



Coffee Break Training - Info Search and Web 2.0

Learn how to manage your information by harnessing the power of Really Simple Syndication (RSS)

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Learning Objective: The student shall be able to explain what an RSS feed is and subscribe to a feed(s) in a news reader of his/her choice

You've no doubt heard of RSS by now. You've probably seen those funny orange icons on Web sites? Maybe you've heard coworkers talk about it, but still have no idea yourself what RSS is? Have no fear, there are a lot of other people who haven't either, but this is changing. RSS is not only transforming the way news, media, and Web site owners share information, but it's also rapidly changing the way we all consume it.

RSS allows us to get updates to the content of RSS-enabled Web sites without having to visit these sites repeatedly ourselves. Instead, information from such Web sites (typically the title and a description) is piped to us in a process known as really simply syndication.

Before getting started please watch this fun, 3-minute video describing RSS feeds called "RSS in Plain English": <http://weblogs.elearning.ubc.ca/brian/archives/037788.php>

How many Web sites do you visit each day? It may be too difficult to find the time to visit more than several regularly. What if you could visit your favorite info sources and Web pages in just one place and all at the same time, without being bothered with all the advertising or having to hunt for new information on a page you've already read before? Think of all the time you could save without having to visit each site individually. Would that be valuable to you? RSS makes this possible.

Steps to using RSS feeds?

1. Choose a feed reader.

Most Web browsers such as Internet Explorer 7 or Firefox now allow you to subscribe to and manage your RSS feeds. You can also try out a variety of other Web-based readers. Each reader has a slightly different way of adding a new feed. Follow the directions for your reader. Here are some options to consider:

Internet Explorer 7: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/IE/ie7/tour/rss/>

Firefox – Live Bookmarks: <http://support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Live+Bookmarks>

Google Reader: http://www.andywibbels.com/flash/google_reader.htm This is a very good 3- to 4- minute flash demo of how to use Google Reader

Bloglines: <http://www.bloglines.com/>

2. Find a feed and add it to your feed reader. When you find a feed you want to subscribe to, select the RSS icon or hyperlink. In most cases at the next screen you'll subscribe by simply selecting your desired reader from a drop-down menu. If you're using an older version of a Web browser and see instead only an html code, you'll need to copy the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) from your Web browser's address bar and paste it into your reader.

3. Read your content.

The RSS feeds you subscribe to will start to display and regularly update the site headlines for you. Simply click on the update(s) that interest you.

Other resources:

Fire service-related RSS feeds: <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/rss.html>

Emergency management RSS feeds: http://www.lrc.fema.gov/rss_em.html

