



Lesson #30

Case Study: Tag Positions Matter

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Introduction

Recognizing where tags should go is not always easy. This is very true if you are pretty new and the theme has a lot of customizations. The good news is, you'll improve over time when you begin to recognize the common code positions. Being well rested with as little distraction as possible helps too :)

This case study is a classic example of why tag placement matters. I was called into a chat a few months ago by a WordPress designer who could not understand why the `posts_nav_link` tag does not display on the home page but it displays in the archive pages.

Inside Or Outside The Loop?

Whenever a tag exists in your theme but does not display, one of the first things you should ask yourself is, is this tag supposed to be used inside or outside the loop? Do you know where the loop starts and where the loop ends? If you're still unsure go back to lesson 26 the part about The Loop is covered on pages 11-12.

If you're not sure whether a tag only works inside The Loop, check the tag out in the [Codex](#). Most of the time it's stated in the tag explanation itself whether the tag can work outside the loop or not.

That was one of the first questions I asked the designer. Where is the code now? I knew the next page tag works outside The Loop. She told me it was outside The Loop which greatly puzzled me.

The next step to do and sometimes it works, is to see if there were any alternative tags that could be used. So I requested her to change out `posts_nav_link` with `next_posts_link`. True, they aren't exactly the same thing but sometimes you need to try alternative tags to test if it's tag related, theme related or placement related.

The response, no go. This was beginning to take the shape of a real mystery. These two tags are pretty common and simple tags. It is very rare for them not to work. I came back to The Loop again.

Turned out, the designer overlooked where The Loop ends. The tag was put within the endwhile and endif tags. Like this:

```
1. <?php endwhile; else: ?>
2. <p><?php _e('Sorry, no posts matched your
   criteria. '); ?></p>
3. <?php posts_nav_link(); ?>
4. <?php endif; ?>
```

This is a good way to test yourself on your basic PHP skills. Take a good look at the code. Can you understand what it's actually saying and why the navigation link is not showing? Try to figure that out. Don't cheat by looking at the answer in the next section.

This Is Why

In lines 1-3 (above code), endwhile; else: tells WordPress that the first part of The Loop – where the information about the posts are has ended. If there are no posts to be found, then display the stuff that's on lines 2-3 and then neatly end everything on line 4 with the endif.

Since the posts_nav_link tag is between the endwhile else and endif, that means the link will **only** display if there are **no posts** to be found. But since **there are posts** in that blog, the link will not be displayed. Makes sense?

Solution

Before we solve this, let's make sure we understand where The Loops ends. It is after the endif. Knowing this, the solution is simple. Move the posts_nav_link outside of endif like this.

```
<?php endwhile; else: ?>
<p><?php _e('Sorry, no posts matched your
criteria. '); ?></p>
<?php endif; ?>
<p><?php posts_nav_link(); ?></p>
```

That works.

Next Lesson...

We are going to go back to look at some of the tags we've used in the past lessons. Did you know many tags have options that allows you to further customize the way the tag outputs the content? That's what we will explore.

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