

Microformats Wiki

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What are microformats?

Microformats are small patterns of HTML to represent commonly published things like [people](#), [events](#), [blog posts](#), [reviews](#) and [tags](#) in web pages.

Microformats are the quickest & simplest way to provide an API to the information on your website. See what else [you can do with microformats](#).

First time visitors, see also the [introduction](#) page.

Launch Definition

The original definition on the [home page](#) said:

Designed for humans first and machines second,
microformats are a set of simple, open data formats
built upon existing and widely adopted standards.

originally written by Dan Cederholm with help from Tantek Çelik for the
launch of [microformats.org](#) on June 20th, 2005.

From The Mailing List

Microformats are simple conventions for embedding
semantics in HTML to enable decentralized
development.

from someone on the microformats-discuss mailing list. Please link/cite if
you know the origin of this.

- ✉ Mostly seems to originate from [Dr Ernie Prabhakar](#) but with [some later development](#).

More Specifically From The Mailing List

One popular definition from our [mailing list](#) (see also: [mailing-lists](#)) is "simple conventions for embedding semantics in HTML to enable decentralized development." More precisely, microformats can be defined as:

simple conventions
for embedding semantic markup
for a specific problem domain
in human-readable (X)HTML/XML documents,
Atom/RSS feeds, and "plain" XML
that normalize existing content usage patterns
using brief, descriptive class names
often based on existing interoperable standards
to enable decentralized development
of resources, tools, and services

<http://microformats.org/discuss/mail/microformats-discuss/2005-September/000922.html> by Dr. [Ernie Prabhakar](#)

"Or do you just use your browser to browse? That's so 20th century." --
[Mark Pilgrim](#)

[Chris Messina](#)

Microformats are simple codes that you can use to identify specific kinds of data, like people or events, in your webpages.

[Tantek Çelik](#)

Microformats are the way to publish and share information on **the web with higher fidelity**.

For example, if a company wanted their **contact information** to be easily found and shared, they would publish it with [hCard](#). Similarly if an organization is planning a series of events and wants more people to know about them and add them to their calendars, then they would publish their **events listing** with [hCalendar](#). For advocacy groups, whenever they take a

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position on some political leader, some piece of legislation etc., if they wanted their **evaluations/reviews/ratings** of those people/laws to be more easily found and passed around, they would publish such opinions with [hReview](#). For all of these, to make it easier, publishers can use [tools and services that support microformats](#).

The key here is that microformats are simple/easy enough that the any organizations own **web authors/designers can easily add them** in themselves. Adding microformats is easier than publishing an RSS feed for example. You don't have to be a programmer. Anyone with decent (X)HTML+CSS authoring/writing skills can use microformats. Pretty much anyone who is literate can be taught how to author HTML+CSS, and thus microformats makes use of very widely available skill sets.

From an IRC conversation 2006-06-06 which helped "knowprose" grok microformats. Update 2006-06-07: knowprose's blog post [Making Sense of Microformats: Have Data, Will Find It](#).

microformats are carefully designed (X)HTML class names that extend the semantics of (X)HTML and enable authors to publish higher semantic fidelity content such as people, events, reviews, etc.

From an IRC conversation 2006-07-28 with tcaspers on irc.freenode.net/#wasp.

a microformat is way of adding more meaning to web pages beyond normal HTML headings and paragraphs, so you can indicate mentions of people, companies, events, reviews, tags, etc.

From an instant message conversation 2007-07-06.

Drew McLellan

Microformats are a way of attaching extra meaning to the information published on a web page. This extra semantic richness works alongside the information already presented, and can be used for the benefit of people and computers. This is mostly done through adding special pre-defined names to the class attribute of existing XHTML markup.

from an IRC conversation

Aaron Gustafson

Simply put: "Microformats are a codification of convention." -- [Aaron Gustafson](#)

Alok Jain

microformats are evolving frameworks for how to present commonly used data items. For e.g. hCard microformat provides framework to capture a person's details First, middle, last name, company, contact info etc.

In my view this is doing two things:

- a Bringing some amount of standardization to commonly used data sets, which can lead to several benefits towards data retrieval
- a Bringing an implicit meta data structure which again can be used to fetch information at more granular level. SO in above example one could fetch just the company name, even though there is not meta data around company name

[Alok Jain](#)

Dave Sanford

Chris asked me to contribute my 'definition,' although I refer to it as a distillation:

"Microformats are a way of identifying and labeling classes of commonly used data that make it easier for humans or computers to locate or distribute such information on websites."

Andy Mabbett

Here's my re-write of the current opening blurb, from:

Designed for humans first and machines second, microformats are a set of simple, open data formats built upon existing and widely adopted standards.

to:

Microformats are a way of adding simple markup to human-readable data items such as events, contact details or locations, on web pages, so that the information in them can be extracted by software and indexed,

searched for, saved, cross-referenced or combined.

Which can be followed by:

More technically, they are items of semantic markup, using just standard (X)HTML with a set of common class-names. They are open and available, freely, for anyone to use.

Principles:

- Start with "Microformats are"
- Mention web pages
- Say what purpose microformats serve
- Use plain language

Guillaume Lebleu

Microformats are simple standardized annotations of content available on the Web that provide a practical solution today to more productive and decentralized Web-based information search and sharing.

In other words, Microformats allow you today to copy/paste information from a Web page, for instance someone's contact information from their blog to your address book, instead of manually retyping it. Eventually, microformats will allow anyone to make the information they publish easily sharable and searchable (products, events, resume, etc.) without having to duplicate and maintain up-to-date their data in centralized databases.

BenWest

A microformat is a specific collection of names, values, and accompanying structure defined through rigorous market research intended to consider pervasive use of semantic html that increases data fidelity in HTML-borne data widely distributed on the web. Microformats are more than one of these, eg "hcard and hcal are microformats."

DerrickPallas

microformats are semantics with momentum, a codification of what everyone did anyway. They are what works, written down.

Alessandro Martin

Microformats are frames for your contents. Using microformats you tell, in a way both humans and machines can understand, what is the basic meaning of what you are writing in a web document.

written by [Alessandro Martin](#).

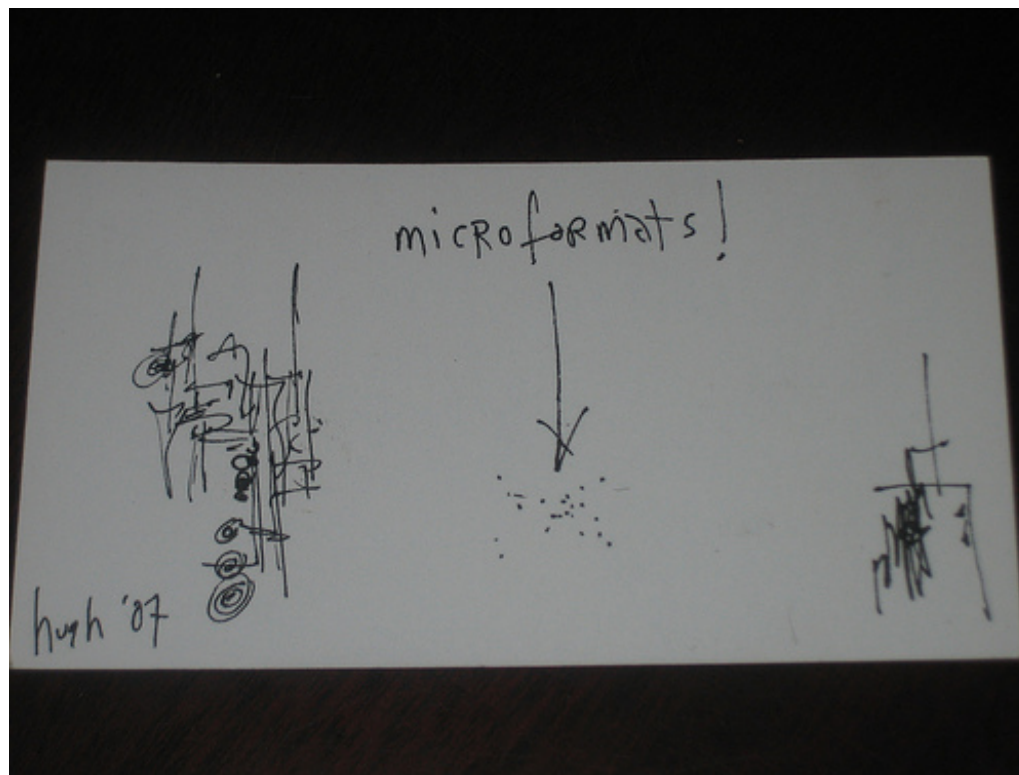
Alan Hogan

Microformats are a guarantee that anyone who wants to can grab certain types of data from your website without worrying much that a site redesign will require the to build a whole new parser.

Microformats is to people and computers what Java is to operating systems. Java programs are written once and run on Mac, Windows, Linux, Solaris, etc. Microformats-enabled web pages are written once and are understandable by both humans and computers.

written by [Alan Hogan](#).

Hugh Macleod



2007 September by [Hugh Macleod](#).

Toby Inkster

You know all that stuff you already have on your website? Microformats tell computers what that stuff is.

Asa Berdahl

microformats are a set of rules that utilize present technology to make it not only more easily interactive, but human-friendly as well. microformats uses long standing practices of good web design techniques combined with simple changes in coding to make content far more than just plain text.

written by Asa Berdahl.

Yuval Ararat

Microformats are the incarnation of Semantic Web in the XHTML standard, they make text surrounded by markup relevant to its meaning and not its markup. The standardization effort that is collected here is the embodiment of the new Web 3.0.

written by Yuval Ararat.

Sugandh Sarkar

Microformats are helpful in creating rich snippets for websites, by virtue of this search engines can pull reviews and also people's data enabling readers to see useful information.

[Sugandh Sarkar](#)

See Also

- [what-can-you-do-with-microformats](#)
- [faq](#)
- [definition-feedback](#)

Translation

- [c'est quoi les microformats](#) (fr)

[What are microformats?](#) was last modified: Saturday, March 19th, 2016

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