

Implementing microdata in your page / the itemscope, itemtype and itemprop attributes

Basic steps

Adding microdata to an HTML page is a really simple task and requires only three attributes: itemscope, itemtype and itemprop.

1 - Define a container element by adding an itemscope attribute

First, you need to add an itemscope attribute to an HTML element. This will define the "global object" for which we will define properties. This element can be of different types that we will describe later, but for now let us keep looking at the same example we used in previous sections:

1. `<sectionitemscopeitemtype"http://schema.org/Person"`
2. `</section>`

We will look at the itemtype attribute later. Now that we have defined a global wrapper object/element (a Person in that case), we can add properties inside this element to define the first name, last name, etc.

2 - Specify the vocabulary used for your microdata with the itemtype attribute of the container element

HTML5 proposes semantic elements for representing sections, articles, headers, etc, but it does not propose any specific elements or attributes to describe an address, a product, a person, etc.

We need a special vocabulary to represent a person or a physical address. With microdata you can define your own vocabulary or better, reuse one of the existing popular vocabularies available, such as the ones from <http://www.schema.org>^[1].

Microdata works with properties defined as name/value pairs. The names are defined in the corresponding vocabulary. For example, the vocabulary for representing a Person, available at <http://schema.org/Person>^[2] defines a set of property names, as illustrated by the following screenshot:

Thing > Person

A person (alive, dead, undead, or fictional).

| Property | Expected Type | Description |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Properties from <u>Thing</u> | | |
| <u>additionalType</u> | URL | An additional type for the item, typically used for adding more specific types from external vocabularies in microdata syntax. This is a relationship between something and a class that the thing is in. In RDFa syntax, it is better to use the native RDFa syntax – the 'typeof' attribute – for multiple types. Schema.org tools may have only weaker understanding of extra types, in particular those defined externally. |
| <u>description</u> | Text | A short description of the item. |
| <u>image</u> | URL | URL of an image of the item. |
| <u>name</u> | Text | The name of the item. |
| <u>url</u> | URL | URL of the item. |
| Properties from <u>Person</u> | | |
| <u>additionalName</u> | Text | An additional name for a Person, can be used for a middle name. |
| <u>address</u> | <u>PostalAddress</u> | Physical address of the item. |
| <u>affiliation</u> | <u>Organization</u> | An organization that this person is affiliated with. For example, a school/university, a club, or a team. |
| <u>alumniOf</u> | <u>EducationalOrganization</u> | An educational organizations that the person is an alumni of. |

As you can see in this small extract from the vocabulary (also called a "schema"), a Person can have a name (some text), an Address (the type is defined by another vocabulary named PostalAddress), an affiliation (defined by another vocabulary named Organization) and so on.

We notice that one property, such as the address of a Person, may use another vocabulary. Yes, a vocabulary may link to another vocabulary! There is also inheritance between vocabularies! The above screenshot shows that the Person vocabulary inherits from a Thing vocabulary, and the five first properties of the table come from this vocabulary that describes things.

If you are a developer and if you are familiar with object oriented programming, think of properties as class attributes and think of vocabularies as classes.

Vocabularies are meant to be shared

If one of the existing vocabularies available at the schema.org Web site fits your needs, you should reuse it, as the most popular vocabularies are becoming de facto standards and will be taken into account by Web crawlers, browsers, and browser extensions.

However, if you do not find a vocabulary corresponding to your needs, keep in mind that anyone can define a microdata vocabulary and start embedding custom properties

in their own Web pages. You need to define a namespace and put a description of your vocabulary in a Web page that has the name of your vocabulary. For example, if you own japaneserobots.com, you may define a vocabulary for describing Mech Warrior robots at <http://japaneserobots/MechWarrior> in the same way as <http://schema.org/Person>^[3] describes the properties of a person.

3 - Add properties using the itemprop attribute in HTML elements inside the container

Basics:

Now that you defined a container element, you may add properties to the HTML inside:

1. `<sectionitemscopeitemtype"http://schema.org/Person"`
2. `<h1>Contact Information</h1>`
3. `<dl>`
4. `<dt></dt>`
5. `<dditemprop"name"Michel Buffa</dd>`
6. `<dt>Position</dt>`
7. `<dd><span`
8. `itemprop"jobTitle"Professor/Researcher/Scientist`
9. ``
10. `<spanitemprop"affiliation"University of Nice,`
11. `France`
12. ``
13. `</dd>`
14. `</dl>`
15. `<h1>My different online public accounts</h1>`
16. ``
17. `<a"http://www.twitter.com/micbuffa"`
18. `itemprop"url"Twitter profile`
19. `<a"http://www.blogger.com/micbuffa"`
20. `itemprop"url"Michel Buffa's blog`
21. ``
22. `</section>`

In this example the container is a `<section>` that corresponds to a Person (we have one clue here: the name of the vocabulary given by the `itemtype` attribute), and each property defined inside this section is identified by the value of the `itemprop` attribute

of sub-elements.

The line:

1. `<dd itemprop="name" Michel Buffa</dd>`

...defines a property called "name" that has a value of "Michel Buffa" (the text value between the opening and closing tags of the `<dd>` element)

Nesting microdata items:

As we saw with the Person/Address example at the beginning of this chapter, it is possible to nest microdata items inside one another.

Give an element inside a microdata container its own `itemscope` attribute with the recommended `itemtype` attribute for indicating the name of the vocabulary used by the nested microdata.

Again, look at the Person/Address example:

1. `</`
2. `<!-- SURFACE ADDRESS GOES HERE -->`
3. `dd itemprop="address" itemscope`
4. `itemtype="http://schema.org/PostalAddress"`
5. `span itemprop="streetAddress" promenade des anglais</><`
6. `span itemprop="addressLocality"</>,<`
7. `span itemprop="addressRegion" Alpes maritimes France</`
8. `span itemprop="postalCode" 06410</><`
9. `span itemprop="addressCountry" itemscope`
10. `itemtype="http://schema.org/Country"`
11. `span itemprop="name" France</`
12. `</`
13. `</`
14. `<h1> different online public accounts</`

The properties at lines 8-12 refer to the address nested microdata (they are defined in the Address vocabulary, not the Person vocabulary), and "France" (line 14) is a property that refers to the Country vocabulary.

Several properties with the same name but different values

It is possible to use the same property name several times in one microdata object, but with different values:

1. `<h1> different online public accounts</`
2. ``
3. `a href"http://www.twitter.com/micbuffa" itemprop"url"Twitter`
4. `profile/a></`
5. `a href"http://www.blogger.com/micbuffa" itemprop"url"Michel`
6. `Buffa's blog`
7. ``

This will define the fact that Michel Buffa has two online accounts, and the two properties have the name , each with its own value.

It is possible to set more than one property at once, with the same value

Here are some microdata that represent a song. In this example, at line 5 we set two different properties: `genrekeywords` with the same value (see the `MusicRecording` schema definition at <http://schema.org/MusicRecording>^[4]

1. `<div itemscope itemtype"http://schema.org/MusicRecording"`
2. `<h2>The song I just published</h2>`
3. ``
4. `Name: <span itemprop"name"Please buy me on itunes, I need money!`
``
5. `Band: <span itemprop"genre keywords"Punk, Ska`
6. ``
7. `</div>`

And so on...

Now let's see what elements are compatible with the `itemprop` attribute and where the values of the properties are located, depending on each element type.

The HTML elements compatible with the `itemprop` attribute

Extract from : <http://www.sencha.com/blog/the-html5-family-microdata-overview/>^[5]

If the `itemprop` attribute appears on a:

Elements that can be associated with microdata

| HTML5 elements | microdata value associated |
|--|--|
| <code><a></code> , <code><area></code> , <code><audio></code> , <code><embed></code> , <code><iframe></code> , <code></code> , <code><link></code> , <code><object></code> , <code><source></code> , or <code><video></code> element | The data is the url in the element's <code>href</code> , <code>src</code> , or data attribute, as appropriate. For example, an image element inside a container of personal contact information can be recognized as that person's photo and downloaded accordingly. |
| <code><time></code> element | The data is the time in the element's <code>datetime</code> attribute. This lets you, for example, just say "last week" in your text content but still indicate exact date and time. |
| <code><meta></code> element | The data is whatever appears in the content attribute of the <code><meta></code> element. This is used when you need to include some data that isn't actually in the text of your page. |
| anything else | The data is whatever is in the text of the element. |

For example, the value of a property defined in an `` element will be the value of the attribute:

1. `<img itemprop="image" "MichelBuffa.png" "A great professor"`

Or for a `<time>`, it will be the value of the `datetime` attribute:

1. `<time itemprop="birthday" datetime="1965-04-16" "April 16, 1965">`

Or for an `<a>` element, the value will be the value of the attribute:

1. `<a "http://www.twitter.com/micbuffa" itemprop="url" profile>`

Links

1. <http://www.schema.org/>
2. <http://schema.org/Person>
3. <http://schema.org/Person>

4. <http://schema.org/MusicRecording>
5. <http://web.archive.org/web/20131125153723/http://www.sencha.com/blog/the-html5-family-microdata-overview/>

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