Forms

# http operation

When you design a web form in HTML, it helps to know how the web browser and the remote server handle your form, and the user data.

As part of the form definition, you will supply two attributes to the FORM tag

Method: GET | POST | PUT | DELETE | PATCH

The method attribute is one of the 5 HTTP verbs to send to the server. It also dictates how the user data is packaged and sent to the server. The two verbs of primary interest are GET and POST.

The GET verb is used to request information from the server, and is the default value for the FORM ‘s METHOD attribute. For example, when enter a url into the address bar of a browser, the browser sends a GET message to server at that address, and displays the HTML response in the display window. If there is data to accompany the GET request, it is sent as part of the url/request. Eg

http://hotmail.com/inbox?user=eamole@hotmail.com&order=ascending

The POST verb is used when you wish to send information to the server. The address is the same, but the data is now sent in the body of the HTTP message that is sent to the server.

You can see this in operation by opening the web developer tools in your browser, and looking for the networking tab. In there, you can inspect the raw messages (ascii text) that are sent from the browser to server, and the HTML responses from the server.

# FORM Tag

<FORM METHOD=”GET | POST | PUT | DELETE | PATCH” ACTION=”url”>…</FORM>

The FORM tag has 2 primary attributes.

The METHOD attribute, is one of the 5 HTTP verbs. The default is GET.

The ACTION attribute is the web address (url) of the script that will process the data being sent from the form, and to return the HTML of the next page the user will see.

# Form Elements

The single most common and important input element is the INPUT tag. The INPUT tag is used to represent the various 15 different HTML5 input controls.

The basic format of the INPUT tag is

<INPUT NAME=”name” TYPE=”type” VALUE=”value” />

## Name Attribute

The NAME attribute is quite important, and can have significant impact on the usability of a web page. The name value is used to label the information that is sent to the server (as key/value pairs). It is also used by the browser to remember, and popup, previous values that have been input to variables with the same name. To assist the user by making the experience more friendly, please use standard spellings for form NAME values, so that the user is presented with values they have previously provided, perhaps to other websites. Common variable names include

name, firstname, lastname, email, phone….

By adhering to these conventions, you make the user’s experience of your website a more pleasant one, by reducing their workload, and annoyance factor. This can very often lead to an improved bottom line for the client.

## Type Attribute

The type attribute determines the form the input control will take. The default value for the type attribute is “text”. The type attribute can accept the following values

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type | Description |
| Text | A standard text input box. |
| Checkbox | A standard checkbox, which is either checked or not. |
| Radio | A radio button. Usually part of a set/group of radio buttons with the **same name**. Only one radio button in a set/group can be active at a time. The value attribute is what is sent to the server. The visual text can appear before or after the actual input tag. |
| Color | Displays the system color picker |
| Image | Displays a button, |