

# Writing Internet-Drafts in Markdown

Dan York

[york@isoc.org](mailto:york@isoc.org)

@danyork

June 12, 2018 - IETF Hub Boston

# Why Markdown?

Because this...

```
--- middle

# Introduction

Here is some intro text.
```

is easier for *most* people to understand than this...

```
<middle>
  <section title="Introduction">
    <t>Here is some intro text.</t>
  </section>
</middle>
```

# What is Markdown?

- Lightweight text formatting language
- Developed by John Gruber in 2004 with help from Aaron Schwartz
- <https://daringfireball.net/projects/markdown/>
- Inspired by customs and conventions emerging out of text-based email

*"The overriding design goal for Markdown's formatting syntax is to make it as readable as possible. The idea is that a Markdown-formatted document should be publishable as-is, as plain text, without looking like it's been marked up with tags or formatting instructions."*

*"The idea for Markdown is to make it easy to read, write, and edit prose. HTML is a **publishing** format; Markdown is a **writing** format."*

# Markdown example

```
# First level heading
```

```
Some text
```

```
## Second level heading
```

- ```
- first bullet with italic text
```
- ```
- second bullet with bold text
```
- ```
- third bullet
```

```
### Third level heading
```

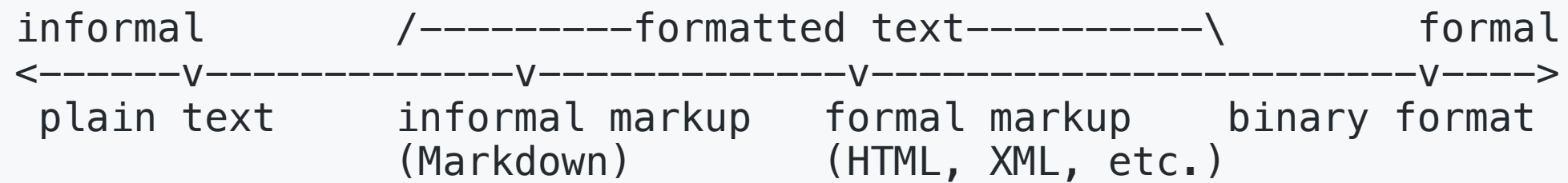
```
Visit [the IETF's web site](https://www.ietf.org)
```

```
## Second level heading
```

```
(you get the idea...)
```

# Comparison of Markdown to other formats

[RFC 7764](#) has this useful chart:



**But what if you want to write something that is NOT in the original Markdown syntax?**

(for example, tables...)

# Markdown and Standardization

*"I believe Markdown's success is due to, not in spite of, its lack of standardization. And its success is not disputable."*

*"Because different sites (and people) have different needs. No one syntax would make all happy."*

- John Gruber, [twitter thread in 2014](#)

# The many flavors of Markdown

- "Original" from John Gruber
- MultiMarkdown
- GitHub Flavored Markdown (GFM)
- pandoc
- kramdown
- Fountain
- CommonMark
  - An attempt at standardizing Markdown by a group of advocates
  - [www.commonmark.org](http://www.commonmark.org)
- ***MANY*** other variants... *(including the one I used to create these slides)*



# The text/markdown media type and an IANA Registry

Informational [RFC7763](#) (March 2016):

- registers the text/markdown media type
- defines a "Markdown Variants" registry established by IANA
- registers "Original" in that new registry

IANA Registry at:

- <https://www.iana.org/assignments/markdown-variants/markdown-variants.xhtml>

# RFC 7764

- Informational RFC also in March 2016
- Title: "**Guidance on Markdown: Design Philosophies, Stability Strategies, and Select Registrations**"
- A good read to understand more about Markdown
- Registers with IANA:
  - a number of common Markdown variants, including:
    - kramdown-rfc2629
    - RFC7328 - Pandoc2rfc

**ENOUGH ALREADY... let's build some Internet Drafts!**

# FYI... it's actually a 2-step process

At a basic level, the various tools do this:

## 1. Take a markdown file and generate "xml2rfc" XML

- Originally often called "RFC 2629 XML", but then later defined in RFC 7749 "xml2rfc v2" and now [RFC 7991](#) "xml2rfc v3"

## 2. Run "xml2rfc" on the resulting XML to generate TXT

# First Step: Choosing your tool chain

- Kramdown-rfc
  - <https://github.com/cabo/kramdown-rfc2629>
  - Developed in Ruby by Carsten Bormann
  - Can be used online at: <https://xml2rfc.tools.ietf.org/experimental.html>
- mmark
  - <https://github.com/miekg/mmark>
  - Developed in Go by Miek Gieben
  - Supported by Docker image from Paul Jones: <https://github.com/paulej/rfctools>

# Other Markdown tool options

- pandoc
  - <https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc7328.txt>
  - pandoc2rfc - <http://github.com/miekg/pandoc2rfc> - by Miek Gieben
  - Based on pandoc from John MacFarlane - <http://pandoc.org/>
  - Unable to generate XML2RFC v3 XML
  - Miek views mmark as the successor
- drafter
  - <https://ipv.sx/drafter/>
  - Quick visual tool from Richard Barnes that allows you to see the conversion
  - Currently based on an older version of kramdown-rfc

# Getting Started with kramdown-rfc (locally)

1. Assuming your computer has Ruby, install the `kramdown-rfc2629` package:

```
gem install kramdown-rfc2629
```

2. Create your file using your favorite text editor

- Many "markdown editors" also available
- Convention is to end file with `.md` or `.mkd`

3. Just execute the `kdrfc` command:

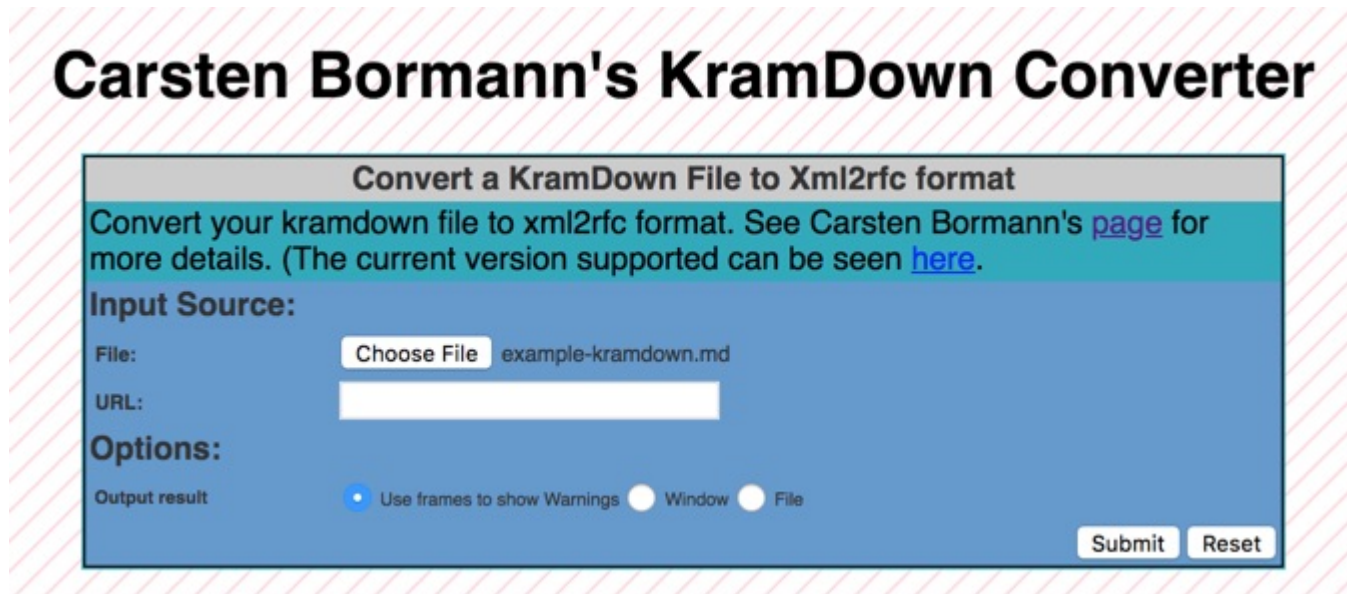
```
$ kdrfc draft-whomever-some-witty-name.md
```

4. Output is two files: `.xml` and `.txt`

More info: <https://github.com/cabo/kramdown-rfc2629>

# Using kramdown-rfc remotely

1. Create your file using your favorite text editor
2. Visit <https://xml2rfc.tools.ietf.org/experimental.html>
3. Find the kramdown box:



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Carsten Bormann's KramDown Converter". Below the title is a subtitle "Convert a KramDown File to Xml2rfc format". A teal banner contains the text: "Convert your kramdown file to xml2rfc format. See Carsten Bormann's [page](#) for more details. (The current version supported can be seen [here](#)." Below this is the "Input Source:" section with a "File:" label, a "Choose File" button, and the text "example-kramdown.md". There is also a "URL:" label and an empty text input field. The "Options:" section includes a label "Output result" and three radio buttons: "Use frames to show Warnings" (selected), "Window", and "File". At the bottom right are "Submit" and "Reset" buttons.

4. Choose file and submit for processing
5. The XML file will be downloaded to your computer.
  - *NOTE:* The XML file name is currently same name as input file, including `.md` extension.



# Kramdown-rfc Notes

- Based on kramdown parser by Thomas Leitner. Syntax:
  - <https://kramdown.gettalong.org/syntax.html>
- File starts with `---`
- Header based on YAML. Example

```
title: Your amazing title
abbrev: Your Abbreviation
docname: draft-todo-your-name-here
ipr: trust200902
area: General
author:
  ins: C. Bormann
  name: Carsten Bormann
  email: cabo@tzi.org
```

- References:
  - Normative: `{{!RFC2119}}` or Informative: `{{?RFC1925}}`

# Getting Started with mmark

1. Ensure that the Go language is available.
2. (Follow instructions on <https://github.com/miekg/mmark> to build application.)
3. Use the `mmark` command to generate XML:

```
./mmark/mmark -xml2 -page draft-whomever-some-witty-name.md
```

4. Use `xml2rfc` to generate TXT:

```
xml2rfc --text draft-whomever-some-witty-name.xml
```

(Make files can automate this.)

More info: <https://github.com/miekg/mmark>

# Automating mmark with a Docker image

- Paul Jones provides Docker image with both `mmark` and `xml2rfc`
  - <https://github.com/paulej/rfctools>
  - Docker Hub: <https://hub.docker.com/r/paulej/rfctools/>

- With Docker installed, just do:

```
docker pull paulej/rfctools
```

- Actual command is rather long:

```
$ docker run --rm --user=$(id -u):$(id -g) -v $(pwd):/rfc -v  
$HOME/.cache/xml2rfc:/var/cache/xml2rfc -w /rfc paulej/rfctools md2rfc draft-  
jones-markdown-example-00.md
```

- Sooo... just grab [Paul's sample Makefile](#) and reduce your command to:

```
make
```

- *(assumes the file starts with 'draft-')*

# Mmark Notes

- Syntax draws from kramdown, pandoc and more. Defined:
  - <https://miek.nl/2016/march/05/mmark-syntax-document/>
- File starts with `%%%`
- Header based on TOML ( <https://github.com/toml-lang/toml> ):

```
% title = "Your amazing title"
% abbrev = "Your abbreviation"
% docName = "draft-todo-your-name-here"
% ipr= "trust200902"
% [[author]]
% initials="R."
% surname="Gieben"
% fullname="R. (Miek) Gieben"
%   [author.address]
%   email = "miek@miek.nl"
```

- References:
  - Normative: `[@!RFC2119]` or Informative: `[@?RFC1925]`

# Finding examples to get started

- Easiest way to begin is to find other people's Markdown I-Ds
- Examples provided in Github repos of both kramdown-rfc and mmark

## For people wanting a deeper dive:

- Martin Thomson provides a thorough git repo:
  - <https://github.com/martinthomson/i-d-template>
  - See features: <https://github.com/martinthomson/i-d-template/blob/master/doc/FEATURES.md>
  - Supports files in both kramdown-rfc and mmark formats

# My own examples

- Created using mmark via Docker image (primarily because at the time I was learning more about Docker and this gave me a reason to experiment more)
- **draft-york-manycouches-completely-virtual-meetings**
  - <https://github.com/danyork/draft-york-manycouches-completely-virtual-meetings>
  - <https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-manycouches-completely-virtual-meetings-04>
- **draft-york-dnsop-deploying-dnssec-crypto-algs**
  - <https://github.com/danyork/draft-deploying-dnssec-crypto-algs>
  - <https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-york-dnsop-deploying-dnssec-crypto-algs>

# Resources

- RFC 7763 - <https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc7763>
- RFC 7764 - <https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc7764>
- Tutorial: **Writing RFCs and Internet-Drafts in markdown and a bit of YAML**
  - <https://www.ietf.org/about/participate/tutorials/process/writing-rfcs-and-internet-drafts-markdown-and-bit-yaml/>
  - Presented at IETF 92 in Dallas in 2015
  - Tools have evolved but still provides good foundation

# One other alternative

- asciirfc
  - Not Markdown, but a similar idea
  - <https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-ribose-asciirfc>
  - <https://github.com/riboseinc/rfc-asciirfc-minimal>
  - Based on <https://asciidoctor.org/>
  - Provides a more formal, structured text markup



## Getting more involved

If you want to do more with writing Internet Drafts in Markdown,  
you can join the rfc-markdown list:

<https://www.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/Rfc-markdown>

# Thank You

Dan York

[york@isoc.org](mailto:york@isoc.org)

@danyork

FYI, these slides were created in Markdown and rendered using MARP  
(<https://yhatt.github.io/marp/>)

Slides can be found at:

- <https://github.com/danyork/writing-internet-drafts-in-markdown>