



HTML – Meta tags



Meta tags have two main functions

- To help list your site in some search engines indexes.
As the web gets older this function does not have the same importance. In earlier times some Meta tags provided the information to search engines (crawlers¹) but now some search engines only treat this as a secondary means of listing your site on their index.
UWS pages (using the CMS system) do not use these tags.
- To help maintain pages within your own organisation.
Some tags are used for maintaining page relevance or can assist with searching within an organisation.

Overview

We will describe the most popular meta tags here and how they are used.
The meta tag itself looks like this;

```
<meta name="keywords" content="fish, sea life, sea snails, sea weed, chips">
```

Meta tags are made up of two main attributes **name** (type) and **content**.

To add Meta tags

You add Meta tags within the **<head>** tags of your HTML document.

Many HTML editors (such as **FrontPage**) automatically insert Meta tags for you or can be configured to do so.

There are many different Meta tags you can include in your pages but the most important for maintaining an internal focus are;

keywords, description, maintainer and review.

Keywords

You can use a Meta tag to include keywords which will make your page easier to search for, within your site.

```
<meta name="keywords" content="computer, training, it training, web">
```

By including a list of words that people would often use to search on your site, you can increase the number of people finding your pages. Keywords should include words and phrases people would use when trying to find your site. You can use both singular and plural versions of words to increase the number of hits you receive. Try a thesaurus for synonyms of keywords.

Some Search Engines will also use this Meta tag.

Some important points:

- Try using about 5-7 keywords or phrases on each page. Don't overdo it.
- Overloading **keyword** Meta tags with a diverse collection of keywords only waters down their impact on your ranking.
- Phrases often work better. For example, you are unlikely to search for "Word"; you are much more likely to search for "Word 2007 training".

¹ A crawler is a program that searches for sites and provides the information to a Search Engine.



Description

The **description** Meta tag provides a summary of your page in the list of sites found.

Some Search Engines will also use this Meta tag.

```
<Meta name="description" content="This site is for training staff .....">
```

The description should be a brief and concise description of the page.

Some important points.

- Don't make it too long because the search engines usually only allow a limited amount of text.
- Don't simply copy the description from the title page for each subsequent page you create – you should describe each page itself if you want an accurate listing.
- It's a good idea to also include a basic description of your site using the html comment tags for those search engines (such as Excite), which do not use Meta tags.

```
<!-- This site is for computer training for staff from UWS only-->
```

An example of using both description and comment tags is:

```
<html>  
  <head> <title>Computer Training For UWS Staff</title>  
  <!-- This site is for computer training for staff from UWS only-->  
  <meta name="description" content= "This site is for computer training for staff  
    from UWS only.">  
</head>
```

There are Internal software programs that search for out-of-date pages and contact the owners to make sure they are updated.

Maintainer

The maintainer Meta tag provides the name of the person responsible for maintaining a page. You will be contacted by email when your site is due for review.

```
<meta name="maintainer" content="Gordon Grant">
```

Review

UWS web sites use this tag so that when the 'review' date approaches, whoever is listed as the 'maintainer' is contacted by email and made aware that the information on the web page/s need to be reviewed.

```
<meta name="review content= "Fri, 14 May 2003 23:59:59.">
```



More Meta Tags.

There are more meta tags you can use.

Refresh

The refresh tag is used to automatically load a new page or reload the current page after the specified period of time (in seconds).

```
<meta http-equiv="refresh" content="5; url=http://www.uws.edu.au/">
```

The best time to use it is when you want to redirect pages that have been moved. The original page loads with a message saying that the site has moved and then the new site is loaded automatically. You can also use the **refresh** Meta tag to make slide shows where, after a given period of time, the next page in the series is automatically loaded. Don't overuse it.

Copyright

The copyright Meta tag is used to add an official copyright notice to your page.

```
<meta name="copyright" content="Copyright 2000. UWS IT">
```

Although everything on the web is copyrighted by default, including a notice prevents the excuse of "I didn't know" should a legal situation ever arise.

Robots

The **robots** Meta tag is used to specify whether or not you want robots to access your page.

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow">
```

Robots are programs that surf the www indexing and cataloguing it for search engines etc. The content of this tag can be **noindex** or **index**, and/or **nofollow** or **follow**. **Noindex** prevents the page from being indexed, while **nofollow** stops the robot from following any of the links from the page.

Using Meta tags in html

Below is an example of using some of the Meta tags described:

```
<html>
<head>
  <title>Professional Development Unit - IT Training Page</title>
  <meta name="review" content="1 Dec 2005 00:00:00">
  <meta name="maintainer" content="Gordon Grant">
  <meta name="description" content="This site is for training UWS staff in HTML">
  <meta name="keywords" content="computer training, Microsoft office training">
  <meta name="copyright" content="Copyright 2001. UWS PDU">
</head>
<body>
```

Instead of doing this on every single page in your site, you can copy and paste the common tags and then set the **description** and **keywords** for individual pages.