*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org.*

QUESTION: When I click Favorites in Internet Explorer I see something called Feeds. What are Feeds and how does one use them?

PC CLUB: Feeds are a method to subscribing to various Web sites, especially blogs. Let's start with some definitions:

- Blog – an online journal. They are used as a short form of web logs which means a list of writings on the Internet. When all the writing is combined together to give it a look like a small website it is called a blog. A blog can be comprised of news, articles, personal diary pages, pictures, audios, video, company information, product to be sold, their advertisement and the list is endless.
- Aggregator – is nothing more than client software or a Web application which aggregates syndicated web content such as news headlines, blogs, podcasts, and vlogs (video logs) in a single location for easy viewing.
- RSS - Short for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary, this handy service is revolutionizing the way we search for content. In addition, we as web searchers don't necessarily have to keep checking back to any particular site to see if it's been updated – all we need to do is subscribe to the RSS feed, much like you would subscribe to a newspaper, and then read the updates from the site, delivered via RSS feeds, in what's called a "feed reader." (We'll get to feed readers in just a minute!)

RSS feeds benefit those who actually own or publish a website as well, since site owners can get their updated content to subscribers fast by submitting feeds to various RSS directories.

How do RSS feeds work?

RSS feeds really couldn't be simpler. They're basically simple text files that, once submitted to feed directories, will allow subscribers to see content within a very short time after it's updated (sometimes as short as 30 minutes or less; it's getting faster all the time). This content can be aggregated to be viewed even more easily by using a feed reader. A feed reader, or feed aggregator, is just a really simple way to view all your feeds at one time via one interface. For instance, if you have a Bloglines feed, you can get all sorts of good stuff . Can you imagine how much time it saves you to have all these topics sent to you in one place rather than searching it out? Read about Bloglines at http://tinyurl.com/2akenay.

In addition, all these people who have their sites syndicated on Bloglines are enabling their content to be seen by many people who wouldn't necessarily find it in the search engines or directories. RSS feeds are a wonderful resource, and the uses for RSS are only just beginning to be realized; not only for search engines and searching, but in how people optimize their sites.

Possible uses - news alerts, latest specials, clearance items, upcoming events, new stock arrivals, new articles, new tools & resources, search results, a book's revision history, top 10 best sellers (like Amazon.com does in many of its product categories), project management activities, forum posts, recently added downloads, weather forecasts, etc.

For tutorials go to http://tinyurl.com/2bylczf and to see 50 things you can do with RSS go to http://tinyurl.com/ysdaf8 and for the best RSS Readers go to http://tinyurl.com/yo3on6.

Subscribing – there are several ways to subscribe as follows:
If you visit a site and see little RSS icon in the upper right corner turn from gray to orange, then that

site is publishing a feed.

You merely click that icon and a link titled "Subscribe to this feed" will show up in the upper left corner. Click the link and a window will open allowing you to subscribe. You can accept the default name or provide one of your own. Click the Subscribe link to finish.


To view the feeds, just click your Favorites button in Internet Explorer and choose the Feeds tab. You can select the feed and click any subject to read the article. They will be in chronological order and will be updated every day.

You can use an online RSS Reader such as Google's, available at www.google.com/reader. You need an account such as a free Gmail account. To add a feed, just click the "Add a subscription" button. You can search for feeds such as "New York Times".

You can also use an RSS aggregator such as Feed Demon available for free at http://www.newsgator.com/individuals/default.aspx. You just download and install the application. This is meant for Desktop use whereas the Google RSS Reader is available on line from anywhere with an Internet connection.

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Most blogs also have an RSS icon. When you click this you are offered several choices on how to subscribe including the Google Reader. Of course you must have an account there.
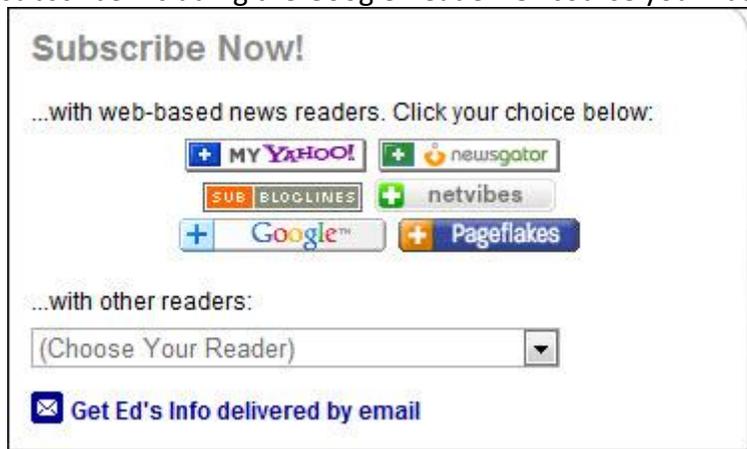
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