WHAT IS AN RSS FEED & WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

A Practical How-to Guide

by

Renée Lemley

Sending out an RSS at

www.graymatterminute.com
RSS Introduction: What is it?

Strategy: Why should I use an RSS?

Okay, Fine: Now how do I use it?

Aha!
### What is it?

An **RSS** is defined as…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Really</th>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Syndication</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1)</td>
<td>as in very basic published/broadcasted</td>
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<td>2)</td>
<td>Rich cool content Site from Websites/blogs/etc. Summary nicely summarized</td>
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<td>3)</td>
<td>RDF Resource Description Site W3C-related Summary old-school stuff for techies</td>
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Most have settled on **Really Simple Syndication** in our Web 2.0 world. Let’s run with that before they change it on us again. 😊
The bottom line?

An RSS FEED Syndicates Web Content to Make Distribution AUTOMATED & EASIER

Think of it like this…
BEFORE RSS...

YOU

Visit Websites

Search Google

Read Newsprint

You Sought the Content
AFTER RSS...

The Content Comes to You
It’s easier than ever to feed your brain…
So what do we know...

Now you know what that adorable little RSS icon means.

When you see it, you know you can grab an RSS FEED from any given Web page.

And you know that the content you want will be delivered right to your desktop.
Put another way…

= A Digital Subscription

BUT, unlike a printed subscription (magazines, newspapers, etc.), subscriptions to RSS Feeds are FREE

and so are the RSS Readers* you need to read them.

* I’ll explain what an RSS Reader is in a sec. Stay with me…
Why should I use an RSS?

So you can control the flow of information!

Think of it like this…

- Sift Through the Noise.
- Decide What’s Good.
- Get the Feed for the Great Stuff.
- Share Your Very Best Finds.
Key benefits of RSS

• **Automate** info gathering (so you don’t have to chase it)
• **Scan** content quickly (from pre-selected sources)
• **Save** time (reread this bullet)
• **Keep up** with new online content
• **Track** blogs, microblogs and more
• **Get** breaking news (local or global)
• **Feed** your gray matter
• **Organize** info for easy reading
• **Share** the info you’ve culled with your network

So then...what’s the barrier to getting started?
At least that’s what I keep hearing people whisper in my little ear.
Okay, here’s how to use an RSS...

You just need to download a **feed reader**.

*Think of it like this…*

- **Email** is delivered to your inbox.
- **Newspapers** are delivered to your front door.
- **The Web** is delivered through a browser  
  (i.e., Mozilla Firefox, Safari, or heaven forbid, Internet Explorer.)

An **RSS Feed** is delivered to a **FEED READER**.
An RSS feed reader is like a virtual newsstand, bringing all of your feed subscriptions together into one place.

**FEED READERS ARE:**
- **FREE.** As are all good things in life.
- **NECESSARY.** You can’t read the feed without a feed reader!
- **SAFE.** You have total control over your feed reader and feeds (no spam, no selling of your name, no viruses, etc.).

So how do you get a feed reader?
My advice?

Don’t waste time trying to figure out which reader you should download.

Just pick one and do it.

You can find a handy little list at http://blogspace.com/rss/readers

I use NewsGator.

So let’s roll with that for now, shall we?
Go to [http://www.newsgator.com](http://www.newsgator.com)

In the menu, click on **Products**, then **RSS Readers**

Download the (free) software app (for Mac, Windows or your mobile device)

- **FeedDemon** For Windows
- **NetNewsWire** For Mac
- **NetNewsWire** For iPhone
- **NewsGator Go!** For Mobile
- **NewsGator Online** Free RSS Reader
- **NewsGator Inbox** For Microsoft Outlook

Please, DON’T overthink this like I did. Just pick one and download it!
LAUNCH THE APPLICATION AND YOU’RE READY TO START GRABBING FEEDS.

Here’s what my MAC desktop feed reader looks like:

My pre-selected sites are in the left column.

The headlines from new posts on those sites are in the top center column.

The bottom center box displays the full post for the headline on which I’ve clicked.
HERE’S HOW YOU SUBSCRIBE TO AN RSS FEED ON A SAMPLE WEBSITE:

This is a twitter homepage. (Both twitter and facebook offer feeds from a user’s stream.)

Look for the RSS Feed icon.

Click it.

Your feed reader may launch automatically, so you just need to choose the appropriate category from the dropdown menu and click subscribe.
Now, if you click a site’s RSS icon and your feed reader does NOT automatically open, then a new window will pop up in your Web browser and you simply need to click on the feed reader that you use.

For example, it may look like this:

So in my case, I would simply choose NewsGator from the list.
SHARE!

The whole point of finding and subscribing to good feeds is to share the most valuable content!

For example, you can:
• Email an article to a client.
• Post a story to your Facebook wall.
• Share the link on Twitter.

Your RSS feeds offer you a full suite of Networking Opportunities through the sharing of quality intelligence.

Now, that's what I call very Rewarding Social Sharing. (I also call it Really Smart Sharing, but that's just because I like playing with acronyms.)
Let’s do a final recap…

You Choose the Cool Sites

The Cool Content COMES TO YOU

You Deliver VALUE to Your Network with a Quality Share

All of these FEED into your RSS Aggregator

NOTE: “Aggregator” is just a 50¢ word for “feed reader.”
NOW I DON’T KNOW HOW OTHER PEOPLE DO IT, BUT THIS SYSTEM WORKS FOR ME…

• I create folders by category.

• When I add a new feed, I file it accordingly.

• I check my Feed Reader 2x/day (AM & PM).

• And when I feel overwhelmed, behind or like it’s just one more thing I’m not going to get to, I never hesitate to click:

Seriously. It’s okay. The world will not end if you miss a few posts. This tool is here to create less (not more) work for you. There will be other great content in your future. Trust me. Learn to let go…
If not, give it an honest try and please do ping me your “aha” when it happens. It’s a nice moment to share. 😊
And did I mention…

You can also grab a feed from a podcast?

Or should I save that for the next slideshare?
Wow.

Who knew?

I'm going to RT that.

Hey, I can't see!

I dig it.

This makes me happy...

And to think we can share this FREELY!

I will grab an RSS!

That sure did answer my RSS SOS.

Was that all?

TO LEARN MORE, GRAB THE RSS
OR SUBSCRIBE VIA EMAIL TO:

www.graymatterminute.com

You can also find me @usegraymatter on twitter.