Introducing PHP

Learning About PHP and Server-Side Programming

This article describes what PHP and server-side technologies are and walks you through creating your first PHP pages. This article assumes that you are already comfortable with HTML and you're interested in learning more about other Web technologies.

PHP is a commonly used, simple, yet powerful Web server scripting language used for embedding dynamic content into HTML Web pages. PHP stands for PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor.

PHP is a server-side scripting language. What distinguishes PHP from something like client-side JavaScript is that the code is executed on the server. This means that the server executes your script and translates the content to HTML before sending it to your Web browser. All of the heavy lifting and computing is done on the server.

When a user looks at the source for the page created by your PHP file, they have no way of knowing what's going on behind the scenes—all they see is the end result.

Using PHP

PHP is automatically enabled with all of the hosting accounts we offer. Once you activate your hosting account, you can create and upload PHP pages.

If you're not familiar with PHP and not interested in writing your own programming code, you can still use PHP on Web sites by downloading existing scripts and applications and and installing them on your site. There are a multitude of free PHP scripts and applications already written and distributed on the Internet.

Using PHP and a MySQL database, you can create robust Web sites that generate content and images dynamically.

Below is a list of just some of the features you can add to your Web site using PHP:

- Blogs

- Guestbooks

- Discussion Fora

- Mail Functions

- Password Generation

- Database Communication

- Auctions

- Calendars/Planners

- Games

- File Management

- Voting/Polling Features

What PHP Looks Like

If you are familiar with HTML, PHP is a straightforward language to learn. Once you learn the basic syntax, you can explore more advanced features of PHP.

Here is a basic example of what PHP looks like in an HTML document:

```
<html>
    <head>
        <title>Example</title>
    </head>

    <body>

        <?php
        echo "Hi, I'm a PHP script!";
        ?>

    </body>

</html>
```

Unlike Perl or C, there's no need to write a program with a lot of commands to output your HTML. You simply write an HTML script with some embedded code to do something.

Notice how The PHP code is enclosed in special start and end tags. These allow you to jump into and out of "PHP mode."

Your First PHP Page

There are several good (often free) PHP editors available for writing your PHP code, but technically you can use any text editor program to write a PHP file (e.g., Notepad, TextEdit).

To Create Your First PHP Page

1. Open your text editor.

2. Type the following code into your text editor:

```
<html>
    <head>
        <title>PHP Test</title>
    </head>

    <body>

        <?php echo '<p>Hello World</p>'; ?>

    </body>
</html>
```

3. Save you file as "hello.php" and close your text editor. If you are using Windows Notepad, make sure that the the ".php" replaces the ".txt" when you save your file.

4. Upload your new PHP file to the root folder of your hosting account.

5. Use your browser to access the file by typing in your Web address followed by /hello.php/. For example, www.yourdomainnamehere.com/hello.php.

If everything is configured correctly, PHP will convert the code in between the <? and ?> tags and display the text "Hello World" in your browser.

> **NOTE:** If you tried this example and it did not display correctly or you see the whole file as text, contact customer service. Remember to upload your file to your hosting account. If you try to view this PHP file on your computer, it will not work. You need to upload it onto a server that has PHP running.

The point of the example is to show the special PHP tag format. In this example we used <?php to indicate the start of a PHP tag. Then we put the PHP statement and left PHP mode by adding the closing tag, ?>. You may jump in and out of PHP mode in an HTML file like this anywhere you want. For more details, read the manual section on the basic PHP syntax.

Your Second PHP Page

One of the most popular PHP scripts is one that calls the phpinfo() function. The phpinfo() function displays useful information about your system and setup such as available pre-defined variables, loaded PHP modules, and configuration settings.

To Use the phpinfo() Function

1. Open your text editor.

2. Type the following code into your text editor:

```
<html>
    <head>
        <title>PHP Information</title>
    </head>

    <body>

        <?php phpinfo(); ?>

    </body>
</html>
```

3. Save you file as "info.php" and close your text editor. If you are using Windows Notepad, make sure that the the ".php" replaces the ".txt" when you save your file.

4. Upload your new PHP file to the root folder of your hosting account.

5. Use your browser to access the file by typing in your Web address followed by /hello.php/. For example, www.yourdomainnamehere.com/info.php.

If everything is configured correctly, PHP will convert the code in between the <? and ?> tags and display your system's PHP information in your browser.

Additional Resources

There are a number of places on the Internet where you can learn more about PHP and the different types of PHP Web applications that you can use on your Web site. Here are a few links to get you started:

http://www.php.net/

http://www.w3schools.com/php/default.asp

http://www.phpfreaks.com/