

HTML FORMS TIPS

This outline is a work-in-progress, and may change in the future – medatech@medasf.org

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HTML FORMS

HTML Forms is the primary way for your web page or website to “receive” information from the user. The way we “send” information to the user is primarily through text displayed on the screen. Other ways that we can send information is video, audio, and animation. The sending and receiving of data between a computer and human, or a computer and another computer is called “I/O”, which stands for input/output.

COMMON HTML FORM ELEMENTS

There are a variety of HTML form elements that we can use to receive data from the user. The most common is the “input” HTML element. The input HTML element has about 20 different “modes”. Here are four examples:

- ➔ **<input type="submit" />** - Shows a submit button.
- ➔ **<input type="text" />** - Shows a text box.
- ➔ **<input type="checkbox" >** - Shows a checkbox, unchecked by default.
- ➔ **<input type="radio" />** - Shows a radio button.

HTML FORM TIPS

When you have a group of input elements with the type of radio, you can generally “select” all the radio buttons, but this is usually not the functionality we look for in a form. If you want to force only one selection from a group of radio buttons, you must assign all the radio button elements an attribute of “name” and give it a value that identifies that group.

Example:

```
<input type="radio" name="age" />  
<input type="radio" name="age" />  
<input type="radio" name="age" />
```

From the example above, you would have three radio buttons on the web page but you can only select one of the three since they all belong to the same group!

While the above examples will only have just radio buttons, you want to put text next to them so the user knows what that radio button represents.

Example:

```
<p>1-17</p><input type="radio" name="age" />  
<p>17-65</p><input type="radio" name="age" />  
<p>65+</p><input type="radio" name="age" />
```

The example above will show the paragraph element before the radio button, and will make it clear to the user what that radio button represents.

When A form is long, or has multiple sections, it is always a good habit to specify what that section is about. In the example below, we can add a label HTML Element. The label element is the same as a paragraph, but it semantically represents that input element. To create this semantic connection, we need to give the label a “for” attribute with the value matching the id of the input element.

Example:

```
<label for="username">Username:</label>  
<input type="text" id="username" name="username" />  
<label for="password">Password:</label>  
<input type="password" id="password" name="password" />
```

One common form element that is at first confusing is the dropdown list. This is a little different than the input element. You would use a select HTML element, and it would have many option HTML elements as children, very similar to an unordered list or ordered list.

Example:

```
<select id="subscribe" name="subscribe" />  
  <option value="yes">Yes, subscribe me!</option>
```

```
<option value="no">No thank you!</option>  
</select>
```

Finally, if you would like the user to have plenty of space to write a lot of text, you can check out the `textarea` HTML element. This is generally a box that accepts many characters and can be resized by giving it `rows` and `cols` attribute. Note that the `rows` and `cols` attribute measures characters, not pixels!

Example:

```
<textarea rows="100" cols="20"></textarea>
```

The example above will create a textbox that can fit 100 rows of text, and 20 characters per row!

NOTES
