

Academic Markdown

A Guide to Writing Academic Works from Markdown

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Introduction

A long time ago, there was a boy, who, like all others in the land of academics wished to create nicely formatted, accessible documents. As most people in the land, he was forced to speak in LaTeX. And although he was first confused, he eventually learned to love it.

The joy of simply reading through a document that looked professional, sleek, dare one say *like a work of art*. “Who cares about content?”, the boy thought. And so he spent his days formatting, formatting, and formatting. And oh how he formatted.

To the sound of ‘my favorite things’

From tables, to templates, and tensors, to tokens.
And sections and headings, and figures, he opens.
Each one of these looks as best as can be.
Those are some of his favorite things.

Until one day, his deadline was due, he got into trouble. You see, as was *so* meticulously formatting, and formatting, and formatting, he forgot to write! Shock and terror overtook the boy, as it slowly dawned on him: “Who cares about formatting?!”.

That’s right, who cares about formatting? Well, I won’t lie, I do. But as I have learned, it should not distract from the content. You might be surprised to hear that the boy from the parable is me, and you might be even more surprised to hear that no-one should care about formatting. “What?” Yes, wait, please bear with me.

Let me rephrase: you should not care about formatting. As a writer, I have to care about formatting, but it should never be your focus. Formatting exists to support the message, but for the formatting to support your message, you should have a good message in the first place. The reader, you, should not care about formatting. The message should be the focus.

As writing the message should be the focus, why would we use tools riddled with markup language when writing? Honestly, I don’t know. There are many

different possibilities with regard to writing workflows, and I don't claim to know them all. But I do have the feeling that not many of them involve raw text in a distraction-free environment.

That is not to say I don't think they're useful. Languages such as the TeX¹ provide incredibly detailed typesetting configurations. Microsoft Word, regardless of its many shortcomings, provides a more intuitive way for people to format their documents. The former has allows is more malleable, while the latter is generally easier to use. But these are not necessary for *writing*, rather they are necessary for typesetting.

My personal belief, however, is that your message should stand as independent from your formatting as possible. Notwithstanding the importance of accessibility, it should not matter whether your 'document' is a collection of sheep with glyphs shaved in their wool, or a carefully type-set LaTeX document. Although, the latter will probably smell significantly less.

I therefore want to urge anyone who is reading the following: Start writing in plaintext. Literal *plain text*. Not because it is easy to distribute, or because it does not require any tools besides a text editor, or even because of it is small size. Write in plain text because you will not be able to fool yourself with anything but your own writing. Tools are a windows into the world; when you are holding a hammer, everything suddenly looks 'hammerable'.

This starts to sound more like a manifesto and less like a manual or user-guide, so I will slack on the opinions. I nevertheless hope I have at least motivated my choice, and I hope to have at least made you think about your writing and its efficacy. Which brings me, and you for that matter, to the part where I will explain how *I* practice what I preach, and how you can copy said practice.

¹It's actually a fully Turing-complete language. LaTeX is only a set of macros (i.e. functions) for the TeX language.

Conclusion

The conclusion to a very serious and important article.

Appendix

Syntax Overview

This section is supposed to serve as a reference to the *recommended* syntax. In many cases, variations on the syntax exist. I have often chosen not to include these to ensure clarity and consistency. Especially in the case of [Figures], the syntax I show is chosen because it operates more easily with different tools and formats.

Document Sections

In these examples a multi-document setup is denoted as *MD*, and a single-document setup as *SD*.

Title (MD)

Listing 0.1 In a single document, including this in the frontmatter is *not* the preferred way of denoting the title, simply for compatibility with other markdown flavours. In a multi-document setup, this should be denoted in the `metadata.yaml` file.

```
title: Title or Section
```

Title (SD) or Section (MD)

Listing 0.2 In single documents, this will be the title. In multi-document formats, this will denote a level-1 heading or a section.

```
# Title or Section
```

Section (SD) or Subsection (MD)

Subsection (SD) or Subsubsection (MD)

```
### Subsection (SD) or Subsubsection (MD)
```

Listing 0.3 Section in a single-document setup, or subsection in a multi-document one.

Section (SD) of Subsection (MD)

Subsubsection (SD) or Subsubsubsection (MD)

Listing 0.4 Subsubsubsubsubsubsubsubsubsub...

Subsubsection (SD) or Subsubsubsection (MD)

Text formatting

Common text is just written as normal text. There are some tricks included in that might not immediately be obvious. To force a newline you can end the current line with two spaces.

Line this. A separate paragraph, however, is made by a blank line between two blocks of text, i.e. two newlines.

The next code blocks show how you can format text in different ways. Like many other things in markdown, there are multiple syntaxes. These are, however, the ones that are most commonly used, or simply the type that I consider ‘better’ either for clarity.

Common text

Emphasized text

Emphasized text or **Emphasized text**

~~Strikethrough text~~

~~Strikethrough text~~

Strong text

__Strong text__ or ****Strong text****

Strong emphasized text

Listing 0.5 An alternative is to use the following *****Strong emphasized text*****, but this is hard to distinguish from normal ****Strong text**** (similarly for emphasized text).

___Strong emphasized text___

or

*****Strong emphasized text*****

or

Strong emphasized text****

- Bullet list
 - Nested bullet

```

        * Sub-nested bullet etc
    • Bullet list item 2

- Bullet list
  - Nested bullet
    - Sub-nested bullet etc
- Bullet list item 2

-OR-

* Bullet list
  * Nested bullet
    * Sub-nested bullet etc
* Bullet list item 2

1. A numbered list
  1. A nested numbered list
  2. Which is numbered
2. Which is numbered

1. A numbered list
  1. A nested numbered list
  2. Which is numbered
2. Which is numbered

☐ An uncompleted task
☒ A completed task

- [ ] An uncompleted task
- [x] A completed task

☐ An uncompleted task
☐ A subtask

- [ ] An uncompleted task
  - [ ] A subtask

Blockquote > Nested blockquote

> Blockquote
  >> Nested Blockquote

```

Inter- and Extra-document Links

Website Links

Named Link or `http://example.com/`

`[Named Link](https://www.example.com/)` or `<http://example.com/>`

Link to Title (MD)

Link to [\[Title \(MD\)\]](#)

Table, like this one :

First Header	Second Header
Content Cell	Content Cell
Content Cell	Content Cell

```
First Header | Second Header
-----|-----
Content Cell | Content Cell
Content Cell | Content Cell
```

Adding a pipe | in a cell :

First Header	Second Header
Content Cell	Content Cell
Content Cell	

```
First Header | Second Header
-----|-----
Content Cell | Content Cell
Content Cell | \|
```

Left, right and center aligned table

Left aligned Header	Right aligned Header	Center aligned Header
Content Cell	Content Cell	Content Cell
Content Cell	Content Cell	Content Cell

```
Left aligned Header | Right aligned Header | Center aligned Header
:-----|-----:|-----:
Content Cell      |      Content Cell |      Content Cell
Content Cell      |      Content Cell |      Content Cell
```

code()

`code()`

Horizontal line : - - - -

- - - -

Image with alt :

![picture alt](http://via.placeholder.com/200x150 "Title is optional")

Inline L^AT_EX

Listing 0.6 An alternative to the backticks is to use three squiggly lines `~~~`. This is useful if you want to show a markdown code block in a code block. Not really useful unless you want to present markdown notation.

```
var specificLanguage_code =
{
  "data": {
    "lookedUpPlatform": 1,
    "query": "Kasabian+Test+Transmission",
    "lookedUpItem": {
      "name": "Test Transmission",
      "artist": "Kasabian",
      "album": "Kasabian",
      "picture": null,
      "link": "http://open.spotify.com/track/5jhJur5n4fasblLSC0crTp"
    }
  }
}
```

`$$\LaTeX$`

Block equation:

$$E = mc^2$$

`$$`
`E = mc^2`
`$$`

Footnotes:

Something to read for later²

Something to read for later^[1]

^[1]: [A Brief History of Time](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvb)

²A Brief History of Time



Figure 1: picture alt

References

Intel. 1988. "Example Website." <http://example.com>.

`\printbibliography`

General Overview

(Intel 1988)

