

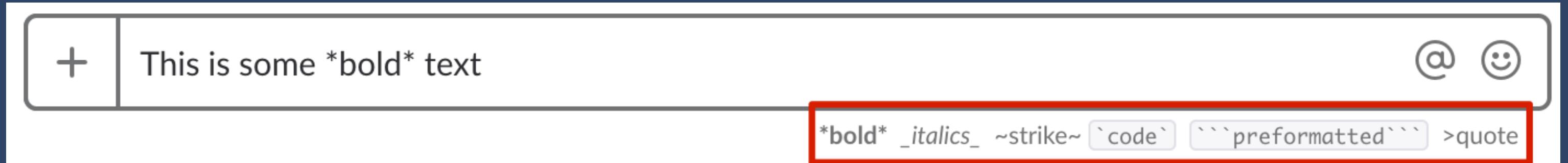
Why Markdown?

Write the Docs SF - Nov. 9, 2017

Outline

- What it is
- Why it's so popular
- Challenges and limitations
- References

Markdown(-like) syntax is everywhere



- Slack
- Pivotal
- Balsamiq

What Markdown is



“Markdown” is **two things**: (1) a plain text formatting syntax; and (2) a software tool... that converts the plain text formatting to HTML.

– John Gruber (creator of Markdown)

```
---
```

title: Using Balsamiq in Your Classroom
date: '2015-05-09T14:46:35.000+00:00'
weight: 200
menu: "menudesktop"
product: "Balsamiq Mockups 3 for Desktop FAQs"
draft: ''

If you are teaching a course about human computer interaction, software design, user interfaces or prototyping, the [free Balsamiq 3 for Desktop for classroom use offer](<https://balsamiq.com/free>) can be a useful tool to add to your teaching arsenal.

This guide helps instructors who plan on using Balsamiq 3 for Desktop in their class. We also provide [UX Apprentice](<http://www.uxapprentice.com/>), a free resource for students new to user experience design. The site helps students learn the basics of UX Design with easy steps to follow, and pointers for learning more.

This document is always evolving, and we would love to hear about your experience in order to improve it. Please email your comments and stories to peldi@balsamiq.com, much appreciated!

Getting Balsamiq 3 for Desktop for Your Class

We are proud to offer you **a long-term extended trial key for Mockups 3 for Desktop for the duration of your course, free of charge**.

To apply, enter your information **[here](<https://balsamiq.com/free>)**. You will receive the trial key over email.

Installing the Software

To install Balsamiq Mockups 3 for Desktop, just visit [our download page](<https://balsamiq.com/download>) from a PC or Mac, download and install the application.

Your students are welcome to download it and install it on their own laptops and computers as well.

If you'd like to install and register the application in several lab machines, we have some instructions [here](/installation/silentinstall/).

Using the Class License Key **@leonbarnard, #writethedocsSF**

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"front matter"

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Level 2 heading

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Why it's so popular

*Markdown is intended to be as **easy-to-read** and **easy-to-write** as is feasible.*

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**Even the book on it
is only 17 pages.**

**You can learn it in an
afternoon.**

Writing in Markdown

by Matt Gemmell

1. It's code that can be read by non-coders

From "Writing in Markdown"

[Y]ou've probably already used Markdown, without being aware of it. If you've ever emphasised something *like this*, you've used Markdown. If you've ever made a list by starting each line with a hyphen, or asterisk (or a number), you've used Markdown.... That's the real beauty of it.

Bonus: it can actually teach you HTML

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HTML > vs. Markdown

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Once they [register the software](</sales/desktopregister/#registering-mockups-for-desktop>) with it, they will see that the application's fully-functioning trial period will be extended for your class.

Sharing and Grading Project Files

Your school probably already has a means for students to share files with each other, and with you.

Some schools use Dropbox, some others use Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive, or others. We [generate](</desktop/clouddrive/>) with these tools.

Balsamiq 3 for Desktop project files are no different: each BMPR file contains everything that's needed to open and review a Balsamiq project.

2. It's made for the web

- **HTML is to web media as PDF is to printed media.** It's universal.
- No special software, platform, or configuration is required.
- Converting to HTML and vice-versa **isn't so much translating** one language to another as **compiling according to strict rules.**

3. It's made for writing

- It's for *written documents*, with some images (like today's documentation and blogs)
- It's like HTML as it was originally intended
- Never write in "wysiwyg" view again!

Note: It's not good for *making* web sites

(Detour)

Q: How do you build a website with Markdown?

A: You don't.

Sites that support Markdown use **templates** (built in Ruby, PHP, Go, etc.) that *embed* Markdown content in the appropriate place.



▼ Balsamiq Mockups 3 for Desktop FAQs

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Not
markdown

Balsamiq Mockups 3 for Desktop Troubleshooting Guide

Something not working as expected? We're here to help. Here's a short list of steps we recommend.

1. Check Your Version

If you've hit a bug there's a decent chance we've fixed it in a recent update. Start by checking the [download page](#) to make sure you're running the latest version.

Markdown

2. Check the Docs

If your problem isn't a bug or the application crashing you may find the answer to your question in our documentation. You might want to start with our [desktop application FAQs](#) or maybe [these FAQs about installation, licensing and purchasing](#). Or you can [search](#) all our docs.

3. Contact Us

Get a human! Answering your questions is part of everyone's job here at Balsamiq. Email support@balsamiq.com or find more ways to [contact us here](#).

[Can I Export Mockup Notes? →](#)

Share this page:

3. It's made for writing

It's not good for making web sites. It's for written content (with some images), like documentation and blogs.

HTML5 has brought HTML back to what it was intended for. We got lost for a few years there...

Never write in "wysiwyg" view again!

It's HTML as it was intended.

I used it for this presentation. I organize my thoughts in it.

(show how templates are broken up into nav and content)

Tip: Use it to organize your thoughts

4. Great editor support

Keyboard shortcuts and previews mean you don't even need to memorize all the syntax.

Some of my favorites:

- * CMD+B = **Bold**
- * CMD+I = **Italic**
- * CMD+1,2,3, etc. = Heading 1, 2, 3, etc.
- * Shift+CMD+K = link
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And code-editor like behavior when you select text. Can immediately convert it rather than overwriting it.

Editors also often have built-in reference guides. Like this one!

(screenshots here)

@leonbarnard, #writethedocsSF

5. Near universal publishing platform support

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Why it's so popular

> Markdown is intended to be as ****easy-to-read**** and ****easy-to-write**** as is feasible.

-- John Gruber (creator or Markdown)

<!--^ Now I'll go into more detail-->

1. It's code that can be read by non-coders

From "Writing in Markdown"

> [Y]ou've ever emphasised something *like this*, you've used Markdown. If you've ever made a list by starting each line with a hyphen, or asterisk (or a number), you've used Markdown.... That's the real beauty of it.



this presentation is actually markdown

John Gruber's [philosophy behind it is here](<https://daringfireball.net/projects/markdown/syntax#philosophy>).

****Bonus:**** it can actually teach you HTML (if you look at what it exports).

2. It's made for the web

* Converting to HTML and vice-versa ****isn't so much translating**** one language to another as ****compiling according to strict rules****.

<!--^ (i.e., there are clear, rigid rules rather than interpretations).-->

<!--^ "transpiling"?-->

@leonbarnard, #writethedocsSF

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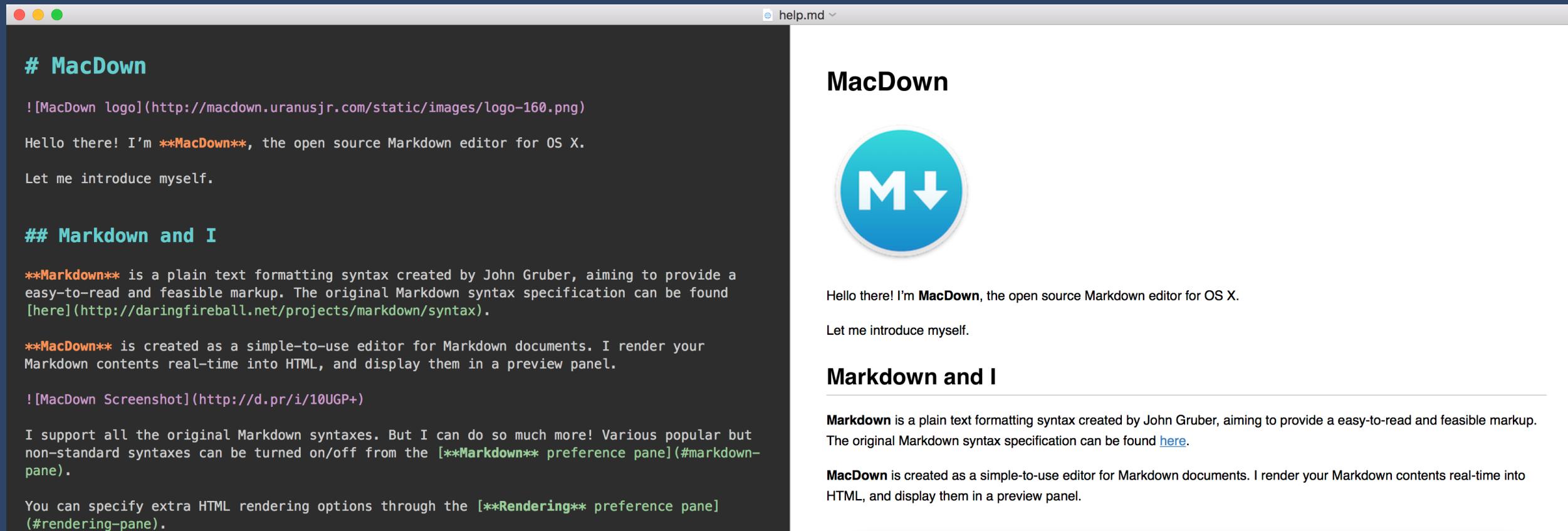
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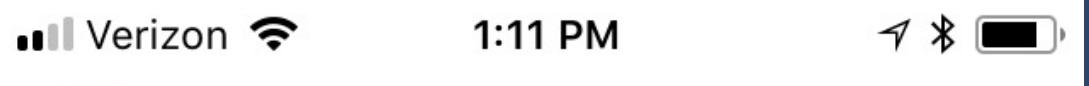
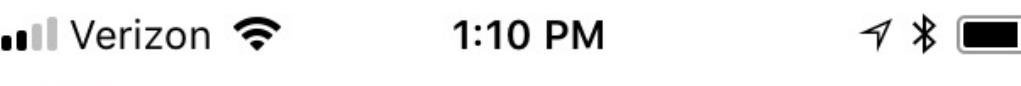
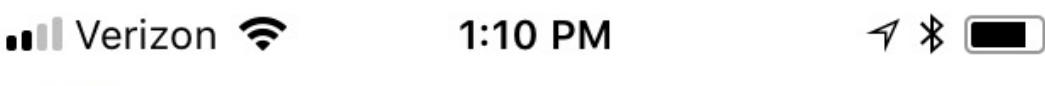
4. Great editor support

Keyboard shortcuts and live preview means you don't need to memorize all the syntax.



Sample keyboard shortcuts

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- CMD+I = *Italic*
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 #general   

 For anyone who uses Sphinx and reStructuredText, what editor do you use/recommend for reStructuredText?

 **loquacity** 5:24 PM
atom, with an RST plugin

 **penseleit**  5:24 PM
Using keybindings for formatting

 **loquacity** 5:25 PM
if that's your thing 😊

 **penseleit**  5:25 PM
I can't find a good rST toolbar in Atom. There is a reasonable one for Markdown. (edited)
Might have to make my own... 😕

 loquacity 5:27 PM

Message #general

@leonbarnard, #writethedocsSF

 #general   

Ah, I said much the same thing in [#doctools](#) I use Atom, but support in the plugins I use is not as good as MD 😞

I have been looking into it...

Today

 **nicolan** 3:04 AM
Also atom with RST plugin

 **chrisward** 3:14 AM
@nicolan The conversation continued in [#doctools](#) but it's more than a lot of other plugins don't work so well with RST... Yet.

 **nicolan** 3:58 AM
That's what I get for returning to a
thread 8 hours later. 😊

 chrisward D20 6:18 AM
“DD-MG”

Message #general

@ / ⌂

-  **#doctools** 
-  
-  **penseleit**  5:16 PM
For anyone who uses Sphinx and reStructuredText, what editor do you use/recommend?
-  **chrisward**  10:32 PM

 @penseleit Good question... One of the reasons I haven't taken the plunge yet is that my editor of choice (atom) doesn't support it as well as say, MD.

Today

 **penseleit**  1:15 AM
Thanks [@chrisward](#). I tend to agree.
Sorry for my dull brain, but what is MD?

 chrisward 1:17 AM
@penseleit Markdown

 penseleit  1:17 AM

Message #doctools

@ / 📄

5. Near universal publishing platform support

- *All* static site generators
- Wordpress
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Summary

1. It's code for non-coders
2. It's made for the web
3. It's intended for writing
4. Great editor support
5. Broad publishing platform support

Challenges

- Lack of features - e.g., includes/conrefs, crossrefs, etc.
- Lack of a standard

See "Why You Shouldn't Use 'Markdown' for Documentation" -
by Eric Holscher

"Flavors"?

Add support for syntax highlighting, task lists, tables, etc.

- [GitHub Flavored Markdown](#)
- [Markdown Extra](#)
- [Bitbucket](#)

Helpful references 😎

- "Writing in Markdown" by Matt Gemmell
- The Philosophy of Markdown by John Gruber
- GitHub Help - Basic Markdown writing and formatting syntax
- Online HTML to Markdown conversion tool

References (cont'd)

- Marp - a free Markdown presentation writing tool
- Deckset - a paid Markdown presentation tool
- MacDown - my favorite Markdown editor for Mac
- MarkdownPad - The Markdown Editor for Windows

thankyou