

# Extended Definition of XML

## Overview

XML is a computer markup language that was designed to help store, transport, structure, and describe data using user defined “tags”. The term “XML” is the short form for “Extensible Markup Language.” XML allows different computers, applications and organization to share structured information. It was primarily designed for the Internet.

## What is XML and How it Works

It’s important to understand that XML does *not* do anything. It’s just plain text that “tags” information and describes its meaning.

The following example is a note to Brad from Jim, stored as an XML document (see Figure 1).

```
<note>
<to>Brad</to>
<from>Jim</from>
<heading>A+ for You!</heading>
<body>Just wanted to let you know Brad that you’re the best student I’ve
ever had. In fact, don’t worry about writing the exam or anymore
assignments. I’m just going to give you an A+!</body>
</note>
```

**Figure 1**

XML is just pure information wrapped in tags. This means an XML document can be created in Microsoft Word or any other text editor.

Separate software is needed to make XML documents useful. XML editors, like XMLSpy, can convert XML documents into Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) format or Portable Document Format (PDF) for viewing.

Other markup languages, like HTML, have predefined tags. Predefined tags can not be changed. XML is unique because users can define their own tags. User defined tags allow organizations to tailor their information to suit their specific requirements. The following is an example of an XML document used by a hospital (see Figure 2).

```
<assessment>
<doctor>Brad Dunleavy</doctor>
<patient>Jim Catton</patient>
<diagnosis>Information overload</diagnosis>
<treatment>Jim needs a raise and a free one month vacation.</treatment>
</assessment>
```

**Figure 2**

XML was not designed to replace HTML. Both were designed to achieve different goals. XML was designed to store, transport, structure, and describe information while HTML was designed to view information.