Golden Dragon

GD Star Rating

WordPress Rating Plug-in User Guide

User Guide Version: **0.8.5**
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User guide is not yet fully completed, and some information could be false or incomplete.

Official Blog:	http://wp.gdragon.info/
Plugin Page:	http://wp.gdragon.info/plugins/gd-star-rating/
Support Forum:	http://forum.gdragon.info/viewforum.php?f=9
Google Code Development:	http://code.google.com/p/gd-star-rating/
Google Groups Discussion:	http://groups.google.com/group/gd-star-rating
Support Email:	starrating@gdragon.info

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Introduction

GD Star Rating is WordPress plugin that can be used to add rating capabilities to posts, pages and comments on your blog. But, there is a lot more to this plugin compared to any other similar plugin.

Requirements

Plugin is developed and tested only for WordPress 2.5.0 or newer. There is no plan to add support for older versions. Current WordPress 2.6 is also supported, but some of the features could be a problem. As long as you don't change location of your wp-content folder, things will work just fine. If you move this folder, then tinyMCE3 editor button will not work, and you must created shortcode manually.

Features

The following list contains full list of features:

1. Rating of posts and pages
2. Rating of comments
3. Review Rating
4. AJAX voting
5. Voting rules on post/page base
6. Moderation of votes on post/page base
7. Different star styles and sizes
8. Separate saving of voting data for registered users and regular visitors
9. Logging of each vote
10. Saving cookies with votes
11. Calculation of voting trend data for each post, page and comment
12. Rating multi instance support widget
13. WordPress shortcode support
14. WordPress editor button and tinyMCE3 plugin for shortcode
15. Multi language support
16. Setting number of stars for voting (up to 20)
17. Control Panel
18. Manual placement functions of the rating code
19. Category support for posts
20. User Guide

Planned Features

Beside the implemented (or in work) features, there are still some things that will be added later:

1. More options for shortcode
2. More options for widget
3. Widget for comments votes
4. New methods of rating

Included Graphics

Stars Styles

Each stars style comes in different sizes.

Supported stars sizes:

Currently 4 sizes are supported:

- **Mini**: 12px
- **Small**: 20px
- **Medium**: 30px
- **Big**: 46px

Included stars styles

Stars can be in PNG, JPG or GIF format. PNG can be with full transparency (32bit PNG). GIF supports only 1 bit for transparency, just like 8bit PNG.

- Oxygen (32bit PNG)
- Crystal (32bit PNG)
- Darkness (32bit PNG)
- Starscape (32bit PNG)
- Soft (32bit PNG)

Additional sets can be downloaded from official blog download page.

Trend Icons

Trend icons are used to represent post rating and voting trends. Each set has three icons for rise, fall and no change. Trend icons have no preset sizes, but included will be 16x16 px.

Included icons

Icons types are the same as for the stars.

- Fam Fam Fam (32bit PNG)
- Fam Fam Fam Arrows (32bit PNG)
- Fam Fam Fam Mini (32bit PNG)

Additional sets can be downloaded from official blog download page.

Rating Types

Currently plugin supports 3 types of ratings, and 3 more will be implement in the future.

Implemented:

1. **Article Rating (Posts and Pages):** This is the main type of rating. It's used on posts and pages (articles from now on). One article can have one rating. Rating is recorded for users (registered blog users logged in) and visitors (not logged in).

2. **Article Review Rating**: Review rating is no-votes rating. Rating is set only through admin panel (plugins control pages) or on edit screen for each post or page (sidebar control). This value represents rating added by the article author or editor.

3. **Comments Rating**: This is the rating for comments. Each comment can have rating block active. Rules for comments are not per comment but per post. So, all comments for one post have the same rules.

To be implemented:

1. Multiple Rating (v1.2.0)
2. Recommend Article Rating (v1.1.0)
3. Recommend Comments Rating (v1.1.0)

Using the plugin

I will try to explain in details how the plugin works and how you can use it and set it to fit your needs.

Intro

When you first install plugin it should work right away and it should display stars for all posts/pages and comments. Rating displayed with both comments and posts/pages basically looks the same, but it can be set differently, so the rating for comments and articles can have different number of stars, different styles, text and anything else.

Rating block

The rating block you see is called exactly like that RATING BLOCK. Here is the example of how this block looks like:

Rating Header:

In the above picture, rating header is a text: “Please, rate this post:”. This is the text, always rendered above the stars. You can add custom CSS class to this element, and you can change its position, color and other properties. Rating text supports html markup.

Stars:

This is the main part of the rating block and contains the actual stars. All visitors will see current rating displayed by the block, and if the visitor/user can vote, then when hovers over the stars, a new (usually red) stars will appear as a selected rating. When visitor/user clicks on the desired rating value, vote is recorded by the plugin.

Rating Text:

Third part of the block is a description of current rating, and this text supports templates to format it. Also, this text can be rendered left, right, top or bottom to the stars. How the templates work, we will see later. Rating text, like header supports adding custom CSS class.

Rendering of rating block

For rating block to appear, plugin must know where to render it. There are three types of rendering stars:

Automatic rendering

This rendering is controlled by the plugin, and is more or less the same for articles and comments. With this, block is always rendered at the end of the article or comment.

For article, plugin can insert rating code in individual posts or pages, for posts in the archives and on the front page. This is controlled on the settings page in the admin control panel. By default all 4 options are

checked and active. For comments this is much simpler, and either rating is rendered automatically or is not.

For comments, rating block can be inserted only at the end of the comment. This is controlled by the setting in the control panel comments tab.

Shortcode rendering

If you don't like where the rating block is placed automatically by the plugin, you can turn off these options and you can add shortcode in your posts, and with that you can determine the place where plugin places the block. Shortcodes for this are **[STARRATER]** or **[STARRATINGBLOCK]**.

Shortcode rendering can't be used for comments.

Function in theme template file rendering

This last method is here for the theme designers or advanced user and this method requires changes to the theme files and calling the function that will render the block. It's very important that this call must be made from inside the post/page loop. Function name for this: **wp_gdsr_render_article()**.

For comments function name is: **wp_gdsr_render_comment()**.

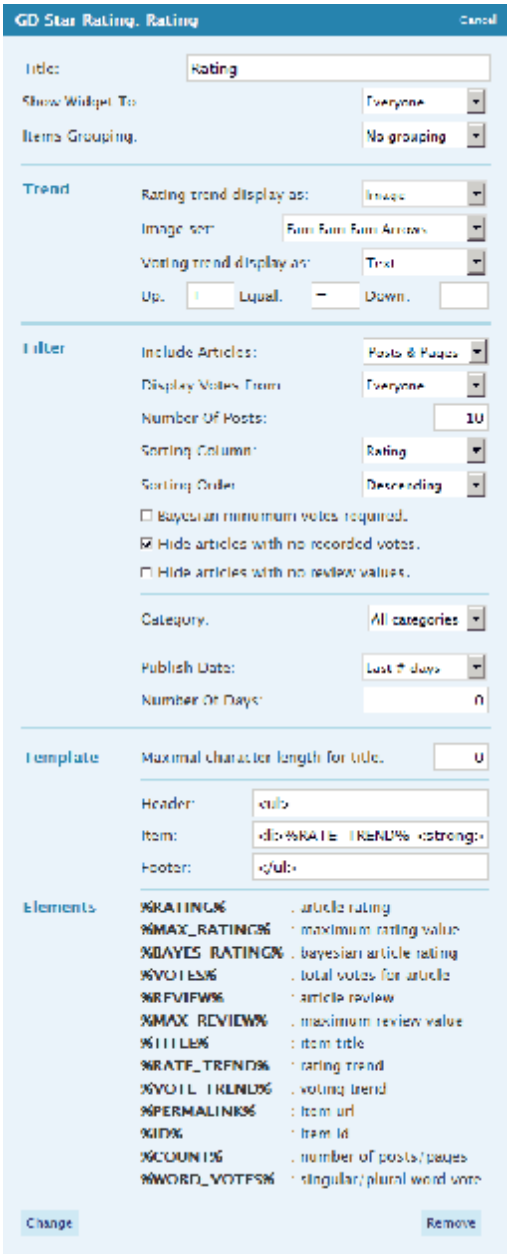
If you don't use any of this, then the rating block and stars will not be rendered. You can even have multiple rating blocks in the same article, but they will act the same, so there is no point in that.

Widgets

Currently there is only one widget that can be used to display rating data.

GD Star Rating Widget

This widget can be used to display top rated posts and pages. But there is a lot more to this widget, large number of options you can set. Widget supports multiple instances, so you can have more than one in sidebars with different settings. Also, widget supports template output, and you can set it to look any way you want using lists, tables or anything else.



Settings for a widget are divided into several collapsible groups.

Main Options

Main options include title for the widget, display and grouping. Display can be used to show widget to only visitors or only to logged users. Grouping option is interesting feature allowing you to display ratings on user or category basis.

If you choose user grouping, widget will display users rather than posts, and rating will be average rating for all posts from that user. This way you can rank post authors by the rating of their articles. If you choose category grouping, widget will display categories, and average rating for all posts in that category.

Trend

This group contains options for setting the render style for the trend. Plugin can calculate voting and rating trends, and they can be displayed using text or using images. You can select here what you prefer. If you select text, you can set each trend element, and if you select image you can select image set you want to use. Trend parameters can be set on the Settings page, Statistics tab.

Filter

Filter options include various filter that can help you narrow down post you want to show using categories, dates and other criteria, and also by setting sorting options.

Template

You can limit the length of title if you want to fit the list better in the space you have available. You can set 3 elements for template. Header and footer will be

rendered only once, on top and bottom of the widget and they can't include any template elements. Item is a template used for rendering of each result record. This part can contain different template elements:

Element	Description
%RATING%	Calculated Rating for the record
%MAX_RATING%	Maximum rating value allowed
%BAYES_RATING%	Bayesian mean estimate calculation for the rating
%VOTES%	Number of recorded votes
%REVIEW%	Review value set for the post or page
%MAX_REVIEW%	Maximum review value allowed
%TITLE%	Post title, or user/category title with grouping activated
%PERMALINK%	Url to post, or user/category with grouping activated
%RATE_TREND%	Rating trend indicator
%VOTE_TREND%	Voting trend indicator
%ID%	Post ID, or user/category ID with grouping activated
%COUNT%	If grouping is activated, number of posts, if not than is 1
%WORD_VOTES%	Custom template element for vote/votes word

Shortcodes

Current version has only one shortcode implemented. Bellow you can see shortcode details and all options for the shortcode explained.

Shortcode: STARREVIEW

This shortcode is used to render post review rating stars. This shortcode has no attributes.

Shortcode: STARRATER / STARRATINGBLOCK

This shortcode is used to render rating stars for the post or page in custom location. This shortcode has no attributes.

Shortcode: STARRATING

This shortcode is used to render table with voting summary for post and/or pages. It has a lot of attributes that can be used to make table look exactly the way you want it.

Using manual functions

Automatic rendering is controlled by plugin. But in many cases you might need to do things 'your own way'. For this I have created few functions, and more will come.

wp_gdsr_render_article()

Renders rating stars block for posts and pages

This method will display rendering stars for post or page. This must be used in a post loop or will not work. This is the same as using STARRATER shortcode.

wp_gdsr_render_comment()

Renders rating stars block for comments

This method will display rendering stars for comment. This must be used in a comment loop or will not work. This is the same as using STARRATERCOMMENT shortcode.

wp_gdsr_render_review()

Renders posts and pages review stars

This method will render stars for post review rating. This is the same as using STARREVIEW shortcode. Function has no parameters.

wp_gdsr_render_widget($widget)

Renders content like the sidebar widget does

This method will render widget like content. This method requires a number of parameters. If no parameters are passed, then the default widget parameters will be used. Parameters are in the form of array.

For rendering items you can specify exact template you want to use for header of the widget, each item and footer. Template strings can be HTML encoded or not. For this use, I recommend decoded HTML strings. Template can contain specific strings that will be replaced with actual values (hence the template).

List of all supported template strings can be found in the widget description chapter later on.

wp_gdsr_rating_text_article($cls)

Renders only rating text for posts and pages

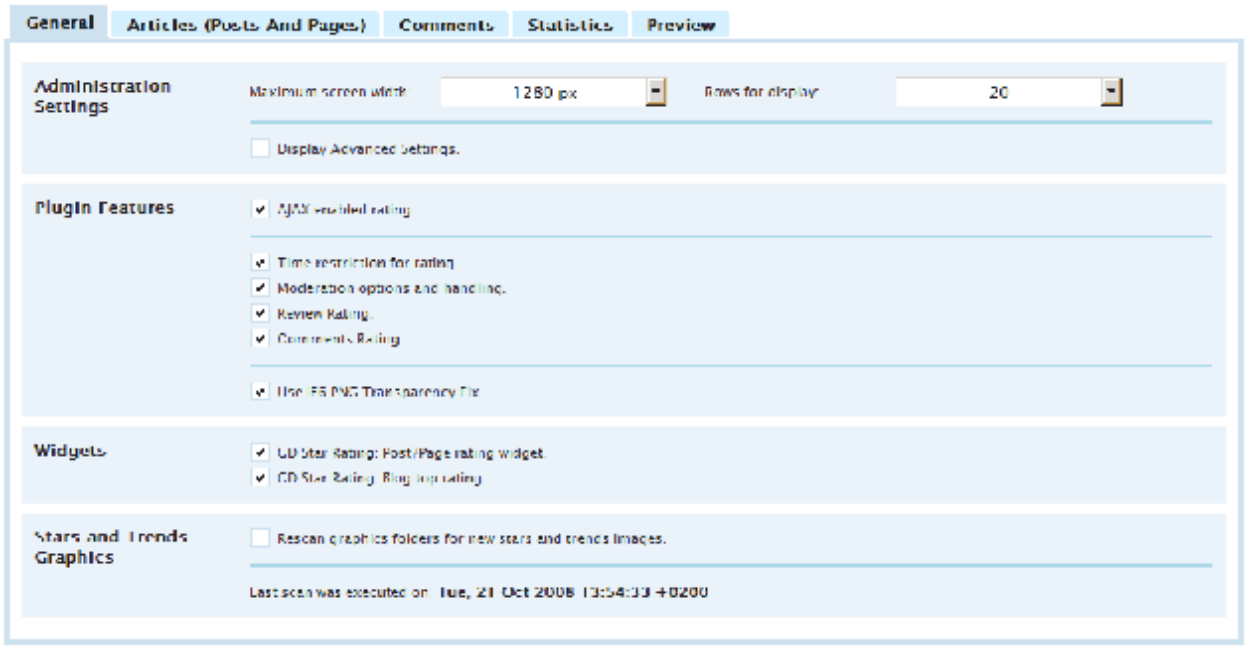
This function will render only star rating text of rating block. You can't use it to vote, but only to display votes and rating. Optional parameter **$cls** can be used to add custom CSS class to rendered block.

Plugin Settings

All the settings are divided into several tabs.

General

First tab contains administration pages settings, plugin features and stars preview.



Administration Settings

With this set of options you can control maximum screen width that will affect all the grids rendered by plugin and make them easier to read if you use large monitor resolutions. Also, you can set number of rows displayed on one page for grids.

Advanced settings are settings not too important for most users, so if you want them too, check this option.

Plugin Features

If you don't need all the plugin features, you can disable the one you don't use.

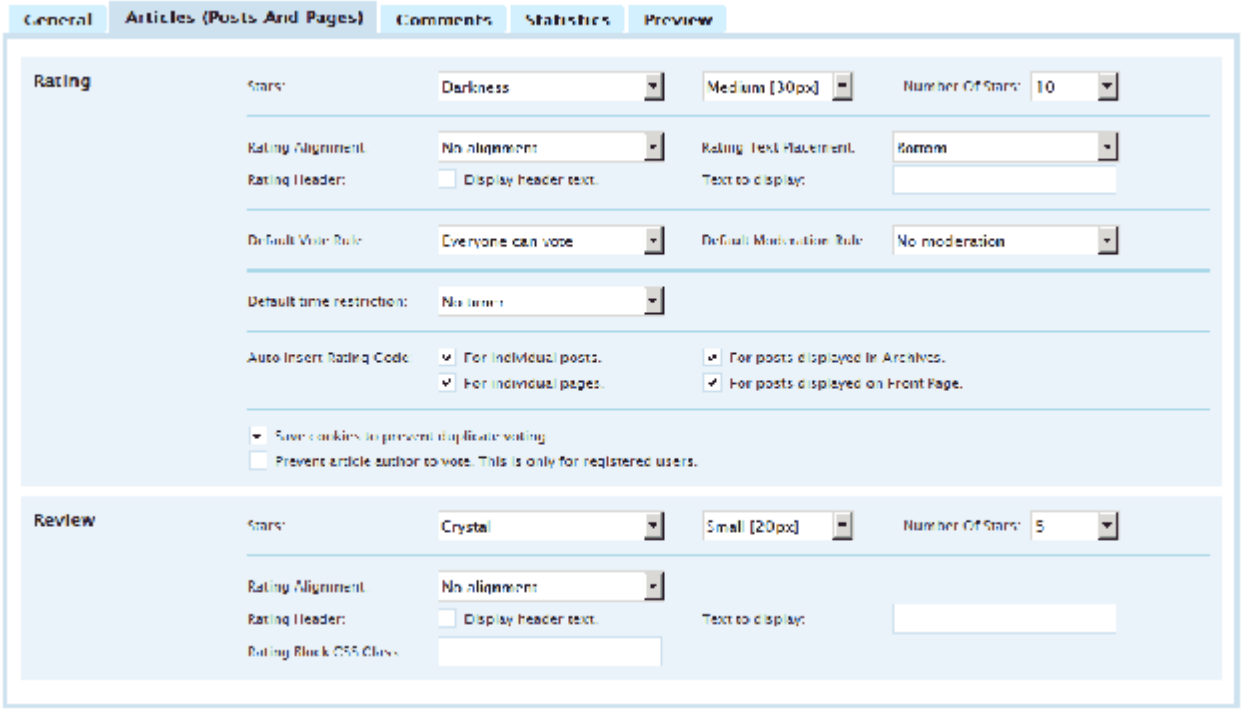
IE6 PNG Transparency Fix will be used only with MS Internet Explorer 6 browsers, regardless if it's on or off will not affect any other browser.

Stars Preview

Here you can see how the different stars will look on different backgrounds. This can help you decide what combination of stars and their size will be best for your blog.

Articles Rating (Posts and Pages)

Options here are divided into two groups, one for rating and the other for review.



First row contains options for setting the look of stars used for rating and their number (up to 20).

In the second row you control placement of rating text. To better understand the rendering, here is the image with complete rating block.

Rating Block

Rating block has 3 parts. First is the Header, always rendered at the top of the rating block. Bellow the header, you can see the rating stars and on bottom is rating text. Rating text can be rendered all around the rating stars, and it can be placed on top, bottom, left or right of the stars. It can also be hidden, or hidden if no votes are recorded for that post. Rating block can be aligned. Rating header text can contain full HTML code for formatting the text.

Also, complete rating block and rating header can have custom CSS class added to change the way they look. These CSS options are advanced settings and they are hidden if you don't activate advanced settings option on general tab.

Default Settings

Default settings for voting and moderation rules are automatically added to each new post or page. More details about the rules will be in the next chapter.

Rating block inserting

For articles, rating code can be inserted automatically. With 4 checkboxes you control where the rating block will be automatically inserted into the posts or pages.

Other options

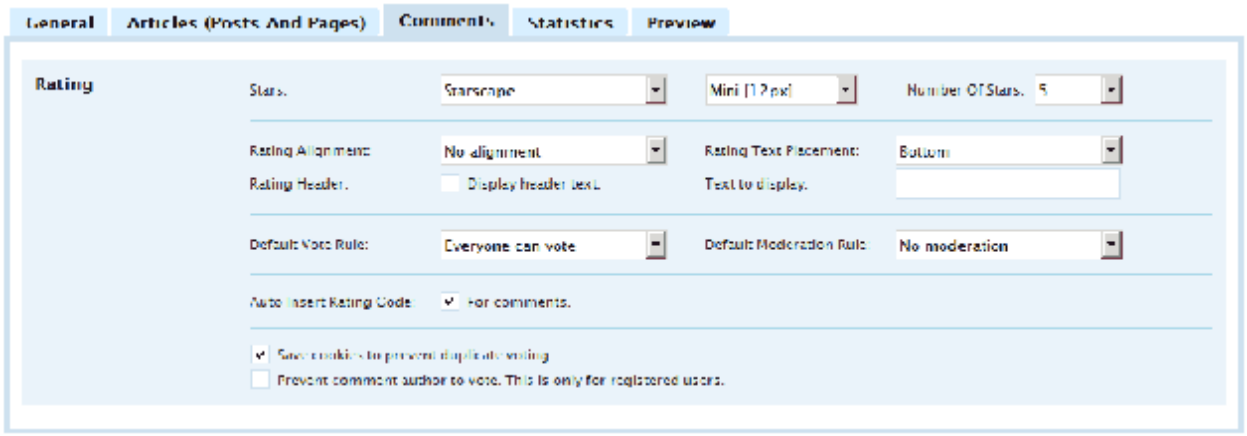
There are few more options you can set. You can use cookies to record votes and help to prevent multiple voting, and you can also prevent recording votes from author of the post or page. This way authors can rate their own posts.

Review Rating

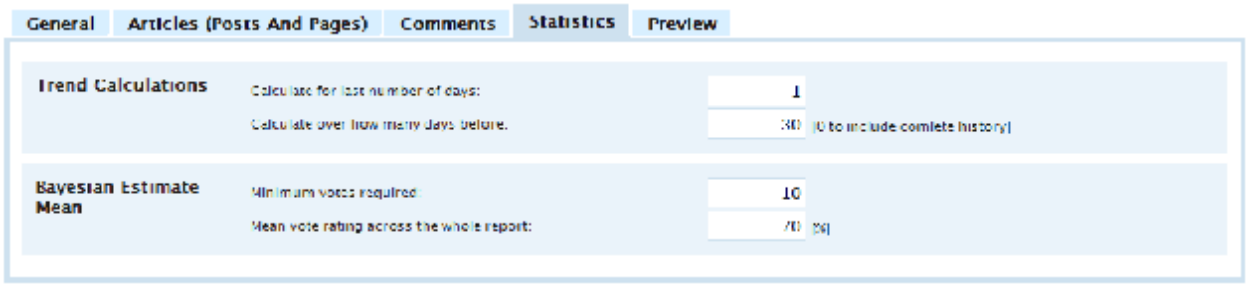
Posts and pages support special type of rating, called review rating. Settings are pretty much the same as for the regular rating. Rating block for review rating can't be inserted automatically in the post, and you need to use shortcode to add rating code to the post.

Comments Rating

Basically, comments settings are very much the same as the settings for articles.



Statistics



Preview

General
Articles (Posts And Pages)
Comments
Statistics
Preview
Stars
Crystal
Medium (30px)
Trends
Fam Fam Fam

Graphics Sets

Sets for trends and stars are stored in two places:

1. **Plugin folder**: this is the folder where the plugin is located, and there you have folders **stars** and **trends** where the default sets are located. I don't recommend adding anymore sets in these folders, because if you use WordPress plugin upgrade system, all that will be lost when you update to newer plugin version.
2. **Additional folder**: You need to create **gd-star-rating** folder in **wp-content** folder. And in this new folder create two more folders: **stars** and **trends**. Structure you need to have looks like this:
   wp-content/gd-star-rating/stars
   wp-content/gd-star-rating/trends

Each set must be in its own folder, and make sure not to use folder names like the folder names used for default icon sets.

Stars

Stars must be created in 4 sizes. Each size requires one image file. Also, you need to create additional description file with some info about the set. Here are the star sizes, image dimensions and file name (xxx in file name is extension):

- 12 pixels (image size: 12x36) (file name: stars12.xxx)
- 20 pixels (image size: 20x60) (file name: stars20.xxx)
- 30 pixels (image size: 30x90) (file name: stars30.xxx)
- 46 pixels (image size: 46x138) (file name: stars46.xxx)

Files can be in PNG, GIF or JPG format. PNG can be used for true 32bit format with real transparency. But this is not supported by some older browsers including MS Internet Explorer 6.

Each image contains three elements used to create rating stars. On the image on the right you have large version of the set with all 3 parts. Top element is rating star background image. Middle element is image used for hover effect when a user wants to vote. Bottom element is used to render actual rating value.

You need to use basically the same size and position of elements you want to use (stars, boxes, hearts…) so the transition of elements looks nice. I have included Photoshop PSD file with oxygen stars as a template. Also, images you use must have square dimensions. You can't use element with 46x50 size.

Description file is required, and this file must be named '**stars.gdsr'**. Use example I have included to create your own description for you sets. Only first two lines are **required**. All the other lines can be removed if you want. **Type** line must have set extension for the stars in your set.

Trends

Trends image is different than stars and it requires only one image that includes all 3 trend states. Also, one trend set is only for one size, you can't have one set with different sizes like stars have. File name must be **trend.xxx**, with xxx being extension. Top image in the set is for trend rising state, middle is for trend stagnation, and the bottom is for trend falling.

Description file is required, and this file must be named '**trend.gdsr'**. Use example I have included to create your own description for you sets. Only first three lines are **required**. All the other lines can be removed if you want. **Type** line must have set extension for the stars in your set. **Size** line must have set width dimension of the image. Trend elements must be with square dimensions, you can't have 16x20 elements in the set.

I have included Photoshop PSD file template.