

# Creating a personalised homepage with iGoogle and RSS feeds

## About

This activity demonstrates how to create a customised homepage, so that stories, news feeds and items of relevance are immediately pulled onto the first page that is displayed in your browser. This activity requires a Google account to create a Google personalised homepage. Similar techniques can be applied to services offered by Microsoft – the activities specified here are specific to iGoogle.

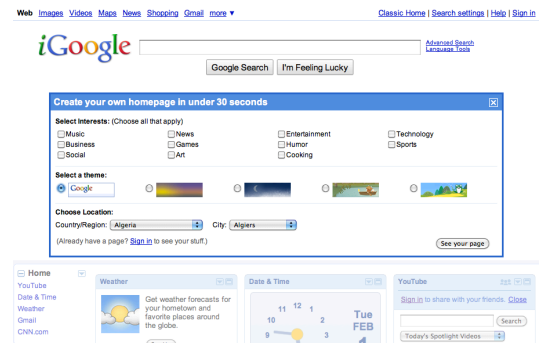


Figure 1

## Note

It is the nature of Web Browser based services to change very rapidly. These screenshots were current on 20/2/2011, but it is entirely possible that the interface may differ over time.

## One

Use a modern browser to navigate to [www.google.com/ig](http://www.google.com/ig). This page is the default customisable Google homepage (figure 1). If you haven't signed in, use the sign in link (typically in the top right-hand corner – figure 2)

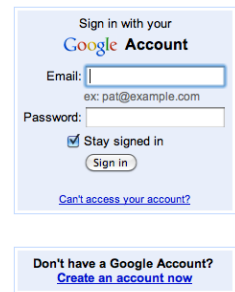


Figure 2

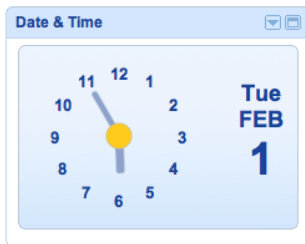


Figure 3

## Two

Each item (gadget or feed) on the page has its own rectangle, with a banner at the top indicating its name and a small number of icons that can be used to control the gadget (figure 3). Move each gadget around the page by hovering the mouse over the banner and using a click and drag motion. To see/edit the settings for a gadget or feed, use the down-arrow icon (figure 4) – try changing the settings for the clock gadget (figure 5).

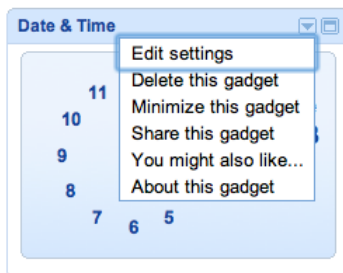


Figure 4

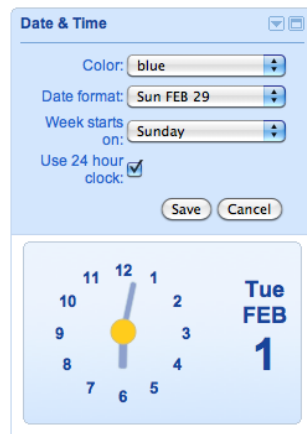


Figure 5

The other icon in the banner will make the gadget occupy the full width of the browser window – the features and functionality available will depend on the gadget – try the full width mode for the clock gadget.

### Three – adding a customised RSS feed

RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication) are a common web feed format used on sites to export (typically) the *title*, a *summary* and a *link* to an original story or text piece (figure 6). Sites that support RSS use an icon (figure 7) to signify that they provide a feed that may be used to extract the content onto other sites.

RSS feeds can be used in dedicated feed reader software (that can be downloaded and installed) or online through the browser – iGoogle allows RSS feeds to be encapsulated through a gadget onto the personalised home page.

There are two ways to add a feed (the browser may force the use of one or the other of these)

- Click on the RSS link on a page and follow the instructions (Firefox)
- Copy the feed and create the gadget in iGoogle

Firefox example: In a new tab in the browser, navigate to <http://www.digg.com> and look for the RSS icon. Clicking on the icon should show an option to subscribe to the feed - use the *Subscribe Now* button, and choose to add the feed to your iGoogle homepage.

Safari example: In a new tab in the browser, navigate to <http://www.digg.com> and look for the RSS icon. Clicking on the icon will switch to RSS view (figure 9).

Highlight and copy the feed URL in the address bar of the browser - which for planet retail is something like

`feed://www.planetretail.net/rss/dailynewssummary`

Return to iGoogle and select the *add feed* link (figure 10), then click on the *Add feed or gadget* link (figure 11) - paste the URL into the box – **important** – you may need to change the start of the URL from *feed://* to *http://* to make the feed work

### BBC News – Home

The latest stories from the Home section of the BBC News web

[Mass protest fills central Cairo](#)

1 February 2011 20:39

Egyptian protesters hold a massive rally in the capital, Cairo, a

[Millions clog crime map website](#)

1 February 2011 16:44

A new crime-mapping website for England and Wales is expert Office says.

[Warning over 7/7 bomb ingredient](#)

1 February 2011 18:55

The main ingredient in the bombs used on 7/7 is easier to buy attacks says.

[New PM for Jordan amid protests](#)

1 February 2011 20:13

Figure 6



Figure 7

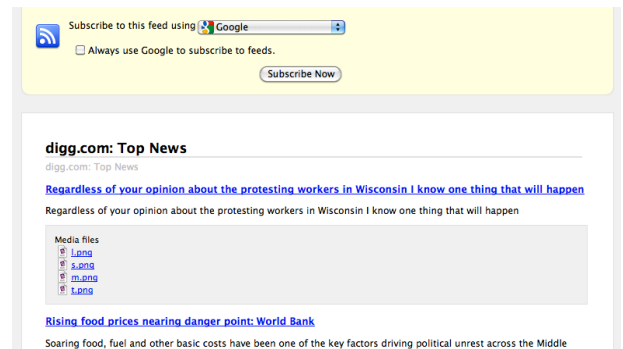


Figure 8

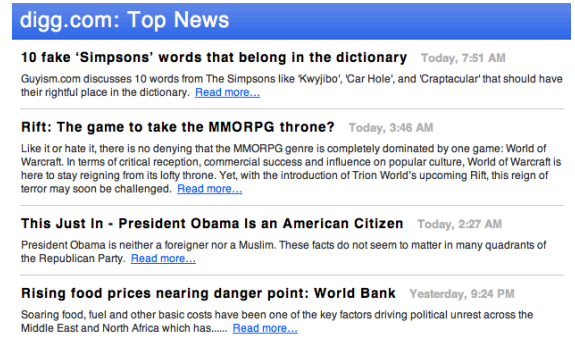


Figure 9

- [Finance](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [by Google](#)

 [Add feed or gadget](#)

Figure 10

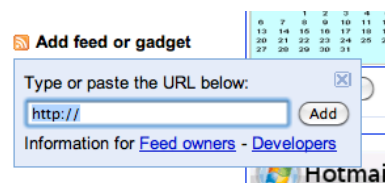


Figure 11

**Exercise** Add a feed for another IT news site – [www.slashdot.org](http://www.slashdot.org)

#### Four – Organising iGoogle tabs

You can organise the tabs (the links shown on the left of the page), adding, renaming or deleting tabs by categories of your choice. Use the arrow-down icon and *Add a tab* to create a tab called *IT News* (figure 12)

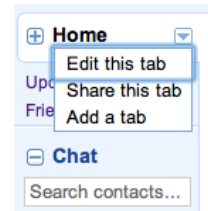


Figure 12

Move the IT based feeds off the original *home* tab and onto the new *IT News* tab by grabbing the banner at the top of the feed and dragging / dropping it onto the *IT News* tab.

Add feeds for two other retail sites

- <http://arstechnica.com>
- <http://www.theregister.co.uk>

Then change each of the feeds so that 9 news items are displayed in each one (hint – use edit settings in each feed individually). When finished it should look something like figure 13

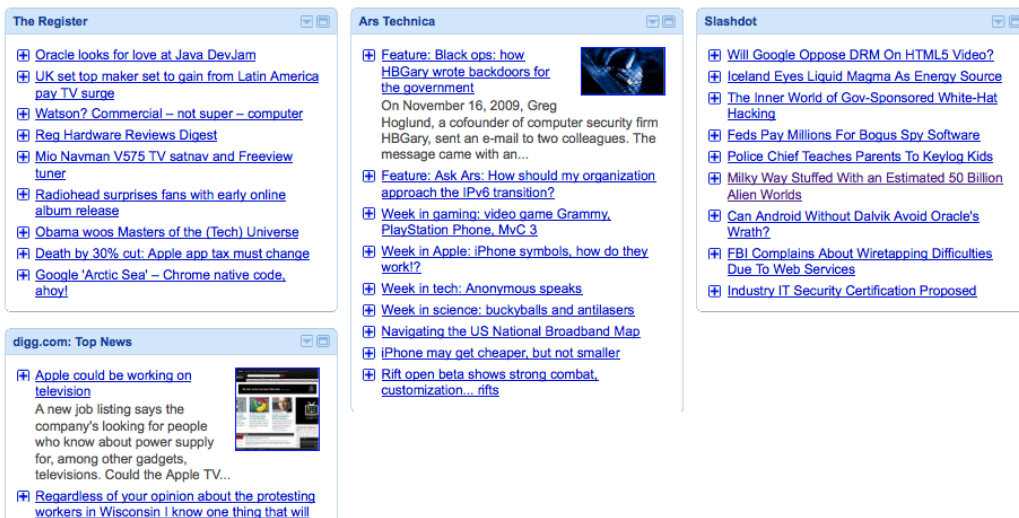


Figure 13

#### Five – creating a specific RSS feed on a specific news topic

Google allows RSS feeds to be created on any stories which it indexes as part of its news search, which can be particularly useful when studying current news around some event or organisation. To do this select *Google News* and search for news on a particular IT subject (for example Social Network).

At the very bottom of the page is an RSS icon, which will turn this search into a dedicated RSS feed which can be added to your other feeds (figure 14).

Search (and add) an RSS feed for an IT subject that you wish to follow.



The selection and placement of stories on this page were determined automatically by a computer program. The time or date displayed reflects when an article was added to or updated in Google News.

 RSS   [Search Help](#)   [Give us feedback](#)

Figure 14