

History

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Its key design goal is readability – that the language be readable as-is, without looking like it has been marked up with tags or formatting instructions,[9] unlike text formatted with a markup language, such as Rich Text Format (RTF) or HTML, which have obvious tags and formatting instructions. To this end, its main inspiration is the existing conventions for marking up plain text in email, though it also draws from earlier markup languages, notably setext, Textile, and reStructuredText.[9]

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Markdown has since been re-implemented by others e.g. in a Perl module available on CPAN (Text::Markdown), and in a variety of other programming languages.[10] It is distributed under a BSD-style license and is included with, or available as a plugin for, several content-management systems.[6][11][12]

Sites like GitHub, Bitbucket, Reddit, Diaspora, Stack Exchange, OpenStreetMap, and SourceForge use variants of Markdown to facilitate discussion between users.[13][14][15][16]

Standardization

Markdown has been characterised by an informal specification[17] and a reference implementation for conversion to HTML. Over time, many Markdown implementations have appeared. People developed these mostly driven by the need for additional features on top of the base syntax—such as tables, footnotes, definition lists (technically HTML description lists), and Markdown inside HTML blocks. The behavior of some of these diverges from the reference implementation. At the same time, a number of ambiguities in the informal specification have attracted attention.[18] These issues spurred an effort by some developers of Markdown parsers for standardisation.

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