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Tag Meta – Quick Guide

A brief introduction and usage tutorial

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SOMMARIO

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INTRODUCTION

Tag Meta is a Joomla! 1.5 native extension that allows you to efficiently manage site meta tags. Tag Meta allows to set the tag 'title' and the meta tags 'description', 'author', 'keywords' and 'robots' on each page, which is identified by the URI or a part of it. Also the rel 'canonical' is supported, and there's a customizable database of synonyms for each keyword. This provides a powerful tool to improve site positioning in SEO optimization.

It was created because many Joomla extensions don't provide a way to set meta info on their pages, and in these cases Tag Meta helps you to do this. So, **first thing you should understand is to use Tag Meta only when there are no other ways or for some advanced "things"**. For an article, as example, you can provide simple "Metadata Information" inside the article edit screen, so probably in this case you don't need to use Tag Meta. But if you create a menu item that points to a component, you can't set metadata into menu edit screen, so if the component doesn't provide you a way to do this, **you can use Tag Meta**.

For best SEO results, remember to use meaningful descriptions for title and description, concerning the content of the pages, and also remember to insert comma separated keywords (with no spaces).

Finally, it is recommended to use native Joomla! SEO options ("Site" -> "Global Configuration" -> "Site", look at "SEO Settings" box), to simplify the structure of the site URLs, improving both page positioning, and meta info management to associate to each URI.

HOW IT WORKS

Tag Meta consists of a component for managing URI list, and a plugin that is in charge of setting the meta info on the page. These are the main steps to make it work (for geeks):

1. Install the package using Joomla! Administration interface;
2. Activate the plugin "System - Tag Meta" and set its position and global parameters;
3. Use Tag Meta component's functions to manage meta info and synonyms.

Detailed instructions on each step are described in the following paragraphs. In this section we just want to focus on some basic concepts related to Tag Meta and how it works.

The first important thing to understand is the "item" concept. With Tag Meta Manager (the component interface) you can create as many "item" as you want, and each item has its meta info. But not necessarily an item corresponds to a single page (i.e. matches just a single URL).

An item has a "URI" field that can be full URI or just a part of it. For example, if the configured "URI" field for an item is **"/home.html"**, then this item matches both the URL <http://www.mysite.com/home.html>

and <http://www.mysite.com/orders/home.html?view=status>. So, it means that **with a single item is possible to match multiple site URLs**.

When an user requests a site URL, the plugin take the “path+query” parts of the URL¹ and compares this string with the list of (published) item’s “URI”, considered in their order set. **The first matching item found** (if there’s at least one) is used to set page meta info.

Last thing to understand about the item is that the “URI” field can be a **regular expression**. These provide a powerful way to specify complex search patterns for matching URL. In the next paragraphs will be shown many regular expression examples.

INSTALLATION PROCEDURE

Since version 1.3 of Tag Meta there is just one package to download and install. This package includes both the needed component and plugin, and supports the installation with “upgrade” mode, so there’s no need any more to uninstall any previous version of Tag Meta.

To install Tag Meta, login to Joomla! backend as administrator, and go to menu “Extensions” -> “Install/Uninstall”.

Click the browse button, select the package file (**TagMetaX.XCommunity.zip** or **tagMetaJX.XEnterprise.zip**) and click the install button.



The screenshot shows the Joomla! Extension Manager interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Install', 'Components', 'Modules', 'Plugins', 'Languages', and 'Templates'. Below this, a blue notification banner reads 'Install Component Success'. The main content area displays the following text: 'Tag Meta allows to set the tag 'title' and the meta tags 'description', 'keywords' and 'robots' on pages (useful for SEO)'. Below this, it says 'Plugin System - Tag Meta installed: remember to activate it [here](#)'.

That’s all. Now we are ready to start using Tag Meta.

¹ NOTE: The URL’s parts “scheme”, “user”, “pass”, “host” and “port” are dropped, so the domain name must not be included in the item’s URI field.

UPGRADE PROCEDURE

If you are upgrading from a previous version of Tag Meta, **there is no need** to first uninstall old component and plugin. As mentioned earlier, since version 1.3 of Tag Meta the “upgrade” mode is supported for the installation, so just install the new package over the old one, both component and plugin will be upgraded.

Note that when upgrading Tag Meta also the database tables are upgraded without to delete any table data, so your items will be preserved. It is in charge of the installation process to upgrade tables structure as needed.

USAGE

Remember that is the plugin that “do the work”. Tag Meta component is just an administrative interface that let you manage your items, but is the plugin that check site calls and override the meta info when needed. So, first thing is to enable the plugin. **Note that if you need to disable Tag Meta, just disable the plugin.**

Go to menu “Extensions” -> “Plugin Manager”, find “System - Tag Meta” in the list and click on it to enter into configuration page.

The screenshot shows the configuration interface for the 'System - Tag Meta' plugin. The 'Details' section on the left contains the following fields: Name (System - Tag Meta), Enabled (radio buttons for No and Yes), Type (system), Plugin File (tagmeta.php), Access Level (Registered/General), Order (0 / System - Tag Meta), and Description (TAG META DESCRIPTION). The 'Parameters' section on the right contains the following fields: Custom Meta Author, Add Meta Author (radio buttons for No, Yes, Preserve), Custom Meta Copyright, Add Meta Copyright (radio buttons for No, Yes, Preserve), Custom Meta Generator, Replace Meta Generator (radio buttons for No, Yes, Force, Clean), Add site name to page title (radio buttons for No, Before, After), Separator string (|), Close default page (radio buttons for No, Yes), and Align Meta Title (radio buttons for No, Yes, Force). There is also an 'Advanced Parameters' section at the bottom.

Set “Enabled” to “Yes”, and set other parameters on the right side according to your needs. Look at “Plugin settings” paragraph for detailed information of each parameter.

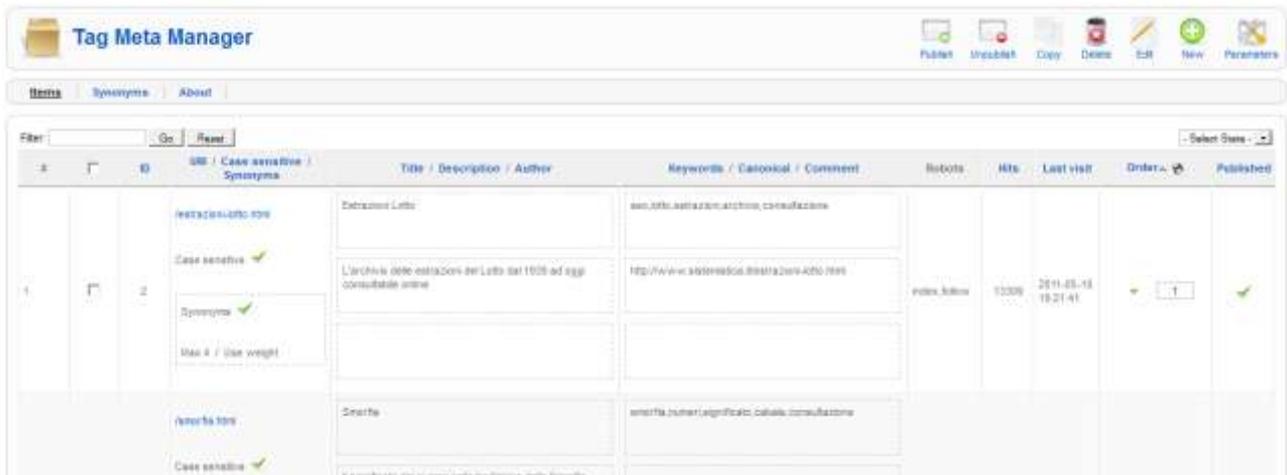
Click on “Save” and check that plugin is enabled.

46	<input type="checkbox"/>	System - CSLookup	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
47	<input type="checkbox"/>	System - Tag Meta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
48	<input type="checkbox"/>	System - ReDJ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Last thing to check is the plugins order, that can be much important especially if there are some other plugins that mess with meta information. **Normally, it should be better to put Tag Meta as the last system type plugin in the list, so it will be the last to set page meta info.**

Now Tag Meta is ready to work! Let's create our first item, and after this let's test the meta information from the web browser to verify that Tag Meta is working. **Note that you could get a cached page with old meta tag values. To avoid this, remember to clear server-side cache from Joomla! Backend (menu "Tools" -> "Clean Cache", "Site" tab, select all and click "Delete" button), and client-side cache from your web browser.**

To add an item go to menu "Components" -> "Tag Meta" -> "Items", to access to Tag Meta Manager.



From here, to add new item click on "New" button. It will be shown a screen for entering information related to an item.

Details

URI:	<input type="text" value="/download.html"/>
Case sensitive:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Published:	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Order:	10 (/download.html) ▼
Title:	<input type="text" value="Download"/>
Description:	<input type="text" value="This section is dedicated to downloads available on our site. Please, feel free to use our Joomla! extensions."/>
Author:	<input type="text"/>
Keywords:	<input type="text" value="download,tag meta,redj,joomla,tutorials,documentation"/>
Canonical:	<input type="text"/>
Comment:	<input type="text"/>
Use Synonyms:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Yes (case sensitive)
Max Synonyms:	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Use Synonyms Weight:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hits:	<input type="text" value="3846"/>
Last visit:	<input type="text" value="2011-01-12 10:10:03"/>

The “URI” field must contains an “URL part” to compare with browser URL. **Remember that “URI” must not contains URL’s parts “scheme”, “user”, “pass”, “host” and “port”.**

The field “Case sensitive” specify if the match between item and current URL must consider the letters case (i.e. uppercase and lowercase are considered different). So, in case sensitive mode the item must match with current URL also for the case of characters. If case sensitive is off, no matter if item or current URL differs only for case of characters (i.e. MyPage.php = myPage.PHP = mypage.php).

Fields “Published” and “Order” have the usual Joomla! meaning. Other fields “Title”, “Description”, “Author”, and “Keywords” are related to common meta information for **URLs that match with current item**. There are also robots information available on the right side of the same page.

Robots	
index:	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Skip
follow:	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Skip
snippet:	<input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> Skip
archive:	<input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> Skip
odp:	<input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> Skip

The field “Canonical” allow to set the rel “canonical” meta information on the matching URLs. More information on how to use the rel “canonical” meta tag in efficient manner are available here:

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=139394>

The “Comment” field is just an annotation that can be attached to the item, and is not used in any way on the matching URLs.

Fields “Use Synonyms”, “Max Synonyms”, and “Use Synonyms Weight” are related to the Keywords Synonyms database feature, and their meaning will be explained in the Synonyms Database section.

Finally, the field “Hits” counts the number of times this item were used, while the field “Last visit” indicates the last time this item were used. Here you can change the counter value if needed.

In our example the URI field contains:

/download.html

We must talk in the plural when we said “*URLs that match with this item*” because **the URI specified in a single item can match more than a single browser URL**. In the previous example, with “*/download.html*” we match ANY URL in the form:

<http://www.mysite.com/download.html>

<http://www.mysite.com/download.html?itemid=xxx>

...

<http://www.mysite.com/directory/download.html?id=xxx>

This behavior makes Tag Meta very flexible, but that’s not all.

It is also possible to use **Regular Expressions** into URI field. Tag Meta, in fact, supports regular expressions according to Henry Spencer's implementation:

<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.0/en/regexp.html>

And this feature makes it extremely powerful when you can master it.

The following table shows some examples. Look at “Examples and Solutions to common problems” paragraph for more advanced examples.

URI field	What does it mean
/section/*\$	The dollar (\$) means “end with”. The star (*) means “match zero or more occurrences of previous character”, that is the slash (/). So, the URI field means “address ends with /section or /section/”.
^/section/9-article.html\$	The hyphen (^) means “start with”. The dollar (\$) means “end with”. So, the URI field means “address starts and ends exactly with /section/9-article.html”.
^/section/11-articles.php\?id=12\$	The hyphen (^) means “start with”. The dollar (\$) means “end with”. Also, we need a “literal” question-mark (?) for inline arguments, so it must be escaped with a backslash (\?). So, the URI field means “address starts and ends exactly with /section/11-articles.php?id=12”.

Last thing to know about the URI field matching address is that even the items order is important. For each URL request, Tag Meta searches all the matching (published) items, but ONLY THE FIRST ONE in the ordering set is used. This can be useful, as example, to distinguish a category from its articles. If we have two URLs as follow:

<http://www.mysite.com/category/>

<http://www.mysite.com/category/article-1.html>

Items could be configured with the following URI field:

Wrong Order	Correct Order
/category/	/category/article-1.html
/category/article-1.html	/category/

For the browser URL <http://www.mysite.com/category/article-1.html>, if items are set in the wrong order, both items match the URL, but remember that only the first matching item (/category/) is applied, so the meta info for page article-1.html will never be used.

LIST OF SUPPORTED MACROS

Tag Meta supports use of “macros” that allow to generate dynamic content (i.e. content generated at run-time and based on the current page state). These macros can be used into these item fields:

- Title;
- Description;
- Author;
- Keywords.

So, anytime a supported macro is found in one of the fields above, Tag Meta replaces it with the current value. Here is a list of supported macros for these fields:

Macro	Example
{siteurl}	Web site address (e.g. www.example.com/path/to/Joomla)
{sitename}	Web site name (from Joomla configuration)
{globaldescription}	Global site meta description (from Joomla configuration)
{globalkeywords}	Global site meta keywords (from Joomla configuration)
{currenttitle}	Current page title, (as found by Tag Meta before to start to modify page meta info)
{currentdescription}	Current page meta description (as found by Tag Meta before to start to modify page meta info)
{currentkeywords}	Current page meta keywords (as found by Tag Meta before to start to modify page meta info)
{currentauthor}	Current page meta author (as found by Tag Meta before to start to modify page meta info)

{currentgenerator}	Current page meta generator (as found by Tag Meta before to start to modify page meta info)
{autokeywords M,N}	Automatic single-word keywords generation (M is minimum length of admitted words, N is number of comma separated keywords to return) - ENTERPRISE VERSION ONLY
{autokeywords2 M,N}	Automatic double-word keywords generation (M is minimum length of admitted words, N is number of comma separated keywords to return) - ENTERPRISE VERSION ONLY

Macros highlighted are only available for Enterprise version of Tag Meta.

NOTE: The macro substitution happens before to check for synonyms, so if macros are included into the “keywords” field, first these macros are expanded and then the synonyms are checked.

SYNONYMS DATABASE

Synonyms section allows the creation of an ontology of keywords with similar meaning. This database can be used to automatically associate to site pages keywords with similar meaning, or similar to each other.

To manage the synonyms database go to menu “Components” -> “Tag Meta” -> “Synonyms”.



To add new synonyms item click on “New” button. It will be shown a screen for entering information related to an item.

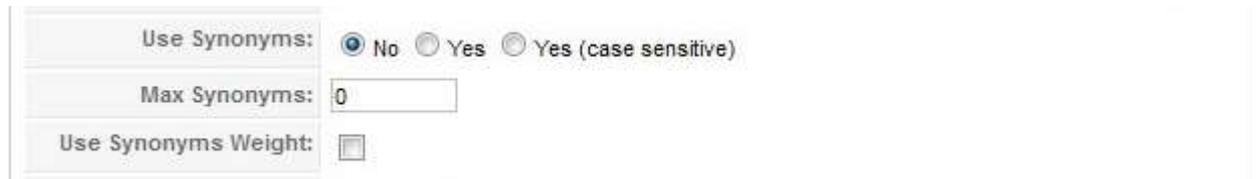
Details

Keywords:	<code>seo, sef, serp, joomla, extensions</code>
Published:	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Order:	New items default to the first position. The ordering can be changed after this item is saved.
Synonyms:	<code>tag meta, redj, seo, sef, serp, friendly url, joomla, extensions</code>
Weight:	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Comment:	<code>This item covers all the occurrences of joomla and seo related keywords, adding the keywords about our extensions</code>
Hits:	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Last visit:	<input type="text" value="0"/> 

Usage is really simple:

- The **Keywords** field must contain a list of similar words, separated by commas (e.g. joomla,Joomla,cms,open source);
- The **Synonyms** field, similarly, must contain a list of synonyms to be used in addition to any of the previous keywords (e.g. joomla,Joomla,cms,open source,OSM,Open Source Matters). Typically (but not necessarily) the two lists of words match. But in some cases a word can be included only from the keywords, or from the synonyms. In our example, “tag meta”and “redj” words are included only in the synonyms list, so we want to consider these as synonyms for “seo”, “sef”, and so on, but the opposite is not true.
- The **Weight** field can be used to specify a preference between items. If a keyword is present in the **Keywords** field of multiple rows, then all these rows will be used to extract synonyms. With option “Use Synonyms Weight” of a Tag Meta item, these rows will be sorted by weight, so we can decide the synonyms importance through the weight.

Once created the synonyms database, to use it there are three fields available in any Tag Meta item.



Use Synonyms:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Yes (case sensitive)
Max Synonyms:	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Use Synonyms Weight:	<input type="checkbox"/>

These fields are:

Use Synonyms

When set to **“No”** the synonyms database will be ignored when the current item will be used. To activate the synonyms feature set this option to **“Yes”** or to **“Yes (case sensitive)”**. The latter (case sensitive) means that the letter case must be considered when searching for a keyword into the **“Keywords”** field of synonyms database (when case sensitive is enabled the keyword **“Joomla”** is considered different from **“joomla”** and they don’t match each other).

Max Synonyms

It’s the total maximum number of synonyms that will be added to the keywords that already exist, going to search through all the synonyms of all the keywords present initially. Note that the number of synonyms that will be added may be less then specified, if there are not enough synonyms in the database for the initial keywords.

Use Synonyms Weight

This option specifies whether to use or not the value of the field **“Weight”** of each synonyms item for the ordering of the synonyms items. As mentioned earlier, the weight represents a way to specify the importance of keywords, and the order in which we prefer they are used.

PLUGIN SETTINGS

In this paragraph we will explain the meaning of each plugin parameter. To edit plugin settings go to menu **“Extensions”** -> **“Plugin Manager”**, find **“System – Tag Meta”** in the list and click on it to enter into configuration page.

Basic Plugin Parameters

Parametri

▼ **Parametri plugin**

Meta Author personalizzato

Aggiungi Meta Author No Si Preserva

Meta Copyright personalizzato

Aggiungi Meta Copyright No Si Preserva

Meta Generator personalizzato

Sostituisci Meta Generator No Si Forza Svuota

Aggiungi il nome sito al titolo della pagina No Prima Dopo

Stringa di separazione

Pulisci la pagina di default No Si

Allinea Meta Title No Si Forza

► **Parametri avanzati**

In the following table there's a list of all basic plugin parameters.

Name	Value	Description
Custom Meta Author	Text	Custom value for meta tag 'author'.
Add Meta Author	No/Yes/Preserve	No, disabled. Yes, always add custom meta tag 'author' (replace if already exists). Preserve, add custom meta tag 'author' only if this is not present.
Custom Meta Generator	Text	Custom value for meta tag 'generator'.

Replace Meta Generator	No/Yes/Clean	No, disabled. Yes, on any page replace value for meta tag 'generator' if this is present with the custom one. Clean, on any page unset value for meta tag 'generator' if this is present.
Add site name to page title	No/Before/After	Position of site name related to pre-existent page title. No, disabled.
Separator string		String to use as separator. Use <code>\b</code> for a blank space.
Clean default page	No/Yes	Force the default page (home) to have only site name in page title.
Align Meta Title	No/Yes/Force	No, disabled. Yes, on any page sync meta tag 'title' with tag 'title' when both present. Force, on any page sync meta tag 'title' with tag 'title' when at least one is present, favoring the tag 'title' when possible.
Mode REDIRECT	No/Yes	Use REDIRECT_URL instead of REQUEST_URI when defined. Useful, for example, to work with friendly URL rewritten by sh404SEF.

Advanced Plugin Parameters

Parametri

► Parametri plugin

▼ Parametri avanzati

Pulisci i link canonical No Si Preserva

Auto escludi canonical No Si

Pulisci chiavi No Si

Escludi da chiavi singole

Escludi da chiavi doppie

Modo REDIRECT No Si

Conteggio parole sicuro No Si

Percorso base

In the following table there's a list of all advanced plugin parameters.

Name	Value	Description
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Use early redirect	No/Yes	Check for redirect in a early phase. Useful only for Internal Redirect (Enterprise version), to prevent conflict with other extensions (e.g. Joomfish)
Base path	Text	The Joomla base installation path (e.g. /myportal if the site's homepage is http://www.mysite.com/myportal). This string will be dropped from the current URI, so to increase portability for configured items. Leave blank if the site is installed on the root.

EXAMPLES AND SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

These are some of the common questions posted on support forum.

How to	Solution
<p>Match only site homepage:</p> <p>http://www.mysite.com/</p>	<p>Create an item with the following URI field:</p> <p><code>^/\$</code></p> <p>The expression means “start and end with slash (/)” (i.e. there’s ONLY the slash).</p>
<p>Match an URL with one or more parameters:</p> <p>http://www.mysite.com/catalog.php?page=1&order=asc</p>	<p>Create an item with the following URI field:</p> <p><code>/catalog.php\?page=1&order=asc</code></p> <p>or</p> <p><code>/catalog.php[[.question-mark.]]page=1&order=asc</code></p> <p>In both cases you need to “escape” the question mark (?). You can do it with a backslash (\) behind, or replacing with string “[[.question-mark.]]”.</p>
<p>Match all the URLs in the following form:</p> <p><code>/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=159&pop=1&page=52&Itemid=10218</code></p>	<p>Create an item with the following URI field:</p> <p><code>/index2.php\?option=com_content&task=view&id=[0-9]{1,3}&pop=1&page=[0-9]{1,2}&Itemid=[0-9]{1,5}</code></p>

<pre> /index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1 7&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=72 /index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3 01&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=10440 /index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7 7&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=113 ... </pre>	<p>The expression [0-9]{1,5} means “a sequence from 1 to 5 digits”.</p>
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GET SUPPORT

If you need help with Tag Meta, post a request on support forum:

<http://www.sistemistica.it/forum.html>

To send us private data like access credentials to your backend, use the contact email:

info@sistemistica.it

SUPPORT US

If you like this extension and found it useful, would you consider a small donation to support both site and development. It's easy... just go to menu “Components” -> “Tag Meta”, select the “About” tab, and click on Paypal image button, or use the link below:



https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=9YA4PNLYMLDHC