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What is RSS?



What is RSS? I'm regularly asked this question and thought it might be worth putting together a page to define RSS and hopefully shed some light on the topic.

Do you want to keep up to date with the latest posts on ProBlogger?

We have a number of ways that you can subscribe to this site and receive updates. The main one that our readers use is our [RSS feed](#). But **what is RSS?**

What is RSS?

RSS is a technology that is being used by millions of web users around the world to keep track of their favorite websites.

In the 'old days' of the web to keep track of updates on a website you had to 'bookmark' websites in your browser and manually return to them on a regular basis to see what had been added.

The problems with bookmarking

- You as the web surfer had to do all the work
- It can get complicated when you are trying to track many websites at once
- You miss information when you forget to check your bookmarks
- You end up seeing the same information over and over again on sites that don't update very often

RSS Changes Everything

What if you could tell a website to let you know every time that they update? In a sense, this is what RSS does for you.

RSS flips things around a little and is a technology that provides you with a method of getting relevant and up to date information sent to you for you to read in your own time. It saves you time and helps you to get the information you want quickly after it was published.

RSS stands for 'Really Simple Syndication'. Many people describe it as a 'news feed' that you subscribe

to.

I find the ‘subscription’ description helpful. It’s like subscribing to a magazine that is delivered to you periodically but instead of it coming in your physical mail box each month when the magazine is published it is delivered to your ‘RSS Reader’ every time your favorite website updates.

How RSS actually technically works is probably a lesson for another day but the key today is for you to understand why it’s good and how to use it.

Let me say right up front that I’m not the most technically savvy guy going around – but even I can use RSS. At first I found it a little strange to make the change from bookmarking to RSS but I found that when I started that I just couldn’t stop.

How to Use RSS

Get an RSS Reader – The first thing you’ll want to do if you’re getting into reading sites via RSS is to hook yourself up with an RSS Feed Reader.

There are many feed readers going around with a variety of approaches and features – however a good place to start is with a couple of free and easy to use web based ones like [Google Reader](#) and [Bloglines](#). Either one will do if you’re starting out (I use Google’s Reader) – as I say there are many others to choose from but to get started either of these are fairly easy to use and will help you work out the basics of RSS.

Both of these feed readers work a little like email. As you subscribe to feeds you’ll see that unread entries from the sites you’re tracking will be marked as bold. As you click on them you’ll see the latest update and can read it right there in the feed reader. You are given the option to click through to the actual site or move onto the next unread item – marking the last one as ‘read’.

The best way to learn how to use either Google Reader or Bloglines is to simply subscribe to some feeds and give it a go. Both have helpful help sections to get you up and running.

Note: other options to tracking websites that you might already be familiar with include using pages like MyYahoo, MyGoogle and MyMSN.

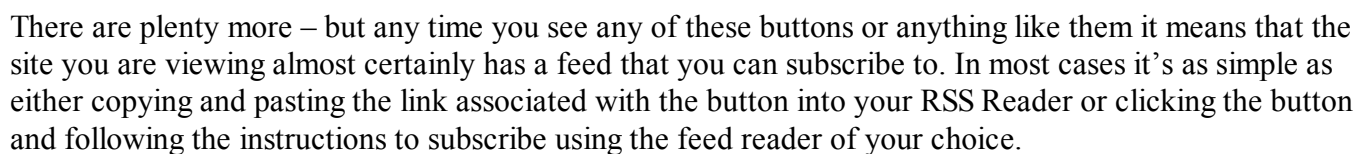
Find Some Feeds to Subscribe to – there are two places to look for a site’s feed:

1. On the Site
2. In Your Browser

On Site Subscription

Over the last few years you may have noticed a lot of little buttons and widgets appearing on your favorite sites and blogs. Little orange buttons, ‘counters’ with how many ‘readers a blog has, links called RSS, XML, ATOM and many more.



They come in all shapes and sizes. Here are a few you might have seen:



Many internet browsers now have the ability to find and subscribe to RSS feeds built right into them.

Here's how it looks for ProBlogger when you're using Firefox:



 <http://www.probloger.net/> 

To quickly and easily subscribe by clicking these icons you'll want to set up your browser to do it with your feed reader of choice as by default they will probably subscribe you using the in-browser reader. You can do this by going to the 'preferences' to your browser and choosing 'Google Reader' or 'Bloglines' etc as your feed reader.

Don't want to Use an RSS Reader? Email is an Option

Here at ProBlogger we know that not everyone is into the RSS thing so at the top of our right hand sidebar there is a field where you can enter your email address and get a daily email with a summary of our latest

posts. You can unsubscribe at any time and your email will be kept private and not used for any other purposes than to send these daily updates.

Further Reading on What RSS is

- [How to Explain RSS the Oprah Way](#)
- [Getting Started with RSS](#)



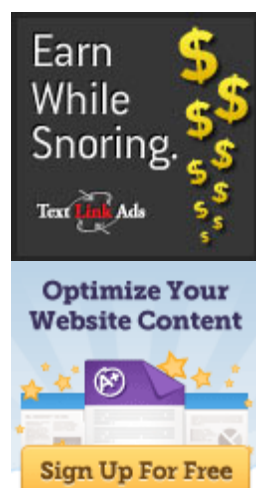
[VideoJug: RSS In Plain English](#)

Hopefully this answers your question of '**what is RSS**'!

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Who is Behind ProBlogger?



My name is Darren Rowse and I'm a full time Blogger making a living from blogs like [Digital Photography School](#) and [TwiTip - Twitter Tips](#).

In 2002 I stumbled upon an article about 'Blogging'. I didn't know it at the time but that moment changed my life. Read more [about Darren](#) or [contact him](#). Connect with me on [Twitter](#) at , [Facebook](#), [Google+](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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