

Forum Post Assistant

Generating The Post Output For You

General Information:

The *Forum Post Assistant* has been designed to assist newcomers to the forum to be able to post relevant system, instance, php and troubleshooting information directly in to a pre-formatted forum post. This should save a few hours of posting back and forth, asking for, and explaining how to acquire useful information in order for other forum users to help troubleshoot a problem.

This process also means that consistent information is gathered and presented in every case, enabling helpers to quickly target information relevant to the specific problem observed by the user.

The idea is to make the information collection, and subsequent posting, as simple as possible for the end user, a simple script, automatically collects the information when run in a web-browser and presents the user with the option to include or exclude any site sensitive information before "generating" the post [BB]code that can then be copied and simply pasted in to a new or existing forum post with no other interaction by the user required after posting.

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK Accuracy and completeness of this script and documentation is *not* assured and *no* responsibility will be accepted for any damage, issues or confusion caused by using versions contained within these branches.

Compatibility:

PHP 4.1, PHP4, 5, 6DEV

MySQL 3.2 - 5.5

MySQLi from 4.1 (@ >=PHP 4.4.9)

Joomla! Version Support:

- v 1.0.x

- v 1.5.x


- v 1.6.x

- v 1.7.x

Language Support:

- English (USA/UK/AU)
- Community language translations may be available. As translations become available, each localized version will be released into it's own "branch" (EG: fr_FR, de_DE) and will be available for download from the "Downloads" button (*in .tar.gz or .zip format*) within the localized branch. All files that are needed have been added to the download package.

Download:

- Use these links to download the English version:
[Download .tar.gz version](#) or [Download the .zip version](#)
- Downloading language specific versions:
 - If there is a localized language specific version of FPA available, then select the desired language from the [Branch List](#) by clicking on the desired language. This will open the selected language specific version branch.
 - Select the  Downloads button on the right to open the download option popup.
 - Select the desired download option (*.tar.gz or .zip format*) to download and in a few moments the download will begin.

Installation:

1. Download the desired archive as described above.
2. Uncompress the downloaded package file on your own computer (using WinZip or a native decompression tool).
3. READ the included README text file for any special Release notes.
4. READ the included Documentation file (this file) for detailed usage instructions.
5. Upload the fpa-xx.php script (replace xx with the language version you downloaded) to your Joomla! Site Root "/" directory. This is the place you installed Joomla and may not be the main root for your server. See examples below.
6. If you are using a localized version of the FPA script, then also upload the language files.
7. Run the script through your browser by entering: <http://www.mysite.com/fpa-xx.php> replacing xx with the language version you downloaded\ and substitute your domain for www.mysite.com.

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Installation Examples:

- Joomla! is installed in your web-root folder and you installed the English version of the FPA script:
 - Upload the fpa-en.php script to: <your-domain-name.com>/public_html/
 - To run the script: <http://www.<your-domain-name>.com/fpa-en.php>
- Joomla! is installed in a sub-directory named "cms" and you installed the English version of the FPA script:
 - Upload the fpa-en.php script to: <your-domain-name.com>/public_html/cms/
 - To run the script: <http://www.<your-domain-name>.com/cms/fpa-en.php>
- Joomla! is installed in your web-root folder and you installed a localized language version of the FPA script:
 - Upload the fpa-xx.php (replacing xx with the language version you downloaded) script to: <your-domain-name.com>/public_html/
 - Upload the included language file to: <your-domain-name.com>/public_html/
 - To run the script: <http://www.<your-domain-name>.com/fpa-xx.php> (replacing xx with the language version you downloaded).
- Joomla! is installed in a sub-directory named "cms" and you installed a localized version of the FPA script:
 - Upload the fpa-xx.php (replacing xx with the language version you downloaded) script to: <your-domain-name.com>/public_html/cms/
 - To run the script: <http://www.<your-domain-name>.com/cms/fpa-xx.php> (replacing xx with the language version you downloaded).

Updating:

The Forum Post Assistant (FPA) script may be updated using the following procedure.

- Run the FPA and Select the link titled "Get the latest release of the Forum Post Assistant". This link is available near the top of the FPA display and is also available at the bottom of the FPA display. The link will open the correct download page in your browser for your current installed language version of the FPA.
- Once the page has opened within your browser, select the desired download type (.tar.gz or .zip) button to begin the download.
- Once the download is complete, unpackage the archive and using your ftp program, upload the fpa-xx.php file, (replace xx with the language version of FPA you are using) overwriting the existing fpa-xx.php file.
- The update is now complete. Please read the included readme file and the documentation for any new information or changes that may have been included or made.
- Run the updated fpa-xx.php file from your browser as described in the [Installation](#) and [Examples](#) sections above.

Security:

The FPA script collects information about your website and the server environment. The script is run by entering the url to the script in a browser. Anyone, including hackers who enter the correct url can run the script gaining access to the information that the FPA collects. As a diagnostic tool, some of the information gathered by the FPA may aid in hacking your website. When not in use, it is recommended that the Forum Post Assistant be uninstalled from the website domain.

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Usage:

When called from your browser, the Forum Post Assistant will run and display information it has gathered about your site and the server environment your site is installed on. You may use the information displayed by the FPA to assist in troubleshooting your site. In order to be easy to use the following general layout of the FPA is followed.

- **Forum Post Assistant Box** → Quick general information about your Server Installation.
- **Show the Forum Post Assistant** → Link to open or close the Security Forum Posting Assistant. See the Section on [Using the FPA to make a post to your Security forum topic](#).
- **Application Instance :: Discovery** → Information on the CMS that was found.
- **Application Instance :: Configuration** → Information on the CMS configuration that was found.
- **DataBase Instance :: Discovery** → Information on the database the CMS uses
- **DataBase Instance :: Performance** → Statistics on the database that the CMS uses.
- **PHP Environment :: Discovery** → Information on PHP that is used on the Server
- **Systems Environment :: Discovery** → The server setup that is being used.
- **PHP Extensions :: Discovery** → Extensions that are installed within the PHP version on the server. These are not the extensions installed in Joomla.
- **Core Folders Permissions Checks** → Display of the permission levels, ownership and group for important directories.
- **Templates :: Site /Administration** → Templates that are installed for the CMS.

Key to Legends and Default FPA Settings:

LEGENDS AND SETTINGS			
<input type="checkbox"/> OK/GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> WARNINGS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALERTS	<input type="checkbox"/> [- protected -]
Developer-Mode	Information Privacy	Elevated Permissions	DataBase Tables
<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Partial (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hide (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hide (Default)
Dagnostic-Mode	Components	Modules	Plugins
<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hide (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hide (Default)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hide (Default)

Using the FPA to make a post to a Security forum topic:

Click on the “**Show the Forum Post Assistant**” link to open the Post Tool for generating the code you will paste into your forum post.

Entering Optional Information - Refer to Fig. 1

- Enter a brief description of your problem (optional)
- Enter any error messages you see (optional)
- Enter a brief description of any actions you have taken to resolve the issue (optional)
- You may leave this information blank if desired, but providing what you can will usually help figure out the issue.

Optional Information	
Problem Description:	<input type="text"/>
Log/Error Message:	<input type="text"/>
Log/Error Message:	<input type="text"/>
Actions Taken To Resolve:	<input type="text"/>
Leave ALL fields blank/empty to simply post diagnostic information.	

Fig. 1

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Selecting Run Time Options - Refer to Fig. 2

- Select the detail level of the Run Time Options for the report (optional).
- Select the Information Privacy Level of the report (optional).

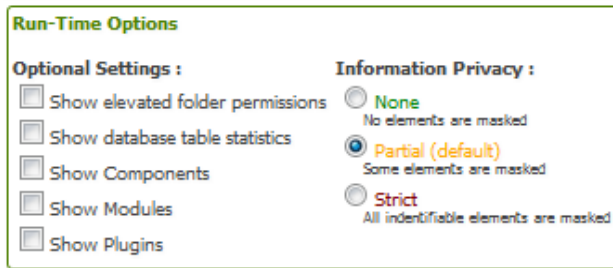


Fig. 2

Generating the Post - Refer to Fig. 3

- Click the “Click Here To Generate Post” button to build the post content using the information and options you selected above.
- Click the “Reset” button to reset to defaults the information and options selections displayed in Figures 1 and 2.
- If you get an “Out of Memory” or “Execution Time Error” when generating the post information, then select the Seeing PHP "Out of Memory" or "Execution Time" Errors? check box to temporarily increase PHP memory and execution times and try generating the post again.




Fig. 3

- If you continue to get an “Out of Memory” or “Execution Time Error” after selecting the check box when generating the post information, then please make a report in [\[add forum discussion post address here\]](#) by making a post in the discussion thread. If possible copy and paste the **PHP Environment :: Discovery** information into your report to help in diagnosing the issue.

Copying the Generated Information - Refer to Fig. 4

- Place your computer cursor into the Post Detail box. It does not matter where within the code the cursor is.
- Select All of the content by using the key combination CTRL – A to select all of the code within the box.
- Copy the contents selected to your computers clipboard by using the key combination CTRL – C

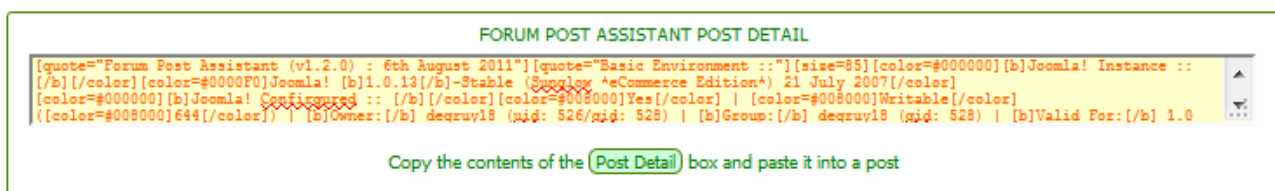


Fig. 4

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Inserting the information into a New Forum Posting:

- If you have not made a posting in the appropriate Joomla security forum for your version of Joomla about your security issue, then select the appropriate forum for your post from this list:
 - [Security Forum – 1.0.xx](#) This is a user to user forum and no longer supported by the Joomla project.
 - [Security in Joomla! 1.5](#)
 - [Security in Joomla! 1.7 / Joomla! 1.6](#)
 - As newer versions of Joomla become available, new security forums will be made available.
 - Localized language forums are also available to post in. See the [Joomla Forums index page](#) for the complete list.
- Once you are at the appropriate forum, click on the “New Topic” button.
- Enter a descriptive subject for your topic. Avoid the phrase I was hacked!
- In the message body, enter any additional information you think may be helpful in assisting with the issue your having. Do Not post any direct links to infected sites, assumed nationality, hacker links or hacker names you found displaying on your site.
- Paste the information from the FPA into the message body area using the CTRL – V keyboard command. The correct forum format codes are already included in the post generation so there is no additional formatting needed of the generated code.
- If you need to add pictures for clarity, use the attachment upload section of the forum post editor to add them now.
- If you wish to preview the message before posting it, then click the “Preview” button below the message body area.
- When satisfied with your message, click the “Submit” button that is below the message body area.

Inserting the information into an Existing Forum Thread:

- At the bottom of an existing forum thread there is a “Quick Reply” message body area. You may use that to post the FPA information into your existing forum thread.
- In the message body area, enter any additional information you think may be helpful in assisting with the issue your having. Do Not post any direct links to infected sites, assumed nationality, hacker links or hacker names you found displaying on your site.
- Paste the information from the FPA into the message body area using the CTRL – V keyboard command. The correct forum format codes are already included in the post generation so there is no additional formatting needed of the generated code.
- When satisfied with your message, click the “Submit” button that is below the message body area.
- If you wish to preview the message before posting it or prefer working in the full forum message editor, then click the “Full Editor” button below the message body area. Use the “Full Editor” if you need to add pictures for clarity!