

PHP for Site Modularity

Website Planning

What is PHP?

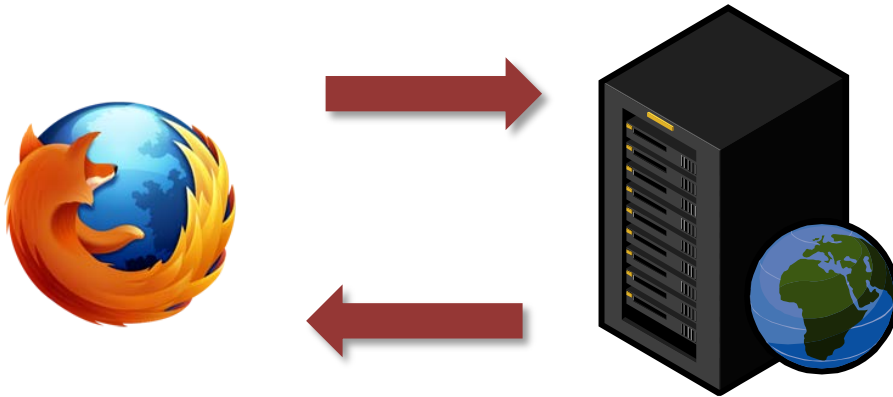
- PHP is a "server-side" scripting language specifically designed for producing dynamic web pages.
- PHP is the most widely used web scripting language in the world.
- Many significant websites are developed using PHP (Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, Yahoo! etc.).
- PHP 5 is the most recent version.

How does PHP work?

- PHP scripts are embedded within HTML markup.
- The file must be saved with a ".PHP" extension so that the server knows how to treat it.
- When a user requests a PHP page, the server passes the page to the PHP "parser", which runs the scripts and passes the compiled page back to the web server for delivery to the user.

The HTML server request

1. Request for HTML file
(index.html) from browser

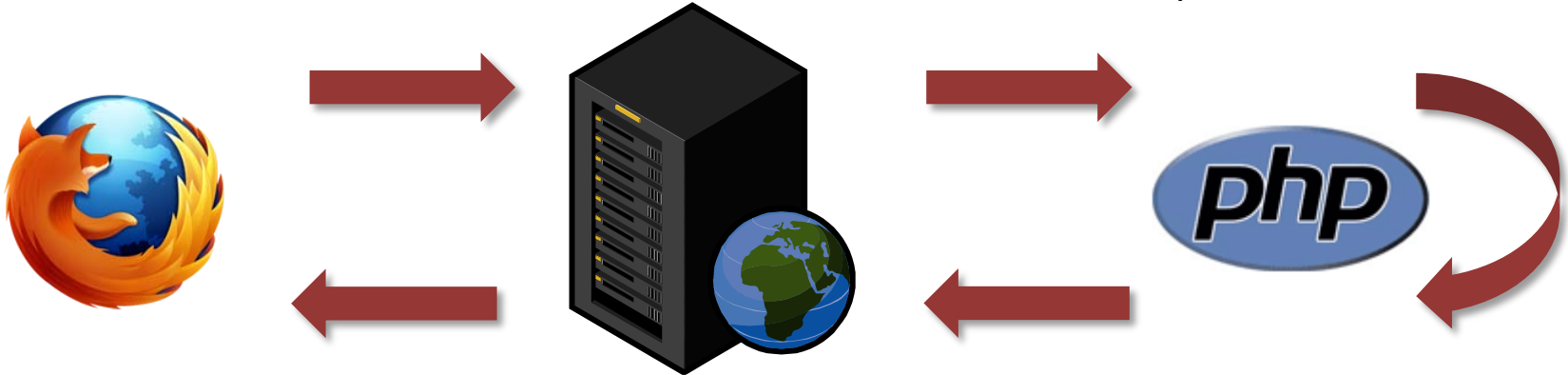


2. index.html sent
to browser

The PHP server request

1. Request for PHP file
(index.php) from browser

2. index.php sent to
the PHP interpreter



4. Parsed index.php
sent to browser

3. index.php returned to the web
server after it has been parsed

How easy is PHP to learn?

- PHP is pretty easy to learn, it is logical and sequential.
- If you have done any programming at all, you'll pick it up very easily.
- If you've never done any programming, PHP is a good place to start.
- If JavaScript scares you, you'll find PHP makes you only slightly nervous.

What does PHP look like?

```
<html>
```

```
<head>
```

```
<title>PHP Test</title>
```

```
</head>
```

```
<body>
```

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

```
</body>
```

```
</html>
```

Before parsing

PHP scripts are always enclosed within special tags `<?php script ?>`

Each instruction is terminated with a semi-colon ;

What does the user see?

```
<html>  
<head>  
<title>PHP Test</title>  
</head>  
<body>  
  
<p>Hello World</p>  
  
</body>  
</html>
```

After parsing

After parsing, the PHP script is replaced with the output. In this case, just an HTML paragraph.

Using variables for consistency

```
<?php $page_name = "PHP Test" ; ?>  
<html>  
<head>  
<title><? echo $page_name; ?></title>  
</head>  
  
<h1><? echo $page_name; ?></ h1>  
  
<body>  
</body>  
</html>
```

What the designer writes

Variables are just containers that hold bits of information.

Variable names always begin with a dollar sign \$

Using variables for consistency

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

```
<h1>PHP Test</ h1>
```

```
<body>  
</body>  
</html>
```

What the user's browser sees

The `echo` instruction tells the parser to print (or echo) a string or the contents of a variable. In this case, the `$page_name` variable is replaced with its contents.

Keeping things up-to-date

- One of the important maintenance tasks for a website is keeping dates current.
- For example, many websites have a copyright notice in the footer with the current year:

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Keeping things up-to-date

- With a static HTML site, the date would have to be manually changed on the 1st January each year.
- But PHP can do this for us automatically:

Copyright © 2003 – `<? echo date("Y"); ?>` David...

The `date` function can be used to return a date string formatted just the way you want it. The `"Y"` parameter tells PHP to return only the year as a 4 digit number.

Dates and Times

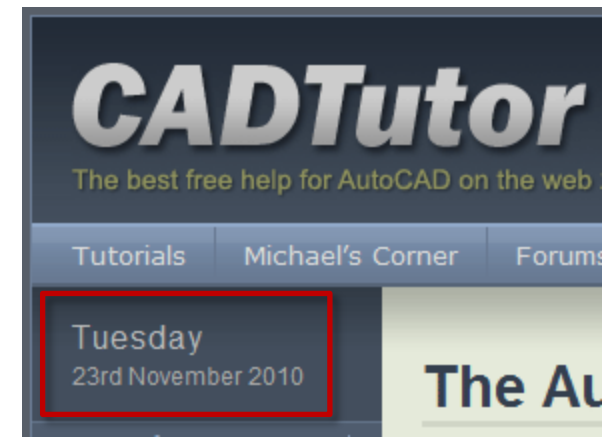
- PHP allows a great deal of flexibility over the formatting of dates and times. For example:

```
<? echo date("g:ia jS M Y"); ?>
```

returns:

12:55pm 23rd Nov 2010

- However, bear in mind that PHP always returns *server time* and **not** local time. If you want local time, you must use JavaScript.



Making pages intelligent

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Today</title>
</head>
<body>
<?php
$today = date(l);
echo "<p>Today is $today</p>";
if ($today == "Saturday" OR $today == "Sunday"){
    echo "<p>Hooray! It's the weekend.</p>";
}
else{
    echo "<p>Oh, it's just another work day.</p>";
}
?>
</body>
</html>
```

This script finds out what day it is using the `date` function and then decides if it's a weekend. It then prints one message if it is a weekend and another if it's a weekday.

If today is Wednesday...

```
<html>  
<head>  
<title>Today</title>  
</head>  
<body>  
<p>Oh, it's just another work day.</p>  
</body>  
</html>
```

Once the script has been parsed and passed to the browser, the html looks like this. The user is completely unaware of the process, all they see is the end result.

Site Modularity

If you look at any well designed website, you should notice that each page contains a number of common elements.

The page on the left has 3 elements that are common to all pages in the same site, the masthead or branding, the sidebar and the footer.

Both the sidebar and the footer contain content that may need to be updated frequently. For example, site navigation will need to be updated if new pages are added to the site. It can be difficult to keep all navigation links co-ordinated on a complex site because changes need to be made to all pages in the site.

MA Web Design & Content Planning

Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich

THE MA WEB DESIGN & CONTENT PLANNING PROGRAMME takes graduates from many disciplines and provides them with the hands-on skills necessary to plan, design, build and promote an effective website in relation to the needs of a business, profession, government office or organisation. The programme is also suitable for those who are considering a future in freelance web design. Applicants should have an interest in design and a working familiarity with the software employed in a modern office environment. See [Our students](#) for more information.

There are many web design courses in London but we are the only institution currently offering a post-graduate MA in this fast-evolving subject.

Learning web design

The design of excellent websites presents a notable intellectual challenge and on graduating from the programme, students will have the skills to design, publish and manage a corporate intranet or a public website. In addition, students will learn how to promote and generate revenue from public websites. The objective is to provide a balanced education in the three aspects of web design: technical, functional and aesthetic. See [Our philosophy](#) for more information.

The technical aspects of the programme provide an understanding of the wide range of tools and technologies that are available for the design and development of websites. This includes the creation of semantically correct XHTML and CSS based design using web standards.

The functional aspects focus on the creation of websites using good information architecture and that demonstrate best practice in accessibility, usability and findability. Students develop an understanding of how people use the web, how they like to navigate and search for information and the importance of SEO. See [Design principles](#) for more information.

The aesthetic aspects of web design are considered with regard to both graphic/artistic and business objectives, such as corporate identity and branding. The architectural principle that form should follow function is relevant, not as a rule but because aesthetic considerations must be judged with regard to the technical and functional aspects of a website.

Flexible teaching mode

The timetable is designed to make it easy for those in full-time employment to attend the programme and students have the option of a full-time (one day per week) or part-time (one half day per week) mode of study. Although contact time is relatively short, students should be aware that there will be a substantial amount of course work, project work and reading to be completed in their own time. See [Programme details](#) for more information.

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- Site homepage
- Programme details
- Core courses
- Our philosophy
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MA Web Design & Content Planning (full-time and part-time modes) now recruiting for September 2018. Find out more...

Redesign this site

Select one of the colour options below to change the way this site looks. How does this work?



Frequently asked questions

- Will we learn how to use Dreamweaver?
- At what time of year does the programme begin?
- What do students do after graduation?
- How much study time will I need each week?
- Where are lectures held?
- Where can I get financial advice?

More FAQs...

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Most students tell us that the programme has exceeded their expectations. See [Our students](#).

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- WordPress & Haccresis
- Careers
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- Could this campaign see...
- Should the BBC dump half

More forum topics...

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Site Navigation
Site homepage
Programme details
Core courses
Our philosophy
Design principles
Our students
Frequent questions
Web design bookshelf
Contact

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Site Navigation
Site homepage
Programme details
Core courses
Our philosophy
Design principles
Our students
Frequent questions
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Site Modularity

Wouldn't it be great if we could update the navigation links on our site by editing a single file – just like we can change the design of our site by editing a single CSS file?

With PHP we can do just that. All we need to do is to identify any common or repeating elements in our site design and put the markup for that element in a separate file.

We then use PHP to bring all the different parts together to make up the whole page.

We do this using the [include](#) function.

The screenshot shows a website layout for 'MA Web Design & Content Planning' at the University of Greenwich. The page is divided into several sections:

- Branding:** The top header area containing the site title and logo.
- Main Content:** A central column with text about the programme, including sections for 'Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich', 'Learning web design', and 'Flexible teaching mode'.
- Sidebars:** Two vertical columns on the right side containing 'Programme details', 'Redesign this site', 'Frequently asked questions', 'Student opinion', and 'Latest forum topics'.
- Footer:** A bottom section with 'Site Navigation', 'Our Favourite Websites', and 'University of Greenwich' links.

Red arrows point to these specific areas: 'Branding' points to the header, 'Sidebar' points to the right-hand sidebar, and 'Footer' points to the bottom navigation area.

Site Modularity

For example, a code schematic for the page on the right might look something like this:

```
<html>
[HEAD SECTION]
<body>
[INCLUDE BRANDING HERE]
<div class="content">
[CONTENT GOES HERE]
</div>
[INCLUDE SIDEBAR HERE]
[INCLUDE FOOTER HERE]
</body>
</html>
```

The image shows a screenshot of the MA Web Design & Content Planning website. The page is divided into several sections, with red arrows pointing to specific areas:

- Branding:** Points to the header area containing the logo "MA Web Design & Content Planning".
- Sidebar:** Points to the right-hand column containing sections like "Programme details", "Redesign this site", "Frequently asked questions", "Student opinion", and "Latest forum topics".
- Footer:** Points to the bottom section containing "Site Navigation", "Our Favourite Websites", and "University of Greenwich".

The main content area includes a title "Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich", a paragraph about the programme, a "Learning web design" section, and several other paragraphs detailing the course's focus on technical, functional, and aesthetic aspects of web design.

Site Modularity

In reality, those include statements might look something like this:

```
<html>
[HEAD SECTION]
<body>
<? include('branding.php');?>
<div class="content">
[CONTENT GOES HERE]
</div>
<? include('sidebar.php');?>
<? include('footer.php');?>
</body>
</html>
```

In each case, the server replaces the include statement with the contents of the file indicated.

The image shows a screenshot of a website for 'MA Web Design & Content Planning' at the University of Greenwich. The website has a pink and white color scheme. A red arrow points to the top header area, labeled 'Branding'. Another red arrow points to a vertical sidebar on the right side of the page, labeled 'Sidebar'. A third red arrow points to the footer area at the bottom, labeled 'Footer'. The footer contains three columns of links: 'Site Navigation', 'Our Favourite Websites', and 'University of Greenwich'. The sidebar contains sections for 'Programme details', 'Redesign this site', 'Frequently asked questions', 'Student opinion', and 'Latest forum topics'. The main content area has a title 'Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich' and several paragraphs of text.

Site Modularity

The three files...

branding.php

sidebar.php

footer.php

...are known as server-side includes because they are added to the main page by the server before passing the completed page to the user's browser for display.

In reality, the page on the right is built from 4 files, a parent file (index.php) and the 3 includes. The file extension for includes can be anything you like. You will often see...

branding.inc

...Or...

branding.inc.php

The screenshot shows a website for the MA Web Design & Content Planning programme at the University of Greenwich. The page is divided into several sections:

- Header:** MA Web Design & Content Planning. An arrow points to this header area, labeled "branding.php".
- Main Content:** Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich. This section contains introductory text, a list of frequently asked questions, and a "Need to know more?" section. An arrow points to the right-hand sidebar area, labeled "sidebar.php".
- Footer:** Site Navigation, Our Favourite Websites, and University of Greenwich. An arrow points to the footer area, labeled "footer.php".

The website also features a "Programme details" sidebar on the right, a "Resign this site" section, and a "Latest forum topics" section.

Site Modularity

Most commonly, includes are just given a ".php" extension and then stored in a folder called "includes". As with other files that make up your site, it's important to give includes a logical name, usually this will describe what they are or what they do. In most cases, SEO is not a consideration because include files alone are not navigable. In fact, most designers will disallow indexing of the includes folder using the robots.txt file:

User-agent: *

Disallow: /includes/

To keep your includes away from prying eyes, you could even store them above the web root.

The screenshot shows a website for 'MA Web Design & Content Planning' at the University of Greenwich. The page layout includes a header with the site title, a main content area with text and a 'Study web design in London at the University of Greenwich' section, a right-hand sidebar with sections like 'Programme details', 'Redesign this site', 'Frequently asked questions', 'Student opinion', and 'Latest forum topics', and a footer with 'Site Navigation', 'Our Favourite Websites', and 'University of Greenwich' links. Three red arrows point to specific elements: one to the header title 'branding.php', one to the sidebar 'sidebar.php', and one to the footer logo 'footer.php'.

Server-side include paths

A relative path:

```
<? include('includes/footer.php'); ?>
```

The problem with using relative paths for includes is that they change depending on where in the site the parent file is located.

An absolute path:

```
<? include('/home/mydomain/public_html/includes/footer.php'); ?>
```

PHP can see above the document root so, unlike HTML, PHP absolute paths begin at the topmost server level and not the document root. Notice that the name of the domain is included in an absolute path.

A "portable" absolute path:

```
<? include($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'] . '/includes/footer.php'); ?>
```

In order to make absolute paths "portable" (they work on different domains or if the domain changes), use the `$_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT']` superglobal variable as in the example above.

Server-side include paths

The `$_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT']` superglobal variable contains the path from the server root to the document root. This will be something like `"/home/mydomain/public_html"`. The period `"."` means append the text that follows, so the result is the full path from the server root to the specified file.

```
<? include ($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'] . '/includes/footer.php'); ?>
```

You may sometimes see the `require` function being used in place of `include`:

```
<? require ($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'] . '/includes/footer.php'); ?>
```

The `include` and `require` instructions are very similar. The difference is that `require` will stop a script if the file is not found and `include` will continue – or attempt to continue.

An example of a page with includes

```
<?php $this_page = "PHP Example"; ?>
<html>
<head>
<title><? echo $this_page; ?></title>
<link href="/style/style.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" media="screen" />
</head>

<body>

<div id="wrapper">
<?
include($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'].'/includes/header.php');
include($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'].'/includes/navigation.php');
?>

<div id="content">

<!-- Content Begin -->

<h1><? echo $this_page; ?></h1>

<p>Some body text... </p>

<!-- Content End -->

</div>
<? include($_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'].'/includes/footer.php'); ?>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

In this file, all the common site design elements (header, navigation and footer) are added as includes using the `include` function and the variable `$this_page` is for the page title and `<h1>`.

The included navigation

```
<ul id="navigation">  
<li><a href="php-example.php">PHP Example</a></li>  
<li><a href="another-link.php">Another Link</a></li>  
<li>...  
    ...</li>  
</ul>
```

This markup will display the same navigation links on every page – great for ease of site management because if we want to add another link, we just add it to this include and it will display across the entire site.

However, what if we want the navigation to indicate which page we're on? We don't want a live link to the PHP Example page if we're already on that page. PHP to the rescue...

The included file is just another PHP file that contains a fragment of markup.

Adding some intelligence

...We can get PHP to decide which page we're on and then add a link or not.

In our example page, we assigned the page title to a variable like this:

```
$this_page = "PHP Example";
```

We can use this information to add some intelligence to our navigation:

```
<ul id="navigation">
<?php
if ($this_page == "PHP Example") {
    echo "<li>PHP Example</li>";
}else{
    echo "<li><a href=\"php-example.php\">PHP Example</a></li>";
}
?>
<li><a href="another-link.php">Another Link</a></li>
<li>...
    ...</li>
</ul>
```

We're using an if else conditional statement to make a decision based on the value of a variable.

Site-wide intelligent navigation

```
<ul id="navigation">
<?php

if ($this_page=="PHP Example"){
    echo "<li>PHP Example</li>";
}
else{
    echo "<li><a href=\"php-example.php\">PHP Example</a></li>";
}
}
if ($this_page=="Another Page"){
    echo "<li>Another Link</li>";
}
else{
    echo "<li><a href=\"another-page.php\">Another Link</a></li>";
}
}
if ($this_page=="A Third Page"){
    echo "<li>A Third Link</li>";
}
else{
    echo "<li><a href=\"a-third-page.php\">A Third Link</a></li>";
}
}
?>
</ul>
```

We can add the same conditional logic to all our links.

Random image display

```
<?php
```

```
$random_image = rand(1, 3);  
switch ($random_image) {  
    case "1":  
        $image = "image-01.jpg";  
        break;  
    case "2":  
        $image = "image-02.jpg";  
        break;  
    case "3":  
        $image = "image-03.jpg";  
}  
?>
```

This script decides which one of 3 images will be used and assigns the name to the `$image` variable. That variable is then used in the html `` tag to display it.

```
<img href="<? echo $image; ?>" width="25 height="25" alt="" />
```

Random image with alt text

```
<?php
```

```
$random_image = rand(1, 3);  
switch ($random_image) {  
    case "1":  
        $image = "image-01.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Blackbird";  
        break;  
    case "2":  
        $image = "image-02.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Blue Tit";  
        break;  
    case "3":  
        $image = "image-03.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Robin";  
    }  
?>
```

In this script, we've added more intelligence by using a second variable to store the alt text. If our images are different sizes, we could also add variables for height and width.

```
<img href="<? echo $image; ?>" width="25 height="25" alt="<? echo $alt; ?>" />
```

Day of the week image

```
<?php
```

```
$today = date(l);  
switch ($today) {  
    case "Monday":  
        $image = "image-01.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Blackbird";  
        break;  
    case "Tuesday":  
        $image = "image-02.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Blue Tit";  
        break;  
    case "Wednesday":  
        $image = "image-03.jpg";  
        $alt = "A Robin";
```

```
...and so on for each day of the week...
```

```
}  
?>
```

```
<img href="<? echo $image; ?>" width="25 height="25" alt="<? echo $alt; ?>" />
```

In this variation on the previous script, we can display a different image depending on the day of the week.

Now think about this...

We could use the same logic to add includes and not just images, so the entire page could change depending on the day of the week or month of the year or...

Using quotes

We can print text in PHP using the `echo` function like this:

```
echo "David likes PHP";
```

We can also print HTML using the same function:

```
echo "<p>David likes PHP</p>";
```

But a problem arises when the text or HTML we are printing includes quotes:

```
echo "<p class=\"content\">David likes PHP</p>";
```

This will cause an error because `echo` thinks the string ends after the second double quote. There are 2 ways around the problem:

Escape the double quotes:

```
echo "<p class=\"content\">David likes PHP</p>";
```

Or use single quotes:

```
echo '<p class="content">David likes PHP</p>';
```

Both the above options give the same result:

```
<p class="content">David likes PHP</p>
```

This is really important and is the cause of much anguish for the PHP beginner.

Comments in PHP scripts

```
<?php
```

```
# assign the name of the day to a variable
```

```
$today = date(l);
```

```
/* check the value of the variable against a number of  
options – the days of the week */
```

```
switch ($today) {
```

```
    # if today is Monday, assign the image and alt variables
```

```
    case "Monday":
```

```
        $image = "image-01.jpg";
```

```
        $alt = "A Blackbird";
```

```
        break;
```

```
    # if today is Tuesday, assign the image and alt variables
```

```
    case "Tuesday":
```

```
        $image = "image-02.jpg";
```

```
        $alt = "A Blue Tit";
```

```
        break;
```

It's always a good idea to add comments to your scripts so that you can see what it's doing – or what it's supposed to do. Single line comments begin with the hash symbol (#). Multi-line comments use exactly the same syntax as CSS.

```
<?php  
$end="<p>This is the end</p>";  
echo "$end";  
?>
```