

Markdown Cheatsheet

GitHub Flavored Markdown Reference

Every syntax rule below is grouped by where it actually comes from, since "Markdown" on GitHub is really three layers stacked on top of each other:

- **CommonMark** — base spec, works everywhere
- **GFM** — GitHub Flavored Markdown extension (spec-defined)
- **GitHub.com** — web app rendering only, not in any Markdown spec

Headings – CommonMark

ATX-style headings use 1–6 `#` characters followed by a space. A closing run of `#` is optional and ignored.

```
# Heading 1
## Heading 2
### Heading 3
#### Heading 4
##### Heading 5
##### Heading 6
```

Emphasis – CommonMark (+ GFM)

Bold and italic are core CommonMark. Strikethrough (`~text~`) is a GFM-only addition.

```
*italic* or _italic_
**bold** or __bold__
***bold italic***
~~strikethrough~~
```

Paragraphs & Line Breaks – CommonMark

A blank line starts a new paragraph. For a hard line break inside one paragraph, end the line with two or more trailing spaces, or a trailing backslash `\`.

First paragraph.

Second paragraph, line one

Second paragraph, line two

Line one\

Line two (backslash break)

The above stands in for two literal trailing spaces — invisible in most editors, which is exactly why the backslash form is usually the safer choice.

Blockquotes – CommonMark

Prefix a line with `>`. Quotes can be nested and can contain other block elements like lists or code.

```
> Single level quote.
>
> > Nested quote inside it.
>
> Back to the first level, with a bold word.
```

Lists – CommonMark

Unordered lists accept `-`, `*`, or `+` as the bullet marker — pick one and stay consistent. Ordered lists use any number followed by `.`; the actual numbers after the first don't matter for rendering.

```
- Item one
- Item two
  - Nested item
- Item three

1. First step
2. Second step
  1. Nested step
3. Third step
```

Task Lists – GFM

A list item written as `[ ]` or `[x]` renders as an interactive-looking checkbox. On GitHub.com, checkboxes in issues and PRs are actually clickable.

- [x] Write cheatsheet
- [x] Add GFM extensions
- [] Ship it
- [] Sub-tasks:
 - [x] Draft
 - [] Review

Code – CommonMark

Inline code uses single backticks. Fenced code blocks use triple backticks and accept an optional language hint that GitHub.com uses for syntax highlighting.

```
Run `npm install` first.
```

```
```bash
echo "hello world"
git status
```
```

Links – CommonMark

Inline links carry the URL right in the text. Reference-style links keep prose clean by parking the URL in a definition elsewhere in the document.

```
[Anthropic](https://anthropic.com "Anthropic homepage")
```

Check out [TGWAB][tgwab] for MSP tips.

```
[tgwab]: https://techguywithabeard.com "TechGuyWithABeard"
```

Autolinks – CommonMark (+ GFM extended)

CommonMark auto-links anything wrapped in angle brackets. GFM's *extended autolinks* go further and link bare URLs, `www.` domains, and email addresses with no brackets at all.

```
<https://example.com>
<support@techguywithabeard.com>
```

Just paste it bare: `https://github.com`
Or a bare domain: `www.michalferber.dev`

Images – CommonMark

Same syntax as links with a leading `!`. Wrap an image in a link to make it clickable.

```
![Server rack diagram](./rack.png "Rack layout v2")

![Company logo](./logo.png)(https://techguywithabeard.com)
```

Tables – GFM

Pipe-delimited rows with a required header separator. Colons in the separator control column alignment.

```
Service	Uptime	Cost
DNS	99.99%	$150
Migration	99.9%	$400
```

| Service | Uptime | Cost |
|-----------|--------|-------|
| DNS | 99.99% | \$150 |
| Migration | 99.9% | \$400 |

Horizontal Rules – CommonMark

Three or more `-`, `*`, or `_` characters on their own line, all producing an identical `<hr>`.

```
Above the line.

---
***
---
```

Below the line.

Escaping – CommonMark

A backslash before a punctuation character forces it to render literally instead of being parsed as syntax.

```
\*not italic\*
\# not a heading
1975\. not a list item
```

Escapable characters: \ ` * _ { } [] () # + - . ! |

Footnotes – GFM

A caret-bracket marker in the text pairs with a definition anywhere else in the document; GitHub.com renders it as a jump-linked superscript.

```
DNS propagation can take up to 48 hours.[^1]
```

```
[^1]: In practice it's usually under an hour with low TTLs.
```

Raw HTML – CommonMark (+ GFM sanitization)

CommonMark passes inline HTML straight through. GFM's *disallowed raw HTML* extension then escapes a specific list of tags for safety, even though the base parser would otherwise render them.

```
<details>
<summary>Click to expand</summary>

Hidden content revealed on click.

</details>

<!-- this comment is invisible -->
```

Tags GFM always escapes: <title> <textarea> <style> <xmp> <iframe> <noembed> <noframes> <script> <plaintext>

GitHub.com Extras – GitHub.com

Web-app rendering behavior, not part of the GFM parsing spec. These only activate inside GitHub.com, in a repository context — a static Markdown renderer built against the GFM spec won't reproduce them.

```
Nice work :rocket: :tada:
```

```
Thanks @octocat for the review.
```

```
Fixes #142, see also a5c3785.
```