PHP Forms

The PHP superglobals $_GET and $_POST are used to collect form-data.

PHP - A Simple HTML Form
The example below displays a simple HTML form with two input fields and a submit button:

```
<html>
<body>
<form action="welcome.php" method="post">
Name: <input type="text" name="name"><br>
E-mail: <input type="text" name="email"><br>
<input type="submit">
</form>
</body>
</html>
```

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When the user fills out the form above and clicks the submit button, the form data is sent for processing to a PHP file named "welcome.php". The form data is sent with the HTTP POST method.

To display the submitted data you could simply echo all the variables. The "welcome.php" looks like this:

```
<html>
<body>
Welcome <?php echo $_POST["name"]; ?><br>
Your email address is: <?php echo $_POST["email"]; ?>
</body>
</html>
```

The output could be something like this:

Welcome John

Your email address is john.doe@example.com

PHP Forms

The same result could also be achieved using the HTTP GET method:

Example

```
<html>
<body>

<form action="welcome_get.php" method="get">
Name: <input type="text" name="name"><br>
E-mail: <input type="text" name="email"><br>
<input type="submit">
</form>

</body>
</html>
```

PHP Forms

and "welcome_get.php" looks like this:

```
<html>
<body>

Welcome <?php echo $_GET["name"]; ?><br>
Your email address is: <?php echo $_GET["email"]; ?>

</body>
</html>
```

The code above is quite simple. However, the most important thing is missing. You need to validate form data to protect your script from malicious code.

PHP Forms

GET vs. POST

Both GET and POST create an array (e.g. array(key1 => value1, key2 => value2, key3 => value3, ...)). This array holds key/value pairs, where keys are the names of the form controls and values are the input data from the user.

Both GET and POST are treated as $_GET and $_POST. These are superglobals, which means that they are always accessible, regardless of scope - and you can access them from any function, class or file without having to do anything special.

$_GET is an array of variables passed to the current script via the URL parameters.

$_POST is an array of variables passed to the current script via the HTTP POST method.

PHP Forms

GET vs. POST

When to use GET?

Information sent from a form with the GET method is **visible to everyone** (all variable names and values are displayed in the URL). GET also has limits on the amount of information to send. The limitation is about 2000 characters. However, because the variables are displayed in the URL, it is possible to bookmark the page. This can be useful in some cases.

GET may be used for sending non-sensitive data.

Note: GET should NEVER be used for sending passwords or other sensitive information!

PHP Forms

GET vs. POST

When to use POST?

Information sent from a form with the POST method is **invisible to others** (all names/values are embedded within the body of the HTTP request) and has **no limits** on the amount of information to send.
Moreover POST supports advanced functionality such as support for multi-part binary input while uploading files to server.
However, because the variables are not displayed in the URL, it is not possible to bookmark the page.

Developers prefer POST for sending form data.

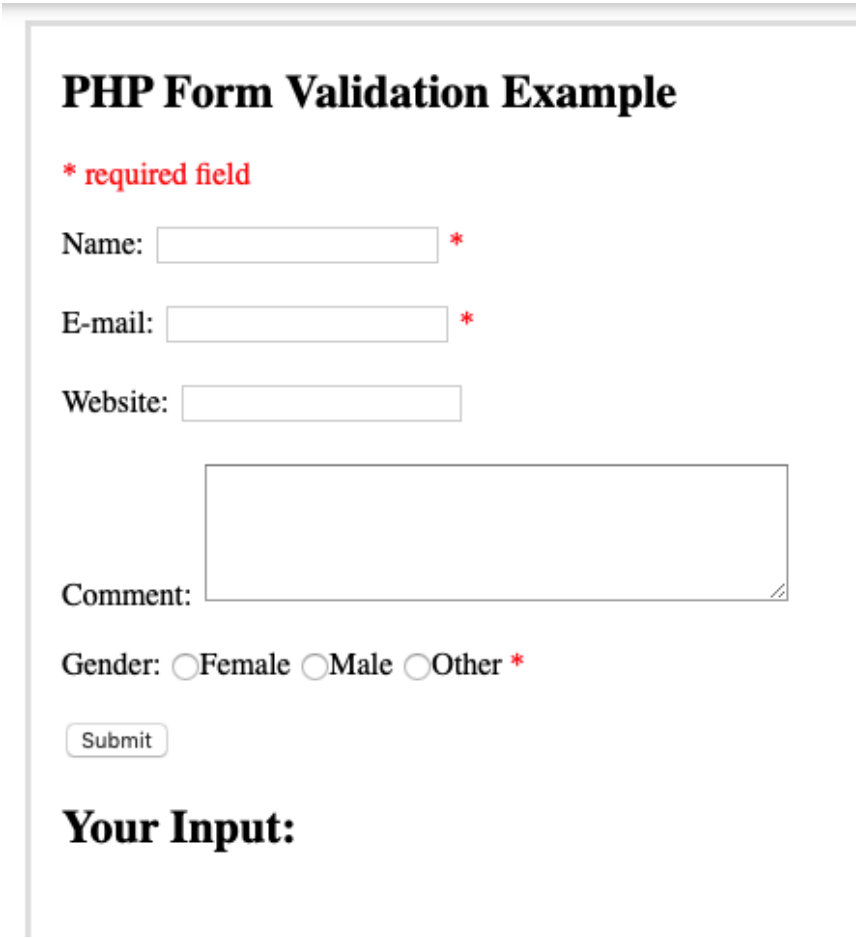
PHP Forms

PHP Form Validation

Think SECURITY when processing PHP forms!

These pages will show how to process PHP forms with security in mind. Proper validation of form data is important to protect your form from hackers and spammers!

The HTML form we will be working at in these chapters, contains various input fields: required and optional text fields, radio buttons, and a submit button:



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PHP Form Validation

The validation rules for the form above are as follows:

Field	Validation Rules
Name	Required. + Must only contain letters and whitespace
E-mail	Required. + Must contain a valid email address (with @ and .)
Website	Optional. If present, it must contain a valid URL
Comment	Optional. Multi-line input field (textarea)
Gender	Required. Must select one

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PHP Form Validation

First we will look at the plain HTML code for the form:

Text Fields

The name, email, and website fields are text input elements, and the comment field is a textarea. The HTML code looks like this:

Name: <input type="text" name="name">
E-mail: <input type="text" name="email">
Website: <input type="text" name="website">
Comment: <textarea name="comment" rows="5" cols="40"></textarea>

Radio Buttons

The gender fields are radio buttons and the HTML code looks like this:

Gender:
<input type="radio" name="gender" value="female">Female
<input type="radio" name="gender" value="male">Male
<input type="radio" name="gender" value="other">Other

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PHP Form Validation

The Form Element
The HTML code of the form looks like this:

```
<form method="post" action="<?php echo htmlspecialchars($_SERVER["
PHP_SELF"]);?>">
```

When the form is submitted, the form data is sent with method="post".

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PHP Form Validation

What is the $_SERVER["PHP_SELF"] variable?

The $_SERVER["PHP_SELF"] is a super global variable that returns the filename of the currently executing script.

So, the $_SERVER["PHP_SELF"] sends the submitted form data to the page itself, instead of jumping to a different page. This way, the user will get error messages on the same page as the form.

What is the htmlspecialchars() function?

The htmlspecialchars() function converts special characters to HTML entities. This means that it will replace HTML characters like < and > with < and >. This prevents attackers from exploiting the code by injecting HTML or Javascript code (Cross-site Scripting attacks) in forms.

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PHP Form Validation

Big Note on PHP Form Security

The $_SERVER["PHP_SELF"] variable can be used by hackers!
If PHP_SELF is used in your page then a user can enter a slash (/) and then some Cross Site Scripting (XSS) commands to execute.

Cross-site scripting (XSS) is a type of computer security vulnerability typically found in Web applications. XSS enables attackers to inject client-side script into Web pages viewed by other users.

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PHP Form Validation

The next stValidate Form Data With PHP
The first thing we will do is to pass all variables through PHP's htmlspecialchars() function.
When we use the htmlspecialchars() function; then if a user tries to submit the following in a text field:
<script>location.href('http://www.hacked.com')</script>
- this would not be executed, because it would be saved as HTML escaped code, like this:
<script>location.href('http://www.hacked.com')</script>
The code is now safe to be displayed on a page or inside an e-mail.

PHP Forms

PHP Form Validation

We will also do two more things when the user submits the form:
Strip unnecessary characters (extra space, tab, newline) from the user input data (with the PHP trim() function)
Remove backslashes (\) from the user input data (with the PHP stripslashes() function)
The next step is to create a function that will do all the checking for us (which is much more convenient than writing the same code over and over again).
We will name the function test_input().

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Now, we can check each $_POST variable with the test_input() function:s:

```
<?php
// define variables and set to empty values
$name = $email = $gender = $comment = $website = "";
if ($_SERVER["REQUEST_METHOD"] == "POST") {
  $name = test_input($_POST["name"]);
  $email = test_input($_POST["email"]);
  $website = test_input($_POST["website"]);
  $comment = test_input($_POST["comment"]);
  $gender = test_input($_POST["gender"]);
}
function test_input($data) {
  $data = trim($data);
  $data = stripslashes($data);
  $data = htmlspecialchars($data);
  return $data;
}
?>
```

PHP Forms

PHP - Required Fields

From the validation rules table on the previous page, we see that the "Name", "E-mail", and "Gender" fields are required. These fields cannot be empty and must be filled out in the HTML form.

Field	Validation Rules
Name	Required. + Must only contain letters and whitespace
E-mail	Required. + Must contain a valid email address (with @ and .)
Website	Optional. If present, it must contain a valid URL
Comment	Optional. Multi-line input field (textarea)
Gender	Required. Must select one

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PHP - Required Fields

In the previous chapter, all input fields were optional.
In the following code we have added some new variables: $nameErr, $emailErr, $genderErr, and $websiteErr. These error variables will hold error messages for the required fields. We have also added an if else statement for each $_POST variable. This checks if the $_POST variable is empty (with the PHP empty() function). If it is empty, an error message is stored in the different error variables, and if it is not empty, it sends the user input data through the test_input()function:

PHP Forms

```
<?php
// define variables and set to empty values
$nameErr = $emailErr = $genderErr = $websiteErr = "";
$name = $email = $gender = $comment = $website = "";

if ($_SERVER["REQUEST_METHOD"] == "POST") {
  if (empty($_POST["name"])) {
    $nameErr = "Name is required";
  } else {
    $name = test_input($_POST["name"]);
  }

  if (empty($_POST["email"])) {
    $emailErr = "Email is required";
  } else {
    $email = test_input($_POST["email"]);
  }
```

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```
if (empty($_POST["website"])) {
    $website = "";
  } else {
    $website = test_input($_POST["website"]);
  }
  if (empty($_POST["comment"])) {
    $comment = "";
  } else {
    $comment = test_input($_POST["comment"]);
  }
  if (empty($_POST["gender"])) {
    $genderErr = "Gender is required";
  } else {
    $gender = test_input($_POST["gender"]);
  }
}
?>
```

PHP Forms

PHP - Display The Error Messages

Then in the HTML form, we add a little script after each required field, which generates the correct error message if needed (that is if the user tries to submit the form without filling out the required fields):

To See the example: Click here

PHP Forms

PHP - Validate Name

The code below shows a simple way to check if the name field only contains letters, dashes, apostrophes and whitespaces. If the value of the name field is not valid, then store an error message:

```
$name = test_input($_POST["name"]);
if (!preg_match("/^[a-zA-Z-' ]*$/",$name)) {
  $nameErr = "Only letters and white space allowed";
}
```

The preg_match() function searches a string for pattern, returning true if the pattern exists, and false otherwise.

PHP Forms

PHP - Validate E-mail

The easiest and safest way to check whether an email address is well-formed is to use PHP's filter_var() function.

In the code below, if the e-mail address is not well-formed, then store an error message:

```
$email = test_input($_POST["email"]);
if (!filter_var($email, FILTER_VALIDATE_EMAIL)) {
  $emailErr = "Invalid email format";
}
```

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PHP - Validate URL

The code below shows a way to check if a URL address syntax is valid (this regular expression also allows dashes in the URL). If the URL address syntax is not valid, then store an error message:

```
$website = test_input($_POST["website"]);
if (!preg_match("/\b(?:(?:https?|ftp):\/\/|www\.)[-a-z0-
9+&@#\/%?=~_|!:,.;]*[-a-z0-9+&@#\/%=~_|]/i",$website)) {
  $websiteErr = "Invalid URL";
}
```

The script will look like this: Click here