



Reading a GitHub Repo Page: What You're Actually Looking At

A tour of every part of the page, so nothing on it is a mystery

The first time you land on a GitHub repository page it looks like a cockpit: tabs, counters, files, buttons, a wall of text below. Once you know what each part is, it is calm and obvious. Here is the tour.

The file list (you start here)

The big list in the middle is the repo's files and folders, the actual project. Click a folder to go in, click a file to read it. Next to each name is the message from the last commit that touched it, and how long ago; so at a glance you see what changed most recently and where.

The README (the front door)

Scroll below the file list and GitHub displays the `README.md` file as a formatted page. This is the project's front door: what it is, how to install it, how to use it. When you visit someone else's repo, the README is the first thing to read. When you make your own, the README is the first thing to write.

The green Code button

The green **Code** button is how you get the repo onto your machine. Click it and it hands you the clone URL (see the Clone, Pull, Push tip). It is also where "Download ZIP" lives if you just want the files without Git.

The tabs across the top

- **Code**: the files. Where you spend most of your time.
- **Issues**: the to-do list and bug tracker. Each issue is a numbered conversation about something to fix or add. Useful even solo, as a running list.
- **Pull requests**: proposed changes waiting to be reviewed and merged. On a solo project you may never touch these; on a shared one they are the heart of it.
- **Actions**: automation that runs on the repo (tests, deploys). Ignore it until you need it.
- **Settings**: everything about the repo itself, including the single most important switch, below.

Public or private (know this before anything else)

Near the repo name at the top is a badge: **Public** or **Private**. Public means the entire internet can read every file and every commit. Private means only you and people you invite can.

For a lawyer this is the setting you check first, every time. A repo that touches anything client-adjacent should be Private, and you confirm it rather than assume it. You change it under Settings, at the very bottom (the "Danger Zone").

The commit and branch controls

Above the file list sits a row with a branch name (usually `main`) and a commits counter. The branch dropdown lets you view the repo as it looks on a different branch. The commits link opens the full history: every save, every message, in order. Clicking any commit shows exactly what changed in it, line by line, red for removed and green for added.

The About panel

Top right is a short description, a website link, and topic tags, all set by the repo owner. It is the one-sentence "what is this" for anyone who lands here. Fill it in on your own repos; it is thirty seconds of work that saves visitors a minute of guessing.

The playbook

File list is the project. README is the front door. Green Code button gets it onto your machine. Public or Private is the badge you check first, every single time. Tabs are Issues (to-do) and Pull requests (proposed changes); the rest you can ignore until you need them. Learn those six landmarks and no repo page is confusing again.