While XML elements exist alone in the XML file, element declarations in the DTD set categories and specifications that give meaning to XML data. The following table shows how to set these categories:

Category	DTD Syntax	DTD Example
Empty	<!ELEMENT element-name EMPTY>	<!ELEMENT br EMPTY>XML example:
Character data only	<!ELEMENT element-name (#PCDATA)>	<!ELEMENT from (#PCDATA)>
Any contents	<!ELEMENT element-name ANY>	<!ELEMENT memo ANY>
Elements with children (sequences)	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-element-name)> <!ELEMENT element-name (child-element-name,child-element-name,.....)>	<!ELEMENT memo (to,from,heading,body)> **NOTE**: When children are declared in a sequence separated by commas, the children must appear in the same sequence in the document. In a full declaration, the children must also be declared, and the children can also have children.
One occurrence of the same element	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-name)>	<!ELEMENT memo (message)>
Minimum one occurrence of the same element	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-name+)>	<!ELEMENT memo (message+)> **NOTE**: The "+" in the example above declares that the child element "message" must occur one or more times in the "memo" element.
Zero or more occurrences of the same element	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-name*)>	<!ELEMENT memo (message*)> **NOTE**: The "*" sign in the example above declares that the child element "message" can occur zero or more times inside the "memo" element.
Zero or one occurrences of the same element	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-name?)>	<!ELEMENT memo (message?)> **NOTE**: The "?" in the example above declares that the child element "message" can occur zero or one time in the "memo" element.
Either/or content	<!ELEMENT element-name (child-elements,(child-element1|child-element2))>	<!ELEMENT memo (to,from,header,(message|body))> **NOTE**: The example above declares that the element "memo" must contain a "to" element, a "from" element, a "header" element, and either a "message" element or a "body" element.
Mixed content	<!ELEMENT element-name (#PCDATA| child-element1|child-element2| child-element3|…)*>	<!ELEMENT note (#PCDATA|to|from|header|message)*> **NOTE**: The example above declares that the element "memo" can contain any number of elements of parsed character data, "to," "from," "header," and/or "message" elements.

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