



Overview: PHP

By Dennis Pallett

Many of you have probably heard the name PHP, and when exploring the internet, you might have even seen a .php file extension in the URL. This article aims to give you a general overview of what PHP is, and what it's capable of doing.

PHP is a Server-side scripting language; meaning it runs on a Web server, rather than on the Web browser or other client. PHP can be used to create dynamic web pages. This is a page that interacts with the user so that each visitor to the page sees customized information. Dynamic Web applications are popular with commercial sites where the content displayed is generated from information accessed in a database or other external source.

- Portability - It is cross-platform (can run under different operating systems)
- Supports a wide range of databases e.g. Adabas D, InterBase, Solid, dBase, mSQL, Sybase, Empress, MySQL and more

These two features make PHP highly popular, especially for using on sites that require customers, merchandise, purchases, credit information, and other data to be tracked. PHP can also use databases to generate tables and content in real time, as well as create images on-the-fly. It is also compatible with a variety of other Web technologies, including Java, COM, XML and Macromedia Flash.

With interactive web sites becoming more popular, Web masters find that trying to keep hundreds or thousands of separate HTML pages updated is an impossible task. Many Web sites now use HTML to display information while storing the actual data in a database. This allows a company to update a piece of information once in a database, e.g. a product description or price in a catalogue, and have the changes reflected on every page that uses that information.

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