

Exploring Web Feeds and Subscribing to a Website

Website feeds—also known as RSS or XML feeds—allow Internet users to quickly access new content from sites that are updated frequently when they are added to programs called aggregators. In fact, RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication.” Like television programs created by major networks, content at sites that have website feeds is delivered directly to you.

These icons typically indicate that a site provides a web feed:



Images retrieved from <http://www.wikipedia.com> on October 28, 2006

What is an aggregator?

Aggregators—also commonly called feed readers—regularly check for new content at sites that have been included in their feed lists. When new content has been posted at those sites, the aggregator notifies subscribers immediately.

By using feed readers, you can simplify your online life. No longer do you have to regularly visit your favorite website to find out what’s new. Instead, just check in with your feed reader!

Internet users who have learned to take advantage of “Really Simple Syndication” only need to visit one site a day—that of their feed reader—to stay on top of their favorite sites.

What aggregators are particularly useful?

There are literally dozens of aggregators available to Internet users interested in monitoring websites. All include the same basic features and capabilities and many are available for free use after creating an initial account. There are feed readers that require software downloads and operate on your computer and others that are web-based, requiring no downloads.

Retrieved from <http://plugmein.edublogs.org>

My favorite feed reader is **Pageflakes** (<http://www.pageflakes.com>). I like Pageflakes because it is free, and it is web-based. That means that I can check my account from any computer that has an Internet connection. It is also quick and easy to add new websites to my feed reader and to get rid of any websites that I'm not interested in any longer.

How do I use Pageflakes?

The first step to using Pageflakes is to sign in using our Plug Me In username and password:

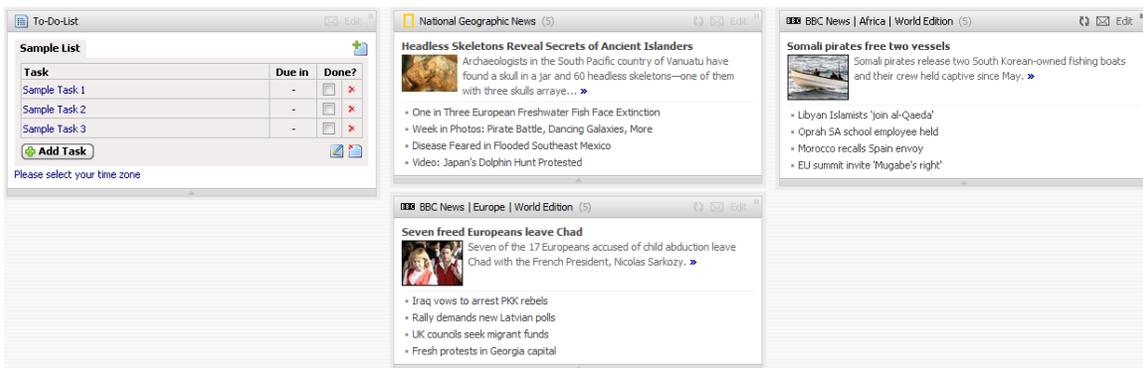
Username: _____

Password: _____

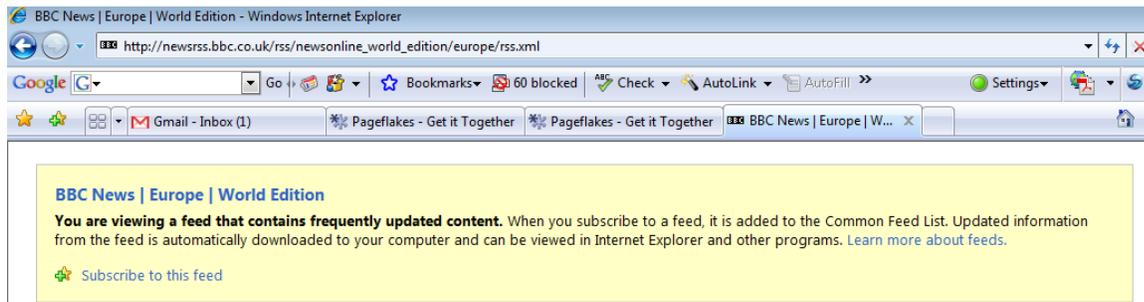
Once you've logged in to our club Pageflakes account, you'll see tabs for "Pages" going across the top of the screen. Begin by creating a new page using your Plug Me In pseudonym. This page is where you will add or delete information for blogs and websites that you are interested in reading regularly. This is also where you will see updates to the sites that you are currently following.



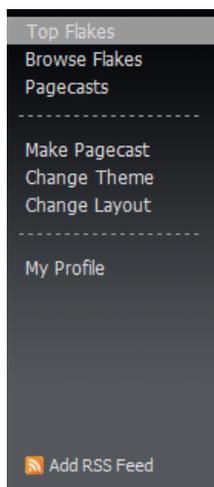
Once you've created your personal page, you're ready to begin adding "Flakes," which are small windows showing the new content at your favorite websites.



To add a new flake, first find a site that provides an RSS feed and copy the feed address. Often, this address can be found by clicking on an RSS icon on an individual website page. RSS feed addresses often end with ".xml".



After you've copied a website's feed address, return to Pageflakes and select the round snowflake icon in the top right hand corner of your personal page.



From the window that appears, select the "Add RSS Feed" icon found in the bottom left hand corner.

Paste the RSS feed into the "Add Feed" box, click the "Get Feed" button and you're done! A new flake containing updates from your favorite site will be added to your personal page. Whenever new information has been posted, you'll be able to access it directly through Pageflakes.

