Atom for the Beginner: Quick Set Up

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1. Welcome

Welcome to Atom for the Beginner: Quick Set-Up

Anyone new to reading and writing computer programming source code should use a text editor with beginner-friendly features. The essential features for beginners are syntax highlighting and live preview.

Syntax Highligting displays source code in different colors and fonts, so you can read your code and distinguish various elements more easily.

Live Preview is a window that appears next to your source code and shows you what your code will look like on a web page. It's "live" preview because the preview window renders your code while you are typing.

In Atom, syntax highlighting and live preview are add-on features for many programming languages. These features are easy to install and use. Atom for the Beginner: Quick Set-Up will show you how to install and use these features for HTML, Markdown, and RST.

ⓘ **Tip:** The basic skills you learn here can be applied to other programming languages and features in Atom.

Chapter 2. Install Atom

Step-by-step instructions to install Atom on your computer.

Atom is a free, open source text editor developed by GitHub. For Mac users, Atom may be a good alternative to Notepad ++.

1. Go to https://atom.io. Above **Download** you should see listed your computer's specific operating system (OS) and version.
   You have a Windows laptop running Windows 10. When you go to Atom, the download button images below appears.

   Figure 1. Atom Download Button

2. If the the OS/version information is correct for your computer, click the **Download** button and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the installation.

   If the OS/version information is not correct or you want to download Atom for a different operating system, then follow these steps:
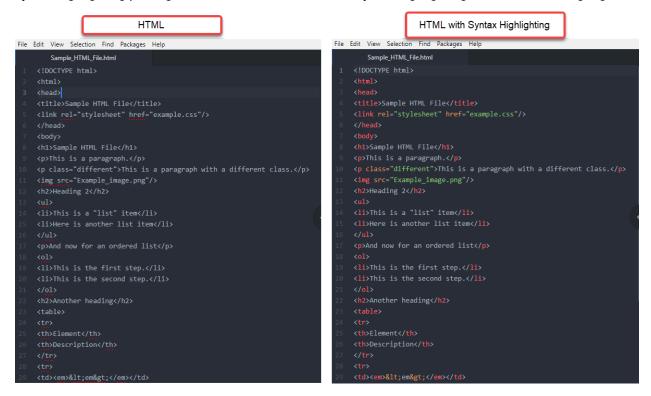
   a. On the bottom left of the screen, click on the **Other platforms** button. You will be taken to Atom's latest version release page on GitHub. You can also get there by clicking this link: https://github.com/atom/atom/releases/tag/v1.45.0
   b. Click the **Assets**button to open the list of the current OS versions available to download.
   c. To download, click on the appropriate file name for your platform.
   d. Open the downloaded file and follow the on-screen installation instructions.

Chapter 3. Syntax Highlighting

Follow these step-by-step instructions for set-up and use. Syntax highlighting displays source code in different colors and fonts, so it's easier to distinguish code elements and identify errors.

on your computer before you can set-up additional features.

HTML and Markdown syntax preview come pre-loaded in Atom, but RST does not. You will install the RST syntax highlighting package and then learn how to enable syntax highlighting for all of these languages.

1. Install the RST Syntax Highlighting package:

   a. Open **Atom**.

   b. Open **Settings** by clicking on the appropriate path for your operating systerm:
      • Mac: **Atom > Preferences**
      • Windows: **File > Settings**

   c. On the left menu, click **Install**.

   d. In the **Search Packages** box, type: `language-restructedtext`. The language-restructuredtext package box appears. View an image of the .

     e. Click **Install**.

2. Open a new file.

3. Type a few lines of html, MarkDown, or RST.

4. Save the file using the appropriate language file extension from the table below.

Language	File Extension
HTML	filename.htm or filename.html
Markdown	filename.md
RST	filename.rst

The file now appears with syntax highlighting.

📝 **Note:**
- After the initial save, the file will always re-open with syntax highlighting.
- Any previously saved .htm, .html, .md, or .rst file will open with syntax highlighting.
- To "turn off" syntax highlighting for a particular language, you will need to disable the syntax highlighting package for that language. To do that, go to **Atom > Preferences > Packages**. You will see all of your currenlty installed packages. Find the appropriate package and click **Disable**.
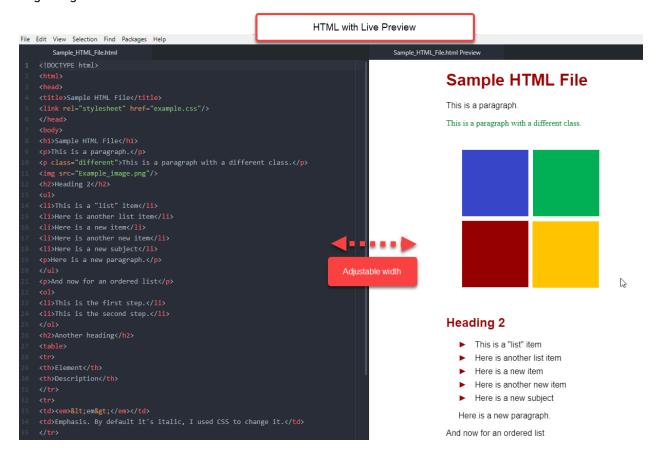

Related reference

Related information

Chapter 4. Live Preview

Step-by-step instructions for set-up and use. The Live Preview window appears next to your source code and, while you type, shows what your source code will look like on a basic web page.

Atom must be installed on your computer before you can set-up additional features.

A text editor that offers a live preview window saves you time and frustration. One of the main challenges for beginning code writers is not knowing how the code you have written will look on a web page. A "live" preview window renders your code *while you write*, which is why live preview is an essential tool for the beginning code writer.

Follow the steps below to set-up and use live preview for HTML, Markdown, and RST.
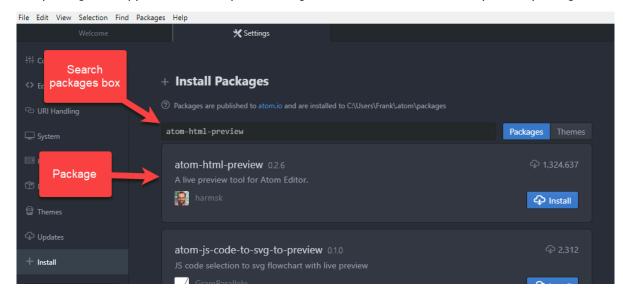
📋 **Note:** The Markdown preview packages comes "pre-loaded" in Atom, so you only need to install the HTML and RST preview packages.

1. Open **Atom**.

2. Open **Settings** by clicking on the appropriate path for your operating systerm:
   - Mac: **Atom > Preferences**
   - Windows: **File > Settings**

3. On the left menu, click **Install**.

4. In the **Search Packages** box, type the package name you want to install from the table below:

Language	Preview Package Name
HTML	`atom-html-preview`
Markdown	*(none; already pre-loaded in Atom)*
RST	`rst-preview`

The package box appears. For example, the image below shows the *atom-html-preview* package box.

ℹ **Tip:** There are many different packages that you can install in Atom. To explore the packages, scroll through the available packages listed in **Install Packages** or type in specific search words in the **Search Packages** box. To find out more about what each package does, click on the descriptive text below the title. (You can click on the title also. The information will be the same, but it will launch in atom.io in a new browser window.)

5. Click **Install**. (To install additional packages, repeat the previous steps starting from Step 1.)
   After the preview package has installed, you can open a file and open (enable) the preview window. Continue to the next step to open the preview window.

6. **Open** a file saved in the same source code language as the preview package you installed. For example, if you installed atom-html-preview, then open a file already saved in .htm or .html or open a new file and save it as an .htm or .html file.

🔔 **Remember:** For the preview window to open in your file, the file must have already been saved with the appropriate file extension (.htm, .html, .md, or .rst).

7. Open the preview window using drop-down menu or hotkey commands from the table below.

   Table 1. Preview Window Toggle Commands

Language	Drop-Down Menu	HotKey Command
HTML	**Packages > Preview HTML > Enable Preview**	`Control + Shift + H`
Markdown	**Packages > Markdown Preview > Toggle Preview**	`Control + Shift + M`
RST	**Packages > reStructuredText > Toggle Preview**	`Control + Shift + R`

Preview now appears in a new window on the right side of your screen with your original source code file on the left.

⚠️ **Important:**
  • You must enable the preview window every time you open your file.
  • You can open or close the preview window anytime using the toggle commands.
  • Hotkey and drop-down menu commands are interchangeable; you can use one method to open the preview pane and the other method to close it. For example, you can open preview using a hotkeycommand and close it using a drop-down menu, and vice versa.

ℹ️ **Tip:**
  • After the preview window opens, your code file window narrows and the code does **not** automatically wrap. To enable text wrapping: From the top menu, click **View > Toggle Soft Wrap**.
  • The Markdown preview window background color can be white or black. This is a toggle command. The white background is "GitHub Style." To change the background color, click **Packages > Markdown Preview > Toggle GitHub Style**.

Chapter 5. Atom Packages

Understanding packages opens up a world of additional features you can use in Atom.

When you download Atom, it comes with a lot of features. For example, Atom comes with syntax highlighting for HTML, but it doesn't come with syntax highlighting for RST. To get syntax highlighting for RST, you have to install it yourself. A package is what Atom calls a feature or group of features that you install after you download Atom.

- Packages are optional. You choose what packages you want to install from Atom's package list.
- Package are free.
- 1-click installation. No code or command line steps necessary.
- Install a package anytime.
- Disable a package anytime.
- Access packages from the **Settings** panel. To access the **Settings** panel, follow the appropriate path for your operating system:
    - Mac: **Atom > Preferences**
    - Windows: **File > Settings**

ℹ **Tip:** In the **Settings** panel drop-down menu list, you will see **Packages** and **Install**.

- **Packages** lists what packages are currently installed.
- **Install** lists all additional packages available to install.

Related information

- [Syntax Highlighting](#)

- [Live Preview](#)

Chapter 6. Additional Resources

Does an ordered list start with 1. or # in Markdown? Find a HTML, Markdown, and RST comparison table and links to online cheatsheets here.

Basic Syntax Comparison

Use this table as a quick reference for HTML, Markdown, and RST.

📋 **Note:** There are different "flavors" (variations) of Markdown. The Markdown syntax used here is for GitHub Flavored Markdown (GFM).

Table 2. Basic Syntax Comparison

Syntax	HTML	Markdown (GFM)	RST
Headings	`<H1>YourHeading</H1>` for top level heading. `<H2>YourHeading</H2>` for 2nd level heading, and so on through H6.	`#` before your heading. Add more hashtags to designate sub-level headings. You can use up to 6 hashtags, `######`, for additional sub-level headings.	Type your heading. On the line below your heading, type a line of either `*`, `=`, or `-` repeating. The special character line must extend beyond the last letter of your heading. Use a different special character to denote a different level of heading.
Bold	`<strong>bold</strong>`	`**bold**`	`**bold**`
Italics	`<em>italics</em>`	`*italics*`	`*italics*`
Ordered List	Each ordered list starts with `<ol>` and ends with `</ol>`. Each list item: `<li>List Item</li>`. To sub-bullet: Insert a new ordered or unordered list, starting with `<ol>`or	Begin each item with `1`.. To sub-bullet, insert the sub-bullet directly below the first character of text of the parent bullet.	Begin each item with `#`.. To sub-bullet: Start with your cursor at the beginning of the sub-bullet line. Space over and insert sub-bullet directly below the first character of text of the parent bullet.

Syntax	HTML	Markdown (GFM)	RST
	`<ul>`, under the appropriate list item.		
Unordered List	Each unordered list starts with `<ul>` and ends with `</ul>`. Each list item: `<li>ListItem</li>`. To sub-bullet: Insert a new ordered or unordered list, starting with `<ol>` or `<ul>`, under the appropriate list item.	Begin each item with `-` or `*`. To sub-bullet, insert sub-bullet directly below the first character of text of the parent bullet.	Begin each item with `-`, `+`, or `*`. To sub-bullet: Start with your cursor at the beginning of the sub-bullet line. Space over and insert sub-bullet directly below the first character of text of the parent bullet.
Image	`<imagesrc="sourcepath"alttext="alttext">`	`![alttext](path)`	`..image::path`
Link	`<ahref="url">linktext</a>`	`[In-linetextname](url)`	`` `linkname<url>`_- ``

Related reference

-

Related information

-

Online Cheatsheets

Check out these links to online syntax cheatsheets.

There are a lot of syntax cheatsheets and reference guides available online. Do your own searches to find the cheatsheets/guides that work best for you.

Markdown

https://github.com/adam-p/markdown-here/wiki/Markdown-Cheatsheet

https://help.github.com/en/github/writing-on-github/basic-writing-and-formatting-syntax

RST (reStructuredText)

https://sublime-and-sphinx-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/index.html

https://github.com/ralsina/rst-cheatsheet/blob/master/rst-cheatsheet.rst

Related reference

- Basic Syntax Comparison *(on page 13)*

Related information

- Syntax Highlighting *(on page 7)*

Chapter 7. About

Why did I write this guide?

As a technical writing student, my instructor recommended we use Notepad ++ as our text editor. I use a Mac. Unfortunately, Notepad ++ is not compatible with MacOS. Although my Mac laptop has a text editor, I realized its shortcomings after seeing an example of Notepad ++.

So, I looked around for an alternative. Since we use GitHub in class and [Atom](#) is a GitHub product (and free), I decided to try it.

My needs for a text editor are very basic. I need to:

- Practice writing source code in HTML, Markdown, and RST.
- Be able to preview what I write.

Installing Atom was easy, but I couldn't figure out how to get syntax highlighting and preview to appear in my documents. It took some time to figure out how to enable those features, so I want to save other beginners time by sharing my learnings here.

I hope this guide gives you the tools to quickly start writing and previewing your work in Atom *(and gives me some practice creating a project in all of the various tools that we are using in class)*.

– Anita