

What is the difference between GitHub and gist?

Asked 8 years, 1 month ago Active 1 year, 5 months ago Viewed 111k times

▲ What is the purpose of gist and how is it different from regular code sharing/maintaining using GitHub?

487

[git](#) [github](#) [repository](#) [gist](#)



76

edited Jan 24 '18 at 8:13



[Peter Mortensen](#)

14.4k 19 88 117

asked Jul 20 '11 at 19:41



[NSExplorer](#)

4,536 10 41 59

17 *Gist is a simple way to share snippets and pastes with others.* – [Felix Kling](#) Jul 20 '11 at 19:44

136 How is it offtopic? I consider both gist and github *software tools commonly used by programmers*. This question fits in perfectly. – [golem](#) Jun 17 '15 at 19:12

42 I voted to reopen this question as it is useful and relates to software tools commonly used by programmers. The "*About Gists*" page on Github contains some useful info, but does not answer the question about the key differences and under which circumstances a user might prefer one over the other. I would personally like to see more detailed answers to this question. – [Simon East](#) Aug 16 '16 at 4:17

6 An important difference i don't see mentioned anywhere is that Gist dropped support for directories. I only noticed it when i ran into this issue: stackoverflow.com/a/27677649/5343341 – [Robotic-Brain](#) Sep 6 '16 at 18:27

1 How are versions of a gist created? Automatically each time a character is entered, or is there a commit mechanism? Sorry to get on with this thread but this is a convenient place! – [seinecle](#) Jan 14 '17 at 11:28

8 Answers



GitHub is the entire site. Gists are a particular service offered on that site, namely code snippets akin to pastebin. However, everything is driven by git revision control, so gists also have complete revision histories.

296

answered Jul 20 '11 at 19:44

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).



- 159 So what's the difference between a Gist and a Repository? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? (I believe this was what the OP intended to ask) – [chharvey](#) Jul 3 '13 at 6:03
- 52 @TestSubject528491: A repository is for user-created files. A gist is for a piece of code (usually unconnected to other code), like for discussing or giving examples. – [Kerrek SB](#) Jul 3 '13 at 8:01
- 16 @TestSubject528491 As Kerrek says, Gists are essentially Githubs equivalent of Pastebin. – [Phill Healey](#) Dec 8 '13 at 19:17
- 43 @Pacerier: Of course you could. But then you need to manage files yourself, clone the repository, push commits and all that. Gists let you edit the text directly in the browser and there are no files you need to manage. As I said, same underlying version control mechanism, but addressing different need. – [Kerrek SB](#) Jun 4 '15 at 9:18
- 15 @SimonEast the main differences between github and gists are in terms of number of features and user interface: one is designed with a great number of features and flexibility in mind, which is a good fit for both small and very big projects, while gists are only a good fit for very small projects. For example, gists do support multi-files, but the interface is very simple, and they're limited in features, so they don't even have a file browser, nor issues, pull requests or wiki. If you don't need to have that, gists are very nice and more discrete. Like the comments, instead of answers, in SO. – [joseLuis](#) Feb 3 '17 at 22:11

My Personal View of Gist and GitHub:

113

Gist: Gist is a simple way to share code snippets and pastes with others. It is used when you need to share a sample piece of code or technique with your co-workers or friends.

And

GitHub GitHub, on the other hand, provides a platform to share an entire project as a repo among a team(private repo) or to the whole world(public repo).

Both Will log version details.

edited Jan 17 '18 at 3:10



[Kushal Ashok](#)

315 1 6 14


answered Sep 7 '16 at 6:07



[Jayavignesh Vicky](#)

1,278 1 9 12

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).

aside that conig is probably old so don't use it)). example of [a project](#) it's pretty small but someone could open a ticket with suggestions and easy to remember address vs gist's url – [vrillusions](#) Oct 28 '16 at 23:23 



The main differences between github and gists are in terms of number of features and user interface:

34

One is designed with a great number of features and flexibility in mind, which is a good fit for both small and very big projects, while gists are only a good fit for very small projects.



For example, gists do support multi-files, but the interface is very simple, and they're limited in features, so they don't even have a file browser, nor issues, pull requests or wiki. If you don't need to have that, gists are very nice and more discrete. Like the comments, instead of answers, in SO.

Note: Thanks to @Qwerty for the suggestion of making my comment a real answer.

answered Nov 3 '17 at 10:13



[joseLuís](#)

520 5 9

3 Also "Gists are for files, repositories are for directories", twitter.com/pavelrepin/status/297473901884223488 – [Qwerty](#) Nov 6 '17 at 10:11

4 In my opinion this is the only real answer to the question to date. Every other answer just restates the purpose of the sites without explaining what features and differences enable that purpose. It's like saying "This car is meant to drive to the beach, but this car is meant to drive to work", without mentioning that the beach car is a convertible. – [DavidS](#) Jan 24 '18 at 23:23

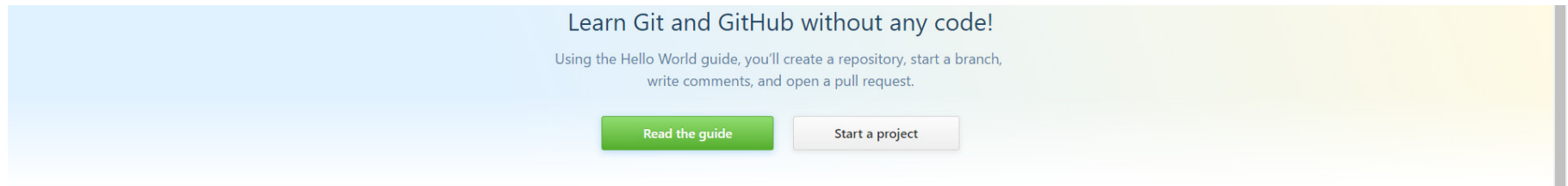


You can access Gist by visiting the following url gist.github.com. Alternatively you can access it from within your Github account (after logging in) as shown in the picture below:

16



By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).



Github: A hosting service that houses a web-based git repository. It includes all the functionality of git with additional features added in.

Gist: Is an additional feature added to github to allow the sharing of code snippets, notes, to do lists and more. You can save your Gists as secret or public. Secret Gists are hidden from search engines but visible to anyone you share the url with.

For example. If you wanted to write a private to-do list. You could write one using Github Markdown as follows:



By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).

Gist description...

todo.md

Spaces 2 No wrap

```
1 # TO DO LIST
2
3 - [x] this is a checked checkbox
4
5 - [ ] this is an empty checkbox
```

Add file

Create secret gist Create public gist

© 2016 GitHub, Inc. Terms Privacy Security Status Help

Contact GitHub API Training Shop Blog About

NB: It is important to preserve the whitespace as shown above between the dash and brackets. It is also important that you **save the file with the extension .md** because we want the markdown to format properly. Remember to save this Gist as secret if you do not want others to see it.

The end result looks like the image below. The checkboxes are clickable because we saved this Gist with the extension .md

Last active just now

[Code](#)
[Revisions 2](#)
[Embed](#)
[<script src="https://gist." data-bbox="628 95 775 110">](#)
[Download ZIP](#)

todo.md [Raw](#)

```

TO DO LIST

☒ this is a checked checkbox

☐ this is an empty checkbox
  
```

answered Nov 16 '16 at 22:41



[JSON C11](#)

5,255 4 48 46

- 3 "Remember to save this Gist as secret if you do not want others to see it." Be careful - Other people can see your secret gist if they happen to have its URL. See help.github.com/articles/about-gists/#secret-gists – [Gan](#) Feb 3 '17 at 9:40

How does this answer the difference between Gists and Github? (or Github repos - the question OP probably really meant to ask) This does not address the original question at all – [JoelAZ](#) Sep 6 '18 at 5:37



My personal understanding or to say my personal usage of Gist and Github is:

16

- Github

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).

- Gist

more like a memo. for example you can write the implementation of a small feature and share it to your blog or write down what you think about the project and share it with your teammates. Just like what the above answers said, gist is used for more like code snippet thing. So normally if you work on a project you use github.

answered Feb 1 '17 at 2:32



J.DoG

169 1 3

2 The "memo" analogy cleared this for me--otherwise, I'd have to ask "what is a pastebin?" – YCode Dec 30 '17 at 4:05

GitHub Gists

4 To gist or not to gist. That is the \$64 question ...

GitHub Gists are Single (or, multiple) Simple Markdown Files with *repo-like* qualities that can be forked or cloned (if public).

Otherwise, not if private.

Kinda like a fancy scratch pad that can be shared.

Similar to this comment scratch pad that I am typing on now, but a bit more elaborate.

Whereas, an *official*, full GitHub repo is a full blown repository of source code `src` , supporting documents (markdown or html, or both) docs or root , images png , ico , svg , and a `config.sys` file for running Yaml variables hosted on a Jekyll server.

Does a simple Gist file support Yaml front matter?

Me thinks not.

From the official GitHub Gist documentation ...

The gist editor is powered by [CodeMirror](#).

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).

And, you can then embed that public Gist into an "official" repo page.md using Visual Studio Code, as follows:

"You can embed a gist in any text field that supports Javascript, such as a blog post."

"To get the embed code, click the clipboard icon next to the Embed URL button of a gist."

Now, that's a cool feature.

Makes me want to search (discover) other peoples' gists, or **OPG** and incorporate their "public" work into my full-blown working repos.

"You can discover the PUBLIC gists others have created by going to the gist home page and clicking on the link ...

[All Gists](#){:title='Click to Review the Discover Feature at GitHub Gists'}{:target='_blank'}."

Caveat. No support for Liquid tags at GitHub Gist.

I suppose if I do find something beneficial, I can always ping-back, or cite that source if I do use the work in my full-blown working repos.

Where is the implicit license posted for all gists made public by their authors?

Robert

P.S. This is a good comment. I think I will turn this into a gist and make it publically searchable over at GitHub Gists.

Note. When embedding the `<script></script>` html tag within the body of a Markdown (.md) file, you may get a warning "MD033" from your [linter](#).

This should not, however, affect the rendering of the data (src) called from within the `script` tag.

To change the default warning flag to accommodate the called contents of a `script` tag from within Visual Studio Code, add an entry to the *Markdownlint Configuration Object* within the User Settings Json file, as follows:

```
// Begin Markdownlint Configuration Object
"markdownlint.config": {
  "MD013": false,
  "MD033": {"allowed_elements": ["script"]}
} // End Markdownlint Configuration Object
```

Note. Solution derived from [GitHub Commit by David Anson](#)

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our Cookie Policy, Privacy Policy, and our Terms of Service.

Take a moment to read through the [editing help](#) in the help center. Formatting on Stack Overflow is different than other sites. – [Isiah Meadows](#) Feb 7 '18 at 22:32

Also, GitHub Gist allows you post a *lot* more than just code. [Here's a concrete example of this](#), and yes, I've actually used Git with it. (You can actually treat them as full-blown repos from a Git client, including extra branches; you just don't have all the issue management, web interfaces for basic Git stuff, and other niceties that go with it being in a proper GH repo.) – [Isiah Meadows](#) Feb 7 '18 at 22:38



3



GISTS The Gist is an outstanding service provided by GitHub. Using this service, you can share your work publically or privately. You can share a single file, articles, full applications or source code etc.

The GitHub is much more than just Gists. It provides immense services to group together a project or programs digital resources in a centralized location called repository and share among stakeholder. The GitHub repository will hold or maintain the multiple version of the files or history of changes and you can retrieve a specific version of a file when you want. Whereas gist will create each post as a new repository and will maintain the history of the file.

answered Feb 15 '18 at 23:02

[Sunil Vishnu Raskar](#)

86 2



1



“Gists are actually Git repositories, which means that you can fork or clone any gist, even if you aren't the original author. You can also view a gist's full commit history, including diffs.”

→ check out the [official github documentation](#)

So the key difference is, that they are single files.

Oh, and: [gists can be “secret”](#) (as in: private url) also without being a paying github customer, if I understand correctly...

answered Nov 10 '17 at 12:29

[Frank Nocke](#)

By using our site, you acknowledge that you have read and understand our [Cookie Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and our [Terms of Service](#).

Cool, [didn't know that!](#) – [Frank Nocke](#) Nov 14 '17 at 8:58
