

## The META Tag of HTML

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### Abstract

This document defines a strict synopsis for the META Tag of HTML. The grammar is extended to the contents of the HTTP-EQUIV field, defining a set of words to use to allow document cataloging.

### 1. Introduction

Now the synopsis of the META HTTP-EQUIV Tag is not severe, allowing so the use of different key words to define the same things.

The functions like this:

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV = "Keywords" CONTENT = "Italy, Tourism">
```

or

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV = "Keys" CONTENT = "Italy, Tourism">
```

could represent the same concepts with two different syntax.

The aim of this Draft is to define which are the words to use to define the contents of an HTML document.

There are, also, some easy rules to implement a binary logic (AND or OR) for the CONTENT field.

### 2. The META Tag (HTML 3.0 definition)

The META element is used within the HEAD element to embed documents meta-information not defined by other HTML elements. Such information can be extracted by servers/clients for use in identifying, indexing and cataloging specialized document meta-information.

Although it is generally preferable to use named elements that have well defined semantics for each type of meta-information, such as title, this element is provided for situations where strict SGML parsing is necessary and the local DTD is not extensible.

In addition, HTTP servers can read the contents of the document head to generate response headers corresponding to any elements defining a value for the attribute HTTP-EQUIV. This provides document authors with a mechanism (not necessarily the preferred one) for identifying information that should be included in the response headers of an HTTP request.

The META element has three attributes:

HTTP-EQUIV  
NAME  
CONTENT

### 3. HTTP-EQUIV.

This attribute binds the element to an HTTP response header. If the semantics of the HTTP response header named by this attribute is known, then the contents can be processed based on a well defined syntactic mapping, whether or not the DTD includes anything about it. HTTP header names are not case sensitive. If absent, the NAME attribute should be used to identify this meta-information and it should not be used within an HTTP response header.

It is possible to use any text string, but if you want to define these properties you have to use the following words:

- keywords: to indicate the keywords of the document
- author: to indicate the author of the document
- timestamp: to indicate when the document is authored
- expire: to indicate the expire date of the document
- language: to indicate the language of the document
- abstract: to indicate the abstract of the document
- organization: to indicate the organization of the author
- revision: to indicate the revision number of the document
- public (Boolean): to indicate if the document is available to everybody or not

An HTTP server must process these tags for an HEAD HTTP request, Do not name an HTTP-EQUIV attribute the same as a response header that should typically only be generated by the HTTP server. Some inappropriate names are "Server", "Date", and "Last-Modified". Whether a name is inappropriate depends on the particular server implementation. It is recommended that servers ignore any META elements that specify HTTP equivalents (case insensitively) to their own reserved response headers.

#### 4. NAME.

This attributes can be used to define some properties such as author, publication date etc. If absent the name can be assumed to be the same as the value of HTTP-EQUIV.  
An example:

```
<META NAME= "Editor" CONTENT = "McDraw Bill">
```

Do not use the META element to define information that should be associated with an existing HTML element.

#### 5. CONTENT

Used to supply a value for a named property.  
If it's used with the HTTP-EQUIV it can contain more than one single information; it is possible to use the Boolean operator (AND, OR) to insert a Boolean definition of the field.  
The AND operator will be represented by the SPACE (ASCII[32]) and the OR operator by the COMMA (ASCII[44]).  
The AND operator is processed before the OR operator. So a string like this: "Red ball, White ball" means : "ball AND (red OR white)".  
Examples:

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV= "Keywords" CONTENT= "Italy Product, Italy Tourism">
```

The spaces between a comma and a word or vice versa are ignored.

#### 6. Cataloging an HTML document

These 'keywords' were specifically conceived for exhaustively and completely catalogue the HTML document.  
This allows the software agents to index at best your own document.  
To do a preliminary indexing, it's important to use at least the http-equiv meta-tag "keywords".