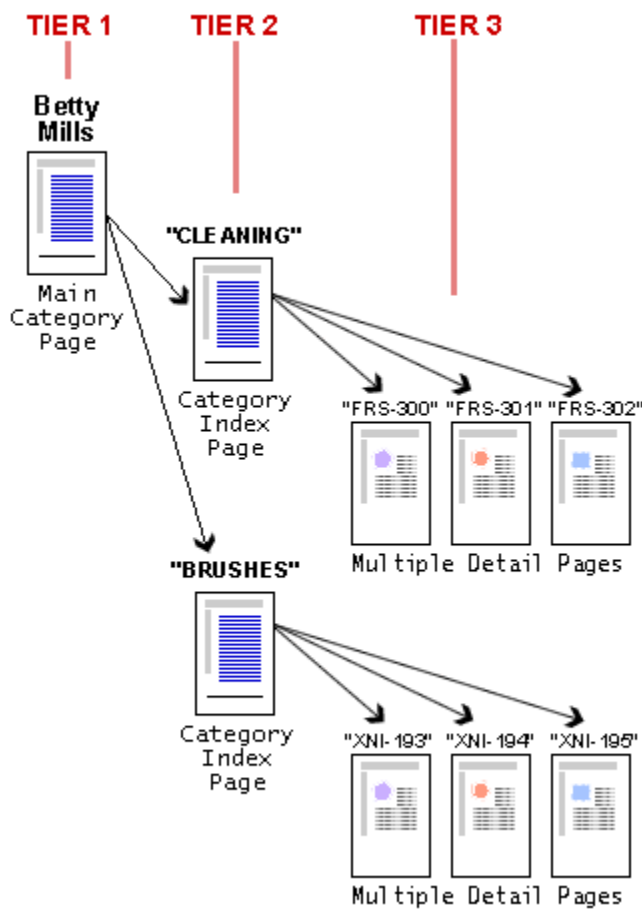


Figure 25 - Three-Tier site hierarchy.

How does this work again?

Because WebMerge completes a maximum of two-tiers at a time, it is necessary to work on **tier-one** first. Once tier-one is completed, the last two tiers will be completed (see figure 26 below).

TIP: Please see the required file matrix for files and categories required for the Three-Tier design.

Two Steps - Two Settings Files:

Two **settings files** are required to complete a three-tier design. Each settings file is used to build one or two tiers. Building more than two-tiers requires more settings files. Start out with WebMerge building the **main category page**, with the first **settings file**. After that is complete, WebMerge can build all of the **category index pages**, and the **detail pages** with the **second settings file**.

At least two *category* Field names need to exist in the data feed file in order to build a site with more than two-tiers.

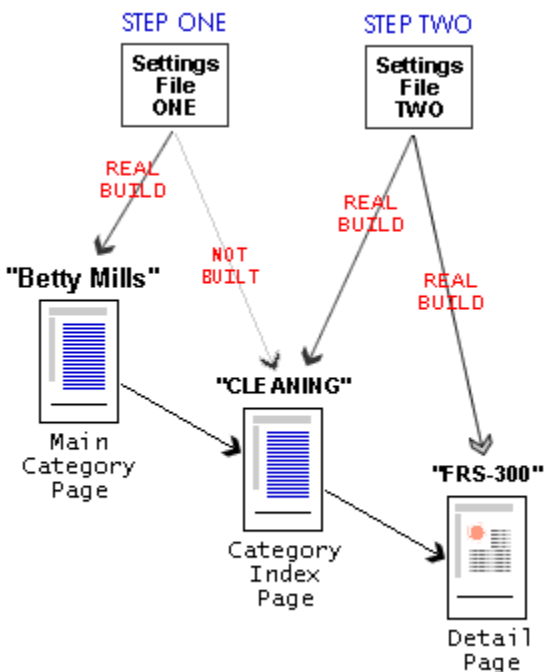


Figure 26 - Components for the two-step process (three-tier affiliate web design).

First step, build Tier One

Getting WebMerge to build the Main Category Page:

In the first step in the process, the links populating the *Main Category Page* are links to **category index pages**, not detail pages. The **category index pages**, and the detail pages

are completed in the second part of the process (See figure 26 above). Please note, detail pages are not built in step one of the process (referred to as **NOT BUILT** in fig. 26 above).

The **Main Category Page** can be thought of as the main page for the merchant. In our example, we are calling it "Betty Mills." Once WebMerge has finished running the first settings file, the result is a **Main Category Page** populated with links to **Category Index Pages** like "Cleaning," "Brushes," and "Storage." The Main Category Page is based on information in the **index template** specified on the **index pages tab** in WebMerge, and saved with the first settings file.

TIP: WebMerge can be set it to build either the **index pages**, or the **detail pages**, or both. This is advantageous when experimenting, building multi-tier web sites, or in cases where index pages do not require updating. Go to the appropriate tab (**detail** or **index**), and un-check the box **Create Index/Detail Pages**. Those pages will not be built.

The **Detail Pages Tab** in WebMerge is not used in step-one of a multi-tiered site design. This is labeled as "NOT BUILT" in Figure 26 above. Remember, in step-one only the **Main Category page** actually needs to be built.

WebMerge Settings:

The next step, requires that you have set up the **data feed file** information on the "Sources" tab in WebMerge.

Switch to the **Index Pages** tab , and identify where WebMerge can find your **Index Template file**, and select the directory (folder) where WebMerge will write the completed **Main Category Index file**.

Under the **Generated File Names** section, click on the **Make Only One Index Page**, then indicate the name of the file to use for this page. The default **index.html** can be used if it will be the main landing page for the site. Alternatively, something creative like "BestMerchant.html" can be used if it is a link off of one of the other pages on your site. There are many schools of thought concerning the naming of pages for Search Engine purposes.

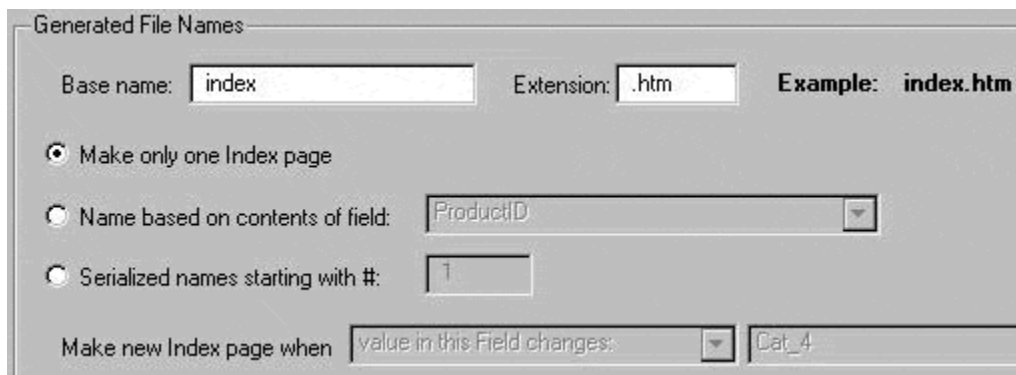


Figure 27 - "Make only one Index page" selected.

Templates:

Only one template (an **Index Template**) is required for the first step in the process. This is because the next step is to build the **Main Category Page** only. WebMerge needs to populate the Main Category Page with links to the **category index pages**, for example "Cleaners" and "Brushes." The Index Template needed will have the proper **WM-Tags** so that WebMerge will populate the page with these types of links.

This tutorial assumes that you are using a template that already has your standard site navigation embedded in it, along with images common to your site, such as logos and any text or banner links.

IMPORTANT: This tutorial assumes that you are using a template that already has your standard site navigation embedded in it, along with images common to your site, such as logos and any text or banner links.

The output of this type of template is to include and format the **WM-Tags** needed to get WebMerge to populate the page with links. Save the file with a logical name that will differentiate it from other template files, for example: "**index_template_01.html**"

WM-Tags:

The **WM-Tags** best suited for step-one would be the **[WM-IndexLabel:]** tag, and the **[WM-Record]** tag. These two tags are nested, and should appear this way in your code:

```
[WM-Record]
  [WM-IndexLabel: Main_Category]
    (Your HTML linking code - see below)
  [/WM-IndexLabel]
[/WM-Record]
```

A Further Explanation about the HTML Code:

HTML between the **WM-Record** tags will be replicated once for each record in the data feed file. Conversely, the **WM-IndexLabel** tag tells WebMerge to write a link only when the value of the field (in the data feed file) listed in that tag changes. For example, it will create a link for "Cleaners" only once, and will not create another link until the value in the **Main_Category** changes. In this example, when the value changes to "Brushes," WebMerge will write a new link onto the page. When WebMerge has completed going through the data feed file records, and finds the next **Main_Category** - Field name (for example "Storage"), it will write the third link onto the page, and so on. This action will continue until WebMerge has completed running through the entire data feed file, and written links onto the page for every different **Main_Category** it reads in the data feed file. These tags are inserted once into the code of the template.

Your HTML linking code:

The code to use can be any form of link code, effectively containing an `<href=` tag. This is a code format that works well, and includes the actual link, the text to display, and a title. In this example, the category's Field name is **Main_Category**.



The code is written this way:

```
<p><a href="http://www.yoursite.net/betty_mills/[WM-Field:
Main_Category nolink].htm" title="[WM-Field: Main_Category
nolink]">[WM-Field: Main_Category nolink]</a></p>
```

If the template were viewed in a browser, the HTML code would be displayed like this:

[\[WM-Field: Main Category nolink\]](#)

If we look at the code as it was written into the final document, it will look like this.

Open the page source code in your favorite HTML editor, and look at the link:

```
<p><a href="http://www.yoursite.net/betty_mills/Cleaners.htm"
title="Cleaners">Cleaners</a></p>
```

After WebMerge has written the file including all of the **Main_Category** links, the link (from the first record) would look like this displayed in a web browser. If a visitor Hovers their mouse over the link, they will see the title:

[Cleaners](#)

WebMerge has inserted all of the information to complete the links, so that when a visitor clicks on a link on the **Main Category Page**, they will be directed to the correct page (next step in the hierarchy). There will likely be many links generated on that page, based on the number of different **Main_Category, Field names** present in the data feed file.

Settings File for step-two

Check to make sure the **Main Category Index** page has been completed properly. If correct, save the **first settings file**. Use a logical name like "Zapos_first," or "za001." This is so it can be easily identified as the *first* settings file. Once this is completed, it can be added to the **Favorites** list in WebMerge. WebMerge will automatically add the proper file name extension.

Next, WebMerge must create the **Category index pages**, and **detail pages**. Name and save the **second settings file** now. Logical names (that match the first *settings file* name) might be "Zapos_second", or "za002."

TIP: Please see the required file matrix for files and categories required for the Three-Tier design...

Step Two

Index Template

An index template is required to build the **Category index pages** (Tier-Two in fig. 26, above). This also must be set up with **WM-Tags**, so that we end up with links to



individual *detail pages*. The easiest way to accomplish this, is to utilize the *Index Template* used in step one, save it with a new name, and modify it for Step Two.

What to modify?

The only items that need changing from the first Index Template are the *WM-Tag*, and any Meta Tags used in the header. Specifically, the "*Index Label*" tags are no longer needed in building links to *detail pages* (see below).

Lastly, changing the file name to something logical like "index_template_02.html" (we used "index_template_01.html" in step one).

WM-Tags

Only one WM-Tag is required for this template, here is an example:

```
[WM-Record]
  (Your HTML linking code - see below)
[/WM-Record]
```

HTML linking code:

```
<p><a href="http://www.yoursite.net/betty_mills/[WM-Field:
ProductID nolink].htm" title="[WM-Field: ProductID nolink] ">[WM-
Field: ProductID nolink]</a></p>
```

The full code with the **WM-Tags**:

```
[WM-Record]

  <p><a href="http://www.yoursite.net/betty_mills/[WM-Field:
  ProductID nolink].htm" title="[WM-Field: ProductID
  nolink]">[WM-Field: ProductID nolink]</a></p>

[/WM-Record]
```

The only real change that was made was to the Field name used in the **WM-Tags**. In this instance using "ProductID" (in step one, we used "Main_Category"). Place this once in the code for the *Index Template*.

After saving the *Index Template*, move on to the detail template.

detail template

Similar to the *Index Template*, start out with a detail template that already has your standard site navigation embedded in it, along with images you choose, like logos and any text or banner links.



TIP: Because you are making many *detail pages*, it may be wise to choose a design that will result in a smaller file size. For example, 10,000 *detail pages* with a size of 20k each results in a disk storage requirement of 200MB! Reducing file size, without compromising the design of your web page is very important.

WM-Tags

They key to the detail template is how well arranged the **WM-Tags** are to present the information from the data feed. Some of the Field names (from the data feed file) that you may want to include in the detail template include:

- Product Name
- Long Description
- SKU Number
- Manufacturer Number
- Keywords
- Price

Some of the **WM-Tags** need to be placed in the body of the document, while others need to be placed between the `<head></head>` tags. Place the tags where you would like product information to appear in your HTML code, complimenting the way the page is displayed to the end user.

For example, if your data feed has a keywords Field name, then a *WM-Tag* can be placed in the appropriate Meta tag (HTML header), for example:

```
<META name="keywords" content="[WM-Field: keywords]">
```

The product name can be placed between the title tags:

```
<title>[WM-Field: Product_Name]</title>
```

TIP: Leaving the price in your detail pages may or may not be a good idea. For example, if the price changes and you don't update the site, the visitor will end up getting a mixed message about the product. You may also irritate the merchant, who has to deal with complaints about a web site (yours) that has out of date pricing.

TIP: Notice the "nolink" portion of the *WM-Tag* is left out in the detail template? It is only used in *Index Templates*.

Inserting product Images can be accomplished easily using standard HTML, by substituting image URL's with **WM-Tags**. The code for a clickable image with a source from the feed is shown below:

```
<a href="[WM-Field: Buy_URL]"></a>
```

In the example above, three **WM-Tags** are used to present more complete information to the site visitor, in the final rendered page. The "`<href=`" tag which makes the image clickable by site visitors, contains the *WM-Tag* for the affiliate link "*Buy_URL*." The "`<img src=`" tag contains the URL of the image source from the merchant "*IMAGE_URL*". And lastly, the "`alt=`" tag contains the name of the product "*Product_Name*." Including the "`alt=`" tag means that site visitors will see the product description when they hover their mouse over the image.

The brief description of some **WM-Tags** (above), has been added in order to demonstrate the flexibility of WebMerge in creating web pages based on data feeds. It is easy to shape the completed *detail pages* utilizing these methods. Basically, one can put information from the data feed file anywhere in the HTML document. **WM-Tags** can also be placed more than once in the same document. This flexibility makes for a completely customized web page, unique to your site.

WebMerge Settings

After initially saving the second settings file, the next step is to configure WebMerge.

Index pages Tab

On the "*Index pages*" tab; locate the new *Index Template* created for step-two (above). Next, in the *Generated File Names* area select "Name based on contents of field," and select the appropriate Field name for the build.

This step is extremely important as the Field name chosen must match the field-name used in step-one to generate links on the *Main Category* page.

Let's review where we used this field-name in step-one. We used the field-name "*Main_Category*" in our step-one template in the *WM-IndexLabel* Tag. WebMerge also built a *Main Index* page with links to *Category index pages* named after "*Main_Category*" Field names.

Detail pages Tab

On the "*Detail pages*" tab, check the "Create detail pages in" box, and after the dialog box appears, select the directory (folder) where WebMerge should build the *detail pages* for this data feed.

Next, check the box for "Use one template file for detail pages," and locate the new detail template created for step-two.

In the *Generated File Names* section, you have a couple of choices concerning the name of files, and how WebMerge assigns those names. Names can be generated based on simple ascending numbers "Serialized names..." However, it may be wiser to use one of

the Field names already provided in the data feed. For example, utilize the product number, or UPC code. This will make tracing problems down, quicker, and will provide a measure of Search Engine “friendliness.” Additionally, when users see the URL, they may be able to more readily identify the link and product that it relates to.

Save the second settings file again. Everything should now be ready to build the second and final step in the three-tiered design.

Automate the Two-Step Process

As discussed earlier, WebMerge can automate many tasks in building data driven web sites. When building a three-tier web site, two settings files are required. You can run these manually and separately by selecting the first settings file, and have WebMerge build the first tier index page(s), then manually selecting the second settings file, and build the last index tier, and *detail pages*. In any event, it is a good idea to actually run the files separately the first time, to ensure everything is working the way it should. Once run manually the first time, there is an easy way to automate the process.

Generation Tab

On the "Generation" tab in WebMerge, you can have the program run more settings files automatically after the previous one completes. By clicking on "Run other WebMerge files after this one completes," and selecting the next settings file, WebMerge will run the first settings file one time to start the process, and automatically run the next Settings File selected. This tool's true value really comes out when it is time to make your process run quickly each time you need to build (re-build) the site with fresh data feed file updates.

More than one additional settings file can be selected to be run automatically, if an unusual configuration is required, or when building additional tiers (four, five or more).

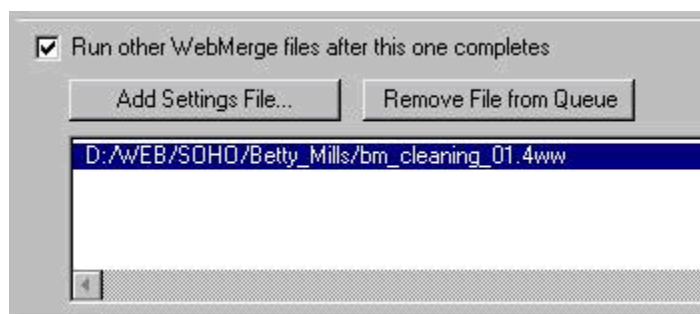


Figure 28 - "Run other WebMerge files..." dialog

Four Tiered Affiliate Web Site Design

Tiers, categories, and detail pages

This design is nearly identical to the *three-tier design*. The four-tier design utilizes the following:

1. A *Main Category Page* for visitors to start "drilling down" into categories and products (Tier 1).
2. A set of top level *Category index pages* for category navigation (Tier 2).
3. A bottom layer of *Sub-Category index pages* which are really sub-categories (Tier 3).
4. detail pages for individual products (Tier 4).

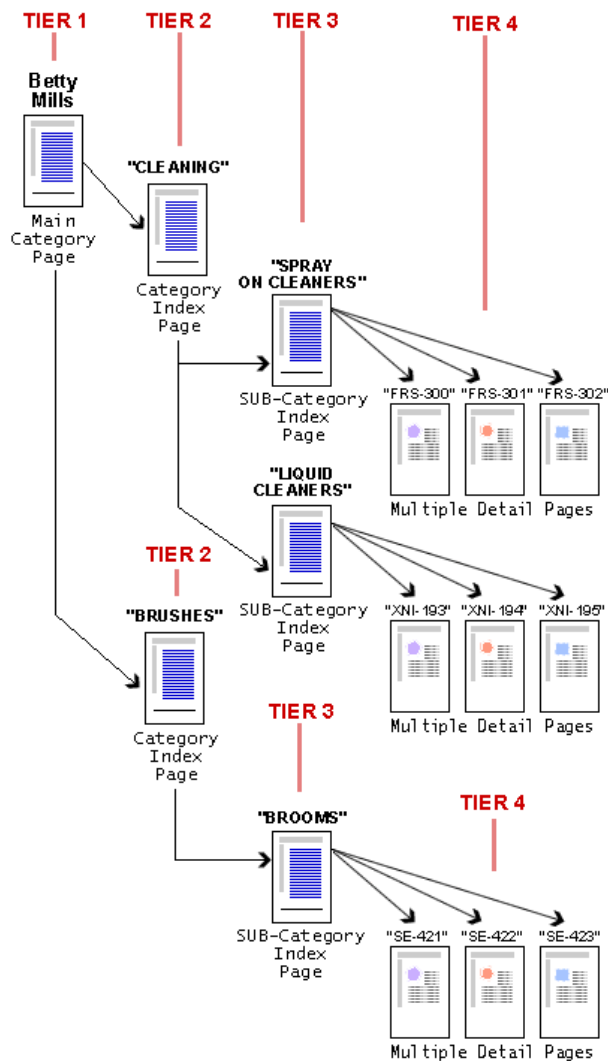


Figure 29 - Four Tier design hierarchy.

TIP: Please see the required file matrix for files and categories required for the Four-Tier design.

Three Steps - Three Settings Files

Three *settings files* are required to complete a four-tier design (as compared to two settings files for a *three-tiered design*). Each settings file is used to build one tier (except "step-three"), so building more than two-tiers requires more settings files.

At least two category Field names need to exist in the data feed file in order to build.

The four-tier design looks complicated, but really is not. The only difference between three and four tier design, is that an extra step is added in the middle, by adding one more *settings file* and *Index Template*. Three steps required, versus two for the *three-tier design*.

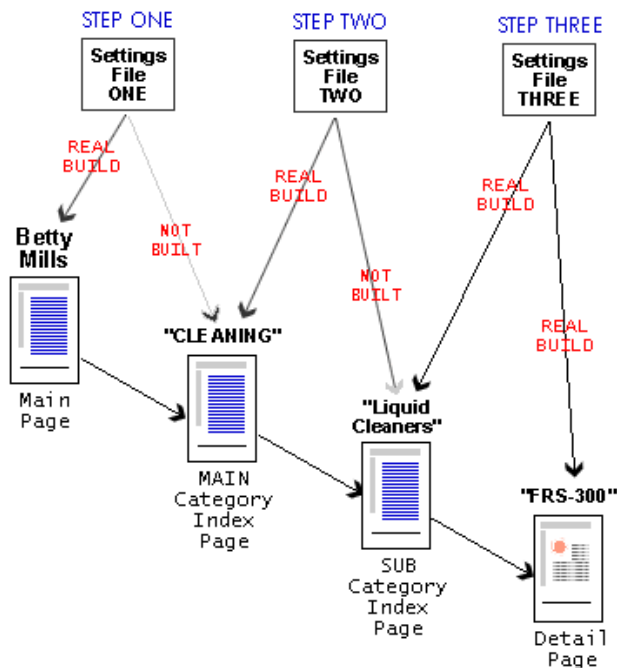


Figure 30 - Components for the three-step process.

Step-One

This step is identical to step-one in the *three-tiered* design.

Briefly, step-one encompasses building the initial index page, or "*Main Category Page*" (see "REAL BUILD" for step one in Figure. 30 above). No detail pages are built at this stage (See "NOT BUILT" above).

Step-Two

This step is *not* identical to what we did in building the three-tier design in step-two, but is similar, and very simple.

Step-two involves building only *index pages*. (See "REAL BUILD" for step two in Figure 30 above).



No detail pages are built at this stage (See "*NOT BUILT*" in Figure 30 above).

In summary, category *index pages* need to be built that have file names that match the links that were placed into the Main Index page made in step-one above - exactly. Naming the *Index Files* in this step is extremely important, if the file names do not match the links, then navigation will not work.

Step-Three

Step three is the final step in the process for a four-tiered design, and is almost identical to "STEP-TWO" in the *three-tiered design*. The only difference is that in the four-tiered design, the *index files* have links to "*Category index pages*," instead of the *Main Category* index page (see Figure 30 above).

detail pages do get built, however and have **WM-Tags**, and a detail template identical to the three-tiered design.



Glossary

Data Feed File "Datafeed"

Data Feed Files are databases containing information, usually product information provided by merchants. The information in a data feed file is organized into "Records" containing detailed information about merchant products.

Delimiter

Separates fields in a data feed file. Delimiters enable database application like WebMerge to separate information in the data feed file. Example: comma “,” “tab” and pipe “|”

Detail pages

Detail pages are the final result of a build by WebMerge, and contain product information, which may include product descriptions, an image of the product, and an affiliate link to the Merchant's web site. WebMerge inserts data into detail pages based on **WM-Tags** in the detail template. detail pages are found at the lowest level of the directory tree or structure.

Drill Down

Drilling down is a term used to describe the act of navigating, or clicking links to go deeper into a site structure. Example: Clicking on the "Cleaning" link on the "Main Category" Index page, then clicking on the "FRS-300 Cleaner" link on the "Category" Index page, then arriving at the individual product page for the FRS-300 (*Three-Tiered hierarchy*).

detail template

The detail template is used by WebMerge to generate completed detail pages. detail templates contain the HTML used to form one's website, including logo, banner and text ads, navigation links, and WebMerge Tags (**WM-Tags**). The **WM-Tags** in the detail template tell WebMerge to look for data in the data feed file, and insert that information in the final detail pages.

Field name

Is the name given to a field in a data feed file, for all records in the feed. When viewed in spreadsheet application (such as MS Excel) the Field name appears as a column header. Example: “Product-ID” Found in data feed files.

Four-Tiered Site

A Four-Tiered site consists of a main index page (Tier-One), with links to lower-level "Category" *index pages* (Tier-Two). The Category *index pages* in-turn, have links to lower level "Sub-Category" *index pages* (Tier-Three), which in turn, have links to "Detail" or Individual Product pages (Tier-Four).

Illegal Characters



Are characters in the data feed file or a template, that cannot be processed or cause errors when processing. Example: the slash “/” or quotes “” when found in a category or other field. The slash character may cause directories to be created, change links or other HTML tags or other strange behavior. Found in data feed files, and less frequently in templates.

Index pages

Index pages are the final result of a build by WebMerge, and contain links to lower level *index pages*, or *detail pages*.

Index Template

The Index Template is used by WebMerge to generate completed *index pages*. WebMerge inserts data into *index pages* based on **WM-Tags** in the Index Template. Index Templates contain the basic HTML used to form one's website, including logo, banner and text ads, navigation links, and WebMerge Tags (**WM-Tags**). The **WM-Tags** in the Index Template tell WebMerge looks for data in the data feed file, and inserts that information in the final *index pages* for navigation to lower level pages.

Lower Level (Category) index page

A Lower (or Bottom) Level index page is the final result of a build by WebMerge, and contain links to individual product pages. See Index Template (above).

Lower Level (Category) Index Template

A Lower (or Bottom) Level Index Template is used to create Lower Level *index pages*. **WM-Record** tags are required for the Lower Level index page. See Index Template (above).

Record

A record is the set of information for a single particular product in an affiliate data feed file. Data feeds can have hundreds to hundreds-of-thousands of records. When viewed in spreadsheet application (such as MS Excel) the Field name appears as a column header. Example: “Product-ID” Found in data feed files.

Settings File

Is the file used to save the data feed/web site configuration in WebMerge. Settings files end with the “.4WW” file extension, and can be saved to any location chosen by the user. Used by WebMerge.

"Text to Columns" operation

A function in MS Excel (and some other spreadsheet/database applications) allowing the user to take delimited data in a column, and separate or split it into two or more columns. Important for preparing, or enhancing some data feed files.

Tiered Site



A Tiered Site consists of a web-page or pages known as "*Index pages*" with links to a lower level of pages. The lower level can either be individual product pages, also known as "*Detail pages*," or can be other *index pages*. Tiered sites can be thought of as having a hierarchical structure, where a top-level page exists with links to lower level pages, in a top-down arrangement.

Top Level (Category) index page

A Top Level index page is the final result of a build by WebMerge, and contains links to lower level *index pages*. See Index Template (above).

Top Level (Category) Index Template

A top level Index Template is used to create top level *index pages*. Both *WM-Record* and *IndexLabel* tags are required for the top level index page. See Index Template.

Three-Tiered Site

A Three-Tiered site consists of a main index page (Tier-One), with links to lower-level "Category" *index pages* (Tier-Two). The Category *index pages* in-turn, have links to lower level "Detail" or Individual Product pages (Tier-Three).

Two-Tiered Site

A Two-Tiered site consists of a main index page, with links to individual " detail pages." A two-tiered site is best suited for data feeds that contain only a handful of products.

WM-Tags

Also known as WebMerge Tags. *WM-Tags* are found in Index and detail templates. *WM-Tags* are used to indicate to WebMerge when it should insert information found in records in the data feed file. *WM-Tags* contain Field-Names from the data feed file. In Index Templates *WM-Tags* are designed to take information from the data feed file, and turn it into a working link to lower-level Index or detail pages. In detail templates *WM-Tags* are designed to take information from the data feed file, and convert it into product information on web pages. This information includes; descriptions, a link to an image of the product, and an affiliate link the site visitor can click.

Files and Categories Requirements for Multi-Tier Web Sites

The matrix below illustrates the number of different file types and settings for each type of site to be built by WebMerge.

Requires	Two Tier Site	Three-Tier Site	Four-Tier Site	Five-Tier Site
Settings Files	One	Two	Three	Four
Index Templates	One	Two	Three	Four
detail templates	One	One	One	One
Category Field names	None	One	Two	Three

Two-Tier Site

(One-Step)	Settings File One	Settings File Two
Index pages Tab	Use Single index page Template	Not Used
Detail pages Tab	Use detail page Template	Not Used
Generation Tab	FTP Only?	Not Used
Index File Name *	index_01.htm	Not Used
Detail File Name *	detail_01.htm	Not Used
Settings File Name *	betty-mills_01.4ww	Not Used

* Note: File names are suggestions only.

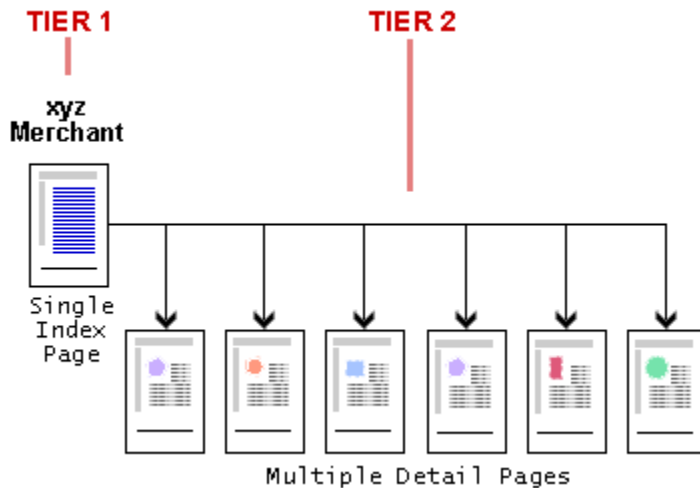


Figure 31 - Two tier web site structure.

Three-Tier Site

(Two-Steps)	Settings File One	Settings File Two	Settings File Three
Index pages Tab	Builds "Main Category Page"	Builds Category Index page	Not Used
Detail pages Tab	Not Built	Builds all detail pages	Not Used
Generation Tab	"Run Other..." includes		Not Used

	"Settings file two."	
<i>Index File Name *</i>	index_01.htm	index_02.htm
<i>Detail File Name *</i>	Not Used	detail_01.htm
<i>Settings File Name *</i>	betty-mills_01.4ww	betty-mills_02.4ww

* Note: File names are suggestions only.

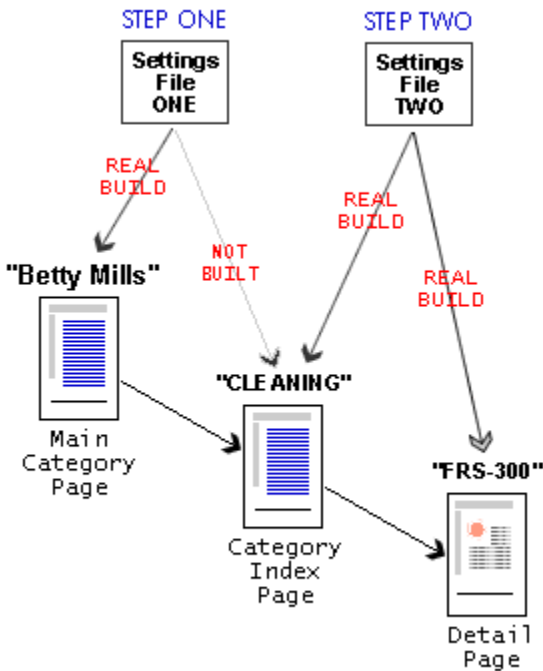


Figure 32 - Three tier web site structure.

Four-Tier Site

(Three-Steps)	Settings File One	Settings File Two	Settings File Three
<i>Index pages Tab</i>	Builds "Main Category Page"	Builds first Category Index page	Builds second (Sub) Category Index page
<i>Detail pages Tab</i>	Not Built	Not Built	Builds all detail pages
<i>Generation Tab</i>	"Run Other..." includes "Settings file two and three."		
<i>Index File Name *</i>	index_01.htm	index_02.htm	index_03.htm
<i>Detail File Name *</i>	Not Used	Not Used	detail_01.htm
<i>Settings File Name *</i>	betty-mills_01.4ww	betty-mills_02.4ww	betty-mills_03.4ww

* Note: File names are suggestions only.

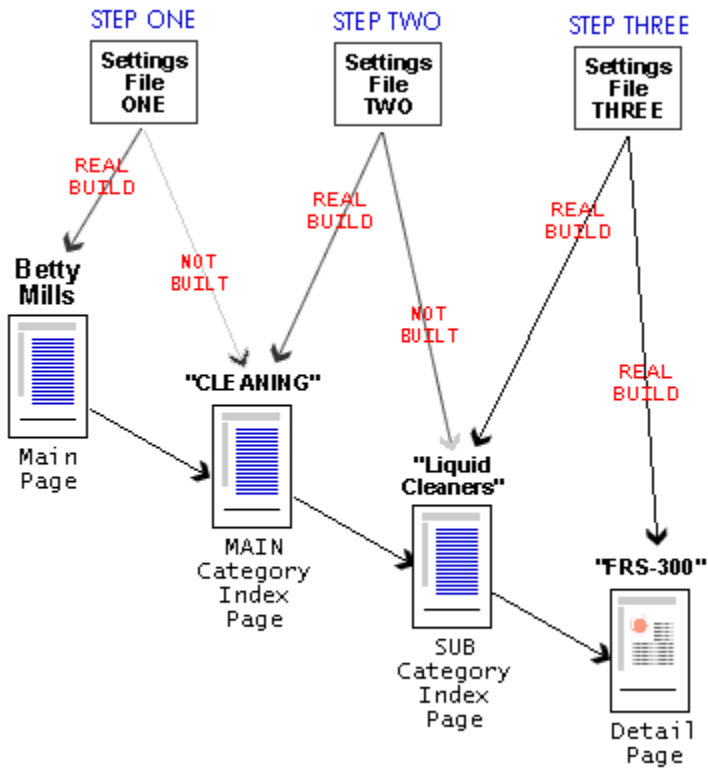


Figure 33 - Four tier web site structure.