



CodeActually
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Forms and Form Processing

Forms provide interactivity for html pages. You can collect data or pass information to parts of your code. Understanding how forms work is the first step in making websites more responsive to user input.

Set up a basic html page with doctype, html, head, title and body.
In the body, insert the basic <form> tag. Everything in the form will be surrounded by this tag.

```
<form name="input" action="mailto:croyal@txstate.edu"
method="post">

</form>
```

The attributes of form are name, action and method. We will discuss when we get to form processing.

Now we will set up a variety of fields.

Text Field – a short text field; the name is the variable name of the field

```
<p>Name: <input type="text" name="name" /></p>
```

Text Area – a longer field, for comments, etc. You can control the size.

```
<p>Comments: <textarea rows="4" cols="50"
name="message"></textarea></p>
```

Radio Button – gives user a choice, either/or, not both; the type is the same for each question.

```
<p><input type="radio" name="gender" value="male">Male<br>
<input type="radio" name="gender" value="female">Female</p>
```

Check Box – allows user to choose as many as they want with a checkbox

```
<p><input type="checkbox" name="vehicle" value="Bike">I have a
bike<br>
<input type="checkbox" name="vehicle" value="Car">I have a car
</p>
```

Dropdown

```
<select multiple name="car">
<option value="volvo">Volvo</option>
<option value="saab">Saab</option>
<option value="mercedes">Mercedes</option>
```

```
<option value="audi">Audi</option>
</select>
```

Buttons – you must have a Submit button for the form to submit. You can also have a Reset button.

```
<input type="submit" value="Submit"><input type="reset"
value="Reset">
```

Add these fields to your own form. Name them specifically as below:

- Add text fields for name and email,
- Add a textarea for comments,
- Add one each of a radio button, a check box and a dropdown.
- Add a submit button.

Save the form as form.html (or something of your own choosing with .html extension). Open the form in the browser.

Form Processing

The mailto method above requires the user to have an email client available, which is not terribly common these days, since most people use a webmail program.

There are other ways that users can submit information, like to a cgi-bin or php script, but these require server support. Our Bluehost accounts have PHP support, as we know, because we are able to host Wordpress installations.

There are some different options for finding a PHP Form Processing Script. The most common is PHPFormMail. It provides a simple way to modify the script and get it to work with your form. You can find it at <http://developer karma.com/projects>. You can download the entire package, but you only need the formmail.php script.

Put a copy of formmail.php in the same folder as your form. On the form, change the action to formmail.php.

```
<form name="input" action="formmail.php" method="post">
```

Open formmail.php in your text editor. You have to change one line:

```
$referers = array('www.cindyroyal.net', 'cindyroyal.net',
'txstate.edu');
```

Change this to include the domain in which you are hosting the form (both with and without www) and the domain to which the results will be sent. We'll add that to a field in the html file. **This is the only thing you have to change in the php.** Pay careful attention to the single quotes.

Now that you have changed the script, you have to add some "hidden" fields to your form that give the script some information so it can process. They are hidden, so they won't show up on the form. Just add lines like these below the opening form tag.

```
<input type="hidden" name="recipient" value="croyal@txstate.edu">
<input type="hidden" name="redirect" value="redirect.html">
<input type="hidden" name="required" value="email">
```

```
<input type="hidden" name="subject" value="My Form">
```

Explanation:

- The recipient is the email you want to receive the results, and that domain needs to be placed in the script in \$referers
- The redirect is optional. You can create a page that thanks the user for submitting. I made a simple one, but you can have anything you want on it. It's just a regular web page.
- You can establish any field as "required."
- If you give the form a "subject", that will be in the email you receive.

One last thing. When using checkboxes and multiple selection lists, you'll need to add [] to the end of the name in the form (i.e. car[]). When the [] is added, PHPFormMail can then properly process the field and print it out in a comma separated format. Technically, this allows the script to store these items in an array.

You will have to ftp these items (form.html, redirect.html, formmail.php) to test in the browser. Login to your server and create a new folder called testform. Then bring the form file up in the address bar. Try to answer the questions on the form and see what happens when you click on Submit.

Check your email to see if the data posted. Fix any bugs.

Another option is <http://www.4serendipity.com/form/>. This is a simple PHP form processing script that you can easily modify for your form fields, but it requires more work than PHPFormMail.

There are some sites that do these steps for you. You can try out <http://phpfmg.sourceforge.net/>.

Using a Form with JavaScript

We will be moving ahead with JavaScript functions that we can use to call in the method section to affect a change on the page.

Example:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
<script>
    function favBrowser()
    {
        var myFav=document.getElementById("myList");
        document.getElementById("favorite").innerHTML=myFav.options
            [myFav.selectedIndex].text;}
</script>
</head>

<body>
```

```
<form>
Select your favorite browser:
<select id="myList" onchange="favBrowser()">
  <option></option>
  <option>Google Chrome</option>
  <option>Firefox</option>
  <option>Internet Explorer</option>
  <option>Safari</option>
  <option>Opera</option>
</select>
</form>
<p>Your favorite browser is: <span id="favorite"></span> </p>

</body>
</html>
```

Processing a Form to a Database

A later exercise will demonstrate how to use form input to post to a database with PHP. See the PHP handout.