

# What is Creole?



## Problem

There are hundreds of wiki engines, each with their own markup with a very few using WYSIWYG. People who work with more than one wiki engine on a regular basis have trouble remembering which syntax is supported in which engine. Therefore, a common wiki markup is needed to help unite the wiki community.



## History

Ward Cunningham, the founder of wikis, coined the term Creole, just like he coined the name wiki from the Hawaiian WikiWiki. He suggested this name at Wikimania 2006 in Boston, where we presented our first empirical analysis on existing markup variants. Ward's and our idea was to create a common markup that was not standardization of an arbitrary existing markup, but rather a new markup language that was created out of the common elements of all existing engines out there. Creole is thought of not as a replacement for native markups, but a second language that evolved from them, and now can be used as a common language.



## Process

Instead of suggesting an arbitrarily chosen markup, we extensively analyzed existing wiki markup, and came up with a subset of elements which was introduced at a workshop at WikiSym 2006 in Denmark. During the workshop, we went through the different markup elements we wanted to unify and called the spec version 0.1. Afterwards, we gave people who did not attend the opportunity to discuss decisions made, and to be able to make their own proposals. We introduced a workflow that incrementally discussed and introduced those proposals into the spec. Discussion pages were used to talk about each topic. At the end of an iteration (4 to 8 weeks) we added a new version number to the spec. Our decisions were consensus-driven, which means we tried not to vote, but instead had opinion polls and tried to reach an agreement later.



## Solution

After many long months of cooperation, we finally reached a point where we were not able to find any more commonalities. Increasing disagreements and the subsequent Creole 0.6 Poll showed that we couldn't reach consensus anymore. At this point we proposed in a last iteration the move to Creole 1.0. The wiki now has extensive reasoning through documentation of the empirical analysis and discussions of the elements that back up the spec.



## Implementation

Creole is a project supported by many different wiki engines, and the wikis who have implemented it are an illustration of that. More than ten engines now support Creole including DokuWiki, Ghestalt, JSPWiki, Oddmuse, MoinMoin, NotesWiki, Nyctergatis Markup Engine, PmWiki, PodWiki, and TiddlyWiki. Other applications include the PEAR wiki filter (enabling developers to more easily write PHP wiki software), the Drupal CMS (using the PEAR wiki filter), Radeox (a Java wiki rendering engine), WikiWizard (a WYSIWiki editor) and a prototype JavaScript parser. The following wiki engines plan to add support for Creole: C2, InfiniteMonkey, MediaWiki, PurpleWiki, TWiki, SnipSnap uses Radeox, MeatballWiki, Wikka Wiki, and Xwiki.



## Future

The participation and support we were given throughout the last year is indicating that the wiki community is starving for a solution to the wiki markup mess. Our research on the common wiki markup elements has shown that there are a lot of commonalities in wiki engine markups and that a common wiki markup only needs some compromise from each side to reach a consensus. Wiki engine developers implementing WikiCreole in their parsers give a clear sign to the community of their readiness to cooperate to draw us all closer together, making life easier for everyone in the wiki world.

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