

PHP Cookies

What is a Cookie?

A cookie is often used to identify a user. A cookie is a small file that the server embeds on the user's computer. Each time the same computer requests a page with a browser, it will send the cookie too. With PHP, you can both create and retrieve cookie values.

How to Create a Cookie?

The `setcookie()` function is used to set a cookie.

Note: The `setcookie()` function must appear BEFORE the `<html>` tag.

Syntax:

```
setcookie(name, value, expire, path, domain);
```

Example 1

In the example below, we will create a cookie named "user" and assign the value "ABC" to it. We also specify that the cookie should expire after one hour:

```
<?php
setcookie("user", "ABC", time()+3600);
?>
```

Note: The value of the cookie is automatically URLencoded when sending the cookie, and automatically decoded when received (to prevent URLencoding, use `setrawcookie()` instead).

Example 2

You can also set the expiration time of the cookie in another way. It may be easier than using seconds.

```
<?php
$expire=time()+60*60*24*30;
setcookie("user", "ABC", $expire);
?>
```

In the example above the expiration time is set to a month (*60 sec * 60 min * 24 hours * 30 days*).

How to Retrieve a Cookie Value?

The PHP `$_COOKIE` variable is used to retrieve a cookie value.

In the example below, we retrieve the value of the cookie named "user" and display it on a page:

```
<?php
// Print a cookie
echo $_COOKIE["user"];

// A way to view all cookies
print_r($_COOKIE);
?>
```

In the following example we use the `isset()` function to find out if a cookie has been set:

```
<html>
<body>

<?php
if (isset($_COOKIE["user"]))
    echo "Welcome " . $_COOKIE["user"] . "!\n";
else
    echo "Welcome guest!\n";
?>

</body>
</html>
```

How to Delete a Cookie?

When deleting a cookie you should assure that the expiration date is in the past.

Delete example:

```
<?php
// set the expiration date to one hour ago
setcookie("user", "", time()-3600);
?>
```

What if a Browser Does NOT Support Cookies?

If your application deals with browsers that do not support cookies, you will have to use other methods to pass information from one page to another in your application. One method is to pass the data through forms.