



The International Obfuscated C Code Contest

IOCCC markdown guidelines

✓

IOCCC 29th Markdown Guidelines

Markdown Guidelines Version

These [Markdown Guidelines](#) are version **28.4 2025-04-28**.

Introduction

The IOCCC makes extensive use of [markdown](#). For example, when submitting to the IOCCC we have people submit remarks about their entry in markdown format. Every [winning entry](#) uses a [README.md](#) markdown file as the basis for forming the [index.html](#) web page for that entry. All HTML 5 generated pages on the [Official IOCCC website](#) start with some markdown content. We no longer support older HTML standards and some of our guidelines help integrate winning entries into the website more easily.

See the [markdown syntax](#) guide. See also the [CommonMark Spec](#). See the FAQ on "[remarks.md submission file](#)".

Nevertheless, the IOCCC does have certain practices that we ask authors to follow. Some of these relate to use of markdown directly and others relate to injecting HTML into the markdown file.

In the sections below, examples will mark by ✖ for the incorrect method and ✔ for preferred correct one.

Start `remarks.md` sections at level 3

If (it is not required) you do use sections in your `remarks.md` file (this does not apply to other markdown files), **PLEASE** start at level three up to level six:

- ✖ # Section Reserved
- ✖ ## Section Reserved
- ✔ ### Section Level 3
- ✔ #### Section Level 4
- ✔ ##### Section Level 5
- ✔ ##### Section Level 6

Replace `` construct.

- ✖ `...`
- ✔ `...`

Markdown links instead of `<a>...`

- ✖ This `HTML link text` works, but ...
- ✔ `[markdown link text](#link_target)`

Replace `<strike>` or `<s>`

- ✖ `<strike>striked through text</strike>`
- ✖ `<s>HTML 5 striked through text</s>`
- ✔ `HTML 5 striked through text`
- ✔ `~~markdown striked through text~~`

Replace `<u>`

- ✖ `<u>old tags</u>`
- ✔ `<ins>HTML 5 tags</ins>`

Replace `<tt>`

- ✖ `<tt>obsolete HTML</tt>`
- ✔ `monospace font`
- ✔ ``markdown style monospace``

Indent code blocks by four spaces, not by TAB.

✗ `echo "This code block is NOT indented"`

We request that you indent the code block by multiples of four (4) ASCII SPACES, never TAB (`␣`):

✓ `echo "This code block is indented by multiples of 4 spaces"`

✓ `# The top level starts with a 4 ASCII space indent.`

✓ `#`

✓ `# Only indent with multiples of 4 ASCII spaces.`

✓ `# 2nd level indent needs 8 ASCII spaces (no tabs)`

✓ `# 3rd level indent needs 12 ASCII spaces (no tabs)`

✓ `# etc.`

Alternatively its possible to use ````` marks, without the initial four (4) space indentation. This is usually the better method.

✓ `````

✓ `The same thing applies to any markdown block bracketed by`

✓ `````

Do not use TAB in markdown files.

Please do **NOT** indent with ASCII TABs (`␣`), **OR** use any ASCII TAB (`␣`) anywhere inside a markdown file.

While we have nothing against the ASCII TAB (`␣`) character in general, we have discovered that ASCII TAB (`␣`) characters create problems when used as part of the leading whitespace within a markdown file.

If you need to indent two (2) or more levels, use multiples of four (4) ASCII SPACES.

✗ `HT Please do **NOT** use ASCII tabs in markdown files.`

✗ `HT HT Please do **NOT** indent markdown with ASCII tabs.`

✗ `HT We don't mind tabs in general,`

✗ `HT We just ask that you NOT use them in markdown files.`

And to clarify, we are only talking about markdown files, not C code or any other non-markdown content:

✓ `printf("It is fine to use tabs in Obfuscated C code")`

✓ `/* if you wish */`

✓ `// We ask that you to NOT use ASCII tab characters`

✓ `// or in any other markdown files within your entry`

NOTE: Again, you are **perfectly welcome** to use ASCII tab characters in your C code and other non-markdown files. We simply ask that you do **NOT** use any ASCII TAB (`␣`) characters in markdown files.

Use HTML comments for code block language syntax.

We request that [fenced markdown code blocks](#) **NOT** specify a language directly.

```
✗ ```c
✗     int main(void) {return 0;}
✗ ```
```

Instead, put the language inside an HTML comment, separated from the markdown code block starting fence by a space:

```
✓ ```<!--c-->
✓     int main(void) {return 0;}
✓ ```
```

IMPORTANT: The initial ````` must be followed by an **ASCII SPACE**, and **THEN** an **opening** `<!--` (a “<”, a “!” and then three “-”s), and **THEN** the **language** and **FINALLY** a **closing** `-->` (two “-”s followed by a “>”).

Ensure blank line between code block and text.

Please do **NOT** place text on the next line after a markdown code block. Instead, place a blank line after the end of a markdown code block as this makes it easier to detect when markdown code blocks are **NOT** properly indented.

```
```
int
main(int foo)
{
 return foo;
}
✗ ```
✗ C compilers cannot be given a -Wno-main-arg-errors flag.

```
    int
    main(int foo)
    {
        return foo;
    }
✓ ```
✓
✓ C compilers cannot be given a -Wno-main-arg-errors flag.
```

Do not add trailing slash to void HTML tags.

Please do **NOT** use a trailing slash on [void HTML elements](#).

See also this note on [trailing slashes in void-element start tags](#).

The trailing slash on void HTML elements has no effect and interacts badly with unquoted attribute values.

✗ `
`
✗ `<hr/>`
✗ ``

✓ `
`
✓ `<hr>`
✓ ``

Do not use a trailing backslash outside of a code block

Unless the line is inside a markdown code block, please do **NOT** end a markdown line with a trailing backslash (\). Instead use a trailing `
`.

✗ In markdown,\
✗ do NOT use trailing\
✗ backslashes outside of\
✗ a code block

✓ In markdown,

✓ use trailing

✓ br's outside of

✓ a code block

✓ ```
✓ This is OK\
✓ inside a\
✓ markdown code\
✓ block
✓ ```

✓ `This is OK`

Doing it this way will prevent **pandoc(1)** from generating deprecated HTML elements such as `
`.

Do not use markdown style images

Instead of using this markdown element to embed an image:

✗ `![alt text](filename.png "Title")`

✓ `
```

Which allows for HTML `<img>` attributes ``alt=``, ``width=`` and ``height=``.

The problem is that **pandoc(1)** generates problematic HTML from the markdown image construct, the resulting HTML does **NOT** have **width** and **height** information so browsers have to slow down on rendering text around the image until it can internally determine the image size.

## Replace markdown style horizontal lines.

Please do **NOT** use `---` style lines in markdown to create horizontal lines or to separate sections.

Unless something is inside a markdown **code block**, do **NOT** start a line with 3 or more dashes (`"-"`s).

Such markdown causes **pandoc(1)** to generate `<hr />`. The `<hr />` has no effect in standard HTML 5 and interacts badly with unquoted attribute values.

If a horizontal line is really needed, use:

✗ `* * *`  
✗ `- - -`  
✗ `---`

Regular divider...

✓ `<hr>`

A short divider...

✓ `<hr style="width:10%;text-align:left;margin-left:0">`

## Do not put a literal `"(` or `)"` in markdown link titles

✗ `[some (text)](https://example.com/curds)`

✓ `[some &lpar;text&rpar;](https://example.com/curds)`

✗ `[ls(1)](https://example.com/ls-man-page.1)`

✓ `[ls&lpar;1&rpar;](https://example.com/ls-man-page.1)`

## Do not end markdown links with `"))"`

Markdown links that end in `"))"` complicate parsing and sometimes lead to incorrect URLs or file paths.

✗ `[some text](https://example.com/foo_(bar))`

✓ `[some text](https://example.com/foo_&lpar;bar&rpar;)`

✗ This thing, `([some text](some/path))`, is NOT ideal.

✓ This thing, `[some text](some/path)`, is better.

## Use `_` for italics in markdown

Please do **NOT** use `*` (single asterisk) for italics in markdown. Instead use an underscore (`_`). Using an asterisk can complicate parsing and sometimes lead to incorrect results. This can especially go for when it is ***bold and italic***.

✗ `*this text is italic*`  
✓ `_this text is italic_`

✗ `***this text is bold italic***`  
✓ `**_this text is bold italic_**`  
✓ `_**this text is bold italic**_`

**BTW:** the astute reader might notice that some cases of `*` for italic might have slipped through. We do ask you, however, to please observe this rule, as best you can.

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## Coda

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