

Fabulous Favicons

by Tom Swan

Favorites Icons (*favicons* for short)—those little pictures next to filenames, browser tabs and bookmarks—may be small but their importance to software interfacing is anything but trivial. I open many files and select countless bookmarks by favicon images alone, barely glancing at the associated titles. Many of you probably do the same.

In this article I explain the proper and not-so-proper ways to attach favicon images to AsciiDoctor-generated HTML documents. We will examine:

- recommended favicon HTML tags and settings
- a quick and dirty way to attach favicons to documents
- a better method that leaves the resulting HTML fresh and clean



The ZIP file that accompanies this article demonstrates two ways to attach favicons to AsciiDoc documents. Unpack the ZIP file ([fav.zip](#)) to create subfolder [fav](#). In that folder, open [index.html](#) to view the demonstration in a web browser. Select between the two links to run the tests, and look for the favicon image in your browser's tabs and bookmarks.

Here's the ZIP file [DOWNLOAD](#) link and a [TRY-IT-NOW](#) link:

DOWNLOAD

[Favicon Demonstration \(fav.zip\)](#)

TRY-IT-NOW (to read along, open in new tab or window)

[Favicon Demonstration \(LIVE\)](#)

Favicon Images

Like pictures, favicons are worth a thousand words (or more!). They come in all sizes and formats, from old-time 16x16-pixel bitmaps to GIF, JPEG, and PNG formats in various sizes and in all the colors of the rainbow. Image sizes of 72x72 seem to be the norm in a lot of web sites today. 32x32 also works.

For this demonstration, I'll use a PNG image. A search online for public domain images easily located an appropriate candidate shown in Figure 1 (click image to expand).

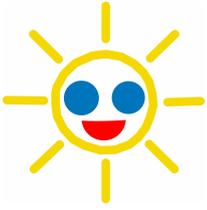


Figure 1. doodle-sun-2. [1: source: <http://www.publicdomainpictures.net>]



You can find all image files mentioned here in the unpacked ZIP file's **image** subfolder.

Figure 2 shows the test favicon after I reduced the high-resolution image down to a more icon-compatible 72x72-pixels square (I also added a green mask to improve the tiny image's visibility):



Figure 2. favicon-72x72.png

If you have the [Gimp](#) graphics editor, you can also open my graphics work file to which I added a green mask-border after scaling the original:

- [Gimp XCF Work File](#)

Favicons and AsciiDoc

To use a PNG image for a favicon, most sources I consulted suggest inserting the following tag into the HTML document's `<head>`:

```
<link rel="icon" type="image/png" href="image/favicon-72x72.png">
```

- **rel** — relationship of this `<link>` to the document
- **type** — graphics file format
- **href** — URL to the favicon image file

Inserting Favicons: The Not So Right Way

Let's get the wrong way out of the way. First store your favicon image where you can find it. Ours is in folder **image**. Next, insert the following lines near the top of your AsciiDoc text:

```
++++  
<link rel="icon"  
type="image/png"  
href="image/favicon-72x72.png">  
++++
```

The two lines of four plus signs are AsciiDoc's "pass-through" command. The text in between is injected directly into the HTML output, in this case inserting a `<link>` tag with the properties shown. This can also be in the form `http://<path>/<file>.png`.

The problem with this method is that it injects the HTML tag into the `<body>` of the document. It is more proper to place such statements in the `<head>` element as I explain next.

Inserting Favicons: The Right Way

The right way to attach a favicon to an AsciiDoc document is also useful for inserting other HTML tags that you want in the `<head>` element. First, create a file named `docinfo.html` with the following lines:

```
<!-- docinfo.html -->
<link rel="icon"
type="image/png"
href="image/favicon-72x72.png">
```

That's the same `<link>` element from before but with a comment on top to identify the filename.



For a quick test, open `docinfo.html` in a browser and it should display the favicon in tabs and bookmarks.

Next, in your AsciiDoc text, set `docinfo` to `shared` with the declaration:

```
:docinfo: shared
```

Compiling the text with AsciiDoctor copies the `docinfo.html` file's contents into the generated `<head>` element. The favicon should now appear in the browser when you open the generated file.

Other Uses for docinfo Files

You can put anything you want in the `docinfo.html` file and it will be inserted into the HTML `<head>` (replace `xxxxx` below with a real file name):

```
<link rel="stylesheet" href="css/normalize.css">
<script src="xxxxx.js"></script>
```

That inserts a stylesheet link and a hypothetical Javascript file reference into the HTML `<head>` section.

Tips



From a terminal prompt, go into the demonstration `fav` folder and type `make` to compile all files. Of course, you must have `Asciidoctor` installed. Type `make clean` to erase generated files.



For other `docinfo` uses and for more information about `docinfo` files in general, browse to this [Asciidoctor User Manual Link](#).



Just for fun, try counting all the icons you can see on your favorite computing device. I did that just now and came up with 62. In a world of ever decreasing attention spans, that's a lot of symbolic power looking to attract a potential reader's eye! Something, perhaps, for self-publishing writers to think about.

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