Creating NPM Package

Your React JavaScript Guide to Create, Test, and Publish NPM Libraries

OLUWATOBI SOFELA

Creating NPM Package with ReactJS

React JavaScript Guide to Create, Test, and Publish NPM Libraries

This book is available at
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Introduction

Welcome to the World of NPM Packages!

NPM (Node Package Manager) is a vast database ecosystem that hosts thousands of reusable code packages. Developers use it to share, manage, discover, and install libraries that solve everyday problems or add functionality to their applications.

Packages are sometimes called libraries, plugins, frameworks, or tools. It is simply a directory (or project) that includes a `package.json` file for recording key information about the package.

Publishing your own NPM package is an empowering way to contribute to the developer community, grow your skills, and build a portfolio-worthy product. In doing so, you will strengthen a range of valuable abilities, including:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Organization
- Problem-solving
- Documentation
- Technical development

Becoming a package publisher allows you to take your ideas from concept to a distributable product that others can integrate into their projects. It is a great way to stand out as a developer.

This book is a practical guide to creating, testing, and publishing your own NPM packages using ReactJS. No prior publishing experience is required.

Why This Book Will Help You

Learning to publish NPM packages is not a craft you master by merely reading or watching tutorials—it is a skill you develop by doing.

That is why this book is project-based and hands-on. Along the way, you will build a working NPM package while applying new concepts immediately in a real-world scenario.

To get the most out of this book, open your code editor (like VS Code) and follow along with the examples. Doing so will keep you from falling into "tutorial hell"—where you watch countless tutorials but never actually build anything.

What You Will Build

You will develop a functional and customizable Tweet Button package throughout the book.

While this library might sound simple, don't underestimate it. This project is designed to teach you the essential skills and patterns required to publish any NPM package. Once you understand the process, you will have the ability to scale your own ideas to any level of complexity.

Use the Right Tools

To ensure smooth progress, it is best to use the exact versions of dependencies listed in this book. This helps avoid unexpected issues that might arise from newer versions.

After completing the project, feel free to upgrade the dependencies. If anything breaks, check online documentation or community discussions for solutions.

What You Should Know First

This book assumes you're familiar with the basics of:

- Git and GitHub

- React
- JavaScript

You don't need to be an expert—just comfortable enough to follow along with code examples and make minor tweaks.

Got Questions?

If you have questions or feedback while reading, feel free to reach out:

📧 Email: contact@codesweetly.com 🐦 Twitter: @oluwatobiss

Let's Get Started!

In the next chapter, we'll set up your project environment and lay the foundation for your package.

Project Configuration

Below is the required system and file configurations for creating NPM packages.

1. Set Up Your System

Please ensure your system has the following installations:

- Git
- Node 22.13 (or greater)
- NPM 10.9 (or greater)

- Use the Git tutorial to install, update, or verify Git on your system.
- Use the package manager tutorial to install, update, or verify Node and NPM on your system.

2. Create a Project Directory

Create a new folder for your project like so:

```
1  mkdir thank-you-tweet-button-001
```

You can use any name you prefer. For instance, I've chosen to use `thank-you-tweet-button-001` for this tutorial.

- Specify a name that is less than or equal to 214 characters.
- Use lowercase letters only in the name.
- Your package's name should not contain "js" or "node".

Afterward, navigate to your project directory using the command line:

```
cd path/to/thank-you-tweet-button-001
```

3. Create a package.json File

Use NPM to initialize a package.json file for your project.

```
npm init -y
```

Let's also configure Git.

4. Initialize a Git Repository

Create a `.git` repo in your project's root directory:

```
git init
```

You now need to specify the files you want Git to ignore.

5. Specify the Files Git Should Ignore

Create a `.gitignore` file in your project's root directory:

```
touch .gitignore
```

Afterward, open the newly created `.gitignore` file and write the names of the files, folders, or file types you want Git to ignore.

Here's an example:

Figure 1. .gitignore

```
/node_modules
/dist
```

The snippet above instructs Git to ignore tracking the current directory's `node_modules` and `dist` folders.

- A current directory is the folder in which you are currently working.
- A current directory is sometimes called a "current working directory (CWD)" or "working directory."
- See the `.gitignore` file example to learn more about `gitignore`.

It's now time to stage and commit your recent changes.

6. Stage and Commit Your Project's Changes to Git

Enter the following command on your terminal to stage and commit your recent changes.

```
1  git add -A && git commit -m "Initialize project using CodeSweetly's guide"
```

The command above tells Git to stage and commit all modified and untracked files in the project.

Let's now configure a remote repository for the project.

7. Configure a GitHub Remote Repository

1. Go to the GitHub website and sign in or sign up if you do not have an account.
2. After signing up for an account, create a home (a repository) in GitHub for your Git repository. (You can use `thank-you-tweet-button-001` as the repo's name or any other name you prefer.)
3. Once you've created a remote repository for your package, link your project's `.git` directory (located locally on your system) with the remote repository on GitHub. To connect to the remote repository, go to your package's root directory via your local terminal and run the `git remote add` command. Here's the syntax:

```
git remote add origin https://github.com/your-username/remote-repo-name.git
```

- Replace `your-username` in the code above with your GitHub username. Likewise, replace `remote-repo-name` with your remote repository's name.
- See GitHub Docs to learn more on creating a GitHub repository.

You can also add the remote repo to your `package.json` file so that people who want to contribute to your project can easily access it.

Figure 2. package.json: Add repository field (line 4-7)

```
{
  "name": "thank-you-tweet-button-001",
  "version": "1.0.0",
  "repository": {
    "type": "git",
    "url": "https://github.com/your-username/app-repo-name.git"
  },
  "scripts": {
    "test": "echo \"Error: no test specified\" && exit 1"
  }
}
```

Let's provide the remote repo's Issues URL as the package's bug tracker. And an email people can use to report issues:

Figure 3. package.json: Add bugs field (line 8-11)

```
{
  "name": "thank-you-tweet-button-001",
  "version": "1.0.0",
  "repository": {
    "type": "git",
    "url": "https://github.com/your-username/app-repo-name.git"
  },
  "bugs": {
    "url": "https://github.com/your-username/app-repo-name/issues",
    "email": "your-project-email@host.com"
  },
  "scripts": {
    "test": "echo \"Error: no test specified\" && exit 1"
  }
}
```

Afterward, stage and commit your changes:

```
git add -A && git commit -m "Create repository and bugs fields"
```

Let's now push the local Git repository upstream.

8. Push Your Local Git Directory to the Remote Repo

After successfully connecting your local directory to the remote repository, you can begin to push (upload) your local project upstream. Here's how:

```
git push -u origin main
```

The command above instructs Git to push your local main branch's `.git` directory to the remote `origin` branch on GitHub.

Refreshing your remote repository's page should now reflect your upload.

The next step is to set up the project with React. So, let's do that now.

9. Install React as a dev-dependency

Install React as a dev-dependency

```
npm i -D react@19.0.0
```

The command above tells NPM to install `react` as your package's dev-dependency.

- The `react` package is a library containing React's core functionality for creating React components.
- `i` is the shorthand notation for `install`.
- The `-D` flag is the shorthand notation for `--save-dev`.

But why install React as a dev-dependency since users need it in production? Let's discuss the reason.

Why Install React as a Package's Dev-Dependency?

Installing React as a dev-dependency rather than a dependency package prevents making it mandatory for users to download React while installing your package.

React requires having only one copy of the `react` package in a project.

Therefore, specifying React as a dev-dependency prevents making it mandatory for users to download React while installing your package. If their project already has a React copy, they wouldn't need to install an additional copy.

A caveat of the dev-dependency installation is that your package will only work for projects having the React package preinstalled. However, there's a good workaround:

- Duplicate the `"react"` property of your `package.json`'s `"devDependencies"` field into the `"peerDependencies"` like so:

Figure 4. package.json: Add peerDependencies field (line 5-7)

```
1 {
2   "devDependencies": {
3     "react": "^19.0.0"
4   },
5   "peerDependencies": {
6     "react": "^19.0.0"
7   }
8 }
```

Specifying React as a peer-dependency tells package managers to check whether the app installing your package contains the listed `peerDependencies`. If so, the application has the dependencies your package needs to work.

But suppose the package manager could not find the `peerDependencies`. In that case, some NPM versions (like versions 7 and 8) will install them automatically. But other versions (like versions 3 to 6) will display a warning showing the dependencies your package needs to work, which the user must install manually.

dependencies vs. devDependencies vs. peerDependencies

- `"dependencies"` specify the packages a project depends on in production (when your app is running on a live server).
- The `"devDependencies"` field lists all the packages a project does not need in production—but requires for its local development and testing purposes.
- `"peerDependencies"` list all the packages a project expects its host application to have in its `node_modules` directory.

So, now that you've installed React, we can discuss writing your component's test case.

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How to Provide Release-It with a Recommended Version

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Automating Changelog Management

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Automating GitHub Releases

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1. Get a GitHub Personal Access Token

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2. Copy the Generated Token

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3. Create a GitHub Environment Variable

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4. Tell Release-It Your GitHub Token's Name

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5. Make the GitHub Secret Available Locally in Your Project

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6. Prevent Git from Monitoring the Environment File

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7. Install the Plugin for Loading the .env File

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8. Load the .env File While Releasing Your Project's Latest Version

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9. Stage and Commit Your Changes

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Epilogue

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What's Next?

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One Last Favor

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