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Use of the Content-Disposition Header Field in the  
Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP)  
draft-reschke-rfc2183-in-http-00

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## Abstract

HTTP/1.1 defines the Content-Disposition Response Header, but points

Internet-Draft

Content-Disposition in HTTP

October 2009

out that it is not part of the HTTP/1.1 Standard. This specification takes over the definition and registration of Content-Disposition, as used in HTTP, and clarifies internationalization considerations.

Editorial Note (To be removed by RFC Editor before publication)

This specification is expected to replace the definition of Content-Disposition in the HTTP/1.1 specification, as currently revised by the IETF HTTPbis working group. See also <http://www3.tools.ietf.org/wg/httpbis/trac/ticket/123>.

Distribution of this document is unlimited. Although this is not a work item of the HTTPbis Working Group, comments should be sent to the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) mailing list at [ietf-http-wg@w3.org](mailto:ietf-http-wg@w3.org) [1], which may be joined by sending a message with subject "subscribe" to [ietf-http-wg-request@w3.org](mailto:ietf-http-wg-request@w3.org) [2].

Discussions of the HTTPbis Working Group are archived at <http://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/>.

XML versions, latest edits and the issues list for this document are available from <http://greenbytes.de/tech/webdav/#draft-reschke-rfc2183-in-http>. A collection of test cases is available at <http://greenbytes.de/tech/tc2231/>.

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Internet-Draft

Content-Disposition in HTTP

October 2009

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1.</a>	Introduction . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">2.</a>	Notational Conventions . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3.</a>	Header Definition . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3.1.</a>	Grammar . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3.2.</a>	Disposition Type . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">3.3.</a>	Disposition Parameter: 'Filename' . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">3.4.</a>	Disposition Parameter: Extensions . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">4.</a>	Examples . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">5.</a>	Security Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">6.</a>	IANA Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">6.1.</a>	Registry for Disposition Values and Parameter . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">6.2.</a>	Header Registration . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">7.</a>	Acknowledgements . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">8.</a>	References . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">8.1.</a>	Normative References . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">8.2.</a>	Informative References . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Appendix A.</a>	Changes from the <a href="#">RFC 2616</a> Definition . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Appendix B.</a>	Differences compared to <a href="#">RFC 2183</a> . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Appendix C.</a>	Alternative Approaches to Filename Escaping . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
	Index . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
	Author's Address . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>

## 1. Introduction

HTTP/1.1 defines the Content-Disposition response header in [Section 19.5.1 of \[RFC2616\]](#), but points out that it is not part of the HTTP/1.1 Standard ([Section 15.5](#)):

Content-Disposition is not part of the HTTP standard, but since it is widely implemented, we are documenting its use and risks for implementors.

This specification takes over the definition and registration of Content-Disposition, as used in HTTP. Based on interoperability testing with existing User Agents, it defines a profile of the features defined in the MIME variant ([\[RFC2183\]](#)) of the header, and also clarifies internationalization considerations.

## 2. Notational Conventions

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [\[RFC2119\]](#).

This specification uses the augmented BNF notation defined in [Section 2.1 of \[RFC2616\]](#), including its rules for linear whitespace (LWS).

## 3. Header Definition

### 3.1. Grammar

```
content-disposition = "Content-Disposition" ":"
                    disposition-type *( ";" disposition-parm )

disposition-type    = "inline" | "attachment" | disp-ext-type
                    ; case-insensitive
disp-ext-type       = token

disposition-parm    = filename-parm | disp-ext-parm

filename-parm       = "filename" "=" value
                    | "filename*" "=" ext-value

disp-ext-parm       = token "=" value
                    | ext-token "=" ext-value
ext-token           = <the characters in token, followed by "*">
```

Defined in [[RFC2616](#)]:

```
token      = <token, defined in \[RFC2616\], Section 2.2>
value      = <value, defined in \[RFC2616\], Section 3.6>
```

Defined in [[draft-reschke-rfc2231-in-http](#)]:

```
ext-value  = <ext-value, defined in \[draft-reschke-rfc2231-in-http\], Section
```

### 3.2. Disposition Type

If the disposition type matches "attachment" (case-insensitively), the implied suggestion is that the user agent should not display the response, but directly enter a "save response as..." dialog.

On the other hand, if it matches "inline", this implies regular processing. Note that this type may be used when it is desirable to transport filename information for the case of a subsequent, user-initiated, save operation.

Other disposition types SHOULD be handled the same way as "attachment" ([\[RFC2183\], Section 2.8](#)).

### [3.3.](#) Disposition Parameter: 'Filename'

[[anchor3: Talk about expected behavior, mention security considerations.]]

### [3.4.](#) Disposition Parameter: Extensions

Parameters other than "filename" SHOULD be ignored ([\[RFC2183\]](#), [Section 2.8](#)).

## [4.](#) Examples

Direct UA to show "save as" dialog, with a filename of "foo.html":

```
Content-Disposition: Attachment; filename=foo.html
```

Direct UA to behave as if the Content-Disposition header wasn't present, but to remember the filename "foo.html" for a subsequent save operation:

```
Content-Disposition: INLINE; FILENAME= "foo.html"
```

## [5.](#) Security Considerations

[[csec: Both refer to 2183, and also mention: long filenames, dot and dotdot, absolute paths, mismatches between media type and extension]]

## [6.](#) IANA Considerations

### [6.1.](#) Registry for Disposition Values and Parameter

[Section 9 of \[RFC2183\]](#) defines the registration procedure for new disposition values and parameters.

### [6.2.](#) Header Registration

This document updates the definition of the Content-Disposition HTTP header in the permanent HTTP header registry (see [[RFC3864](#)]).

Header field name: Content-Disposition

Applicable protocol: http

Status: standard

Author/Change controller: IETF

Specification document: this specification ([Section 3](#))

## [7.](#) Acknowledgements

[[anchor6: TBD.]]

## [8.](#) References

### [8.1.](#) Normative References

- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.
- [RFC2183] Troost, R., Dorner, S., and K. Moore, "Communicating Presentation Information in Internet Messages: The Content-Disposition Header Field", [RFC 2183](#), August 1997.
- [RFC2616] Fielding, R., Gettys, J., Mogul, J., Frystyk, H., Masinter, L., Leach, P., and T. Berners-Lee, "Hypertext Transfer Protocol -- HTTP/1.1", [RFC 2616](#), June 1999.

[[draft-reschke-rfc2231-in-http](#)]

Reschke, J., "Applicability of [RFC 2231](#) Encoding to Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) Headers", [draft-reschke-rfc2231-in-http-05](#) (work in progress), October 2009.

### [8.2.](#) Informative References

[RFC3864] Klyne, G., Nottingham, M., and J. Mogul, "Registration Procedures for Message Header Fields", [BCP 90](#), [RFC 3864](#), September 2004.

#### URIs

[1] <mailto:ietf-http-wg@w3.org>

[2] <mailto:ietf-http-wg-request@w3.org?subject=subscribe>

#### [Appendix A](#). Changes from the [RFC 2616](#) Definition

Compared to [Section 19.5.1 of \[RFC2616\]](#), the following normative changes reflecting actual implementations have been made:

- o According to [RFC 2616](#), the disposition type "attachment" only applies to content of type "application/octet-stream". This restriction has been removed, because user agents in practice do not check the content type, and it also discourages properly declaring the media type.
- o The definition for the disposition type "inline" ([\[RFC2183\]](#), [Section 2.1](#)) has been re-added with a suggestion for its processing.
- o This specification requires support for the extended parameter encoding defined in [\[draft-reschke-rfc2231-in-http\]](#).

#### [Appendix B](#). Differences compared to [RFC 2183](#)

[Section 2 of \[RFC2183\]](#) defines several additional disposition parameters: "creation-date", "modification-date", "quoted-date-time", and "size". These do not appear to be implemented by any user agent, thus have been omitted from this specification.

#### [Appendix C](#). Alternative Approaches to Filename Escaping



[[anchor10: Mention: [RFC 2047](#), IE, Safari]]

## Index

- C
  - Content-Disposition header 4
- H
  - Headers
    - Content-Disposition 4

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