

PHP Local Website Starter Template (Reusable)

This is a **copy-paste, repeatable checklist** you can use anytime you want to spin up a small PHP website (class projects, personal ideas, demos, etc.). No frameworks, no databases required.

1 One-Time Setup (only once per computer)

Install Homebrew (Mac)

```
/bin/bash -c "$(curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Homebrew/install/HEAD/install.sh)"
```

Add Homebrew to PATH:

```
echo 'eval "$( /opt/homebrew/bin/brew shellenv )"' >> ~/.zprofile
eval "$(/opt/homebrew/bin/brew shellenv)"
```

Install PHP

```
brew install php
```

Verify:

```
php -v
```

(You should see PHP 8.x)

2 VS Code Setup (one time)

Required Extensions

- **PHP Intelephense** (syntax + errors)
- (Optional) Live Server (HTML only)

VS Code Settings

Open **Settings → Open Settings (JSON)** and ensure:

```
"php.executablePath": "/opt/homebrew/bin/php"
```

Restart VS Code after this.

3 Create a New PHP Project (EVERY TIME)

Step 1: Create project folder

```
mkdir MyWebsite  
cd MyWebsite
```

Step 2: Create main file

```
touch index.php
```

Your project structure should be:

```
MyWebsite/  
└── index.php
```

4 Basic PHP Website Template (copy/paste)

Paste this into **index.php**:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>  
<html lang="en">  
<head>  
    <meta charset="UTF-8">  
    <title>My PHP Site</title>  
    <style>  
        body {  
            font-family: Arial, sans-serif;  
            background: #f4f4f4;  
            display: flex;  
            justify-content: center;  
            align-items: center;  
            height: 100vh;  
        }  
        .box {
```

```
background: white;
padding: 30px;
border-radius: 10px;
text-align: center;
}
</style>
</head>
<body>
<div class="box">
<h1>Hello 🙌</h1>
<p>This is my PHP site.</p>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

5 Run the Website (EVERY TIME)

IMPORTANT RULE

PHP serves the folder you run it from

Correct way to start server

Inside the project folder:

```
php -S localhost:8000
```

Open browser

```
http://localhost:8000
```

6 Common Errors & Fixes

✗ 404 Not Found

Cause: PHP started in wrong directory

Fix:

```
cd path/to/project  
php -S localhost:8000
```

✖ PHP executable not found (VS Code)

Fix:

```
"php.executablePath": "/opt/homebrew/bin/php"
```

Restart VS Code.

7 When to Use PHP vs HTML

Use **HTML only** when: - Static pages - No logic

Use **PHP** when: - Forms - Buttons doing logic - Multiple pages - Dynamic content

(You can still write **pure HTML/CSS inside PHP** — totally fine.)

8 OPTIONAL: Add JavaScript Later (not required)

PHP = backend logic JS = animations, button movement, effects

You can always add JS later when ready.

9 Project Checklist (copy before starting)

- [] Project folder created
- [] index.php exists
- [] PHP installed (`php -v` works)
- [] Server started in correct folder
- [] Browser opens `localhost:8000`

♻️ Reuse Instructions

To start a new site: 1. Copy folder 2. Rename it 3. Edit `index.php` 4. Run server

❤️ This setup is **perfect for school assignments and personal projects**. No frameworks, no confusion, no wasted time.

◆ ADVANCED TEMPLATES & CHECKLISTS

Everything below builds directly on the basic setup above.

10 Multi-Page PHP Website Template

Folder Structure

```
MyWebsite/
├── index.php
├── about.php
├── contact.php
└── styles.css
```

Navigation (reuse on every page)

```
<nav>
  <a href="index.php">Home</a> |
  <a href="about.php">About</a> |
  <a href="contact.php">Contact</a>
</nav>
```

Example: about.php

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
  <title>About</title>
  <link rel="stylesheet" href="styles.css">
</head>
<body>
  <?php include "nav.php"; ?>
  <h1>About Me</h1>
  <p>This page explains the site.</p>
</body>
</html>
```

1 1 Form + PHP Handling Template

contact.php

```
<?php
$message = "";

if ($_SERVER["REQUEST_METHOD"] === "POST") {
    $name = htmlspecialchars($_POST["name"]);
    $message = "Thanks, $name! Your message was sent 😊";
}

?>

<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
    <title>Contact</title>
</head>
<body>
    <h1>Contact Form</h1>

    <form method="POST">
        <input type="text" name="name" placeholder="Your name" required>
        <br><br>
        <button type="submit">Send</button>
    </form>

    <p><?php echo $message; ?></p>
</body>
</html>
```

Use this pattern for: - login pages - signup pages - surveys - feedback forms

1 2 Portfolio-Ready Project Template

What Recruiters Expect

Include: - Clear title - Short description - Skills used - Clean UI

Example index.php

```
<h1>Project: PHP Mini Website</h1>
<p>A lightweight PHP website demonstrating server-side logic, form handling, and clean UI.</p>
```

```
<ul>
  <li>PHP 8</li>
  <li>HTML / CSS</li>
  <li>Local PHP server</li>
</ul>
```

⚠ Tip: Put screenshots + GitHub link on your LinkedIn.

1 3 Deploy-Later Checklist (Save for Future)

When You're Ready to Go Public

- [] Clean up file names
- [] Remove debug output
- [] Add README.md
- [] Push to GitHub

Easiest Hosting Options (Beginner-Friendly)

- GitHub Pages (HTML only)
- Render (PHP)
- Railway (PHP)
- InfinityFree (PHP)

1 4 Personal Project Ideas (Use This Stack)

- Valentine / birthday pages
- Resume website
- Course project demos
- Small tools (calculators, trackers)
- Portfolio homepage

1 5 Golden Rules (Remember These)

- PHP server runs from **current directory**
- **index.php** is the default entry point
- PHP can contain pure HTML
- Keep projects simple and readable

👉 This entire document is now your **personal PHP playbook**. Copy it. Reuse it. Improve it as you grow.