

README and Markdown

Introduction to Data Management Practices course

NBIS DM Team

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Learning objectives

1. Understand the purpose and importance of README files in research projects.
2. Learn the main sections to include in various types of READMEs.
3. Apply basic Markdown syntax to create and format README files.

What is a README file?

The README file is typically a **plain text file (.txt)**

- The first thing to look after
- It **helps** ensure that anyone interacting with the project can quickly get up to speed

Different types of README files

1. Study level (root folder)
 - General information, project organisation, usage
2. Data level (subfolders)
 - General information, data organisation, data reuse or restrictions
3. Code level (e.g., on GitHub)
 - Purpose, dependencies, examples demonstrating the usage

Study level README

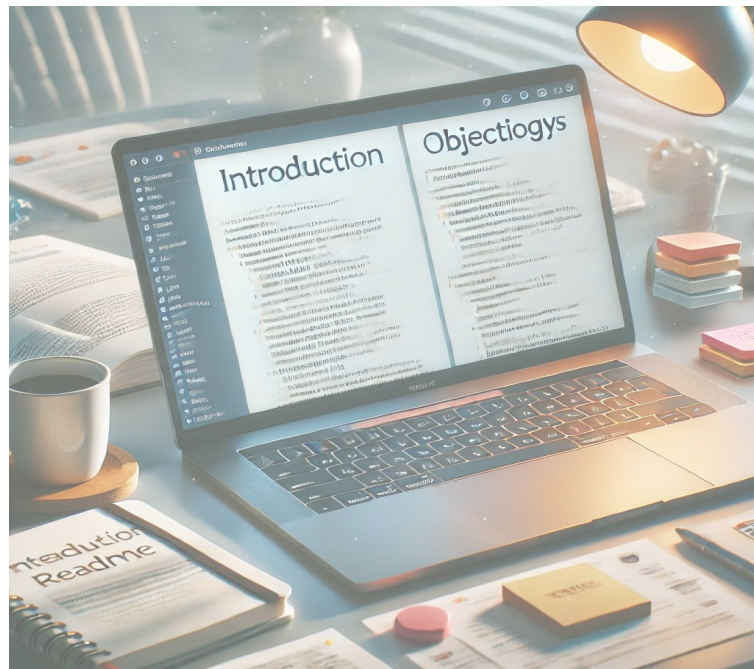
This README file was generated on [YYYY-MM-DD] by [NAME]

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Study title
- Study description
- Principal investigator
- Link to DMP

ORGANIZATION

- Folder structure
- File naming conventions
- File formats



OpenAI. (2025, March 21). AI-generated image of a modern workspace with a README file. DALL-E.

Data level README

This README file was generated on [YYYY-MM-DD] by [NAME]

GENERAL INFORMATION

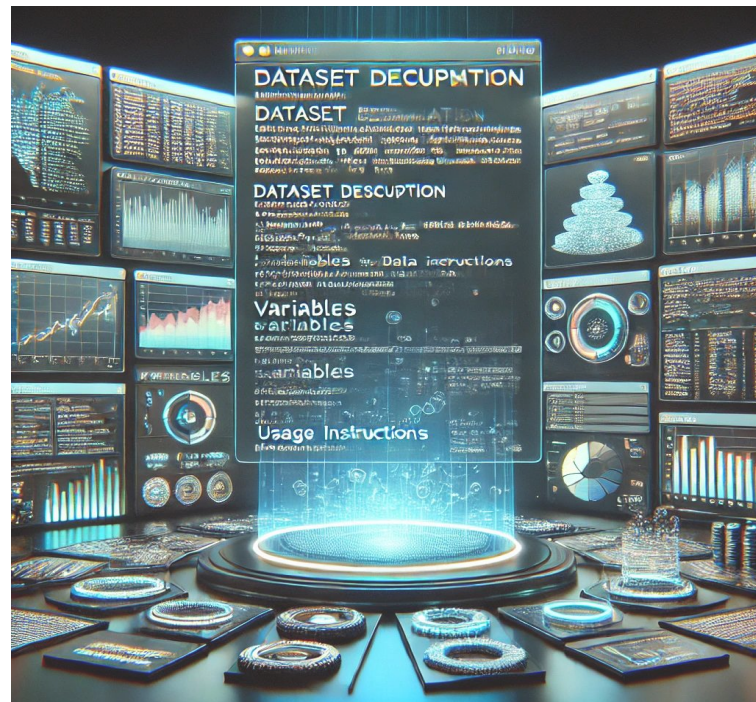
- Dataset description
- Data delivery report

ORGANIZATION

- File naming conventions

DATA REUSE

- Accession numbers
- License
- Use restrictions



OpenAI. (2025, March 21). AI-generated image of a futuristic data lab with a README file at the data level. DALL-E.

What is Markdown?

Lightweight markup language

Plain-text formatting syntax

What are the benefits of Markdown?

- Versatile language (e.g. documents, emails, websites)
- Portable, unlike proprietary formats like MS Word
- Platform independent
- Future proof - if the original application becomes obsolete

How do you write Markdown?

Project overview

Data description

File organization

**Data processing**

`Usage instructions`

~~Contact information~~

Project overview

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Exercises

Link to exercises in the collaborative notes
Try on your own, but ask for help if you get stuck
Have fun!