

PHP - Superglobals

The PHP parser populates the current script with a number of predefined variables in its global namespace. The predefined variables are known as "**PHP superglobals**".

- Any user defined variable declared outside of any function, method, or class also is a global variable. However, to access it, you need to use the **global** keyword.
- In contrast, **superglobals** are always available anywhere in the PHP script, without mentioning them with the **global** keyword.

Most of the superglobals in PHP are associative arrays, and the web server populates them. Hence, if a script is run in the command-line environment, some of the superglobals may be empty.

The list of superglobal variables in PHP includes the following –

- `$GLOBALS`
- `$_SERVER`
- `$_GET`
- `$_POST`
- `$_FILES`
- `$_COOKIE`
- `$_SESSION`
- `$_REQUEST`
- `$_ENV`

In this chapter, we will have a brief introduction to these superglobal variables in PHP. In the subsequent chapters, we will discuss these superglobal variables in detail.

`$GLOBALS`

It is an associative array of references to all globally defined variables. Names of variables form keys and their contents are values of associative array.

`$_SERVER`

All the server and execution environment related information is available in this associative array.

PHP versions prior to 5.4.0 contained `$HTTP_SERVER_VARS` contained the same information but has now been removed.

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`$_GET`

It is an associative array of variables passed to the current script via query string appended to URL of HTTP request. Note that the array is populated by all requests with a query string in addition to GET requests.

A query string is a list of all variables and their values in the form `var=val` and concatenated by the "&" symbol.

The query string itself is appended to the name of PHP script after the "?" symbol. For example, **`http://localhost/hello.php?first_name=Amar&last_name=Sharma`**.

`$_POST`

It is an associative array of key-value pairs passed to a URL by HTTP POST method that uses **URLEncoded** or **multipart/form-data** content-type in request.

`$HTTP_POST_VARS` also contains the same information as `$_POST`, but is not a superglobal, and now been deprecated. The easiest way to send data to a server with POST request is specifying the method attribute of HTML form as POST.

`$_FILES`

The variable `$_FILES` is an associative array containing items uploaded via HTTP POST method. A file is uploaded when a HTML form contains an input element with file type, its `enctype` attribute set to `multipart/form-data`, and the method attribute set to HTTP POST method.

`$_COOKIE`

Cookies are text files stored by a server on the client computer and they are kept of use tracking purpose.

The superglobal `$_COOKIE` stores variables passed to the current PHP script along with the HTTP request in the form of cookies.

\$_SESSION

An HTTP session is the time duration between the time a user establishes connection with a server and the time the connection is terminated. During this interval, some data is persistently available across pages in the form of session variables.

The `$_SESSION` superglobal is an associative array of session variables available to the current script.

\$_REQUEST

`$_REQUEST` is an associative array which is a collection of contents of `$_GET`, `$_POST` and `$_COOKIE` variables.

The order of these variables is decided by the values of **`requests_order`** and **`variables_order`** settings in the "php.ini" file.

\$_ENV

`$_ENV` is an associative array that stores all the environment variables available to the current script. This array also includes CGI variables in case PHP is running as a server module or CGI processor.