

Microformats

Making the Web a Better Place with Rich Snippets

Microformats are a way of marking up content with “meta” information. Other means include Microdata and RDFa. In essence, this involves adding some additional HTML around existing content so that the content can be identified by automated web services. These services include search engines and news aggregators.

Of the three existing formats, I recommend looking at either Microdata or Microformats.

Microformats

[Microformats](#) is a grass-roots effort and has been around for quite a while now. It is based on tagging items with specific classes. There are many “patterns” for Microformats. Each pattern is intended for a specific type of content and has its own set of classes for marking things up.

Some examples of Microformats patterns include:

- [hCard](#) – for people and organizations
- [hCalendar](#) – for events
- [hProduct](#) – for products
- [hReview](#) – for reviews of items
- [hRecipe](#) – for recipes

Microdata

The [Microdata](#) format was proposed by several major search engines within the last year. This is a similar idea to Microformats but the content is marked up in a different way – with new attributes on HTML tags. Since Microdata uses new attributes, it is a bit more technical than simply adding classes to markup.

There are similar examples of Microdata patterns:

- [Person](#) – a person (alive, dead, undead, or fictional)
- [Organization](#) – an organization such as a school, NGO, corporation, club, etc.
- [Event](#) – an event happening at a certain time at a certain location
- [Place](#) – entities that have a somewhat fixed, physical extension
- [LocalBusiness](#) – particular physical business or branch of an organization
- [Product](#) – anything that is made available for sale
- [Review](#) – a review of an item

What are they Good for?

When Google (for example) presents the results of a search, sometimes you get more than just a few lines of text. This could be product information or reviews. Google refers to these “extended results” as rich snippets and it generates rich snippets if it can understand what your content is through the use of Microformats or Microdata.

There is a great [video introduction to rich snippets](#) from Google and you can also [read more about using rich snippets](#) in the Webmaster Tools help area.

WordPress Integration

The concept of Microformats doesn’t seem to have caught on very strongly with the WordPress community. There are a few plugins for providing the ability to mark up content with Microformats but they aren’t very extensive and are more for specific content types, rather than sprinkling the Microformats into regular pages.

Microdata on the other hand seems to have a much stronger presence and some good plugins to look at include [Microdata for SEO](#) and the [Opengraph and Microdata Generator](#).

Webmaster Tools Integration

Google has recently released a Structured Data Dashboard update to Webmaster Tools. This dashboard shows you what sort of structured data Google has found on your site. You can read more at [Introducing the Structured Data Dashboard](#).

Additional Resources and Links

- [WordPress Plugins tagged with “microdata”](#)
- [WordPress Plugins tagged with “microformats”](#)
- [microformats.org](#)
- [schema.org](#)
- [Podcast episode that talks about Microformats](#)
- [Getting started with Microdata](#)
- [Google & Microformats: Drive More Traffic](#)
- [Microformats Made Simple](#) – a book about Microformats

About the Author and Document

This brief knowledge document was originally drafted on July 24, 2012 by [Matt Vanderpol](#). He can be reached at matt@vanderpol.net and he occasionally tweets as [bookwyrm](#).

This document was written in Markdown then saved into a PDF using [Marked](#). You can download both the [PDF version](#) and the [Markdown source](#) of this document on Github.

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