



Using markdown for documentation

Melanie Ganz
Cyril Pernet
Robert Oostenveld

What is markdown?

- Markdown is a lightweight markup language for creating formatted text using a plain-text editor.
- It's written in what people like to call “plaintext”. Plaintext is just the regular alphabet, with a few familiar symbols, like asterisks (*) and backticks (`).
- Already looks decent in any text editor, and looks good when rendered to HTML, PDF, ...

Why is markdown useful to learn?

- Text written in Markdown can be easily shared between computers, mobile phones, and people.
- Markdown is widely used in blogging, instant messaging, online forums, collaborative software, documentation pages, and readme files, for example on GitHub.
- Many academics use Markdown to write documentation, a good example is the community project “The Turing Way” <https://the-turing-way.start.page/>

How can I learn markdown?

There are many great online resources:

<https://www.markdownguide.org/>

<https://www.markdownguide.org/cheat-sheet/>

Lesson style tutorials:

<https://www.markdwntutorial.com/>

<https://commonmark.org/help/tutorial/>

Some editors include a Markdown preview: Atom, Visual Studio, ...

Online Markdown editors: StackEdit, HackMD, ...

Markdown exercise

Go to Stackedit, an online markdown editor:

<https://stackedit.io/app#>

(no registration needed)

Let's write some markdown here together!

Headers in markdown

To make headers in Markdown, you preface the phrase with a hash mark (#). You place the same number of hash marks as the size of the header you want. For example, for a header one, you'd use one hash mark (# Header One), while for a header three, you'd use three (### Header Three).

Let's make a new file in stackedit called "MyFirstMarkdownFile.md".

In the file let's make a header with the name of our course.
And a second level header titled "Markdown exercise".

Different fonts in markdown

Now let's play with different fonts in markdown:

- to make phrases bold in Markdown, you can surround words with two asterisks (**)
- to make a phrase italic in Markdown, you can surround words with an underscore (_)
- You can do this for multiple words
- You can also combine the two

Add the following text to your file using the appropriate fonts: Let's write some markdown text together here! We will explore different fonts, such as bold and italics as well as their combination!

Links in markdown

There are two different link types in Markdown:

- The first link style is called an inline link. To create an inline link, you wrap the link text in brackets [], and then you wrap the link in parentheses ()
- The other link type is called a reference link. This is actually a reference to another place in the document. The link in the text is in brackets [], followed by the reference to an inline place also in brackets [].

Let's add an inline link to our document, add the following text linking to GitHub:

In this course we will also learn about GitHub.

Images in markdown

Images also have two styles

- The first image style is called an inline image link. To create an inline image link, enter an exclamation point (!), wrap the alt text in brackets ([]), and then wrap the link in parentheses (()).
- For a reference image, you'll follow the same pattern as a reference link. You'll precede the Markdown with an exclamation point, then provide two brackets for the alt text, and then two more for the image tag.

Let's add an image with the markdown logo to our document. Find the markdown logo on our GitHub pages and insert it as an inline image into the document.

Lists in markdown

Lists can be unordered or ordered.

- To create an unordered list, you'll want to preface each item in the list with an asterisk (*)
- An ordered list is prefaced with numbers, instead of asterisks.

Let's make a header of level three called breakfast and add a list of the things you had for breakfast to our markdown document.

For more info on markdown, check out:

- <https://www.markdownguide.org/>
- <https://www.markdownguide.org/cheat-sheet/>
- Lesson style tutorials:
 - <https://www.markdowntutorial.com/>
 - <https://commonmark.org/help/tutorial/>