

# Introducing Performance-Critical CSS: An In-Depth Guide



## Performance: A Critical Introduction by Eric Morris

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## What is Performance-Critical CSS?

Performance-critical CSS (PCSS) is a technique that involves identifying and extracting the CSS rules that are essential for rendering the visible content of a web page above the fold, and then delivering those rules in a separate HTTP request, ensuring they load before the rest of the CSS.

PCSS is a critical aspect of website performance optimization as it significantly reduces the amount of CSS that needs to be downloaded and parsed by the browser when the page loads, leading to faster render times and improved user experience.

## Benefits of Using Performance-Critical CSS

- **Faster Page Load Times:** By delivering PCSS separately, the browser can render the visible content of the page above the fold

without waiting for the rest of the CSS to load, resulting in faster initial page display.

- **Improved User Experience:** PCSS enhances user experience by reducing the amount of time users have to wait for a page to become interactive and usable, leading to higher satisfaction and engagement.
- **Increased Page Views:** Faster page load times can result in increased page views as users are more likely to stay on a page that loads quickly.
- **Improved Search Engine Rankings:** Google and other search engines consider website performance as a ranking factor, so implementing PCSS can potentially improve search rankings.

## How to Implement Performance-Critical CSS

There are several methods for implementing PCSS:

1. **Manual Identification:** You can manually identify the critical CSS rules by inspecting the HTML and CSS of your page and determining which styles are needed to render the above-the-fold content.
2. **Use a Tool:** There are several tools available that can help you automatically identify and extract PCSS, such as SiteLocity, Critical CSS Generator, and CriticalCSS.js.
3. **Use CSS Frameworks:** Some CSS frameworks, such as Foundation and Bootstrap, provide built-in support for generating PCSS.

Once you have identified the critical CSS, you should embed it inline in the HTML document using the `<style>` tag, or deliver it as a separate HTTP request, depending on your desired implementation approach.

## Best Practices for Using Performance-Critical CSS

Here are some best practices for using PCSS:

- **Keep PCSS as Small as Possible:** Minimize the amount of CSS included in the PCSS to only what is absolutely necessary to render the above-the-fold content.
- **Use Data URIs for Small Images:** If your critical CSS includes small images, consider using data URIs to embed the images directly into the CSS, avoiding additional HTTP requests.
- **Avoid MediaQuery Breakpoints:** MediaQuery breakpoints can add unnecessary CSS to the PCSS, so avoid including them unless they are essential for the above-the-fold content.
- **Monitor Performance:** Continuously monitor the performance of your PCSS implementation using tools such as Google PageSpeed Insights to ensure it is effective and not having any adverse effects.

Performance-critical CSS is a powerful technique that can significantly improve the performance of your website. By identifying and delivering the critical CSS in a timely manner, you can ensure that the visible content of your page loads quickly, leading to better user experience, increased page views, and improved search engine rankings. Implementing PCSS is a relatively straightforward process that can provide substantial benefits for your website, so consider adopting it for your next project.

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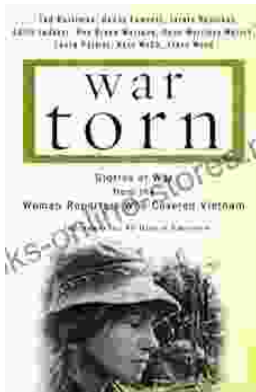
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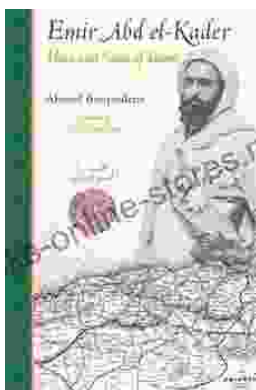


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