

An Easy Way to Read Blogs: Subscribe


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Not long ago, Harvey sent out an e-mail with links to some of his latest blog posts. Some readers hadn't been notified that they'd appeared. That's not good. An easy way for blog readers to get around this kind of problem is to subscribe. This article is going to show you how to subscribe to blogs (or web sites) using Google Reader.

There are three things you should know about subscribing to blogs: (1) it's FREE. (2) It's easy. This is true whether you use Google Reader or some other service. (3) The "go back" button, the Undo option, and the Escape key are your friends. Use them when something doesn't work the way you thought it would.

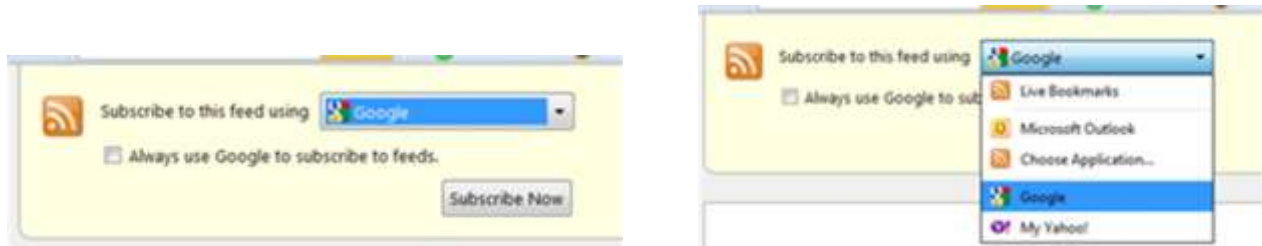
In general, there are two ways to subscribe: by e-mail or via something called Really Simple Subscription (RSS). A blog should give you both options. On Writing the World, the choices look like the image at right. For e-mail, you fill in your name and e-mail address and click the Subscribe button. When something new is posted, it'll show up in your inbox.



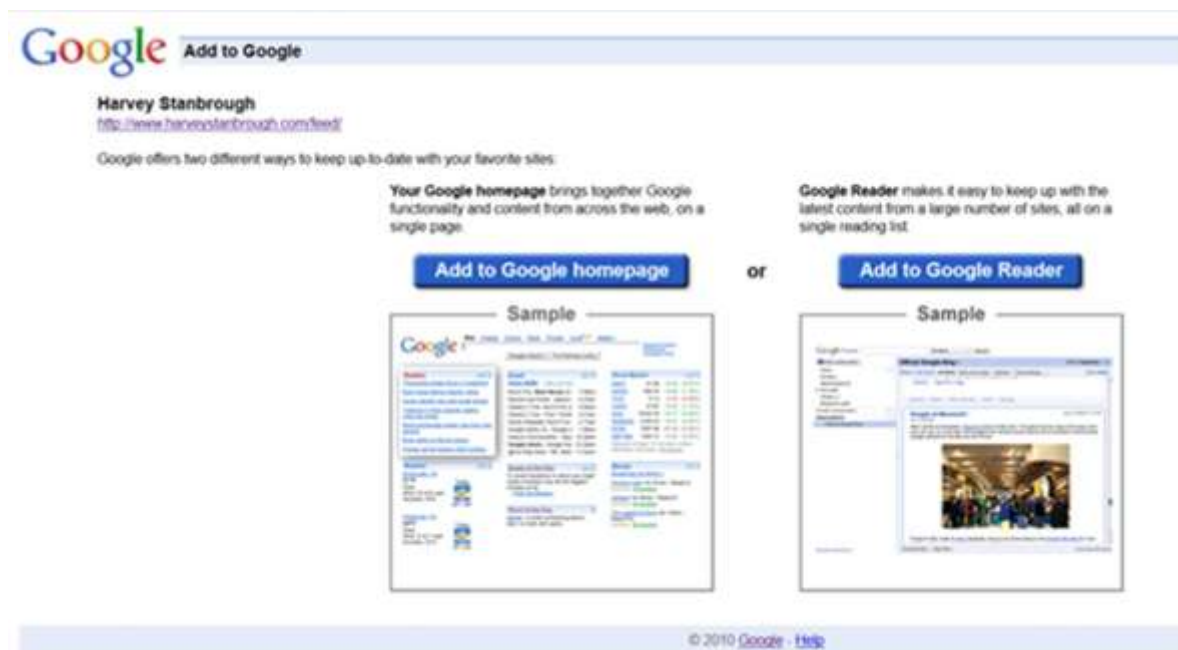
But what's that  symbol next to [WTW](#)? That's the RSS icon. Click on it and you should get a menu of choices, like the one shown at right. Click on the button or reader name you want to get started. We're going to select the Google button.



Now, when you click on that RSS icon or Google button, the first thing you'll see is on the left below. It gives you a drop-down list of choices, as shown on the right.



Selecting Google and clicking the Subscribe Now button gives you the two choices shown below in the big blue buttons: Add to Google homepage and Add to Google Reader.



The first time you click on the Add to Google Reader button, you'll get a page that describes Reader, asks you to sign in to your Google account, and lets you create an account if you don't already have one. From then on, clicking the Add to Google Reader button will take you straight to the Google Reader main screen.

The Google Reader screen has three parts. For now I'm going to concentrate on the one on the left, which I'll call the control panel.

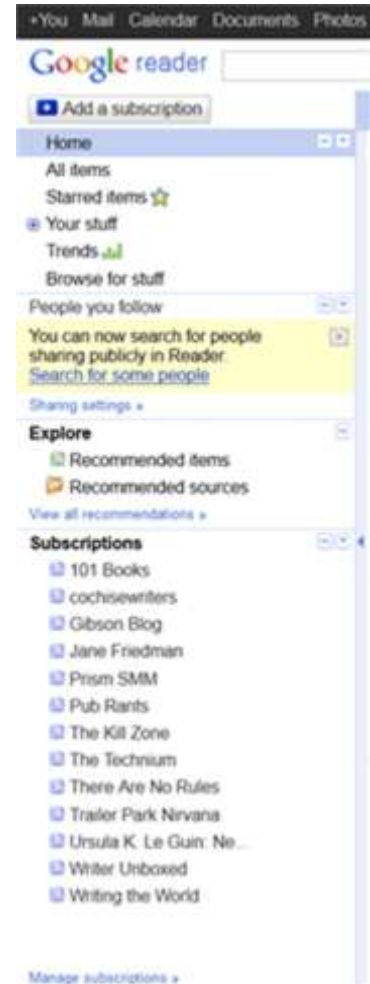
The control panel looks like the image at right. If you're coming to this screen from a blog, that blog's name will appear in your list of subscriptions in the lower portion. Clicking the name will bring up excerpts from the blog's most recent posts.

You can also add new blogs by clicking the Add a subscription button. When you do, a pop-up box like the one below lets you search for the blog you want to follow. This is a handy tool if you don't know the blog's exact address.

Enter the blog's name and click Add.

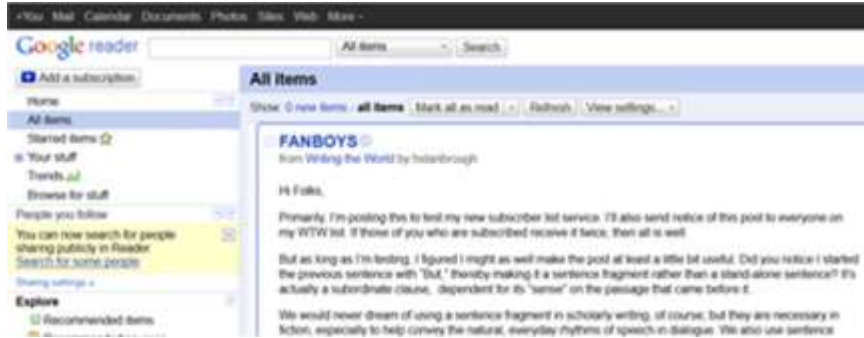
If there's more than one match for what you entered, you'll get a list of choices. The image below shows part of what I got when I entered "Writing the World."

Clicking the Subscribe button adds your choice to your subscription list.



Now that you've subscribed, there are a couple of ways to read a blog's posts.

From the Google Reader main screen, you can click on All Items at the top of the control panel, as shown at right. That will



display the most recent post in the center of the screen. If you've subscribed to more than one blog, this will show the most recent post of all of them. Scroll down to see the others.

You can also place the Google Reader gadget on your Google or iGoogle home page, as shown here. Reader periodically checks for new items, or you can click the [refresh](#) link to force it to update. Posts you haven't read yet appear in bright text, like Harvey's "FANBOYS" post. Those you have read are shown in faint text. Click on the blue title to read a post. Click on the green link to go to the blog's or web site's home page.



You can get to the Reader home page and the control panel by clicking **Google Reader** at the top of the gadget's window.

If you want to stop subscribing to a blog, you can delete your subscription by clicking [Manage subscriptions »](#) at the bottom of the control panel.

Google Reader is a fine tool for managing your subscriptions to blogs, web sites, etc. Don't be afraid to poke around on the Reader page and see what happens.

Happy reading!