

RSS - What the Heck?

Written by Jessica Sprague
Monday, 20 April 2009 19:00



If you visit more than 2 blogs a week, and you've never heard of RSS, you really should read on:

RSS actually stands for "Really Simple Syndication", and it's basically this:

Your favorite blogs (yay! including us right here at JessicaSprague.com!) have a **feed**, which is basically all the new posts or articles on that blog or site, constantly updated and broadcast out into the ethosphere. It's a little like a radio station. And just like tuning in to your favorite radio station to hear NPR or Pearl Jam, you can

subscribe

to the blog's feed to have new articles delivered to you.

So, how do you subscribe? And how is the feed delivered? And how is that better than just going to your favorite blog and reading it in its original version? Ah yes. Good questions. Read on for a quick 4-step guide to RSS: {...}

To subscribe to a feed (and to read it after you've subscribed), you'll need a feed reader, or *reader*

for short. This is a software application that you can either download or access online, that is designed to capture a feed, remember it, and fetch new posts for you.

Step 1: Grab a Reader

My favorite (and I think probably the hands-down favorite, especially if you use Gmail) is the [Google Reader](#)

. You can log in with your Gmail account, or set up a Google Reader account, and then you can access your Reader web-based, no matter what computer you log in to. I mainly love the Google Reader for 3 reasons:

1. It is clean and simple
2. It suggests feeds you might be interested in based on others you have subscribed to
3. You can click on an RSS feed button and Google recognizes it, and automatically asks to add it to your feed reader.

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If you don't love Google, or if you have a Yahoo or AOL account, you can also add RSS feeds to your home page. If none of these feels suitable, check out the dizzying array of options listed in this [RSS Toolbox article from Mashable](#) .

Step 2: Locate a Feed

Here is where the whole radio station analogy kind of falls apart. Because instead of tuning in only to your single favorite radio station, now you can tune into 10, or 100, and have them all waiting for you to select which tasty morsel you want. So now we need to tune in to a few different feeds. This process is slightly different depending on if you have a smart application, like Google Reader, or whether you have to copy and paste the URL. But both ways are fairly painless - especially if you know Photoshop. This is CAKE compared to that! ;)

So locating a feed - basically you're looking for an orange button, that might look like this:

Or it might just say RSS on it, or it might even be a simple text link that says Subscribe to our RSS Feed!

Step 3: Subscribe

Now we need to add this feed to our reader. Let's take [my blog](#) for example. Here's my little RSS feed button, over on the right-hand side of my blog:

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goes up! Coupons +
goodies + class info +
stuff.

Sign up for my Email Newsletter

Subscribe

 [Home RSS](#)

 [Home Comments RSS](#)

Info

[Search This Site](#)

[Hundreds of Scrapbooking
Ideas](#)

[Take an Online Class with](#)

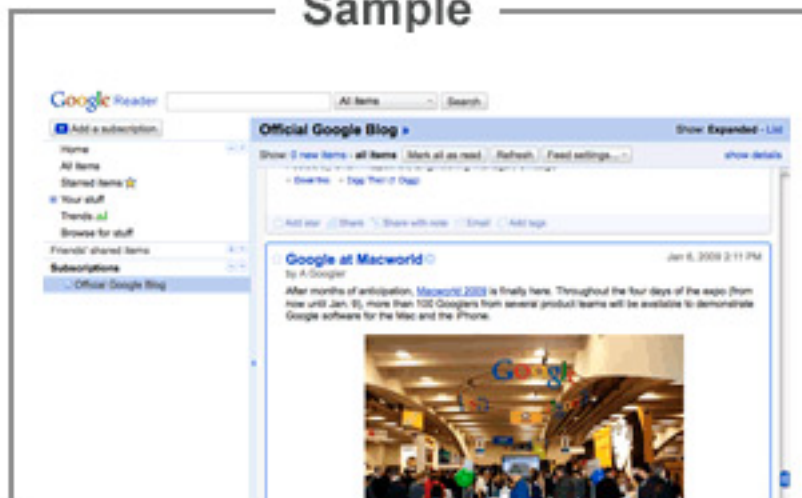
the feed to Google Reader, and you click on this, you'll get a new window that asks you to add

Google Reader makes it easy to keep up with the latest content from a large number of sites, all on a single reading list.

or

Add to Google Reader

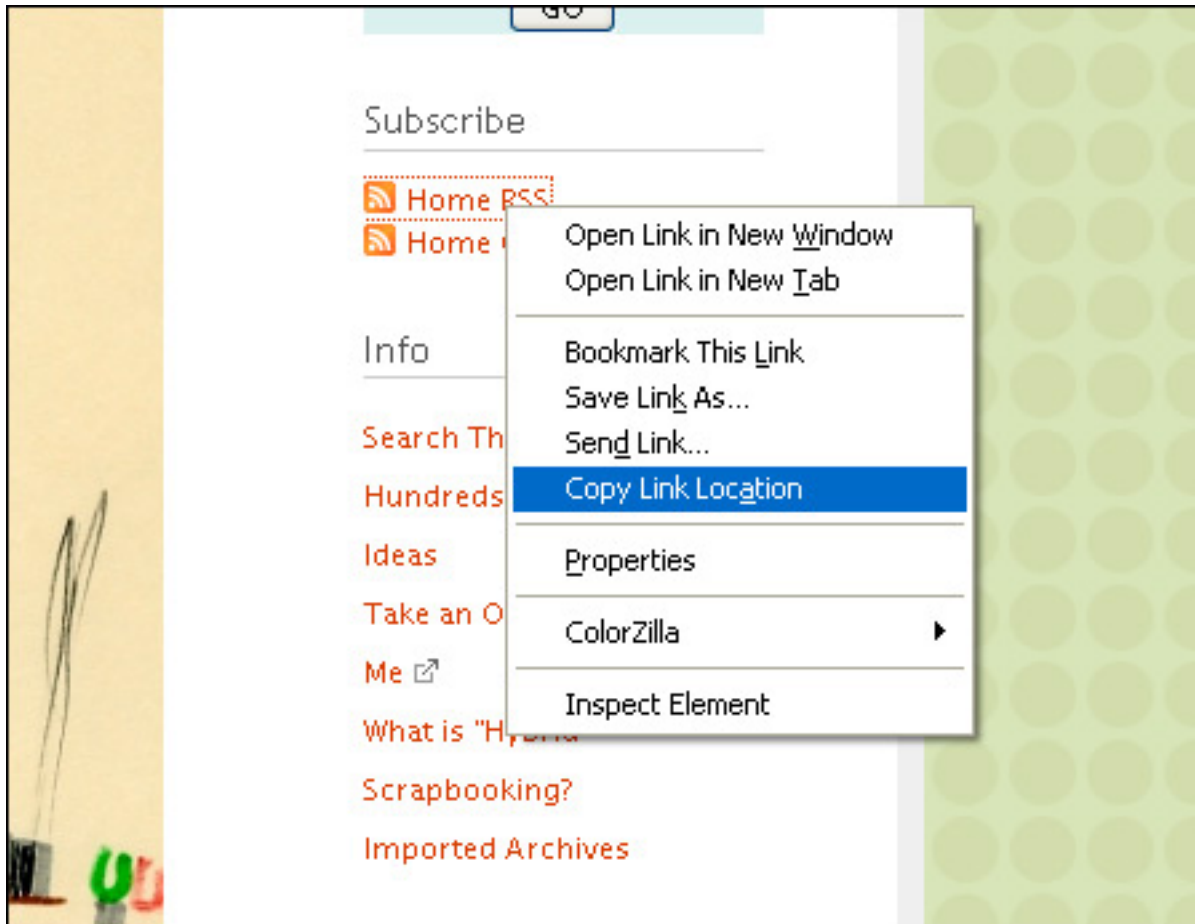
Sample



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and copy the link to the address bar. You'll see the new address bar with the link pasted in. Click the "Go" button in the address bar to load the link. You'll see the new page with the link pasted in. You can also click the "Go" button in the address bar to load the link.

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