Metatags Tutorial

I tried to make this one of the best and most complete resources on metatags you will find with examples on how to use them. I would like to think iScripts for giving this tutorial a 5 star rating. Meta tags are not the cure all or the magic bullet in search engine placement. Some search engines use them, some don't. Be weary of services that "guarantees" that they can put your URL in a top ten listing on all the search engines (Makes you wonder what they promise to do for their 11th customer). Save yourself some time and money and surf right on past those banners that claim to know the "secrets of search engine placement".

I also have some direct submittal links to some of the biggest and most popular search engines:
AltaVista | AOL Netfind | Excite | Google | HotBot | Infoseek | Lycos | MSN Netsearch | Inktomi | Northernlight | Webcrawler | Alltheweb | Directhit | Alexa | Whatuseek

After reviewing this tutorial, fill out the form to generate your own meta tags. Once you get your metatags how you want them, submit your web site to the major search engines using my free automatic submission service.

Metatags

Author	Content-Type	Content-Script-Type	Content-Style-Type	Copyright
Description	Distribution	Expires	Generator	Interpage Transitions
Keyword	Language	PICS-Label	Placement of	Pragma
Refresh	Robots	Set-Cookie	Type	Window-Target

Author

This is where you put your name.

<META NAME="Author" CONTENT="Jone Bula">

Content-Type

The HTTP content type may be extended to give the character set. It causes Netscape Navigator to load the appropriate charset before displaying the page. I have read where this breaks older versions of Netscape and your page may not load at all.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="content-type" CONTENT="text/html; charset=ISO-2022-JP">

Content-Script-Type

Specifies the default scripting language in a document.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Content-Script-Type" CONTENT="text/javascript">

Content-Style-Type

Specifies the default style sheet language for a document.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Content-Style-Type" CONTENT="text/css">

Copyright

Insert copyright statement. <META NAME="copyright" CONTENT="insert copyright statement here.">

Description

The is where you get to toot your horn. Put some time and thought into your description tag. The intent is that this text will be used by the search service when printing a summary of your document. You only get one chance to make a good impression. Limit your description to 20 words or less.

<META NAME="description" CONTENT="This page is about beer, football, and nachos.">

Make sure you use several of your keywords in your description. You may want to include the same description enclosed in a comment tag for spiders that do not look at META tags.

<!--This page is about beer, football, and nachos.--!>

Distribution

I can't tell you much about this tag. I don't really know what it does. Default it to "global".

<META NAME="distribution" CONTENT="global">

Expires

This tells the browser the date and time when the document will be considered "expired." If a user is using Netscape Navigator, a request for a document whose time has "expired" will initiate a new network request for the document. An illegal Expires date such as "0" is interpreted by the browser as "immediately." Robots may delete expired documents from a search engine, or schedule a revisit. Dates must be in the RFC850 format, (GMT format):

<META HTTP-EQUIV="expires" CONTENT="Wed, 26 Aug 1998 08:21:57 GMT">

Generator

Typically the name and version of the publishing tool you used to create your page with. (ie. Frontpage, Notepad, Netscape Gold, etc.)

<META name = "generator" Content = "Mozilla 4.0">

Interpage Transitions

Interpage transitions are supported by Explorer 4+. Use these effects with care. You need to change the # after Duration to the number of seconds that you want the Intro to take. Then, you will need to change the # after Transition to the number of the type of transition that you want the Intro to do.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Page-Enter" CONTENT="RevealTrans (Duration=#, Transition=#)"><META HTTP-EQUIV="Page-Exit" CONTENT="RevealTrans (Duration=#, Transition=#)"> Transition Codes

0)Shrinking Box	1)Growing Box
2)Shrinking Circle	3)Growing Circle
4)Wipes Up	5)Wipes Down
6)Wipes Right	7)Wipes Left
8)Right Moving Stripes	9)Downward Moving Stripes
10)Right Moving Boxes	11)Downward Moving Boxes
12)Pixels "Dissolve" screen	13)Horizontal Curtain Closing
14)Horizontal Curtain Opening	15)Vertical Curtian Closing

16)Vertical Curtian Opening	17)Strips away going Left-Down
18)Strips away going Left-Up	19)Strips away going Right-Down
20)Strips away going Right-Up	21)Horizontal Bars Dissolve screen
22)Vertical Bars Dissolve screen	23)Random Effect

Keyword

Load up on your keywords but do not try to spike the keyword count by using the same word repeated over and over. Most search engines have gotten wise to this and they may not list your site at all. This tag is important if your document has very little text, your page uses frames, or has lots of scripts at the top of your page. You use the keywords attribute to tell the search engines which keywords to use:

<META NAME ="keywords" CONTENT="beer, football, nachos">

Language

This tag is used to declare the natural language of the document. It is used by robots to categorize your site by language. English-British is specified in the following example.

<meta http-equiv="content-language" content="en-GB">

PICS-Label

PICS-Label (PICS stands for Platform for Internet Content Selection), is fairly new. Although PICS-Label was designed as a ratings label, it also has other uses, including code signing, privacy, and intellectual property rights management. PICS uses what is called generic and specific labels. Generic labels apply to each document whose URL begins with a specific string of characters, while specific labels apply only to a given file. This is what my PICS-Label looks like:

<META http-equiv="PICS-Label" content='(PICS-1.1 "http://www.rsac.org/ratingsv01.html" l gen true comment "RSACi North America Server" for "http://www.bruce-hamilton.com/index.html" on "1998.10.05T23:33-0800" r (n 0 s 0 v 0 l 0))'>

Placement of Meta tags

META tags should be placed in the head of the HTML document between the actual <HEAD> tags and before the <BODY> tag. This is very important with framed pages. A lot of people forget to include them on individual framed pages. If you only use META tags on the frameset pages, you will be missing a lot of potential hits.

Pragma

This is another way to try and control browser caching. To use this tag, the value must be no-cache". When this is included in a document, it prevents Netscape Navigator from caching a page locally. It may or may not work, depending on what you read. Use these two tags:

<META HTTP-EQUIV="expires" CONTENT="0">

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">

Why would you want a page not to be cached? If you update your site frequently and you want your visitors to see the newest content or if you want to ensure that a new banner is loaded each time from your server when a page is accessed.

Refresh

This tag specifies the time in seconds before the Web browser reloads the document automatically. It can also specify a different URL for the browser to load. See an example of how this works. Close the new window to return to this page.

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<META HTTP-EQUIV="Refresh" CONTENT="5; url=http://www.newurl.com">

Make sure you put the quotation marks in the right place. If you put them in the wrong place the page will not reload.

Robots

If you don't want your pages indexed by spiders and you don't have access to a "robots.txt" file, the robots META tag is a workaround.

<META NAME="robots" CONTENT="all | none | index | noindex | follow | nofollow">

The default for the robot attribute is "all". This allows all of the files to be indexed by the spider. "None" tells the spider not to index any files, and not to follow the hyperlinks to the other pages. "Index" indicates that this page may be indexed by the spider. "Follow" means the spider is free to follow the links from this page to other pages. "Nofollow" allows the page to be indexed, but links are not followed. The opposite is also true. This META tag would tell the spider not to index this page, but it would follow subsidiary links and index those pages.

<META NAME="robots" CONTENT="noindex">

The robots tag may not be supported by all robots and spiders. List your page(s) in a "robots.txt" file to be double dog sure you get what you want.

Set-Cookie

This is one method of setting a "cookie" in the user's Web browser. If you use an expiration date, the cookie is considered permanent and will be saved to disk (until it expires), otherwise it will be considered valid only for the current session and will be erased upon closing the Web browser.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Set-Cookie" CONTENT="cookievalue=xxx;expires=Wednesday, 21-Oct-98 16:14:21 GMT; path=/">

Type

Type refers to the type of information that is provided on your web page. The most common types are "Home Page", "Advertisement", "Description", "Entertainment", "General", "News", "Personal", "Technical", and "User Manual".

<META name="type" content="Home Page">

Window-Target

This one specifies the "named window" of the current page, and can be used to prevent a page from appearing inside another framed page. Usually this means that the Web browser will force the page to go the top frameset.

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Window-target" CONTENT="_top">

information also available at www.bruce-hamilton.com