



# Custom Fields

How they work and how to use them

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May 2020

# What is a Custom Field?



- Two types:
  - Content: These allow you to design article layouts, similar to templates, and have content of various types inserted into them where the designer places them within the template. The author enters the content manually or selects from choices, depending on the field type, not disrupting the article layout.
  - User: These allow you to add fields to user profiles that enhance or extend the information in the profile beyond the default Joomla! username, email, etc.
- Both types work the same way but in very different contexts.

# Built-in Field Types



- Joomla 3.x comes with a variety of field types:
  - Calendar
  - Checkboxes or Radio Buttons
  - Editor (full WYSIWYG)
  - Number
  - Media (image)
  - Web links (URL)
  - Item list (comma-separated)
  - Expandable bullet lists
  - Even an SQL query-based list
- All field types can be used in both content and user profiles

# How They Work



- Define field groups by context
  - Content: Each group name appears in a tab with the field's group name in the article editor, both front end and back end.
  - User:
    - Front: Each group is a section in the profile editor/viewer.
    - Back: Similar to article editor; separate tab.
    - Ungrouped fields appear in a tab/section named "Field".
- Define fields within contextually-related groups
  - e.g., Recipe, Classified Ad, Bio, etc.

# Field Groups



- Groups usually contain related fields, e.g.,
  - Contact Info (address, phone, website, bio, etc.)
  - Interests (checkboxes or a text field)
  - Ingredients
- Content fields can be assigned to one or more article categories, e.g.,
  - Recipe field group fields could be assigned to a Recipe article category that uses a template just for recipes.
  - Assigning a field to no categories defaults to All categories.
- User fields do not associate with categories
  - You'd think they would be assignable by access level.
  - Access means who can see them, not to whom they apply.

# User Fields



- Provide ways to get additional information per user.
  - Some types have filtering (text length, # range, etc.)
  - Can be made editable by user or only by admin
- Can be required or optional
- Only displayed on profile view if not empty
  - Note: no option to NOT display on profile view
    - e.g., in user-provided info that is only for admin purposes
- Same choices as content fields
- Not much flexibility in terms of layout
- In J 3.9.18 and later, cannot hide field labels (bug)

# Content Fields



- Same choices as user fields
- Several choices of placement
  - After title, before content, after content, by placeholder
  - Ordering in “automatic” cases based on ordering within field group
- Filled-in/selected outside main article body
- One editor tab per associated field group
- Recommended:
  - Keep an unpopulated article to use as template for new ones using the same layout, or...
  - Use Regular Labs “Content Templater” component

# Example Article (edit)



Articles: Edit Joomla!

Save Save & Close Save & New Save as Copy Versions Close Preview Help

Title \* Pizza Alias recipe-pizza

Content Images and Links Recipes Configure Edit Screen Permissions

Editor Code

Font family Font size Format Styles

Layout of article

{field 6} {field 12}

{field 4}

{field 7}

Powered by JCE Core. Get more features with JCE Pro

Path: Words: 4

Sliders Tabs Modal Content Template Preview Module Menu Contact Field

Article Image Page Break Read More

RegularLabs content template inserter

Status Published

Category \* Recipes

Featured Yes No

Access Public

Language All

Tags baked gluten-free

Note

Version Note



# Example Article (fields)



Content Images and Links Recipes Configure Edit Screen Permissions

Enter your recipe details here. DO NOT MODIFY ANYTHING ON THE CONTENT TAB.

Preparation Time \*  ← Text field

Difficulty  Easy  Medium  Challenging  Expert ← Radio field Modified list field ↓

Feeds \*  ← Integer field

Ingredients \*

Amount	Unit of Measure	Ingredient										
<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="tsp"/>	<input type="text" value="Salt"/>	<input type="button" value="−"/> <input type="button" value="0"/> <input text"="" type="button" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="cup"/>	<input type="text" value="Water"/>	<input type="button" value="−"/> <input type="button" value="0"/> <input text"="" type="button" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="packet"/>	<input type="text" value="Dry yeast"/>	<input type="button" value="−"/> <input type="button" value="0"/> <input text"="" type="button" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="cup"/>	<input type="text" value="Flour"/>	<input type="button" value="−"/> <input type="button" value="0"/> <input button"="" type="button" value="images/recipes/P"/> <input type="button" value="Select"/> <input type="button" value="⬆️"/> <input type="button" value="✕"/> <span>← JCE Slideshow field (my custom field)</span> <p>Description * <span>Editor Code</span> <span>Editor field ↓</span></p> <p><b>Font family</b> <b>Font size</b> <b>Format</b> <b>Styles</b></p> <p>This is a recipe for pizza. I could talk on and on about my wife's pizza. It's just amazing. There are two crust recipes; one that is gluten-free and</p>

# Example Article (render)



- Article is laid-out per the template.
- Field content is exactly where it should be.
- On front end, looks like any other article.
- Limitations:
  - No choice on where tags appear.
  - Styling of labels is “iffy”.
  - Most tags put out HTML. Need to know what it is.


## Pizza

Preparation Time: 30  
Difficulty: Medium  
Feeds: 4

**gluten-free** **baked**

Description:

This is a recipe for pizza. I could talk on and on about my wife's pizza. It's just amazing. There are two crust recipes; one that is gluten-free and one that is not.



Ingredients:

- 2 tsp Salt
- 1 cup Water
- 1 packet Dry yeast
- 1 cup Flour

Instructions:

- DOUGH: REGULAR
- DOUGH: GLUTEN-FREE
- TOPPINGS
- PREPARATION AND BAKING

# User Fields (render)



- Fields are listed on profile and in profile editor with group headings in field group order.
- Label control is buggy in profile view.
  - Cannot hide (reported bug)
  - Not always aligned with corresponding field
- Special profile field, User Actions Log Options, appears to have issues.
  - Back end setting does not affect profile options
  - Impossible to disable all options
  - This appears to be a bug (not reported yet)

# Creating a New Field



1. Start with built-in or other field closest to what you need.
2. Copy plugins/fields/<folder> to plugins/fields/<newfolder>
3. Copy plugin's administrator/language files to new files
  - Files should include “newfolder” name
4. Make your code & language file changes
  - PHP, XML, and language files need editing
5. Manage Extensions -> Discover
  - Creates database table entries for new field plugin

# Errata



- Other things I noticed while doing this...
  - Joomla makes me re-login when switching to Articles
  - Invisible re-captcha causes issues with front-end editing
  - Some profile features don't work properly
  - Couldn't see how some field attributes do anything

# Conclusion



- Custom content fields are actually quite handy.
  - Allows articles to be “templated”
  - Decent variety of fields (some need more options)
  - Fairly easy to create new ones (with coding)
- Custom profile fields are OK, but pale in comparison to Community Builder’s.
  - Will probably satisfy many needs
  - Not much formatting capability (no templating)
  - Some bugs still exist