

GitHub Pages: The Missing Manual

[GitHub Pages](#) is an excellent free hosting platform, but the documentation is missing out on some crucial details.

I built a [simonw/playing-with-github-pages](#) repo today. This is what I learned:

Add a `.nojekyll` file to disable Jekyll

GitHub Pages was originally built around the [Jekyll](#) Ruby static site framework. You can turn that off by adding a `.nojekyll` file to your repository root.

`/foo` will serve content from `foo.html`, if it exists

If you create a file called `foo.html` in the repo and visit the page `/foo` you will see content from that file.

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/> serves `index.html`
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/foo> serves `foo.html`
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/foo.html> serves `foo.html`

`/folder` will redirect to `/folder/`

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder> redirects to `/folder/`

This only happens if the folder exists.

`/folder/` will serve `folder/index.html`

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder/> serves `folder/index.html`
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder/index> serves `folder/index.html`
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder/index.html> serves `folder/index.html`

A `404.html` file will be used for 404s

Creating a `404.html` file in the root of the directory customizes the page served for a 404 error.

The `.html` rule beats the folder redirect rule

I created `folder2.html` and `folder2/index.html`:

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder2> serves `folder2.html` (does not redirect)
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder2/> serves `folder2/index.html`
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder2/index> serves `folder2/index.html`

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder2/index.html> serves folder2/index.html

index.json works as an index document too

Here's [a StackOverflow post](#) about this.

I created json/index.json:

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/json> redirects to /json/
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/json/> serves json/index.json
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/json/index> serves a 404
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/json/index.json> serves json/index.json

Note that /json/index served a 404 - so unlike .html the .json extension is not automatically appended.

If there is no index.html or index.json a folder will 404

I created folder-with-no-index with a bar.html file but no index.html or index.json:

- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder-with-no-index> redirects to /folder-with-no-index/
- <https://simonw.github.io/playing-with-github-pages/folder-with-no-index/> serves a 404

Custom redirects are not supported

There is no mechanism to set your own custom redirects. The suggested alternative is to serve an HTML page with a 200 status code and content that looks like this:

```
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8"/>
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
  <meta http-equiv="refresh" content="0;url=https://example.com"/>
  <link rel="canonical" href="https://example.com"/>
  <title>Redirecting to https://example.com</title>
  <style>
    body {
      font-family: sans-serif;
      max-width: 40em;
      margin: 1em auto;
    }
  </style>
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Redirecting to https://example.com</h1>
  <p>This document has moved!</p>
  <p>Redirecting to <a href="https://example.com">https://example.com</a> in 0 seconds.</p>
</body>
</html>
```

I figured this out from [codepo8/github-redirection-demo/](https://codepo8.github.io/github-redirection-demo/) (which uses Jekyll) followed by running `curl -i` against `https://codepo8.github.io/github-redirection-demo/plain-redirect:`

```
% curl -i 'https://codepo8.github.io/github-redirection-demo/plain-redirect'  
HTTP/2 200  
server: GitHub.com  
content-type: text/html; charset=utf-8  
...
```

These days you can do custom things with GitHub Actions

I've not dug into this yet. Here's [the blog page](#) announcement.

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