Branching lets you have different versions of a repository at one time.

By default, your repository has one branch named main that is considered to be the definitive branch. You can use branches to experiment and make edits before committing them to main.

When you create a branch off the main branch, you're making a copy, or snapshot, of main as it was at that point in time. If someone else made changes to the main branch while you were working on your branch, you could pull in those updates.

Have you ever saved different versions of a file? Something like:

* story.txt
* story-joe-edit.txt
* story-joe-edit-reviewed.txt

Branches accomplish similar goals in GitHub repositories.

Here at GitHub, our developers, writers, and designers use branches for keeping bug fixes and feature work separate from our main (production) branch. When a change is ready, they merge their branch into main.