

THE EXPERT'S VOICE® IN WEB DEVELOPMENT

THIRD EDITION

PHP Solutions

Dynamic Web Design Made Easy

David Powers

Apress®

PHP Solutions

Dynamic Web Design Made Easy

Third Edition



David Powers

Apress®

PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy, Third Edition

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About the Author

David Powers is the author of a series of highly successful books and video training courses on web development, with a particular emphasis on PHP and web standards, including *Introducing PHP* and *PHP Code Clinic* in the lynda.com Online Training Library. As a professional writer, he has been involved in electronic media for more than 40 years, first with BBC radio and television and more recently with the Internet. His clear writing style is valued not only in the English-speaking world, as several of his books have been translated into Spanish, Polish, Chinese, and other languages. What started as a mild interest in computing was transformed almost overnight into a passion, when David was posted to Japan in 1987 as BBC correspondent in Tokyo. With no corporate IT department just down the hallway, he was forced to learn how to fix everything himself. When not tinkering with the innards of his computer, he was reporting for BBC television and radio on the rise and collapse of the Japanese bubble economy. Since leaving the BBC to work independently, he has worked on many projects, including the development of an online bilingual database of economic and political analysis for Japanese clients of an international consultancy. He also teaches a postgraduate Web Media course at Oxford Brookes University.

When not pounding the keyboard writing books or dreaming of new ways of using PHP and other programming languages, David enjoys nothing better than visiting his favorite sushi restaurant. He has translated several plays from Japanese.

About the Technical Reviewer

Paul Milbourne has been a software developer in the Washington–Baltimore metropolitan area for over decade. His journey has allowed him to work with such clients as the Washington Redskins, Baltimore Ravens, Zynga Games, and many others.

For the most part, Paul has made a handsome career putting out fires and dealing with edge cases. This experience has exposed him to most aspects of development through a multitude of industries and platforms.

Paul is also a former chef, an avid musician, and a practicing fine artist.

Acknowledgments

The original idea to write *PHP Solutions* came from Chris Mills, my editor for many years at Apress/friends of ED, who's now a Senior Technical Writer at Mozilla Corporation and a passionate advocate of web standards. Chris wanted to move away from the cookbook formula of isolated solutions that left the reader with little or no idea about the practical use of a particular technique. The fact that this book is now in its third edition proves what a great idea it was. Thanks, Chris.

Chris's successor as editor of the second and third editions, Ben Renow-Clarke, followed his example by giving me free rein to shape the book according to my own ideas, but always putting himself in the position of the reader, nudging me in the right direction when an explanation wasn't clear enough or a chapter was badly organized.

I'm also grateful to my technical reviewers: Samuel Wright for the first edition, Kristian Besley and Jason Nadon for the second edition, and Paul Milbourne for this edition. Each edition has built on the previous one, so ideas and suggestions made by reviewers of previous editions live on in this one.

Producing a book like this would be impossible without the diligent help of everyone in the production chain at Apress. My thanks go to them all.

Most of all, my thanks go to the readers who have made this book such a success. Welcome to the club. I hope you enjoy this book and find it useful in building dynamic websites with PHP.

Introduction

When the first edition of *PHP Solutions* was published, I was concerned that the subtitle, *Dynamic Web Design Made Easy*, sounded overambitious. Even with this third edition, it still makes me a little apprehensive about unduly raising readers' expectations. PHP is not difficult, but nor is it like an instant cake mix: just add water and stir. Every website is different, so it's impossible to grab a script, paste it into a webpage, and expect it to work. My aim was to help web designers with little or no knowledge of programming gain the confidence to dive into the code and adjust it to their own requirements.

The fact that the book has remained so popular since it was first published in 2006 suggests that many readers took up the challenge. Members of Boston PHP did so in large numbers when they adopted the second edition as the text for three series of PHP Percolate, a virtual self-study group for beginners. Hundreds signed up to study the book one chapter a week. It worked for them, so I hope it will work just as well for you.

What's New in this Edition

One useful piece of feedback from PHP Percolate participants and other readers was disappointment when I glossed over a section of advanced code, explaining only what it did rather than how it worked. That omission has been corrected in this edition. Occasionally, I point out that you might want to skip the detailed explanation, but it's there if you're intrigued by how a technique works. As a result, the reference section of [Chapter 3](#) has been expanded to include such esoteric delights as variable variables. No, it's not a typo; "variable variable" is a genuine concept in PHP. It's also quite useful.

This edition brings the content up to date with PHP 5.6, which was released in August 2014. Because hosting companies are often slow to upgrade the version of PHP that they offer, I've made PHP 5.4 the minimum version for the code used in this book. PHP 5.4 made some important changes, introducing a simplified array syntax and dropping support for safe mode and "magic quotes." As well as bringing the code up to date, I've revised every chapter, going through it line by line, clarifying explanations. I've also eliminated a number of

errors—without, I hope, introducing new ones.

The biggest changes are to the custom classes for uploading files and creating image thumbnails in [Chapters 6](#) and [8](#). They now use namespaces to avoid naming clashes with other third-party code. More important, the class definitions have been extensively rewritten to make them more efficient. Another significant change is the use of the new password hashing functions in [Chapters 9](#) and [17](#). These functions weren't introduced until PHP 5.5, but you can emulate them in PHP 5.4 by including the `password_compat` library in your scripts. Details of how to obtain the library, which consists of a single file, can be found in [Chapter 9](#).

The chapters on working with a database have been reorganized to make them easier to follow. I've also strengthened the explanation of prepared statements, using both MySQL Improved (MySQLi) and the database-neutral PHP Data Objects (PDO). Some Linux distributions now install MariaDB as a drop-in replacement for MySQL. To avoid unnecessary repetition, I normally refer only to MySQL, but all the PHP solutions in this book work equally well with MariaDB.

How This Book Is Organized

Each chapter takes you through a series of stages in a single project, with each stage building on the previous one. By working through each chapter, you get the full picture of how everything fits together. You can later refer to the individual stages to refresh your memory about a particular technique. Although this isn't a reference book, [Chapter 3](#) is a primer on PHP syntax, and some chapters contain short reference sections—notably [Chapter 7](#) (reading from and writing to files), [Chapter 9](#) (sessions), [Chapter 10](#) (data types in MySQL/MariaDB), [Chapter 11](#) (PHP prepared statements), [Chapter 13](#) (the four essential SQL commands), and [Chapter 14](#) (working with dates and times).

So, how easy is easy? I have done my best to ease your path, but there is no magic potion. It requires some effort on your part. Don't attempt to do everything at once. Add dynamic features to your site a few at a time. Get to understand how they work, and your efforts will be amply rewarded. Adding PHP and MySQL/MariaDB to your skills will enable you to build websites that offer much richer content and an interactive user experience.

Using the Example Files

All the files necessary for working through this book can be downloaded from the Apress website at www.apress.com/9781484206362. Make sure you select the download link for *PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy, Third Edition*. The code is different from the first two editions.

Set up a PHP development environment, as described in [Chapter 2](#). Unzip the files and copy the `phpsolS` folder and all its contents into your web server's document root. The code for each chapter is in a folder named after the chapter: `ch01`, `ch02`, and so on. Follow the instructions in each PHP solution, and copy the relevant files to the site root or the work folder indicated.

Where a page undergoes several changes during a chapter, I have numbered the different versions like this: `index_01.php`, `index_02.php`, and so on. When copying a file that has a number, remove the underscore and number from the filename, so `index_01.php` becomes `index.php`. If you are using a program like Dreamweaver that prompts you to update links when moving files from one folder to another, do not update them. The links in the files are designed to pick up the right images and style sheets when located in the target folder. I have done this so you can use a file comparison utility to check your files against mine.

If you don't have a file comparison utility, I strongly urge you to install one. It will save you hours of head scratching when trying to spot the difference between your version and mine. A missing semicolon or mistyped variable can be hard to spot in dozens of lines of code. Windows users can download WinMerge for free from <http://winmerge.org/>. I use Beyond Compare (www.scootersoftware.com), which is now available for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. It's not free but is excellent and reasonably priced. BBEdit on a Mac includes a file comparison utility. Alternatively, use the file comparison feature in TextWrangler, which can be downloaded free from www.barebones.com/products/textwrangler/.

Layout Conventions

To keep this book as clear and easy to follow as possible, the following text conventions are used throughout:

Important words or concepts are normally highlighted on the first appearance in **bold type**.

Code is presented in **fixed-width font**.

New or changed code is normally presented in **bold fixed-width font**.

Pseudo-code and variable input are written in *italic fixed-width font*.

Menu commands are written in the form Menu ➤ Submenu ➤ Submenu.

Where I want to draw your attention to something, I've highlighted it, like this:

■ Ahem, don't say I didn't warn you.

CHAPTER 1



What Is PHP—And Why Should I Care?

Officially, PHP stands for PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor. It's an ugly name that gives the impression that it's strictly for nerds or propellerheads. Nothing could be further from the truth. A lighthearted debate on the PHP general mailing list (<http://news.php.net/php.general>) several years ago suggested changing what PHP stands for to Positively Happy People or Pretty Happy Programmers. This book aims to help you put PHP to practical use—and in the process help you understand what makes PHP programmers so happy.

PHP is a scripting language that brings websites to life in the following ways:

- Sends feedback from your website directly to your mailbox
- Uploads files through a webpage
- Generates thumbnails from larger images
- Reads and writes to files
- Displays and updates information dynamically
- Uses a database to display and store information
- Makes websites searchable
- And much more . . .

By reading this book, you'll be able to do all that. PHP is easy to learn; it's platform-neutral, so the same code runs on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux, and all the software you need to develop with PHP is open source and therefore free.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- How PHP has grown into the most widely used technology for dynamic websites
- How PHP makes webpages dynamic
- How difficult—or easy—PHP is to learn
- Whether PHP is safe
- What software you need in order to write PHP

How PHP Has Grown

PHP is now the most widely used technology for creating dynamic websites, but it started out in 1995 with rather modest ambitions—and a different name. It was originally called Personal Home Page Tools (PHP Tools). One of its main goals was to create a guestbook by gathering information from an online form and displaying it on a webpage. Within three years, it was decided to drop Personal Home Page from the name, because it sounded like something for hobbyists and didn't do justice to the range of sophisticated features that had since been added.

PHP has continued to develop over the years, adding new features all the time. According to W3Techs

(<http://w3techs.com/technologies/details/php/all/all>), PHP is used to create dynamic content by more than 80 percent of the 10 million websites it regularly surveys. It's the language that drives highly popular content management systems (CMSs) such as Drupal (<http://drupal.org/>), Joomla! (www.joomla.org), and WordPress (<http://wordpress.org/>). It also runs some of the most heavily used websites, including Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org).

One of the language's great attractions, though, is that it remains true to its roots. PHP's original creator, Rasmus Lerdorf, once described it as "a very programmer-friendly scripting language suitable for people with little or no programming experience as well as the seasoned web developer who needs to get things done quickly." You can start writing useful scripts without needing to learn lots of theory, yet be confident in knowing that you're using a technology with the capability to develop industrial-strength applications.

Note At the time of this writing, the current version is PHP 5.6. The code assumes you’re using a minimum of PHP 5.4, which removed several outdated features, such as “magic quotes.” If you have a hosting plan, make sure the server is running at least PHP 5.4.

The next major version of PHP will be called PHP 7. It’s been decided to skip PHP 6 to avoid confusion with a version that was abandoned in 2010 for being too ambitious. The emphasis in this book is on code that works *now*, not on what might work at some unspecified time in the future. However, I fully expect that most if not all of the code and techniques will continue to work in PHP 7.

How PHP Makes Pages Dynamic

PHP was originally designed to be embedded in the HTML of a webpage, and that’s the way it’s often still used. For example, if you want to display the current year in a copyright notice, you could put this in your footer:

```
<p>&copy; <?php echo date('Y'); ?> PHP Solutions</p>
```

On a PHP–enabled web server, the code between the `<?php` and `?>` tags is automatically processed and displays the year like this:

© 2014 PHP Solutions

This is only a trivial example, but it illustrates some of the advantages of using PHP:

- Anyone accessing your site after the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Day sees the correct year.
- The date is calculated by the web server so it’s not affected if the clock in the user’s computer is set incorrectly.

Although it’s convenient to embed PHP code in HTML like this, it’s repetitive and can lead to mistakes. It can also make your webpages difficult to maintain, particularly once you start using more complex PHP code. Consequently, it’s common practice to store a lot of dynamic code in separate files and then use PHP to build your pages from the different components. The

separate files—or *include files*, as they’re usually called—can contain only PHP, only HTML, or a mixture of both.

As a simple example, you can put your website’s navigation menu in an include file and use PHP to include it in each page. Whenever you need to make any changes to the menu, you edit just one file, the include file, and the changes are automatically reflected in every page that includes the menu. Just imagine how much time that saves on a website with dozens of pages!

With an ordinary HTML page, the content is fixed by the web developer at design time and uploaded to the web server. When somebody visits the page, the web server simply sends the HTML and other assets, such as images and the style sheet. It’s a simple transaction—the request comes from the browser, and the fixed content is sent back by the server. When you build webpages with PHP, much more goes on. [Figure 1-1](#) shows what happens.

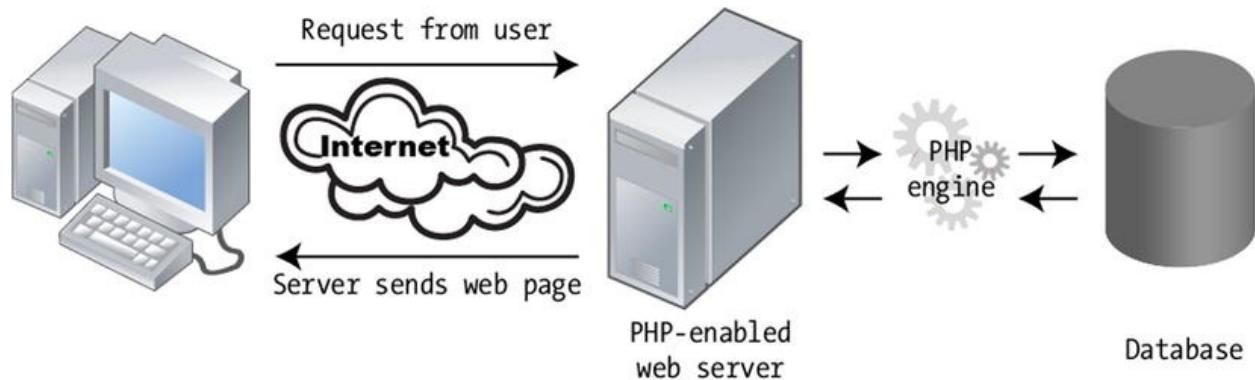


Figure 1-1. The web server builds each PHP page dynamically in response to a request

When a PHP–driven website is visited, it sets in motion the following sequence of events:

1. The browser sends a request to the web server.
2. The web server hands the request to the PHP engine, which is embedded in the server.
3. The PHP engine processes the code. In many cases, it might also query a database before building the page.
4. The server sends the completed page back to the browser.

This process usually takes only a fraction of a second, so the visitor to a PHP website is unlikely to notice any delay. Because each page is built individually, PHP sites can respond to user input, displaying different content when a user

logs in or showing the results of a database search.

Creating Pages That Think for Themselves

PHP is a server-side language. The PHP code remains on the web server. After it has been processed, the server sends only the output of the script. Normally, this is HTML, but PHP can also be used to generate other web languages, such as JSON (JavaScript Object Notation).

PHP enables you to introduce logic into your webpages that is based on alternatives. Some decisions are made using information that PHP gleans from the server: the date, the time, the day of the week, information in the page's URL, and so on. If it's Wednesday, it will show Wednesday's TV schedules. At other times, decisions are based on user input, which PHP extracts from online forms. If you have registered with a site, it will display personalized information —that sort of thing.

How Hard Is PHP to Use and Learn?

PHP isn't rocket science, but don't expect to become an expert in five minutes. Perhaps the biggest shock to newcomers is that PHP is far less tolerant of mistakes than browsers are with HTML. If you omit a closing tag in HTML, most browsers will still render the page. If you omit a closing quote, semicolon, or brace in PHP, you'll get an uncompromising error message like the one shown in [Figure 1-2](#). This affects all programming languages, such as JavaScript and C#, not just PHP.

A missing parenthesis turns this ...



Figure 1-2. Server-side languages like PHP are intolerant of most coding errors

If you're the sort of web designer or developer who uses a visual design tool like Adobe Dreamweaver and never looks at the underlying code, it's time to rethink your approach. Mixing PHP with poorly structured HTML is likely to lead to problems. PHP uses loops to perform repetitive tasks, such as displaying the results of a database search. A loop repeats the same section of code—usually a mixture of PHP and HTML—until all results have been displayed. If you put the loop in the wrong place or if your HTML is badly structured, your page is likely to collapse like a house of cards.

If you're not already in the habit of doing so, it's a good idea to check your pages using the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Markup Validation Service (<http://validator.w3.org/unicorn>).

Note The W3C is the international body that develops standards such as HTML and CSS to ensure the long-term growth of the web. It's led by the inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee. To learn about the W3C's mission, see www.w3.org/Consortium/mission.

Can I Just Copy and Paste the Code?

There's nothing wrong with copying the code in this book. That's what it's there for. I've structured this book as a series of practical projects. I explain what the code is for and why it's there. Even if you don't understand exactly how it all works, this should give you sufficient confidence to know which parts of the code to adapt to your own needs and which parts are best left alone. But to get the most out of this book, you need to start experimenting with the tools found in these pages and then come up with your own solutions.

PHP is a toolbox full of powerful features. It has thousands of built-in functions that perform all sorts of tasks, such as converting text to uppercase, generating thumbnail images from full-sized ones, or connecting to a database. The real power comes from combining these functions in different ways and adding your own conditional logic.

How Safe Is PHP?

PHP is like the electricity or kitchen knives in your home: handled properly, it's very safe; handled irresponsibly, it can do a lot of damage. One of the inspirations for the first edition of this book was a spate of attacks that exploited a vulnerability in email scripts, turning websites into spam relays. The solution is quite simple, as you'll learn in [Chapter 5](#), but even a decade later, I still see people using the same insecure techniques, exposing their sites to attack.

PHP is not unsafe, nor does everyone need to become a security expert to use it. What is important is to understand the basic principle of PHP safety: *always check user input before processing it*. You'll find that to be a constant theme throughout this book. Most security risks can be eliminated with very little effort.

The best way to protect yourself is to understand the code you're using.

What Software Do I Need to Write PHP?

Strictly speaking, you don't need any special software to write PHP scripts. PHP code is plain text and can be created in any text editor, such as Notepad on Windows or TextEdit on Mac OS X. Having said that, your life will be a lot

easier if you use a program that has features designed to speed up the development process. There are many available—both free and on a paid-for basis.

What to Look for When Choosing a PHP Editor

If there's a mistake in your code, your page will probably never make it as far as the browser, and all you'll see is an error message. You should choose a script editor that has the following features:

- **PHP syntax checking:** This used to be found only in expensive, dedicated programs, but it's now a feature in several free programs. Syntax checkers monitor the code as you type and highlight errors, saving a great deal of time and frustration.
- **PHP syntax coloring:** Code is highlighted in different colors according to the role it plays. If your code is in an unexpected color, it's a sure sign you've made a mistake.
- **PHP code hints:** PHP has so many built-in functions that it can be difficult to remember how to use them, even for an experienced user. Many script editors automatically display tooltips with reminders of how a particular piece of code works.
- **Line numbering:** Finding a specific line quickly makes troubleshooting a lot simpler.
- **A “balance braces” feature:** Parentheses (()), square brackets ([]), and curly braces ({ }) must always be in matching pairs. It's easy to forget to close a pair. All good script editors help find the matching parenthesis, bracket, or brace.

The program you're already using to build webpages might already have these features. For example, Adobe Dreamweaver CS5 and later does (www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver/). It also has embedded PHP documentation.

Even if you don't plan to do a lot of PHP development, you should consider

using a dedicated script editor if your web development program doesn't support syntax checking. The following dedicated script editors have all the essential features, such as syntax checking and code hints. It's not an exhaustive list, but rather one based on personal experience.

- **PhpStorm** (www.jetbrains.com/phpstorm/): Although this is a dedicated PHP editing program, it also has excellent support for HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. It's currently my favorite program for developing with PHP.
- **Sublime Text** (www.sublimetext.com/): If you're a Sublime Text fan, there are plug-ins for PHP syntax coloring, syntax checking, and documentation.
- **Zend Studio** (www zend com/en/products/studio/): If you're really serious about PHP development, Zend Studio is the most fully featured integrated development environment (IDE) for PHP. It's created by Zend, the company run by leading contributors to the development of PHP. Zend Studio runs on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. It used to be expensive, but the price for individual developers is now more affordable, and it includes 12 months of free upgrades and support.
- **PHP Development Tools** (www.eclipse.org/pdt/): PDT is actually a cut-down version of Zend Studio and has the advantage of being free. It runs on Eclipse, the open-source IDE that supports multiple computer languages. If you have used Eclipse for other languages, you should find it relatively easy to use. PDT runs on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux and is available either as an Eclipse plug-in or as an all-in-one package that automatically installs Eclipse and the PDT plug-in.
- **Komodo Edit** (<http://komodoide.com/komodo-edit/>): This is a free, open-source IDE for PHP and a number of other popular computer languages. It's available for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. It's a cut-down version of Komodo IDE, which is a paid-for program with more advanced features.

So, Let's Get on with It . . .

This chapter has provided only a brief overview of what PHP can do to add dynamic features to your websites and what software you need to do so. The first stage in working with PHP is to set up a testing environment. The next chapter covers what you need for both Windows and Mac OS X.

CHAPTER 2



Getting Ready to Work with PHP

Now that you've decided to use PHP to enrich your webpages, you need to make sure that you have everything you need to get on with the rest of this book. Although you can test everything on your remote server, it's usually more convenient to test PHP pages on your local computer. Everything you need to install is free. In this chapter, I'll explain the various options for Windows and Mac OS X. The necessary components are normally installed by default on Linux.

What this chapter covers:

- Checking if your website supports PHP
- Why PHP 5.4 should be the minimum version
- Deciding whether to create a local testing setup
- Using a ready-made package in Windows and Mac OS X
- Where to store your PHP files
- Checking the PHP configuration on your local and remote servers

Checking Whether Your Website Supports PHP

The easiest way to find out whether your website supports PHP is to ask your hosting company. The other way to find out is to upload a PHP page to your website and see if it works. Even if you know that your site supports PHP, do the

following test to confirm which version is running:

1. Open a text editor, such as Notepad or TextEdit, and type the following code into a blank page:

```
<?php echo phpversion(); ?>
```
2. Save the file as `phpversion.php`. It's important to make sure that your operating system doesn't add a `.txt` filename extension after the `.php`. Mac users should also make sure that TextEdit doesn't save the file in Rich Text Format (RTF). If you're at all unsure, use `phpversion.php` from the `ch02` folder in the files accompanying this book.
3. Upload `phpversion.php` to your website in the same way you would an HTML page and then type the URL into a browser. Assuming you upload the file to the top level of your site, the URL will be something like <http://www.example.com/phpversion.php>.

If you see a three-part number like **5.6.1** displayed onscreen, you're in business: PHP is enabled. The number tells you which version of PHP is running on your server.
You need a minimum of 5.4.0 to use all the code in this book.

4. If you get a message that says something like "**Parse error**" Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP) website supports Parse error it means PHP is supported but that you have made a mistake in typing the code in the file. Use the version in the `ch02` folder instead.
5. If you just see the original code, it means PHP is not supported.

Official support for PHP 5.3 ended in August 2014. If your server is running PHP 5.3 or earlier, contact your host and tell them you want the most recent stable version of PHP. If your host refuses, it's time to change your hosting company.

WHY PHP 5.4 SHOULD BE THE MINIMUM VERSION

As a general principle, PHP tries to preserve backward compatibility between point releases (where only the numbers after the first dot in the version number change). However, a number of outdated features were removed from PHP 5.4. New syntax was also introduced for arrays.

Although most of the code in this book will run correctly on older versions of PHP, you may get unexpected results if you use a server that still relies on those features. The most important changes that affect the code in this book are the removal of safe mode and magic quotes.

Safe mode is often used in shared hosting environments. Among its effects, safe mode restricts where include files can be located and which files can be read from and written to. With the removal of safe mode in PHP 5.4, these restrictions no longer apply.

Magic quotes were a misguided attempt to make PHP safer for inexperienced developers by inserting backslashes before quotes in user-submitted data. The idea was to prevent a malicious attack known as *SQL injection*. Unfortunately, magic quotes caused more problems than they solved, often leaving text peppered with unwanted backslashes. If you run the code in this book on PHP 5.3 or earlier, you'll get unwanted backslashes if magic quotes haven't been disabled.

The code in this book also uses simplified syntax for arrays, which won't work in older versions of PHP.

The most important reason for not using an old version of PHP is security. When vulnerabilities are discovered, security updates are made only to the current and two previous versions. At the time of this writing, the current version is PHP 5.6. That means PHP 5.4 and 5.5 will benefit from any security updates. But as soon as the next version comes out, PHP 5.4 will cease being patched for security threats. Using an up-to-date version of PHP isn't simply a matter of gaining access to the latest features; it helps protect your website and valuable

data from malicious attacks.

Deciding Where to Test Your Pages

Unlike ordinary webpages, you can't just double-click PHP pages in Windows File Explorer or Finder on a Mac and view them in your browser. They need to be **parsed**, or processed, through a web server that supports PHP. If your hosting company supports PHP, you can upload your files to your website and test them there. However, you need to upload the file every time you make a change. In the early days, you'll probably find you have to do this often because of some minor mistake in your code. As you become more experienced, you'll still need to upload files frequently because you'll want to experiment with different ideas.

If you want to get working with PHP straight away, by all means use your own website as a test bed. However, you'll soon discover the need for a local PHP test environment. The rest of this chapter is devoted to showing you how to do this, with instructions for both Windows and Mac OS X.

What You Need for a Local Test Environment

To test PHP pages on your local computer, you need to install the following:

- A web server: this is a piece of software that displays webpages, not a separate computer
- PHP
- MySQL and a web-based front end for MySQL called phpMyAdmin, which are required in order to work with a database

 **Tip** Some Linux distributions install MariaDB (<https://mariadb.org/>) as a drop-in replacement for MySQL. The code in this book is fully compatible with MariaDB.

All the software you need is free. The only cost to you is the time it takes to download the necessary files, plus, of course, the time to make sure everything is set up correctly. In most cases, you should be up and running in less than an hour, probably considerably less. As long as you have at least 1GB of free disk space, you should be able to install all the software on your computer—even one with modest specifications.

Tip If you already have a PHP test environment on your local computer, there's no need to reinstall. Just check the section at the end of this chapter titled "Checking Your PHP Settings".

Individual Programs or an All-in-one Package?

For many years, I advocated installing each component of a PHP testing environment separately, rather than using a package that installs Apache, PHP, MySQL, and phpMyAdmin in a single operation. My advice was based on the dubious quality of some early all-in-one packages, which installed easily but were next to impossible to uninstall or upgrade. However, the all-in-one packages currently available are excellent, and I have no hesitation in now recommending them.

On my computers, I use XAMPP for Windows (www.apachefriends.org/index.html) and MAMP for Mac OS X (www.mamp.info/en/). Other packages are available; it doesn't matter which you choose.

Tip Setting up a PHP testing environment with an all-in-one package is normally trouble free. The main cause of difficulty is a conflict with another program using port 80, which the web server uses to listen for page requests. If Skype is installed, go to Tools ▶ Options ▶ Advanced ▶ Connection and make sure that port 80 is not being used for incoming connections. Try port 33087 instead.

Setting Up on Windows

Make sure that you're logged on as an administrator before proceeding.

Getting Windows to Display Filename Extensions

By default, most Windows computers hide the three- or four-letter filename extension, such as `.doc` or `.html`, so all you see in dialog boxes and Windows File Explorer is `thisfile` instead of `thisfile.doc` or `thisfile.html`. Windows 8 does display the filename extension for PHP files, but it's useful to turn on the display of filename extension for all files. In Windows 7, it's essential for working with PHP.

Use these instructions to enable the display of filename extensions in Windows 8:

1. Open **File Explorer**.
2. Select **View** to expand the ribbon at the top of the **File Explorer** windowHypertext Preprocessor (PHP)File Explorer window.
3. Select the “**Filename extensions**” check box.

Use these instructions in Windows 7:

4. Open **Start ▶ Computer**.
5. Select **Organize ▶ Folder** and then **Search Options**.
6. In the dialog box that opens, select the **View** tab.
7. In the **Advanced Settings** section, uncheck the box marked “**Hide extensions for known file types**.”
8. Click **OK**.

Displaying filename extensions is more secure—you can tell if a virus writer has attached an `.exe` or `.scr` executable file to an innocent-looking document.

Choosing a Web Server

Most PHP installations run on the Apache web server. Both are open source and work well together. However, Windows has its own web server, Internet Information Services (IIS), which also supports PHP. Microsoft has worked closely with the PHP development team to improve the performance of PHP on IIS to roughly the same level as Apache. So, which should you choose?

The answer depends on whether you develop webpages using ASP or ASP.NET, or intend to do so. ASP and ASP.NET require IIS. You can install Apache on the same computer as IIS, but they both listen for requests on port 80. You can't run both servers simultaneously on the same port.

Unless you need IIS for ASP or ASP.NET, I recommend that you install Apache, using XAMPP or one of the other all-in-one packages, as described in the next section. If you need to use IIS, the most convenient way to install PHP is to use the Microsoft Web Platform Installer (Web PI), which you can download from

www.microsoft.com/web/downloads/platform.aspx.

Installing an All-in-one Package on Windows

There are three popular packages for Windows that install Apache, PHP, MySQL, phpMyAdmin, and several other tools on your computer in a single operation: XAMPP (www.apachefriends.org/index.html), WampServer (www.wampserver.com/en/), and EasyPHP ([www.eeasyphp.org](http://www.easyphp.org)). The installation process normally takes only a few minutes. Once the package has been installed, you might need to change a few settings, as explained later in this chapter.

Versions are liable to change over the lifetime of a printed book, so I won't describe the installation process. Each package has instructions on its website. There are also helpful videos for setting up WampServer and XAMPP in David Gassner's *Installing Apache, MySQL, and PHP* course on lynda.com. Although lynda.com is a subscription service, at the time of this writing all the videos in that course can be viewed free of charge even if you're not a subscriber (www.lynda.com/Apache-HTTP-Server-tutorials/Installing-Apache-MySQL-PHP/77958-2.html).

Setting Up on Mac OS X

The Apache web server and PHP are preinstalled on Mac OS X, but they're not enabled by default. Rather than using the preinstalled versions, I recommend that you use MAMP, which installs Apache, PHP, MySQL, phpMyAdmin, and several other tools in a single operation.

To avoid conflicts with the preinstalled versions of Apache and PHP, MAMP locates all the applications in a dedicated folder on your hard disk. This makes it easier to uninstall everything by simply dragging the MAMP folder to the Trash if you decide you no longer want MAMP on your computer.

Installing MAMP

Before you begin, make sure you're logged in to your computer with administrative privileges.

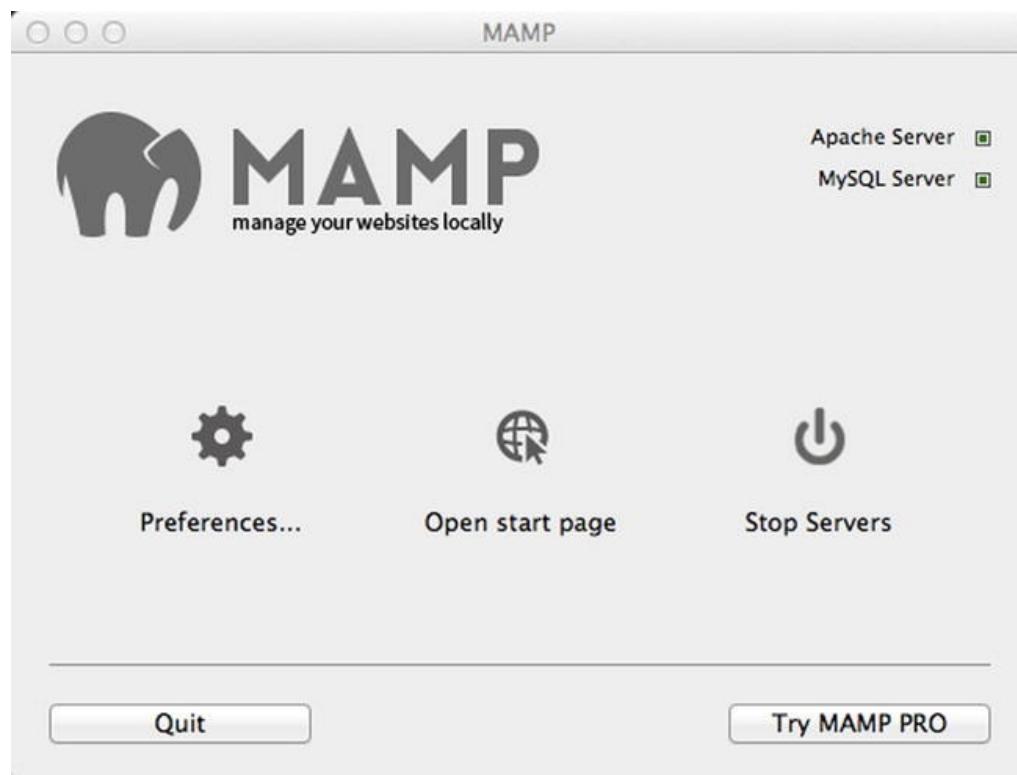
1. Go to www.mamp.info/en/downloads/ and select the link for **MAMP & MAMP PRO**. This downloads a disk image that contains both the free and paid-for versions of MAMP.
2. When the download completes, launch the disk image. You'll be presented with a license agreement. You must click **Agree** to continue with mounting the disk image.
3. Follow the onscreen instructions.
4. Verify that **MAMP** has been installed in your **Applications** folder.

 **Note** MAMP automatically installs both the free and paid-for versions in separate folders called **MAMP** and **MAMP PRO**. The paid-for version makes it easier to configure PHP and to work with virtual hosts, but the free version is perfectly adequate, especially for beginners. If you want to remove the **MAMP PRO** folder, don't drag it to the Trash. Open the folder and double-click the **MAMP PRO** **uninstall** icon. The paid-for version requires both folders.

Testing and configuring MAMP

By default, MAMP uses nonstandard ports for Apache and MySQL. Unless you're using multiple installations of Apache and MySQL, you should change the port settings.

1. Double-click the **MAMP** icon in **Applications/MAMP**. Your default browser should launch and present you with the MAMP welcome page. Note that the URL in the browser address bar begins with `localhost:8888`. The `:8888` indicates that Apache is listening for requests on the nonstandard port 8888.
2. Minimize the browser and locate the MAMP control panel (see [Figure 2-1](#)), which should be running on your desktop. The tiny green lights to the right of **Apache Server** and **MySQL Server** indicate that both servers are running.



[Figure 2-1.](#) The MAMP control panel

3. Click the **Preferences** icon and select **Ports** at the top of the panel that opens. It shows that Apache and MySQL are running on ports 8888 and 8889 (see [Figure 2-2](#)).

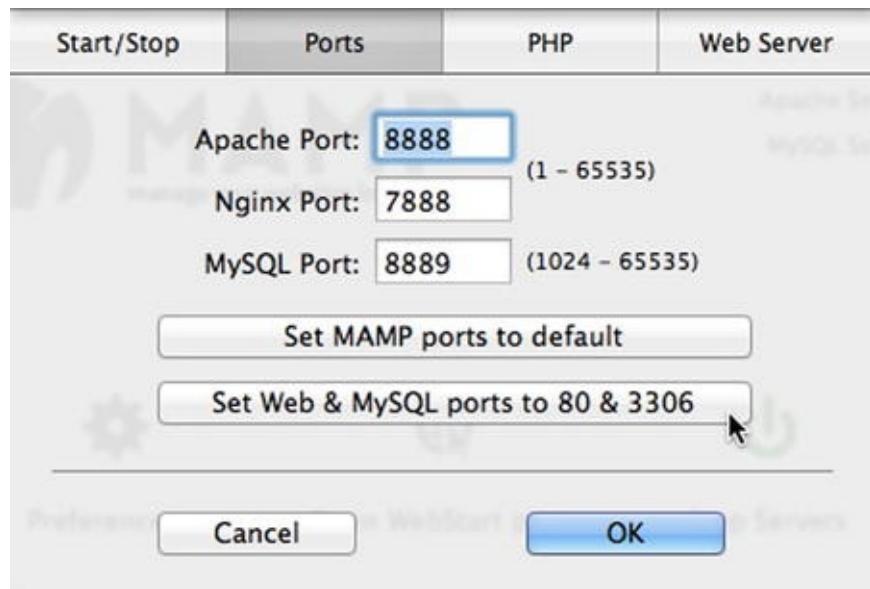


Figure 2-2. Changing the Apache and MySQL ports

4. Click “**Set Web & MySQL ports to 80 & 3306**” as shown in [Figure 2-2](#). The numbers change to the standard ports: 80 for Apache and 3306 for MySQL.

Note MAMP now supports Nginx as an alternative web server. When I clicked “Set Web & MySQL ports to 80 & 3306,” both Apache Port and Nginx Port changed to 80, which prevented the settings from being accepted. If this happens, manually reset Nginx Port to 7888.

5. Click **OK** and enter your Mac password when prompted. MAMP restarts both servers.

Tip If any other program is using port 80, Apache won't restart. If you can't find what's preventing Apache from using port 80, open the MAMP preferences panel and click “**Set MAMP ports to default**.”

6. When both lights are green again, click “**Open start page**” in the MAMP Control Panel. This reloads the

MAMP welcome page into your browser. This time, the URL shouldn't have a colon followed by a number appearing after `localhost` because Apache is now listening on the default port.

Where to Locate Your PHP Files (Windows & Mac)

You need to create your files in a location where the web server can process them. Normally, this means that the files should be in the server's document root or in a subfolder of the document root. The default location of the document root for the most common setups is as follows:

- **XAMPP:** C:\xampp\htdocs
- **WampServer:** C:\wamp\www
- **EasyPHP:** C:\EasyPHP\www
- **IIS:** C:\inetpub\wwwroot
- **MAMP:** Macintosh HD:Applications:MAMP:htdocs

To view a PHP page, you need to load it in a browser using a URL. The URL for the web server's document root in your local testing environment is `http://localhost/`.

 **Caution** If you needed to reset MAMP back to its default ports, you will need to use `http://localhost:8888` instead of `http://localhost`.

If you store the files for this book in a subfolder of the document root called `phpsols`, the URL is `http://localhost/phpsols/` followed by the name of the folder (if any) and file.

 **Tip** Use `http://127.0.0.1/` if you have problems with

`http://localhost/. 127.0.0.1` is the loopback IP address all computers use to refer to the local machine.

Using Virtual Hosts

The alternative to storing your PHP files in the web server's document root is to use a virtual host. A **virtual host** creates a unique address for each site and is how hosting companies manage shared hosting. MAMP PRO simplifies setting up virtual hosts through its control panel. EasyPHP also has a plug-in module for administering virtual hosts.

Manually setting up virtual hosts involves editing one of your computer's system files to register the host name on your local machine. You also need to tell the web server in your local testing environment where the files are located. The process isn't difficult, but it needs to be done each time you set up a new virtual host.

The advantage of setting up each site in a virtual host is that it matches more accurately the structure of a live website. However, when learning PHP, it's probably more convenient to use a subfolder of your testing server's document root. Once you have gained experience with PHP, you can advance to using virtual hosts. Instructions for manually setting up virtual hosts in Apache are on my website at the following addresses:

- **Windows:**
http://foundationphp.com/tutorials/apache_vhos
 - **MAMP:**
http://foundationphp.com/tutorials/vhosts_mamp
-

 **Tip** Remember to start the web server in your testing environment to view PHP pages.

Checking Your PHP Settings

After installing PHP, it's a good idea to check its configuration settings. In addition to the core features, PHP has a large number of optional extensions

Both the all-in-one packages and the Microsoft Web PI install all the extensions that you need for this book. However, some of the basic configuration settings might be slightly different. To avoid unexpected problems, adjust your PHP configuration to match the settings recommended in the following pages.

Displaying the Server Configuration with `phpinfo()`

PHP has a built-in command, `phpinfo()`, that displays details of how PHP is configured on the server. The amount of detail produced by `phpinfo()` can feel like massive information overload, but it's invaluable for determining why something works perfectly on your local computer yet not on your live website. The problem usually lies in the remote server having disabled a feature or not having installed an optional extension.

The all-in-one packages make it easy to run `phpinfo()`:

- **XAMPP:** Click the **phpinfo** link in the menu on the left of the XAMPP welcome screen.
- **MAMP:** Click **phpinfo** in the main menu at the top of the MAMP start page.
- **WampServer:** Open the WampServer menu and click **localhost**. The link for `phpinfo()` is under **Tools**.

Alternatively, create a simple test file and load it in your browser using the following instructions:

1. Make sure that Apache or IIS is running on your local computer.
2. Type the following in a script editor:

```
<?php phpinfo(); ?>
```

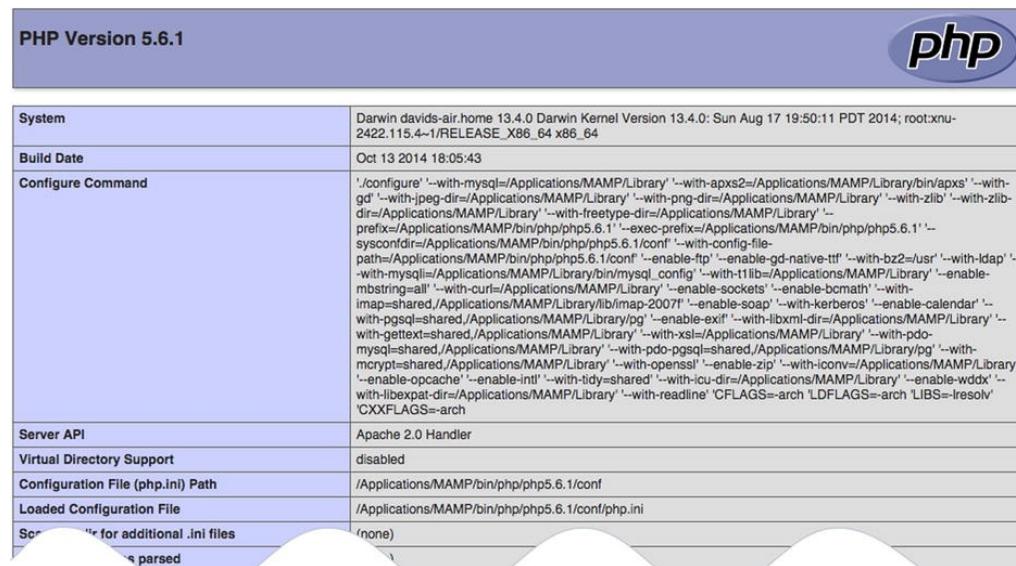
There should be nothing else in the file.

3. Save the file as `phpinfo.php` in the server's document root (see "Where to Locate Your PHP Files (Windows

and Mac)" earlier in this chapter).

Caution Make sure your editor doesn't add a `.txt` or `.rtf` extension after `.php`.

4. Type `http://localhost/phpinfo.php` in your browser address bar and press Enter.
5. You should see a page similar to that in [Figure 2-3](#) displaying the version of PHP followed by extensive details of your PHP configuration.



The screenshot shows the output of the `phpinfo()` function. At the top, it says "PHP Version 5.6.1". Below that is a large table with various configuration parameters listed in columns. The columns include "System", "Build Date", "Configure Command", "Server API", "Virtual Directory Support", "Configuration File (php.ini) Path", "Loaded Configuration File", and "Scanned for additional .ini files". The "Configure Command" column contains a very long command line with many options, starting with `'./configure' --with-mysql=/Applications/MAMP/Library`` and ending with `'--enable-wddx' --with-libxml-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library``. The "Loaded Configuration File" row shows the path `/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1/conf/php.ini`. The "Scanned for additional .ini files" row shows "(none)".

System	Darwin davids-air.home 13.4.0 Darwin Kernel Version 13.4.0: Sun Aug 17 19:50:11 PDT 2014; root:xnu-2422.115.4~1/RELEASE_X86_64 x86_64
Build Date	Oct 13 2014 18:05:43
Configure Command	<code>'./configure' --with-mysql=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-apxs2=/Applications/MAMP/Library/bin/apxs` --with-gd` --with-jpeg-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-png-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-zlib` --with-zlib-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-freetype-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --prefix=/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1` --exec-prefix=/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1` --sysconfdir=/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1/conf` --with-config-file-path=/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1/conf` --enable-ftp` --enable-gd-native-ttf` --with-bz2=/usr` --with-ldap` --with-mysql=/Applications/MAMP/Library/bin/mysql_config` --with-t1lib=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --enable-mbstring=all` --with-curl=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --enable-soap` --enable-bcmath` --with-imap=shared,/Applications/MAMP/Library/libimap-2007f` --enable-soap` --enable-kerberos` --enable-calendar` --with-pgsql=shared,/Applications/MAMP/Library/pg` --enable-exif` --with-libxml-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-pdo-mysql=shared,/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-pdo-pgsql=shared,/Applications/MAMP/Library/pg` --with-mcrypt=shared,/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-openssl` --enable-zip` --with-iconv=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --enable-opcache` --enable-intl` --with-tidy=shared` --with-icu-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --enable-wddx` --with-libexpat-dir=/Applications/MAMP/Library` --with-readline` CFLAGS=arch LDFLAGS=arch LIBS=lsolv` CXXFLAGS=arch</code>
Server API	Apache 2.0 Handler
Virtual Directory Support	disabled
Configuration File (php.ini) Path	/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1/conf
Loaded Configuration File	/Applications/MAMP/bin/php/php5.6.1/conf/php.ini
Scanned for additional .ini files	(none)

[Figure 2-3](#). Running the `phpinfo()` command displays full details of your PHP configuration

6. Make a note of the value for the **Loaded Configuration File item**. This tells you where to find `php.ini`, the text file that you need to edit in order to change most settings in PHP.
7. Scroll down to the section labeled **Core** and compare the settings with those recommended in [Table 2-1](#). Make a note of any differences so you can change them as described later in this chapter.

[Table 2-1](#). Recommended PHP configuration settings

Directive	Local value	Remarks
display_errors	On	Essential for debugging mistakes in your scripts. If set to Off , errors result in a completely blank screen, leaving you clueless as to the possible cause.
error_reporting	32767	This sets error reporting to the highest level.
file_uploads	On	Allows you to use PHP to upload files to a website.
log_errors	Off	With <code>display_errors</code> set on, you don't need to fill your hard disk with an error log.

8. The rest of the configuration page shows you which PHP extensions are enabled. Although the page seems to go on forever, the extensions are all listed in alphabetical order after **Core**. To work with this book, make sure the following extensions are enabled:

- **gd**: Enables PHP to generate and modify images and fonts.
- **mysqli**: Connects to MySQL (note the “i,” which stands for “improved” and distinguishes this extension from the older `mysql` one, which should no longer be used).
- **PDO**: Provides software-neutral support for databases (optional).
- **pdo_mysql**: Alternative method of connecting to MySQL (optional).
- **session**: Sessions maintain information associated with a user and are used, among other things, for user authentication.

You should also run `phpinfo()` on your remote server to check which features are enabled. If the listed extensions aren’t supported, some of the code

in this book won't work when you upload your files to your website. PDO and `pdo_mysql` aren't always enabled on shared hosting, but you can use `mysqli` instead. The advantage of PDO is that it's software-neutral, so you can adapt scripts to work with a database other than MySQL by changing only one or two lines of code. Using `mysqli` ties you to MySQL.

If any of the Core settings in your setup are different from the recommendations in [Table 2-1](#), you will need to edit the PHP configuration file, `php.ini`, as described in the next section.

Editing `php.ini`

The PHP configuration file, `php.ini`, is a very long file, which tends to unnerve newcomers to programming, but there's nothing to worry about. It's written in plain text, and one reason for its length is that it contains copious comments explaining the various options. That said, it's a good idea to make a backup copy before editing `php.ini` in case you make a mistake.

How you open `php.ini` depends on your operating system and how you installed PHP:

- If you used an all-in-one package, such as XAMPP, on Windows, double-click `php.ini` in Windows Explorer. The file opens automatically in Notepad.
- If you installed PHP using the Microsoft Web PI, `php.ini` is normally located in a subfolder of Program Files. Although you can open `php.ini` by double-clicking it, you won't be able to save any changes you make. Instead, right-click **Notepad** and select **Run as Administrator**. (In Windows 7, you need to access Notepad from the **Start** menu. It's in the **Accessories** folder.) Inside Notepad, select **File > Open** and set the option to display **All Files (*.*)**. Navigate to the folder where `php.ini` is located, select the file, and click **Open**.
- On Mac OS X, `php.ini` is displayed in Finder as an executable file. Use a text editor, such as BBEdit or TextWrangler (both available from www.barebones.com), to open `php.ini`.

Lines that begin with a semicolon (;) are comments. The lines you need to edit do not begin with a semicolon.

Use your text editor's Find functionality to locate the directives you need in order to change your settings to match the recommendations in [Table 2-1](#). Most directives are preceded by one or more examples of how they should be set. Make sure you don't edit one of the commented examples by mistake.

For directives that use **On** or **Off**, just change the value to the recommended one. For example, if you need to turn on the display of error messages, edit this line:

```
display_errors = Off
```

by changing it to this:

```
display_errors = On
```

To set the level of error reporting, you need to use PHP constants, which are written in uppercase and are case-sensitive. The directive should look like this:

```
error_reporting = E_ALL
```

After editing `php.ini`, save the file and then restart Apache or IIS so that the changes take effect. If the web server won't start, check the server's error log file. It can be found in the following locations:

- **XAMPP:** In the XAMPP Control Panel, click the **Logs** button alongside **Apache** and then select **Apache (error.log)**.
- **MAMP:** In Applications:MAMP:logs, double-click `apache_error.log` to open it in Console.
- **WampServer:** In the WampServer menu, select **Apache ▶ Apache error log**.
- **EasyPHP:** Right-click the EasyPHP icon in the system tray and select **Log Files ▶ Apache**.
- **IIS:** The default location of log files is C:\inetpub\logs.

The most recent entry in the error log should give you an indication of what prevented the server from restarting. Use that information to correct the changes

you made to `php.ini`. If that doesn't work, be thankful you made a backup of `php.ini` before editing it. Start again with a fresh copy and check your edits carefully.

What's Next?

Now that you've got a working test bed for PHP, you're no doubt raring to go. The last thing I want to do is dampen any enthusiasm, but before using PHP in a live website, you should have a basic understanding of the rules of the language. So, before jumping into the cool stuff, read the next chapter, which explains how to write PHP scripts. Don't skip it—it's really important.

CHAPTER 3



How to Write PHP Scripts

If you run screaming at the sight of code, this is the chapter you'll enjoy the least, but it's an important one that I've tried to make as user friendly as possible. The chapter is in two parts: the first section offers a quick overview of how PHP works and gives you the basic rules; the second section goes into more detail.

You can read just the first section and come back to the more detailed parts later, or you can read the chapter straight through. However, don't attempt to memorize everything at one sitting. The best way to learn is by doing. Coming back to the second part of the chapter for a little information at a time is likely to be more effective.

If you're already familiar with PHP, you may want to skim through the main headings to see what this chapter contains and brush up your knowledge on any aspects that you're a bit hazy about.

This chapter covers:

- Understanding how PHP is structured
- Embedding PHP in a webpage
- Storing data in variables and arrays
- Getting PHP to make decisions
- Looping through repetitive tasks
- Using functions for preset tasks
- Understanding PHP objects and classes
- Displaying PHP output
- Understanding PHP error messages

PHP: The Big Picture

At first glance, PHP code can look quite intimidating, but once you understand the basics, you'll discover that the structure is remarkably simple. If you have worked with any other computer language, such as JavaScript or jQuery, you'll find they have a lot in common.

Every PHP page *must* have the following:

- The correct filename extension, usually `.php`
- Opening and closing PHP tags surrounding each block of PHP code (although the closing PHP tag can be omitted if the file contains only PHP code)

A typical PHP page will use some or all of the following elements:

- Variables to act as placeholders for unknown or changing values
- Arrays to hold multiple values
- Conditional statements to make decisions
- Loops to perform repetitive tasks
- Functions or objects to perform preset tasks

Let's take a quick look at each of these in turn, starting with the filename and the opening and closing tags.

Telling the Server to Process PHP

PHP is a **server-side language**. This means that the web server processes your PHP code and sends only the results—usually as HTML—to the browser. Because all the action is on the server, you need to tell it that your pages contain PHP code. This involves two simple steps, namely:

- Give every page a PHP filename extension; the default is `.php`. Do not use anything other than `.php` unless you are specifically told to do so by your hosting company.

- Enclose all PHP code within PHP tags.

The opening tag is `<?php` and the closing tag is `?>`. If you put the tags on the same line as surrounding code, there doesn't need to be a space before the opening tag or after the closing one, but there must be a space after the `php` in the opening tag like this:

```
<p>This is HTML with embedded PHP<?php //some PHP code  
?>.</p>
```

When inserting more than one line of PHP, it's a good idea to put the opening and closing tags on separate lines for the sake of clarity.

```
<?php  
// some PHP code  
// more PHP code  
?>
```

You may come across `<?` as an alternative short version of the opening tag. However, `<?` doesn't work on all servers. Stick with `<?php`, which is guaranteed to work.

Note To save space, most examples in this book omit the PHP tags. You must always use them when writing your own scripts or embedding PHP into a webpage.

Embedding PHP in a Webpage

PHP is an **embedded** language. This means that you can insert blocks of PHP code inside ordinary webpages. When somebody visits your site and requests a PHP page, the server sends it to the PHP engine, which reads the page from top to bottom looking for PHP tags. HTML passes through untouched, but whenever the PHP engine encounters a `<?php` tag, it starts processing your code and continues until it reaches the closing `?>` tag. If the PHP code produces any output, it's inserted at that point.

Tip A page can have multiple PHP code blocks, but they cannot be nested

inside each other.

Figure 3-1 shows a block of PHP code embedded in an ordinary webpage and what it looks like in a browser and in a page-source view after it has been passed through the PHP engine. The code calculates the current year, checks whether it's different from a fixed year (represented by \$startYear in line 26 of the code on the left of the figure), and displays the appropriate year range in a copyright statement. As you can see from the page-source view at the bottom right of the figure, there's no trace of PHP in what's sent to the browser.

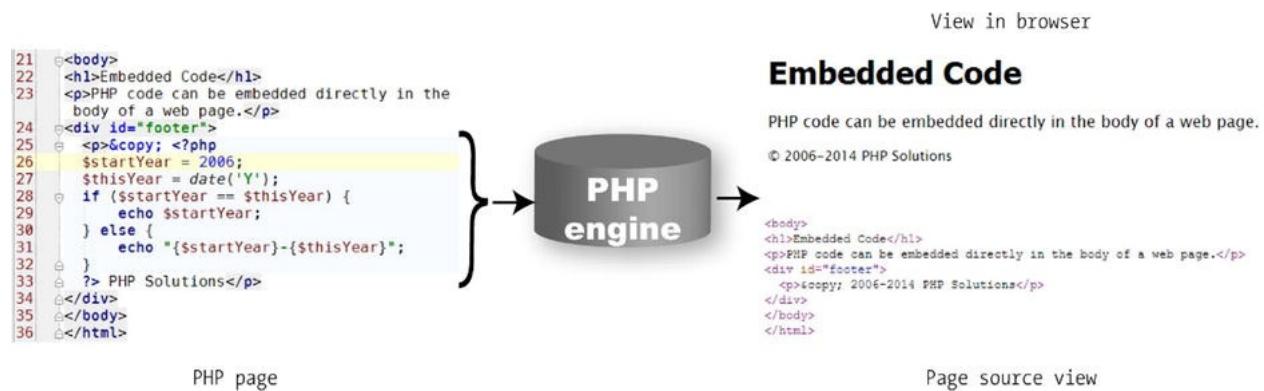


Figure 3-1. The PHP code remains on the server; only the output is sent to the browser

Tip PHP doesn't always produce direct output for the browser. It may, for instance, check the contents of form input before sending an email message or inserting information into a database. Therefore, some code blocks are placed above or below the main HTML code, or in external files. Code that produces direct output, however, always goes where you want the output to be displayed.

Storing PHP in an External File

As well as embedding PHP in HTML, it's common practice to store frequently used code in separate files. When a file contains only PHP code, the opening `<?php` tag is mandatory, but the closing `?>` tag is optional. In fact, the recommended practice is to leave out the closing PHP tag. However, you *must* use the closing `?>` tag if the external file contains HTML after the PHP code.

Using Variables to Represent Changing Values

The code in [Figure 3-1](#) probably looks like an awfully long-winded way to display a range of years. Surely it's much simpler to just type out the actual dates? Yes, it is, but the PHP solution saves you time in the long run. Instead of your needing to update the copyright statement every year, the PHP code does it automatically. You write the code once and forget it. What's more, as you'll see in the next chapter, if you store the code in an external file, any changes to the external file are reflected on every page of your site.

This ability to display the year automatically relies on two key aspects of PHP: **variables** and **functions**. As the name suggests, functions do things; they perform preset tasks, such as getting the current date and converting it into human-readable form. I'll cover functions a little later, so let's work on variables first. The script in [Figure 3-1](#) contains two variables: `$startYear` and `$thisYear`.

Tip A **variable** is simply a name that you give to something that may change or that you don't know in advance. Variables in PHP always begin with \$ (a dollar sign).

Although the concept of variables sounds abstract, we use variables all the time in everyday life. When you meet somebody for the first time, one of the first things you ask is "What's your name?" It doesn't matter whether the person you've just met is Tom, Dick, or Harry, the word "name" remains constant. Similarly, with your bank account, money goes in and out all of the time (mostly out, it seems), but as [Figure 3-2](#) shows, it doesn't matter whether you're scraping the bottom of the barrel or as rich as Croesus, the amount available is always referred to as the balance.

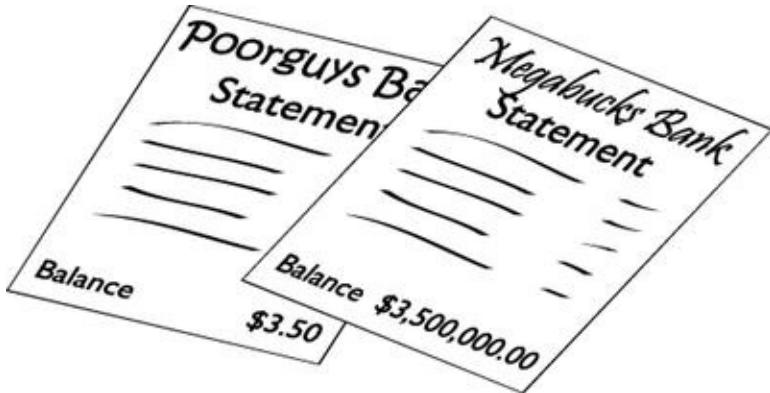


Figure 3-2. The balance on your bank statement is an everyday example of a variable—the name stays the same, even though the value may change from day to day

So, “name” and “balance” are everyday variables. Just put a dollar sign in front of them and you have two ready-made PHP variables, like this:

```
$name  
$balance
```

Simple.

Naming Variables

You can choose just about anything you like as the name for a variable, as long as you keep the following rules in mind:

- Variables always begin with a dollar sign (\$).
- The first character after the dollar sign cannot be a number.
- No spaces or punctuation marks are allowed, except for the underscore (_).
- Variable names are case-sensitive: `$startYear` and `$startyear` are not the same.

When choosing names for variables, it makes sense to choose something that tells you what it’s for. The variables you’ve seen so far—`$startYear`, `$thisYear`, `$name`, and `$balance`—are good examples. Because you can’t use spaces in variable names, it’s a good idea to capitalize the first letter of the second or subsequent words when combining them (sometimes called **camel**

`case`). Alternatively, you can use an underscore (`$start_year`, `$this_year`, etc.).

Technically speaking, you can use an underscore as the first character after the dollar sign, but it's not recommended. PHP predefined variables (e.g., the superglobal arrays described a little later in this chapter) begin with an underscore, so there's a danger that you may accidentally choose the same name and cause problems for your script.

Don't try to save time by using really short variables. Using `$sy`, `$ty`, `$n`, and `$b` instead of the more descriptive ones makes code harder to understand—and that makes it hard to write. More important, it makes errors more difficult to spot. As always, there are exceptions to a rule. By convention, `$i`, `$j`, and `$k` are frequently used to keep count of the number of times a loop has run, and `$e` is used in error checking. You'll see examples of these later in this chapter.

Caution Although you have considerable freedom in the choice of variable names, you can't use `$this`, because it has a special meaning in PHP object-oriented programming. It's also advisable to avoid using any of the keywords listed at <http://php.net/manual/en/reserved.php>.

Assigning Values to Variables

Variables get their values from a variety of sources, including the following:

- User input through online forms
- A database
- An external source, such as a news feed or XML file
- The result of a calculation
- Direct inclusion in the PHP code

Wherever the value comes from, it's always assigned with an equal sign (=), like this:

```
$variable = value;
```

The variable goes on the left of the equal sign, and the value goes on the

right. Because it assigns a value, the equal sign is called the **assignment operator**.

■ **Caution** Familiarity with the equal sign from childhood makes it difficult to get out of the habit of thinking that it means “is equal to.” However, PHP uses two equal signs (==) to signify equality. This is a major cause of beginner mistakes, and it often catches more experienced developers, too. The difference between = and == is covered in more detail later in this chapter.

Ending Commands With a Semicolon

PHP is written as a series of commands or statements. Each statement normally tells the PHP engine to perform a particular action, and it must always be followed by a semicolon, like this:

```
<?php  
do this;  
now do something else;  
?>
```

As with all rules, there is an exception: you can omit the semicolon if there’s only one statement in the code block. However, *don’t do it*. Unlike JavaScript, PHP won’t automatically assume there should be a semicolon at the end of a line if you leave it out. This has a nice side effect: you can spread long statements over several lines and lay out your code for ease of reading. PHP, like HTML, ignores whitespace in code. Instead, it relies on semicolons to indicate where one command ends and the next one begins.

■ **Tip** Using a semicolon at the end of a PHP statement (or command) is always right. A missing semicolon will bring your script to a grinding halt.

Commenting Scripts

PHP treats everything between the opening and closing PHP tags as statements to be executed unless you tell it not to do so by marking a section of code as a

comment. The following three reasons explain why you may want to do this:

- To insert a reminder of what the script does
- To insert a placeholder for code to be added later
- To disable a section of code temporarily

When a script is fresh in your mind, it may seem unnecessary to insert anything that isn't going to be processed. However, if you need to revise the script several months later, you'll find comments much easier to read than trying to follow the code on its own. Comments are also vital when you're working in a team. They help your colleagues understand what the code is intended to do.

During testing, it's often useful to prevent a line of code, or even a whole section, from running. PHP ignores anything marked as a comment, so this is a useful way of turning on and off code.

There are three ways of adding comments: two for single-line comments and one for comments that stretch over several lines.

Single-line Comments

The most common method of adding a single-line comment is to precede it with two forward slashes, like this:

```
// this is a comment and will be ignored by the PHP engine
```

PHP ignores everything from the double slashes to the end of the line, so you can also place comments alongside code (but only to the right):

```
$startYear = 2006; // this is a valid comment
```

Comments aren't PHP statements, so they don't end with a semicolon. But don't forget the semicolon at the end of a PHP statement that's on the same line as a comment.

An alternative style uses the hash or pound sign (#), like this:

```
# this is another type of comment that will be ignored by the PHP engine
$startYear = 2006; # this also works as a comment
```

Because # stands out prominently when several are used together, this style of commenting often indicates sections of a longer script, like this:

```
#####
## Menu section ##
#####
```

Multi-line Comments

For a comment to stretch over several lines, use the same style of comments as in Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and JavaScript. Anything between /* and */ is treated as a comment, like this:

```
/* This is a comment that stretches
over several lines. It uses the same
beginning and end markers as in CSS. */
```

Multi-line comments are particularly useful when testing or troubleshooting, as they can be used to disable long sections of script without the need to delete them.

 **Tip** A combination of good comments and well-chosen variable names makes code easier to understand and maintain.

Using Arrays to Store Multiple Values

In common with other computing languages, PHP lets you store multiple values in a special type of variable called an **array**. A simple way of thinking about arrays is that they're like a shopping list. Although each item might be different, you can refer to them collectively by a single name. [Figure 3-3](#) demonstrates this concept: the variable \$shoppingList refers collectively to all five items—wine, fish, bread, grapes, and cheese.

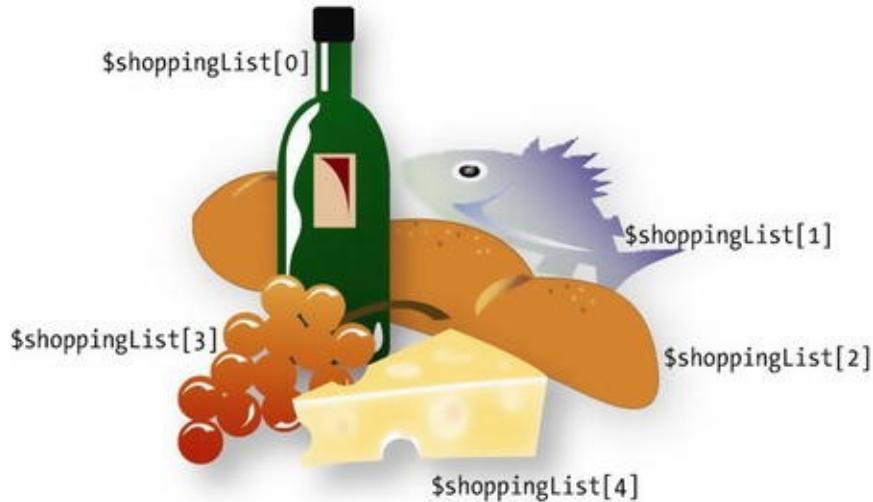


Figure 3-3. Arrays are variables that store multiple items, just like a shopping list

Individual items—or **array elements**—are identified by means of a number in square brackets immediately following the variable name. PHP assigns the number automatically, but it’s important to note that the numbering always begins at 0. So the first item in the array, wine in our example, is referred to as `$shoppingList[0]`, not `$shoppingList[1]`. And although there are five items, the last one (cheese) is `$shoppingList[4]`. The number is referred to as the **array key** or **index**, and this type of array is called an **indexed array**.

PHP uses another type of array in which the key is a word (or any combination of letters and numbers). For instance, an array containing details of this book might look like this:

```
$book['title'] = 'PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design  
Made Easy, Third Edition';  
$book['author'] = 'David Powers';  
$book['publisher'] = 'Apress';  
$book['ISBN'] = '978-1-4842-0636-2';
```

This type of array is called an **associative array**. Note that the array key is enclosed in quotes (single or double, it doesn’t matter). It shouldn’t contain any spaces or punctuation, except for the underscore.

Arrays are an important and useful part of PHP. You’ll use them a lot, starting with the next chapter, when you’ll store details of images in an array to display a random image on a webpage. Arrays are also used extensively with databases as you fetch the results of a search in a series of arrays.

Note You can learn the various ways of creating arrays in the second half of this chapter.

PHP's Built-in Superglobal Arrays

PHP has several built-in arrays that are automatically populated with useful information. They are called **superglobal arrays**, and all begin with a dollar sign followed by an underscore. Two that you will see frequently are `$_POST` and `$_GET`. They contain information passed from forms through the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) `post` and `get` methods, respectively. The superglobals are all associative arrays, and the keys of `$_POST` and `$_GET` are automatically derived from the names of form elements or variables in a query string at the end of a URL.

Let's say you have a text input field called "address" in a form; PHP automatically creates an array element called `$_POST['address']` when the form is submitted by the `post` method or `$_GET['address']` if you use the `get` method. As [Figure 3-4](#) shows, `$_POST['address']` contains whatever value a visitor enters in the text field, enabling you to display it onscreen, insert it in a database, send it to your email inbox, or do whatever you want with it.



Figure 3-4. You can retrieve the values of user input through the `$_POST` array, which is created automatically when a form is submitted using the `post` method

You'll work with the `$_POST` array in [Chapter 5](#) when you send the content of an online feedback form by email to your inbox. Other superglobal arrays that you'll use in this book are `$_SERVER`, to get information from the web server in [Chapters 4, 12, and 13](#), `$_FILES` to upload files to your website in [Chapter 7](#), and `$_SESSION`, to create a simple login system in [Chapters 9 and 17](#).

Caution Don't forget that PHP is case-sensitive. All superglobal array names are written in uppercase. `$_Post` or `$_Get`, for example, won't work.

Understanding When to Use Quotes

If you look closely at the PHP code block in [Figure 3-1](#), you'll notice that the value assigned to the first variable isn't enclosed in quotes. It looks like this:

```
$startYear = 2006;
```

Yet all the examples in “Using arrays to store multiple values” *did* use quotes, like this:

```
$book['title'] = 'PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design  
Made Easy, Third Edition';
```

The simple rules are as follows:

- **Numbers:** No quotes
- **Text:** Requires quotes

As a general principle, it doesn't matter whether you use single or double quotes around text or a **string**, as text is called in PHP and other computer languages. The situation is actually a bit more complex than that, as explained in the second half of this chapter, because there's a subtle difference in the way single and double quotes are treated by the PHP engine.

 **Note** The word “string” is borrowed from computer and mathematical science, where it means a sequence of simple objects—in this case, the characters in text.

The important thing to remember for now is that *quotes must always be in matching pairs*. This means you need to be careful about including apostrophes in a single-quoted string or double quotes in a double-quoted string. Take a look at the following line of code:

```
$book['description'] = 'This is David's latest book on  
PHP.';
```

At first glance, there seems to be nothing wrong with it. However, the PHP engine sees things differently than the human eye does, as [Figure 3-5](#)

demonstrates.

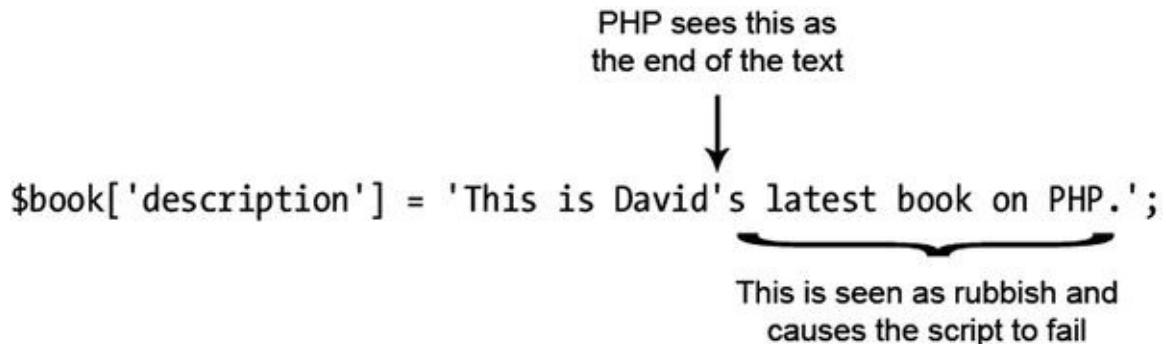


Figure 3-5. An apostrophe inside a single-quoted string confuses the PHP engine

There are two ways around this problem:

- Use double quotes if the text includes any apostrophes.
- Precede apostrophes with a backslash (this is known as **escaping**).

So, either of the following is acceptable:

```
$book['description'] = "This is David's latest book on  
PHP.";  
$book['description'] = 'This is David\'s latest book  
on PHP.';
```

The same applies with double quotes in a double-quoted string (although with the rules reversed). The following code causes a problem:

```
$play = "Shakespeare's "Macbeth"";
```

In this case, the apostrophe is fine, because it doesn't conflict with the double quotes, but the opening quotes in front of *Macbeth* bring the string to a premature end. To solve the problem, either of the following is acceptable:

```
$play = 'Shakespeare\'s "Macbeth"';  
$play = "Shakespeare's \"Macbeth\"";
```

In the first example, the entire string has been enclosed in single quotes. This gets around the problem of the double quotes surrounding *Macbeth* but introduces the need to escape the apostrophe in *Shakespeare's*. The apostrophe

presents no problem in a double-quoted string, but the double quotes around *Macbeth* both need to be escaped. So, to summarize:

- Single quotes and apostrophes are fine inside a double-quoted string.
 - Double quotes are fine inside a single-quoted string.
 - Anything else must be escaped with a backslash.
-

 **Tip** The key is to remember that the outermost quotes must match. My preference is to use single quotes and to reserve double quotes for situations where they have a special meaning, as described in the second half of this chapter.

Special Cases: True, False, and Null

Although text should be enclosed in quotes, three special cases—`true`, `false`, and `null`—should never be enclosed in quotes unless you want to treat them as genuine text (or strings). The first two mean what you would expect; the last one, `null`, means “nothing” or “no value.”

 **Note** Technically speaking, `true` and `false` are **Boolean values**. This name comes from nineteenth-century mathematician George Boole, who devised a system of logical operations that subsequently became the basis of much modern-day computing. It’s a complicated subject, but you can find out more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boolean_algebra. For most people, it’s sufficient to know that Boolean means `true` or `false`.

As the next section explains, PHP makes decisions on the basis of whether something equates to `true` or `false`. Putting quotes around `false` has surprising consequences. Take a look at the following code:

```
$OK = false;
```

It does exactly what you expect: it makes `$OK` false. Now, look at this:

```
$OK = 'false';
```

This does exactly the opposite of what you might expect: it makes `$OK` true! Why? Because the quotes around `false` turn it into a string, and PHP treats strings as `true`. (There's a more detailed explanation in “The truth according to PHP” in the second half of this chapter.)

The other thing to note about `true`, `false`, and `null` is that they are *case-insensitive*. The following examples are all valid:

```
$OK = TRUE;  
$OK = tRuE;  
$OK = true;
```

So, to recap, PHP treats `true`, `false`, and `null` as special cases.

- Don't enclose them in quotes.
- They are case-insensitive.

Making Decisions

Decisions, decisions, decisions... Life is full of decisions. So is PHP. They give it the ability to display different output according to circumstances. Decision-making in PHP uses **conditional statements**. The most common of these uses `if` and closely follows the structure of normal language. In real life, you may be faced with the following decision (admittedly not very often if you live in Britain): If the weather's hot, I'll go to the beach.

In PHP pseudo-code, the same decision looks like this:

```
if (the weather's hot) {  
    I'll go to the beach;  
}
```

The condition being tested goes inside parentheses, and the resulting action goes between curly braces. This is the basic decision-making pattern:

```
if (condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if condition is true  
}
```

Tip Conditional statements are control structures and are not followed by a semicolon. The curly braces keep together one or more individual statements that are intended to be executed as a group.

The code inside the curly braces is executed *only* if the condition is `true`. If it's `false`, PHP ignores everything between the braces and moves on to the next section of code. How PHP determines whether a condition is `true` or `false` is described in the following section.

Sometimes, the `if` statement is all you need, but you often want a default action to be invoked if the condition isn't met. To do this, use `else`, like this:

```
if (condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if condition is true  
} else {  
    // default code to run if condition is false  
}
```

If you want more alternatives, you can add more conditional statements like this:

```
if (condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if condition is true  
} else {  
    // default code to run if condition is false  
}  
if (second condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if second condition is true  
} else {  
    // default code to run if second condition is  
false  
}
```

In this case *both* conditional statements will be run. If you want only one code block to be executed, use `elseif` like this:

```
if (condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if first condition is true  
} elseif (second condition is true) {  
    // code to be executed if first condition fails
```

```
// but second condition is true
} else {
    // default code if both conditions are false
}
```

You can use as many `elseif` clauses in a conditional statement as you like. *Only the first condition that equates to true will be executed; all others will be ignored, even if they're also true.* This means you need to build conditional statements in the order of priority that you want them to be evaluated. It's strictly a first-come, first-served hierarchy.

Note Although `elseif` is normally written as one word, you can use `else` `if` as separate words.

An alternative decision-making structure, the `switch` statement, is described in the second half of this chapter.

Making Comparisons

Conditional statements are interested in only one thing: whether the condition being tested equates to `true`. If it's not `true`, it must be `false`. There's no room for half-measures or maybes. Conditions often depend on the comparison of two values. Is this bigger than that? Are they both the same? And so on.

To test for equality, PHP uses two equal signs (`==`), like this:

```
if ($status == 'administrator') {
    // send to admin page
} else {
    // refuse entry to admin area
}
```

Caution Don't use a single equal sign in the first line (`$status = 'administrator'`). Doing so opens the admin area of your website to everyone. Why? Because this automatically sets the value of `$status` to `administrator`; it doesn't compare the two values. To compare values, you must use two equal signs. It's a common mistake, but one with potentially

disastrous consequences.

Size comparisons are performed using the mathematical symbols for less than (`<`) and greater than (`>`). Let's say you're checking the size of a file before allowing it to be uploaded to your server. You could set a maximum size of 50 KB like this (1 kilobyte = 1024 bytes):

```
if ($bytes > 51200) {  
    // display error message and abandon upload  
} else {  
    // continue upload  
}
```

 **Note** The second half of this chapter describes how to test for multiple conditions simultaneously.

Using Indenting and Whitespace for Clarity

Indenting code helps to keep statements in logical groups, making it easier to understand the flow of the script. There are no fixed rules; PHP ignores any whitespace inside code, so you can adopt any style you like. The important thing is to be consistent so that you can spot anything that looks out of place.

Most people find that indenting four or five spaces makes for the most readable code. Perhaps the biggest difference in styles lies in the way individual developers arrange curly braces. I put the opening curly brace of a code block on the same line as the preceding code, and put the closing brace on a new line after the code block, like this:

```
if ($bytes > 51200) {  
    // display error message and abandon upload  
} else {  
    // continue upload  
}
```

However, others prefer this style:

```
if ($bytes > 51200)
```

```
{  
    // display error message and abandon upload  
}  
else  
{  
    // continue upload  
}
```

The style isn't important. What matters is that your code is consistent and easy to read.

Using Loops for Repetitive Tasks

Loops are huge timesavers because they perform the same task over and over again, yet involve very little code. They're frequently used with arrays and database results. You can step through each item one at a time looking for matches or performing a specific task. Loops are particularly powerful in combination with conditional statements, allowing you to perform operations selectively on a large amount of data in a single sweep. Loops are best understood by working with them in a real situation. Details of all looping structures, together with examples, are in the second half of this chapter.

Using Functions for Preset Tasks

As I mentioned earlier, **functions** do things . . . lots of things, mind-bogglingly so in PHP. A typical PHP setup gives you access to several thousand built-in functions. Don't worry: you'll only ever need to use a handful, but it's reassuring to know that PHP is a full-featured language.

The functions you'll be using in this book do truly useful things, such as get the height and width of an image, create thumbnails from existing images, query a database, send email, and much, much more. You can identify functions in PHP code because they're always followed by a pair of parentheses. Sometimes, the parentheses are empty, as in the case of `phpversion()`, which you used in `phpversion.php` in the previous chapter. Often, though, the parentheses contain variables, numbers, or strings, like this line of code from the script in [Figure 3-1](#):

```
$thisYear = date('Y');
```

This code calculates the current year and stores it in the variable `$thisYear`. It works by feeding the string '`Y`' to the built-in PHP function `date()`. Placing a value between the parentheses like this is known as **passing an argument** to a function. The function takes the value in the argument and processes it to produce (or **return**) the result. For instance, if you pass the string '`M`' as an argument to `date()` instead of '`Y`', it will return the current month as a three-letter abbreviation (e.g., Mar, Apr, May). As the following example shows, you capture the result of a function by assigning it to a suitably named variable:

```
$thisMonth = date('M');
```

 **Note** [Chapter 14](#) covers in depth how PHP handles dates and time.

Some functions take more than one argument. When this happens, separate the arguments with commas inside the parentheses, like this:

```
$mailSent = mail($to, $subject, $message);
```

It doesn't take a genius to work out that this sends an email to the address stored in the first argument, with the subject line stored in the second argument, and the message stored in the third one. You'll see how this function works in [Chapter 5](#).

 **Tip** You'll often come across the term "parameter" in place of "argument." Technically speaking, parameter refers to a variable used in the function definition, while argument refers to an actual value passed to the function. In practice, both terms tend to be used interchangeably.

As if all the built-in functions weren't enough, PHP lets you build your own custom functions. Even if you don't relish the idea of creating your own, throughout this book you'll use some that I have made. You use them in exactly the same way.

Understanding PHP Classes and Objects

Functions and variables give PHP tremendous power and flexibility, but classes and objects take the language to an even higher level. Classes are the fundamental building blocks of **object-oriented programming** (OOP), an approach to programming that's designed to make code reusable and easier to maintain. PHP has extensive support for OOP, and new features are frequently implemented in an object-oriented manner.

An **object** is a sophisticated data type that can store and manipulate values. A **class** is the code that defines an object's features and can be regarded as a blueprint for making objects. Among PHP's many built-in classes, two of particular interest are the `DateTime` and `DateTimeZone` classes, which deal with dates and time zones. Two other built-in classes that you'll use in this book are `MySQLi` and `PDO`, which are used for communicating with databases.

To create an object, you use the `new` keyword with the class name like this:

```
$now = new DateTime();
```

This creates an **instance** of the `DateTime` class and stores it in a `DateTime` object called `$now`. What distinguishes this from the `date()` function in the preceding section is that a `DateTime` object is aware not only of the date and time it was created but also of the time zone used by the web server. The `date()` function, on the other hand, simply generates a number or string containing the date formatted according to the arguments passed to it.

In the preceding example, no arguments were passed to the class, but classes can take arguments in the same way that functions do, as you'll see in the next example.

Most classes also have properties and methods, which are similar to variables and functions, except that they're related to a particular instance of a class. For example, you can use the `DateTime` class's methods to change certain values, such as the month, year, or time zone. A `DateTime` object is also capable of performing date calculations, which are much more complicated using ordinary functions.

You access an object's properties and methods using the `->` operator (a hyphen followed by a greater-than symbol). To reset the time zone of a `DateTime` object, pass a `DateTimeZone` object as an argument to the `setTimezone()` method like this:

```
$westcoast = new DateTimeZone('America/Los_Angeles');
```

```
$now->setTimezone($westcoast);
```

This resets the date and time stored in `$now` to the current date and time in Los Angeles, regardless of where the web server is located, automatically making any adjustments for daylight saving time.

The `DateTime` and `DateTimeZone` classes don't have properties, but you access an object's properties using the `->` operator in the same way:

```
$someObject->propertyName
```

Don't worry if you find the concepts of objects, properties, and methods difficult to grasp. All you need to know is how to instantiate objects with the `new` keyword and how to access properties and methods with the `->` operator.

Tip For an in-depth discussion of OOP in PHP with extensive hands-on examples, see my book *PHP Object-Oriented Solutions* (friends of ED, 2008, ISBN: 978-1-4302-1011-5).

Displaying PHP Output

There's not much point in all this wizardry going on behind the scenes unless you can display the results in your webpage. There are two ways of doing this in PHP: using `echo` or `print`. There are some subtle differences between the two, but they are so subtle you can regard `echo` and `print` as identical. I prefer `echo` for the simple reason that it's one fewer letter to type.

You can use `echo` with variables, numbers, and strings; simply put it in front of whatever you want to display, like this:

```
$name = 'David';
echo $name;    // displays David
echo 5;        // displays 5
echo 'David'; // displays David
```

When using `echo` and `print` with a variable, they work only with variables that contain a single value. You cannot use them to display the contents of an array or of a database result. This is where loops are so useful: you use `echo` or `print` inside the loop to display each element individually. You'll see

plenty of examples of this in action throughout the rest of the book.

You may see scripts that use parentheses with `echo` and `print`, like this:

```
echo('David'); // displays David
```

The parentheses make no difference. Unless you enjoy typing for the sake of it, leave them out.

Using Echo Shortcut Syntax

When you want to display the value of a single variable or expression (and nothing else), you can use a shortcut opening PHP tag, which consists of an opening angle bracket, a question mark, and the equal sign, like this:

```
<p>My name is <?= $name; ?>.</p>
```

This produces exactly the same output as this:

```
<p>My name is <?php echo $name; ?>.</p>
```

Because it's shorthand for `echo`, no other code can be in the same PHP block, but it's particularly useful when embedding database results in a webpage. It goes without saying that the value of the variable must be set in a previous PHP block before you can use this shortcut.

 **Caution** Prior to PHP 5.4, the `echo` shortcut syntax worked only if the `short_open_tag` configuration setting was enabled in `php.ini`. Since PHP 5.4, `<?=` is always available.

Joining Strings Together

PHP has a rather unusual way of joining strings (text). Although many other computer languages use the plus sign (+), PHP uses a period, dot, or full stop (.), like this:

```
$firstName = 'David';
$lastName = 'Powers';
```

```
echo $firstName.$lastName; // displays DavidPowers
```

As the comment in the final line of code indicates, when two strings are joined like this, PHP leaves no gap between them. Don't be fooled into thinking that adding a space after the period will do the trick. It won't. You can put as much space on either side of the period as you like; the result will always be the same, because PHP ignores whitespace in code. In fact, it's recommended to leave a space on either side of the period for readability.

To display a space in the final output, you must either include a space in one of the strings or insert the space as a string in its own right, like this:

```
echo $firstName . ' ' . $lastName; // displays David  
Powers
```

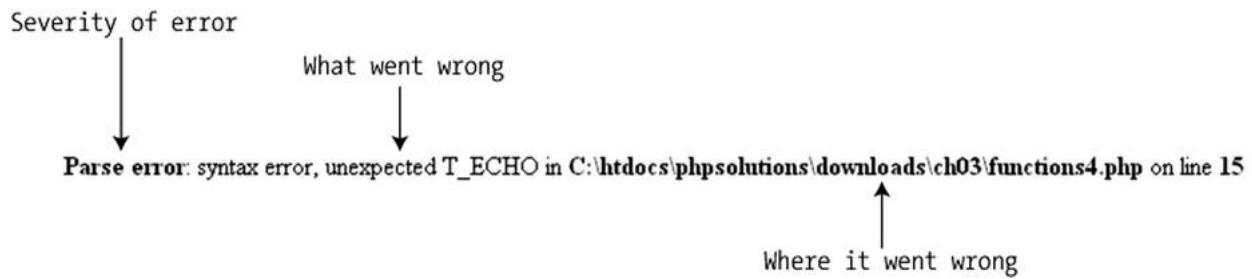
 **Tip** The period—or **concatenation operator**, to give it its correct name—can be difficult to spot among a lot of other code. Make sure the font size in your script editor is large enough to read without straining to see the difference between periods and commas.

Working With Numbers

PHP can do a lot with numbers, from simple addition to complex math. The second half of this chapter contains details of the arithmetic operators you can use with PHP. All you need to remember at the moment is that numbers must not contain any punctuation other than a decimal point. PHP will choke if you feed it numbers that contain commas (or anything else) as the thousands separator.

Understanding PHP Error Messages

Error messages are an unfortunate fact of life, so you need to understand what they're trying to tell you. The following illustration shows a typical error message.



PHP error messages report the line where PHP discovered a problem. Most newcomers—quite naturally—assume that’s where to look for their mistake. Wrong . . .

Most of the time, PHP is telling you that something unexpected has happened. In other words, the mistake lies *before* that point. The preceding error message means that PHP discovered an echo command where there shouldn’t have been one. (Error messages always prefix PHP elements with `T_`, which stands for token. Just ignore it.)

Instead of worrying what might be wrong with the echo command (probably nothing), start working backward, looking for anything missing, probably a semicolon or closing quote on a previous line.

Sometimes, the message reports the error on the last line of the script. That always means you have omitted a closing curly brace somewhere further up the page.

There are seven main categories of errors, presented here in descending order of importance:

- **Fatal error:** Any HTML output preceding the error will be displayed, but once the error is encountered—as the name suggests—everything else is killed stone dead. A fatal error is normally caused by referring to a nonexistent file or function.
- **Recoverable error:** This type of error occurs only when a particular type of error known as an **exception** is thrown. The error message contains much detail, explaining the cause and location of the problem, but it can be difficult for beginners to understand. To avoid recoverable errors, use `try` and `catch` blocks as described in the “Handling exceptions” section.
- **Parse error:** This means there’s a mistake in your code syntax, such as mismatched quotes or a missing semicolon

or closing brace. It stops the script in its tracks, and it doesn't even allow any HTML output to be displayed.

- **Warning:** This alerts you to a serious problem, such as a missing include file. (Include files are the subject of [Chapter 4](#).) However, the error is not serious enough to prevent the rest of the script from being executed.
- **Deprecated:** This warns you about features that are scheduled to be removed from a future version of PHP. If you see this type of error message, you should seriously consider updating your script, as it could suddenly stop working if your server is upgraded.
- **Strict:** This type of error message warns you about using techniques that are not considered good practice.
- **Notice:** This advises you about relatively minor issues, such as the use of a nondeclared variable. Although this type of error won't stop your page from displaying (and you can turn off the display of notices), you should always try to eliminate them. Any error is a threat to your output.

Why is My Page Blank?

Many beginners are left scratching their heads when they load a PHP page into a browser and see absolutely nothing. There's no error message, just a blank page. This happens when there's a parse error—in other words, a mistake in the code—and the `display_errors` directive in `php.ini` is turned off.

If you followed the advice in the previous chapter, `display_errors` should be enabled in your local testing environment. However, most hosting companies turn off `display_errors`. This is good for security, but it can make it difficult to troubleshoot problems on your remote server. As well as parse errors, a missing include file often causes blank pages.

You can turn on the display of errors for an individual script by adding the following code right at the top of the page:

```
ini_set('display_errors', '1');
```

Put this code on the first line after the opening PHP tag, or in a separate PHP block at the top of the page if the PHP is lower down the page. When you upload

the page and refresh the browser, you should see any error messages generated by PHP.

If you still see a blank page after adding this line of code, it means there's an error in your syntax. Test the page locally with `display_errors` turned on to find out what's causing the problem.

 **Caution** After correcting the error, remove the code that turns on the display of errors. If something else breaks in the script at a later stage, you don't want to expose potential vulnerabilities on your live website.

Handling Exceptions

PHP 5 introduced a new way of handling errors, common to many other programming languages, known as exceptions. When a problem arises, many built-in classes automatically **throw an exception**—or generate a special type of object that contains details of what caused the error and where it arose. You can also throw custom exceptions, using the keyword `throw`, like this:

```
if (error occurs) {  
    throw new Exception('Houston, we have a problem');  
}
```

The string inside the parentheses is used as the error message. Obviously, in a real script, you need to make the message more explicit. When an exception is thrown, you should deal with it in a separate code block called—appropriately enough—**catch**.

When using objects, wrap your main script in a block called `try` and put the error-handling code in a `catch` block. If an exception is thrown, the PHP engine abandons the code in the `try` block and executes only the code in the `catch` block. The advantage is that you can use the `catch` block to redirect the user to an error page rather than displaying an ugly error message onscreen—or a blank screen if the display of error messages is turned off, as it should be on a live website.

 **Note** The `try` and `catch` blocks must always be used as a pair. You can't have one without the other.

During the development stage, you should use the `catch` block to display the error message generated by the exception like this:

```
try {
    // main script goes here
} catch (Exception $e) {
    echo $e->getMessage();
}
```

This produces an error message that's usually much easier to understand than the lengthy message generated by a recoverable error. In the case of the previous problem." Although I advised you earlier to use example, it would output "Houston, we have a descriptive variable names, using `$e` for an exception is a common convention.

 **Tip** Congratulations if you've managed to read this far. You should now have sufficient knowledge to get started. The rest of this chapter goes into greater detail about individual aspects of writing PHP scripts. Rather than plowing straight on, I suggest you take a short break and then move on to the next chapter. Come back to the following reference section when you've gained some practical experience of working with PHP, as it will make much more sense then.

PHP: A Quick Reference

The following sections don't attempt to cover every aspect of PHP syntax. For that, you should refer to the PHP documentation at <http://php.net/manual/en/> or check out a more detailed reference book, such as *Beginning PHP and MySQL: From Novice to Professional, Fourth Edition* by W. Jason Gilmore (Apress, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-4302-3114-1).

Using PHP in an Existing Website

There is no problem mixing .html and .php pages in the same website.

However, PHP code will normally be processed only in files that have the `.php` filename extension, so it's a good idea to give the same extension to all your pages, even if they don't all contain dynamic features. That way, you have the flexibility to add PHP to pages without breaking existing links or losing search engine rankings.

Data Types in PHP

PHP is what's known as a **weakly typed** language. In practice, this means that, unlike some other computer languages (e.g., Java or C#), PHP doesn't care what type of data you store in a variable.

Most of the time, this is very convenient, although you need to be careful with user input. You may expect a user to enter a number in a form, but PHP won't object if it encounters a word instead. Checking user input carefully is one of the major themes of later chapters.

Even though PHP is weakly typed, it uses the following eight data types:

- **Integer:** This is a whole number, such as 1, 25, 42, or 2006. Integers must not contain any commas or other punctuation as thousand separators. You can also use hexadecimal numbers, which should be preceded by `0x` (e.g., `0xFFFFFFF`, `0x0000000`).
- **Floating-point number:** This is a number that contains a decimal point, such as 9.99, 98.6, or 2.1. PHP does not support the use of the comma as the decimal point, as is common in many European countries. You must use a period. Like integers, floating-point numbers must not contain thousand-separators. (This type is also referred to as **float** or **double**.)
- **String:** A string is text of any length. It can be as short as zero characters (an empty string) and has no upper limit.
- **Boolean:** This type has only two values: `true` or `false`. However, PHP treats other values as implicitly true or false. See "The truth according to PHP" later in this chapter.
- **Array:** An array is a variable capable of storing multiple values, although it may contain none at all (an empty array).

Arrays can hold any data type, including other arrays. An array of arrays is called a **multidimensional array**. See “Creating arrays” later in this chapter for details of how to populate an array with values.

- **Object:** An object is a sophisticated data type capable of storing and manipulating values. You’ll learn more about objects in [Chapter 6](#).
- **Resource:** When PHP connects to an external data source, such as a file or database, it stores a reference to it as a resource.
- **NULL:** This is a special data type that indicates that a variable has no value.

An important side effect of PHP’s weak typing is that if you enclose an integer or floating-point number in quotes, PHP automatically converts it from a string to a number, allowing you to perform calculations without the need for any special handling. This is different from JavaScript, and it can have unexpected consequences. When PHP sees the plus sign (+), it assumes you want to perform addition, and thus it tries to convert strings to integers or floating-point numbers, as in the following example (the code is in `data_conversion_01.php` in the `ch03` folder):

```
$fruit = '2 apples';
$veg = ' 2 carrots';
echo $fruit + $veg; // displays 4
```

PHP sees that both `$fruit` and `$veg` begin with a number, so it extracts the number and ignores the rest. However, if the string doesn’t begin with a number, PHP converts it to 0, as shown in this example (the code is in `data_conversion_02.php`):

```
$fruit = '2 apples';
$veg = ' and 2 carrots';
echo $fruit + $veg; // displays 2
```

Weak typing is a mixed blessing. It makes PHP very easy for beginners, but it means you often need to check that a variable contains the correct data type before using it.

Doing Calculations with PHP

PHP is highly adept at working with numbers and can perform a wide variety of calculations, from simple arithmetic to complex math. This reference section covers only the standard arithmetic operators. See <http://php.net/manual/en/book.math.php> for details of the mathematical functions and constants supported by PHP.

 **Note** A **constant** is similar to a variable in that it uses a name to represent a value. However, the value of a constant, once defined, cannot be changed. All PHP predefined constants are in uppercase. Unlike variables, they do not begin with a dollar sign. For example, the constant for π (pi) is M_PI.

Arithmetic Operators

The standard arithmetic operators all work the way you would expect, although some of them look slightly different from those you learned at school. For instance, an asterisk (*) is used as the multiplication sign, and a forward slash (/) is used to indicate division. [Table 3-1](#) shows examples of how the standard arithmetic operators work. To demonstrate their effect, the following variables have been set:

```
$x = 20;  
$y = 10;  
$z = 3;
```

[Table 3-1.](#) Arithmetic operators in PHP

Operation	Operator	Example	Result
Addition	+	\$x + \$y	30
Subtraction	-	\$x - \$y	10
Multiplication	*	\$x * \$y	200
Division	/	\$x / \$y	2
Modulus	%	\$x % \$z	2
Increment (add 1)	++	\$x++	21
Decrement (subtract 1)	--	\$y--	9
Exponentiation	**	\$y**\$z	1000

The modulus operator converts both numbers to integers by stripping the decimal portion before processing and returns the remainder of a division, as follows:

```
5 % 2.5      // result is 1, not 0 (the decimal fraction
is stripped from 2.5)
10 % 2       // result is 0
```

Modulus is useful for working out whether a number is odd or even. `$number % 2` always produces 0 or 1. If the result is 0, there is no remainder, so the number is even.

The increment (++) and decrement (--) operators can come either before or after the variable. When they come before the variable, 1 is added or subtracted before any further calculation is carried out. When they come after, the main calculation is carried out first, and then 1 is either added or subtracted. Since the dollar sign is an integral part of the variable name, the increment and decrement operators go before the dollar sign when used in front:

```
++$x
--$y
```

The exponentiation operator requires PHP 5.6 or later. Prior to PHP 5.6, use the `pow()` function, which takes two arguments: the base number and the exponent. For example, `pow(10, 3)` is equivalent to `10**3`. Both raise 10 to the power of 3.

Determining the Order of Calculations

Calculations in PHP follow the same rules of precedence as standard arithmetic. [Table 3-2](#) lists arithmetic operators in order of precedence, with the highest precedence at the top.

Table 3-2. Precedence of arithmetic operators

Group	Operators	Rule
Parentheses	()	Operations contained within parentheses are evaluated first. If these expressions are nested, the innermost is evaluated foremost.
Exponentiation	$\star \star$	
Increment/decrement	$++$ $--$	
Multiplication and division	\star $/$ $\%$	If an expression contains two or more of these operators, they are evaluated from left to right.
Addition and subtraction	$+$ $-$	If an expression contains two or more of these operators, they are evaluated from left to right.

Combining Calculations and Assignment

PHP offers a shorthand way of performing a calculation on a variable and reassigning the result to the variable through **combined assignment operators**. The main ones are listed in [Table 3-3](#).

Table 3-3. Combined arithmetic assignment operators used in PHP

Operator	Example	Equivalent to
$+=$	<code>\$a += \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a + \$b</code>
$-=$	<code>\$a -= \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a - \$b</code>
$*=$	<code>\$a *= \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a * \$b</code>
$/=$	<code>\$a /= \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a / \$b</code>
$\%=$	<code>\$a \%= \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a \% \$b</code>
$\star \star =$	<code>\$a \star \star = \$b</code>	<code>\$a = \$a \star \star \$b</code>

The combined exponentiation assignment operator ($\star \star =$) is available only in

PHP 5.6 and later.

Adding to an existing string

The same convenient shorthand allows you to add new material to the end of an existing string by combining a period and an equal sign, like this:

```
$hamlet = 'To be';
$hamlet .= ' or not to be';
```

Note that you need to create a space at the beginning of the additional text unless you want both strings to run on without a break. This shorthand, known as the **combined concatenation operator**, is extremely useful when combining many strings, such as is required when building the content of an email message or looping through the results of a database search.

 **Tip** The period in front of the equal sign is easily overlooked when copying code. When you see the same variable repeated at the beginning of a series of statements, it's often a sure sign that you need to use `.=` instead of `=` on its own.

All You Ever Wanted to Know About Quotes—and More

Handling quotes within any computer language—not just PHP—can be fraught with difficulties because computers always take the first matching quote as marking the end of a string. Structured Query Language (SQL)—the language used to communicate with databases—also uses strings. Since your strings may include apostrophes, the combination of single and double quotes isn't enough. Moreover, PHP gives variables and escape sequences (certain characters preceded by a backslash) special treatment inside double quotes. Over the next few pages, I'll unravel this tangle and make sense of it all for you.

How PHP Treats Variables Inside Strings

Choosing whether to use double quotes or single quotes might just seem like a question of personal preference, but there's an important difference in the way that PHP handles them.

- Anything between single quotes is treated literally as text.
- Double quotes act as a signal to process variables and special characters known as **escape sequences**.

In the following example, \$name is assigned a value and then used in a single-quoted string. So \$name is treated like normal text (the code is in `quotes_01.php`):

```
$name = 'Dolly';
echo 'Hello, $name'; // Hello, $name
```

If you replace the single quotes in the second line with double ones (see `quotes_02.php`), \$name is processed and its value is displayed onscreen:

```
$name = 'Dolly';
echo "Hello, $name"; // Hello, Dolly
```

 **Note** In both examples, the string in the first line is in single quotes. What causes the variable to be processed is the fact that it's in a double-quoted string, not how it originally got its value.

Because double quotes are so useful in this way, many people use them all the time. Technically speaking, using double quotes when you don't need to process any variables is inefficient. My preference is to use single quotes unless the string contains variables.

Using Escape Sequences Inside Double Quotes

Double quotes have another important effect: they treat escape sequences in a special way. All escape sequences are formed by placing a backslash in front of a character. Most of them are designed to avoid conflicts with characters that are used with variables, but three of them have special meanings: \n inserts a new line character, \r inserts a carriage return, and \t inserts a tab. [Table 3-4](#) lists

the main escape sequences supported by PHP.

Table 3-4. The main PHP escape sequences

Escape sequence	Character represented in double-quoted string
\"	Double quote
\n	New line
\r	Carriage return
\t	Tab
\\\	Backslash
\\$	Dollar sign
\{	Opening curly brace
\}	Closing curly brace
\[Opening square bracket
\]	Closing square bracket

 **Caution** With the exception of \\, the escape sequences listed in [Table 3-4](#) work only in double-quoted strings. In a single-quoted string, they are treated as a literal backslash followed by the second character. A backslash at the end of the string always needs to be escaped. Otherwise, it's interpreted as escaping the following quotation mark. In a single-quoted string, escape single quotes and apostrophes with a backslash as described in the first half of this chapter.

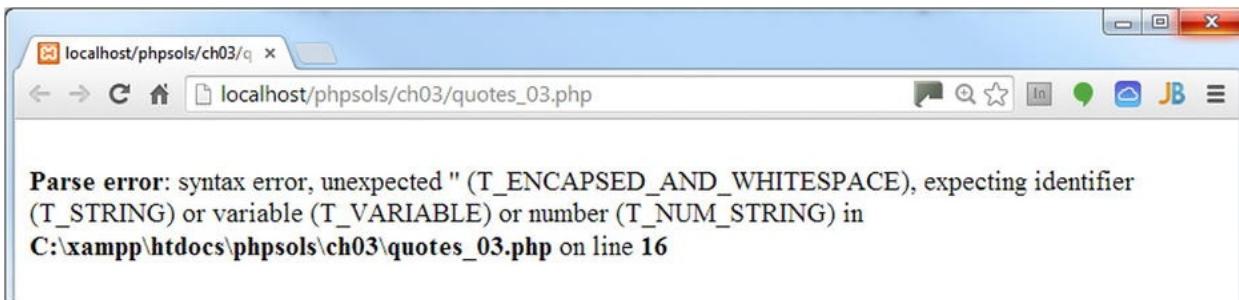
Embedding Associative Array Elements in a String

There's a nasty “gotcha” with associative array elements in a double-quoted string. The following line of code attempts to embed a couple of elements from the \$book associative array found in the first half of this chapter inside a double-quoted string:

```
echo "$book['title'] was written by $book['author'];"
```

It looks OK. The keys of the array elements use single quotes, so there's no mismatch of quotes. Yet, if you load `quotes_03.php` into a browser, you get

this enigmatic error message.



The solution is simple. You need to enclose the associative array variables in curly braces like this (see `quotes_04.php`):

```
echo "{$book['title']} was written by  
{$book['author']}";
```

The values are now displayed correctly, as shown in the following screenshot.



Indexed array elements, such as `$shoppingList[2]`, don't need this special treatment because the array index is a number and is not enclosed in quotes.

Caution Some people try to avoid the problem with associative array elements by removing the quotes from the array key, like this: `$book[title]`. Although it works, removing the quotes from the array key creates an undefined constant, which could result in your code breaking in the future.

Avoiding the Need to Escape Quotes with Heredoc Syntax

Using a backslash to escape one or two quotation marks isn't a great burden, but I frequently see examples of code where backslashes seem to have run riot. It must be difficult to type, and it's certainly difficult to read. Moreover, it's totally unnecessary. The PHP **heredoc syntax** offers a relatively simple method of assigning text to a variable without any special handling of quotes.

 **Note** The name “heredoc” is derived from here-document, a technique used in Unix and Perl programming to pass large amounts of text to a command.

Assigning a string to a variable using heredoc involves the following steps:

1. Type the assignment operator, followed by <<< and an identifier. The identifier can be any combination of letters, numbers, and the underscore, as long as it doesn't begin with a number. The same combination is used later to identify the end of the heredoc.
2. Begin the string on a new line. It can include both single and double quotes. Any variables will be processed in the same way as in a double-quoted string.
3. Place the identifier on a new line after the end of the string. Nothing else should be on the same line, except for a final semicolon. Moreover, the identifier *must* be at the beginning of the line; it *cannot* be indented.

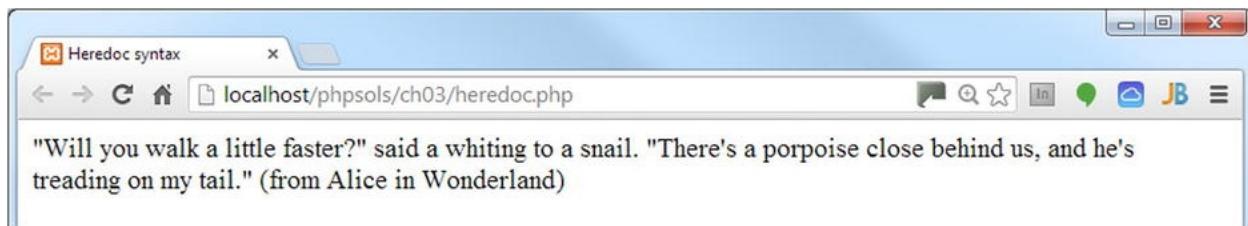
It's a lot easier when you see it in practice. The following simple example can be found in `heredoc . php` in the files for this chapter:

```
$fish = 'whiting';
$book['title'] = 'Alice in Wonderland';
$mockTurtle = <<< Gryphon
"Will you walk a little faster?" said a $fish to
a snail.
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading
on my tail."
(from {$book['title']})
Gryphon;
echo $mockTurtle;
```

In this example, **Gryphon** is the identifier. The string begins on the next line, and *the double quotes are treated as part of the string*. Everything is included until you reach the identifier at the beginning of a new line.

Caution Although heredoc syntax avoids the need to escape quotes, the associative array element `$book['title']` still needs to be enclosed in braces, as described in the previous section.

As you can see from the following screenshot, the heredoc displays the double quotes and processes the `$fish` and `$book['title']` variables.



To achieve the same effect without using the heredoc syntax, you need to add the double quotes and escape them like this:

```
$mockTurtle = "\"Will you walk a little faster?\" said  
a $fish to a snail.  
\\"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's  
treading on my tail.\\" (from  
{$book['title']});
```

The heredoc syntax is mainly of value when you have a long string and/or lots of quotes. It's also useful if you want to assign an XML document or a lengthy section of HTML to a variable.

Note There's a related technique called **nowdoc syntax**, which treats variables in the same way as single quotes—in other words, as literal text. To create a string using nowdoc syntax, enclose the identifier in *single* quotes like this: <<< 'Gryphon'. The closing identifier does not use quotes. See <http://php.net/manual/en/language.types.string.php#language.types.string.syntax.nowdoc>

If you wrap the identifier in double quotes, the string is treated as heredoc syntax.

Creating Arrays

As explained earlier, there are two types of arrays: indexed arrays, which use numbers to identify each element, and associative arrays, which use strings. You can build both types by assigning a value directly to each element. Let's take another look at the `$book` associative array:

```
$book['title'] = 'PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design  
Made Easy, Third Edition';  
$book['author'] = 'David Powers';  
$book['publisher'] = 'Apress';  
$book['ISBN'] = '978-1-4842-0636-2';
```

To build an indexed array the direct way, use numbers instead of strings as the array keys. Indexed arrays are numbered from 0, so to build the `$shoppingList` array depicted in [Figure 3-3](#), you would declare it like this:

```
$shoppingList[0] = 'wine';  
$shoppingList[1] = 'fish';  
$shoppingList[2] = 'bread';  
$shoppingList[3] = 'grapes';  
$shoppingList[4] = 'cheese';
```

Although both are perfectly valid ways of creating arrays, it's a nuisance to have to type out the variable name each time; there are shorter ways of doing it. The syntax is slightly different for each type of array.

Building an Indexed Array

Since PHP 5.4, you have a choice of how to define an array in a single statement. The quick way is to use the shorthand syntax, which is the same as an array literal in JavaScript. You create the array by enclosing a comma-separated list of values between a pair of square brackets, like this:

```
$shoppingList = ['wine', 'fish', 'bread', 'grapes',  
'cheese'];
```

Caution The comma must go outside the quotes, unlike in American typographic practice. For ease of reading, I have inserted a space following each comma, but it's not necessary to do so.

The alternative is to pass a comma-separated list to `array()`, like this:

```
$shoppingList = array('wine', 'fish', 'bread',
'grapes', 'cheese');
```

PHP numbers each array element automatically, beginning from 0, so both methods create exactly the same array as if you had numbered them individually. To add a new element to the end of the array, use a pair of empty square brackets, like this:

```
$shoppingList[] = 'coffee';
```

PHP uses the next number available, so this becomes `$shoppingList[5]`.

Building an Associative Array

Associative arrays use the `=>` operator (an equal sign followed by a greater-than sign) to assign a value to each array key. Using shorthand square-bracket syntax, the structure looks like this:

```
$arrayName = ['key1' => 'element1', 'key2' =>
'element2'];
```

Using `array()` achieves the same outcome:

```
$arrayName = array('key1' => 'element1', 'key2' =>
'element2');
```

So, this is the shorthand way to build the `$book` array:

```
$book = [
    'title'      => 'PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design
Made Easy, Third Edition',
    'author'     => 'David Powers',
```

```
'publisher' => 'Apress',
'ISBN'      => '978-1-4842-0636-2'
];
```

It's not essential to put the opening and closing brackets on separate lines, nor to align the `=>` operators as I have done, but it makes code easier to read and maintain.

Creating an Empty Array

There are two reasons you might want to create an empty array, as follows:

- To create (or **initialize**) an array so that it's ready to have elements added to it inside a loop
- To clear all elements from an existing array

To create an empty array, just use an empty pair of square brackets:

```
$shoppingList = [];
```

Alternatively, use `array()` with nothing between the parentheses, like this:

```
$shoppingList = array();
```

The `$shoppingList` array now contains no elements. If you add a new one using `$shoppingList[]`, it will automatically start numbering again at 0.

Multidimensional Arrays

Array elements can store any data type, including other arrays. For instance, the `$book` array holds details of only one book. It might be more convenient to create an array of arrays—in other words, a multidimensional array—containing details of several books, like this (using square-bracket shorthand):

```
$books = [
    [
        'title'      => 'PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web
Design Made Easy, Third Edition',
```

```

'author'      => 'David Powers',
'publisher'   => 'Apress',
'ISBN'        => '978-1-4842-0636-2'
],
[
    'title'      => 'Beginning PHP and MySQL: From
Beginner to Professional,
                           Fourth Edition',
    'author'     => 'W. Jason Gilmore',
    'publisher'  => 'Apress',
    'ISBN'       => 978-1-4302-3114-1'
]
];

```

This example shows associative arrays nested inside an indexed array, but multidimensional arrays can nest either type. To refer to a specific element, use the key of both arrays; for example:

```
$books[1]['author'] // value is 'W. Jason Gilmore'
```

Working with multidimensional arrays isn't as difficult as it first looks. The secret is to use a loop to get to the nested array. Then you can work with it in the same way as an ordinary array. This is how you handle the results of a database search, which is normally contained in a multidimensional array.

 **Tip** The shorthand syntax works only with PHP 5.4 or later, whereas `array()` works with all versions of PHP. Using `array()` has the marginal advantage of making the structure easier to visualize, but the array literal syntax borrowed from JavaScript involves less typing and is likely to be familiar to most web developers. Use whichever you feel comfortable with.

Using `Print_r()` to Inspect An Array

To inspect the contents of an array during testing, pass the array to `print_r()` like this (see `inspect_array_01.php`):

```
print_r($books);
```

Load `inspect_array_01.php` into a browser to see how `print_r()` outputs the contents of an ordinary array. The following screenshot shows how PHP displays a multidimensional array (the code is in `inspect_array_02.php`). Often, it helps to switch to Source view to inspect the details, as browsers ignore indenting in the underlying output. Alternatively, add HTML `<pre>` tags outside the PHP code block to preserve the indenting.

The screenshot shows two browser windows side-by-side. The top window is titled "Multidimensional array: p..." and displays the output of `print_r()` for a multidimensional array. The array structure is as follows:

```
Array ( [0] => Array ( [title] => PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy, Third Edition [author] => David Powers [publisher] => Apress [ISBN] => 978-1-4842-0636-2 ) [1] => Array ( [title] => Beginning PHP and MySQL: From Novice to Professional, Fourth Edition [author] => W. Jason Gilmore [publisher] => Apress [ISBN] => 978-1-4302-3114-1 ) )
```

The bottom window is titled "view-source:localhost/phpsols/ch03/inspect_array_02.php" and shows the PHP source code for the multidimensional array. The code is:

```
9 | Array
10 | (
11 |   [0] => Array
12 |     (
13 |       [title] => PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy, Third Edition
14 |       [author] => David Powers
15 |       [publisher] => Apress
16 |       [ISBN] => 978-1-4842-0636-2
17 |     )
18 |
19 |   [1] => Array
20 |     (
21 |       [title] => Beginning PHP and MySQL: From Novice to Professional, Fourth Edition
22 |       [author] => W. Jason Gilmore
23 |       [publisher] => Apress
24 |       [ISBN] => 978-1-4302-3114-1
25 |     )
26 |
27 )
```

Tip Always use `print_r()` to inspect arrays; `echo` and `print` don't work. To display the contents of an array in a webpage, use a `foreach` loop, as described later in this chapter.

The Truth According to PHP

Decision-making in PHP conditional statements is based on the mutually exclusive Boolean values of `true` and `false`. If the condition equates to

`true`, the code within the conditional block is executed. If `false`, it's ignored. Whether a condition is `true` or `false` is determined in one of these ways:

- A variable set explicitly to one of the Boolean values
- A value PHP interprets implicitly as `true` or `false`
- The comparison of two non-Boolean values

Explicit Boolean Values

If a variable is assigned the value `true` or `false` and is used in a conditional statement, the decision is based on that value. The keywords `true` and `false` are case-insensitive and must not be enclosed in quotes; for example:

```
$OK = false;  
if ($OK) {  
    // do something  
}
```

The code inside the conditional statement won't be executed, because `$OK` is `false`.

Implicit Boolean (“Truthy” and “Falsy”) Values

Using implicit Boolean values provides a convenient shorthand, although it has the disadvantage—at least to beginners—of being less clear. Implicit Boolean values—or “truthy” and “falsy” values, as they’re sometimes called—rely on PHP’s relatively narrow definition of what it regards as `false`, namely:

- The case-insensitive keywords `false` and `null`
- Zero as an integer (`0`), a floating-point number (`0.0`), or a string (`'0'` or `"0"`)
- An empty string (single or double quotes with no space between them)
- An empty array
- SimpleXML objects created from empty tags

Everything else is `true`.

Tip This explains why PHP interprets "false" (in quotes) as `true`. It's a string, and all strings—except an empty one—are `true`.

Making Decisions by Comparing Two Values

Most `true/false` decisions are based on a comparison of two values using **comparison operators**. [Table 3-5](#) lists the comparison operators used in PHP.

Table 3-5. PHP comparison operators used for decision-making

Symbol	Name	Example	Result
<code>==</code>	Equality	<code>\$a == \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> and <code>\$b</code> are equal; otherwise, returns <code>false</code>
<code>!=</code>	Inequality	<code>\$a != \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> and <code>\$b</code> are different; otherwise, returns <code>false</code>
<code>==</code>	Identical	<code>\$a === \$b</code>	Determines whether <code>\$a</code> and <code>\$b</code> are identical. They must not only have the same value but also must be of the same data type (e.g., both integers).
<code>!==</code>	Not identical	<code>\$a !== \$b</code>	Determines whether <code>\$a</code> and <code>\$b</code> are not identical (according to the same criteria as the previous operator)
<code>></code>	Greater than	<code>\$a > \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> is greater than <code>\$b</code>
<code>>=</code>	Greater than or equal to	<code>\$a >= \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> is greater than or equal to <code>\$b</code>
<code><</code>	Less than	<code>\$a < \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> is less than <code>\$b</code>
<code><=</code>	Less than or equal to	<code>\$a <= \$b</code>	Returns <code>true</code> if <code>\$a</code> is less than or equal to <code>\$b</code>

Caution A single equal sign doesn't perform comparisons; it assigns a value. When comparing two values, you must always use the equality operator (`==`), the identical operator (`==`), or their negative equivalents (`!=` and `!==`).

Testing More Than One Condition

Frequently, comparing two values is not enough. PHP allows you to set a series of conditions using **logical operators** to specify whether all or just some need to be fulfilled.

The most important logical operators in PHP are listed in [Table 3-6](#). The logical Not operator applies to individual conditions rather than to a series.

Table 3-6. The main logical operators used for decision-making in PHP

Symbol	Name	Example	Result
&&	And	<code>\$a && \$b</code>	Equates to true if both <code>\$a</code> and <code>\$b</code> are true
	Or	<code>\$a \$b</code>	Equates to true if either <code>\$a</code> or <code>\$b</code> is true; otherwise, false
!	Not	<code>!\$a</code>	Equates to true if <code>\$a</code> is <i>not</i> true

Technically speaking, there is no limit to the number of conditions that can be tested. Each condition is considered in turn from left to right, and as soon as a defining point is reached, no further testing is carried out. When using `&&`, every condition must be fulfilled, so testing stops as soon as one turns out to be `false`. Similarly, when using `||`, only one condition needs to be fulfilled, so testing stops as soon as one turns out to be `true`.

```
$a = 10;  
$b = 25;  
if ($a > 5 && $b > 20) // returns true  
if ($a > 5 || $b > 30) // returns true, $b never  
tested
```

You should always design your tests to provide the speediest result. If all conditions must be met, evaluate the one most likely to fail first. If only one condition needs to be met, evaluate the one most likely to succeed first. If a set of conditions needs to be considered as a group, enclose them in parentheses, as follows:

```
if ((($a > 5 && $a < 8) || ($b > 20 && $b < 40))
```

 **Note** PHP also uses `AND` in place of `&&` and `OR` in place of `||`. However, they aren't exact equivalents. To avoid problems, it's advisable to stick with `&&` and `||`.

Using the Switch Statement for Decision Chains

The **switch** statement offers an alternative to **if . . . else** for decision making. The basic structure looks like this:

```
switch(variable being tested) {  
    case value1:  
        statements to be executed  
        break;  
    case value2:  
        statements to be executed  
        break;  
    default:  
        statements to be executed  
}
```

The **case** keyword indicates possible matching values for the variable passed to **switch()**. Each alternative value must be preceded by **case** and followed by a colon. When a match is made, every subsequent line of code is executed until the **break** or **return** keyword is encountered, at which point the **switch** statement comes to an end. A simple example follows:

```
switch($myVar) {  
    case 1:  
        echo '$myVar is 1';  
        break;  
    case 'apple':  
    case 'orange':  
        echo '$myVar is a fruit';  
        break;  
    default:  
        echo '$myVar is neither 1 nor a fruit';  
}
```

The main points to note about **switch** are as follows:

- The expression following the **case** keyword is normally a number or a string. You can't use a complex data type like an array or object.
- To use comparison operators with **case**, you must repeat the variable being tested. So **case > 100:** won't work, but **case \$myVar > 100:** will.

- Each block of statements should normally end with `break` or `return` unless you specifically want to continue executing code within the `switch` statement.
- You can group several instances of the `case` keyword together to apply the same block of code to all of them.
- If no match is made, any statements following the `default` keyword are executed. If no default has been set, the `switch` statement exits silently and continues with the next block of code.

Using the Ternary Operator

The **ternary operator** (`? :`) is a shorthand method of representing a conditional statement. Its name comes from the fact that it normally uses three operands. The basic syntax looks like this:

```
condition ? value if true : value if false;
```

Here is an example of it in use:

```
$age = 17;
$fareType = $age >= 16 ? 'adult' : 'child';
```

The second line tests the value of `$age`. If it's greater than or equal to 16, `$fareType` is set to `adult`, otherwise `$fareType` is set to `child`. The equivalent code using `if . . . else` looks like this:

```
if ($age >= 16) {
    $fareType = 'adult';
} else {
    $fareType = 'child';
}
```

The `if . . . else` version is easier to read, but the conditional operator is more compact. Most beginners hate this shorthand, but once you get to know it, you'll realize how convenient it can be.

You can leave out the value between the question mark and the colon. This has the effect of assigning the value of the condition to the variable if the condition is `true`. The preceding example could be rewritten like this:

```
$age = 17;  
$adult = $age >= 16 ?: false; // $adult is true
```

In this case, the expression before the question mark is a comparison, so it can equate to only `true` or `false`. However, if the expression before the question mark is “truthy” (implicitly true), the value itself is returned. For example:

```
$age = 17;  
$years = $age ?: 'unknown'; // $years is 17
```

 **Note** Omitting the value between the question mark and the colon is a specialized use of the ternary operator. It is mentioned here only to alert you to its meaning if you come across it elsewhere.

Creating Loops

A **loop** is a section of code that is repeated until a certain condition is met. Loops are often controlled by setting a variable that counts the number of iterations. By increasing the variable by one each time, the loop comes to a halt when the variable gets to a preset number. Loops are also controlled by running through each item of an array. When there are no more items to process, the loop stops. Loops frequently contain conditional statements, so although they’re very simple in structure, they can be used to create code that processes data in often sophisticated ways.

Loops Using While and Do . . . While

The simplest type of loop is called a `while` loop. Its basic structure looks like this:

```
while (condition is true) {  
    do something  
}
```

The following code displays every number from 1 through 100 in a browser

(you can test it in `while.php` in the files for this chapter). It begins by setting a variable (`$i`) to 1 and then uses the variable as a counter to control the loop, as well as displays the current number onscreen.

```
$i = 1; // set counter
while ($i <= 100) {
    echo "$i<br>";
    $i++; // increase counter by 1
}
```

Tip In the first half of this chapter, I warned against using variables with cryptic names. However, using `$i` as a counter is a widely accepted convention. If `$i` is already in use, the normal practice is to use `$j` or `$k` as counters.

A variation of the `while` loop uses the keyword `do` and follows this basic pattern:

```
do {
    code to be executed
} while (condition to be tested);
```

The difference between a `do . . . while` loop and a `while` loop is that the code within the `do` block is executed at least once, even if the condition is never true. The following code (in `dowhile.php`) displays the value of `$i` once, even though it's greater than the maximum expected.

```
$i = 1000;
do {
    echo "$i<br>";
    $i++; // increase counter by 1
} while ($i <= 100);
```

The danger with `while` and `do . . . while` loops is forgetting to set a condition that brings the loop to an end or setting an impossible condition. This is known as an **infinite loop** that either freezes your computer or causes the browser to crash.

The Versatile for Loop

The `for` loop is less prone to generating an infinite loop because you are required to declare all the conditions of the loop in the first line. The `for` loop uses the following basic pattern:

```
for (initialize loop; condition; code to run after each iteration) {  
    code to be executed  
}
```

The following code does exactly the same as the previous `while` loop, displaying every number from 1 to 100 (see `forloop.php`):

```
for ($i = 1; $i <= 100; $i++) {  
    echo "$i<br>";  
}
```

The three expressions inside the parentheses control the action of the loop (note that they are separated by semicolons, not commas):

- The first expression is executed before the loop starts. In this case, it sets the initial value of the counter variable `$i` to 1.
- The second expression sets the condition that determines how long the loop should continue to run. This can be a fixed number, a variable, or an expression that calculates a value.
- The third expression is executed at the end of each iteration of the loop. In this case, it increases `$i` by 1, but there is nothing stopping you from using bigger increments. For instance, replacing `$i++` with `$i+=10` in this example would display 1, 11, 21, 31, and so on.

Looping Through Arrays and Objects with `Foreach`

The final type of loop in PHP is used with arrays and objects. It takes two forms, both of which use temporary variables to handle each element. If you only need to do something with the element's value, the `foreach` loop takes the following form:

```
foreach (variable_name as element) {  
    do something with element  
}
```

The following example loops through the `$shoppingList` array and displays the name of each item (the code is in `foreach_01.php`):

```
$shoppingList = ['wine', 'fish', 'bread', 'grapes',  
'cheese'];  
foreach ($shoppingList as $item) {  
    echo $item.'  
>';  
}
```

Caution The `foreach` keyword is one word. Inserting a space between `for` and `each` doesn't work.

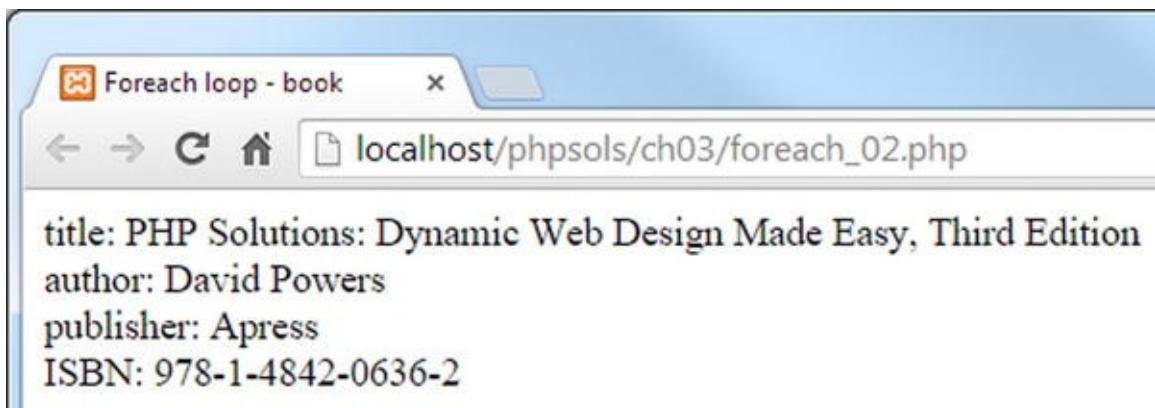
Although the preceding example uses an indexed array, you can also use the simple form of the `foreach` loop with an associative array.

The alternative form of the `foreach` loop gives access to both the key and the value of each element. It takes this slightly different form:

```
foreach (variable_name as key => value) {  
    do something with key and value  
}
```

This next example uses the `$book` associative array from the “Creating arrays” section earlier in this chapter and incorporates the key and value of each element into a simple string, as shown in the following screenshot (see `foreach_02.php`):

```
foreach ($book as $key => $value) {  
    echo "$key: $value  
";  
}
```



Note Apart from arrays, the main use of a `foreach` loop is with a special type of object known as an **iterator**. You'll see how to use iterators in [Chapter 7](#).

Breaking Out Of a Loop

To bring a loop prematurely to an end when a certain condition is met, insert the `break` keyword inside a conditional statement. As soon as the script encounters `break`, it will exit the loop.

To skip the code in a loop when a certain condition is met, use the `continue` keyword. Instead of exiting, it returns to the top of the loop and deals with the next element. For example, the following loop skips the current element if `$photo` has no value:

```
foreach ($photos as $photo) {  
    if (empty($photo)) continue;  
    // code to display a photo  
}
```

Modularizing Code with Functions

Functions offer a convenient way of running frequently performed operations. In addition to the large number of built-in functions, PHP lets you create your own. The advantages are that you write the code only once, rather than needing to retype it everywhere you need it. This not only speeds up development but also makes your code easier to read and maintain. If there's a problem with the code in your function, you can update it in just one place rather than hunting through

your entire site. Moreover, functions usually speed up the processing of your pages.

Building your own functions in PHP is easy. You simply wrap a block of code in a pair of curly braces and use the `function` keyword to name the new function. The function name is always followed by a pair of parentheses. The following—admittedly trivial—example demonstrates the basic structure of a custom-built function (see `functions_01.php` in the files for this chapter):

```
function sayHi() {  
    echo 'Hi!';  
}
```

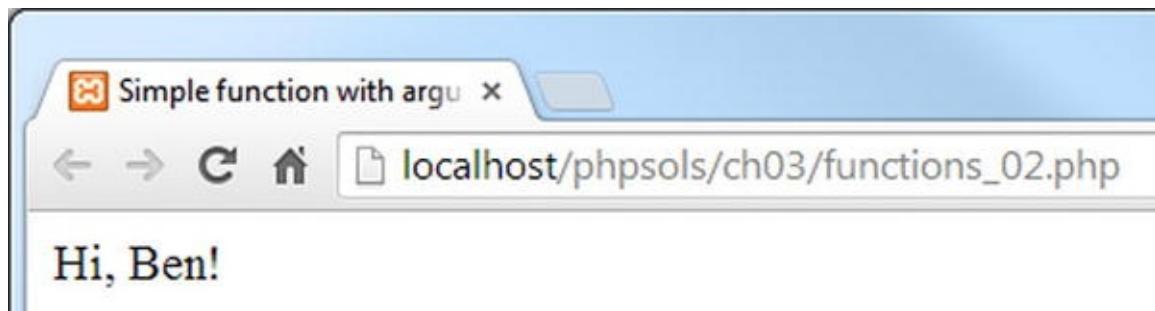
Simply putting `sayHi()`; in a PHP code block results in **Hi!** being displayed onscreen. This type of function is like a drone: it always performs exactly the same operation. For functions to be responsive to circumstances, you need to pass values to them as arguments.

Passing Values to Functions

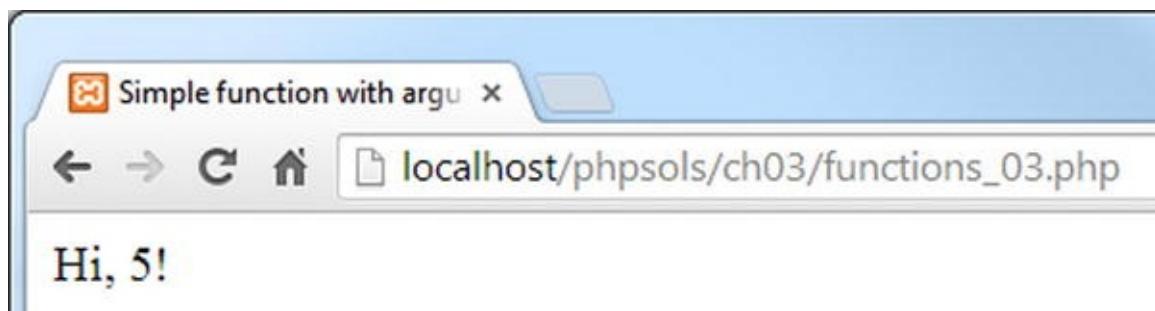
Let's say you want to adapt the `sayHi()` function so that it displays someone's name. You do this by inserting a variable between the parentheses in the function declaration. The same variable is then used inside the function to display whatever value is passed to the function. To pass more than one argument to a function, separate the variables with commas inside the opening parentheses. This is what the revised function looks like (see `functions_02.php`):

```
function sayHi($name) {  
    echo "Hi, $name!";  
}
```

You can now use this function inside a page to display the value of any variable passed to `sayHi()`. For instance, if you have an online form that saves someone's name in a variable called `$visitor`, and Ben visits your site, you can give him the sort of personal greeting shown in the following screenshot by putting `sayHi($visitor)`; in your page.



A downside of PHP's weak typing is that if Ben is being particularly uncooperative, he might type **5** into the form instead of his name, giving you not quite the type of high five you might have been expecting.



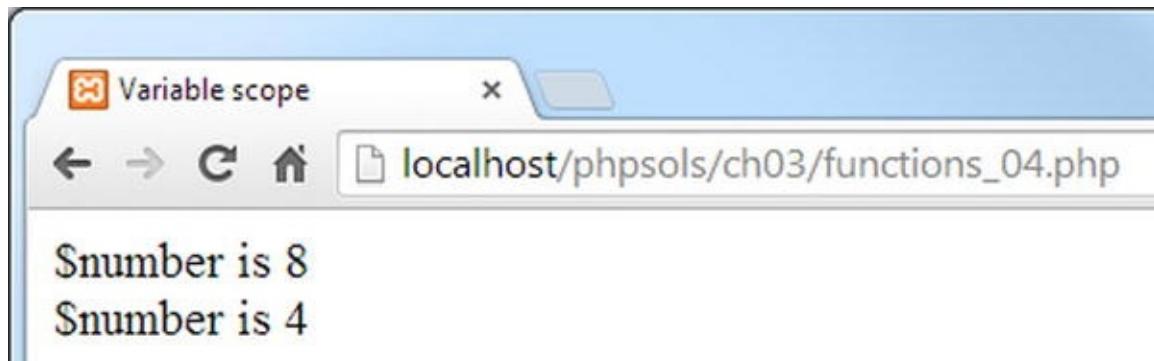
This is why you should check user input before using it in any critical situation.

Variable Scope—Functions as Black Boxes

It's also important to understand that functions create a separate environment that is rather like a black box. Normally what goes on inside the function has no impact on the rest of the script, unless it returns a value, as described in the next section. Variables inside a function remain exclusive to the function. This example should illustrate the point (see `functions_04.php`):

```
function doubleIt($number) {  
    $number *= 2;  
    echo '$number is ' . $number . '<br>';  
}  
$number = 4;  
doubleIt($number);  
echo '$number is ' . $number;
```

The first four lines define a function called `doubleIt()`, which takes a number, doubles it, and displays it onscreen. The rest of the script assigns the value 4 to `$number`. Then it passes `$number` as an argument to `doubleit()`. The function processes `$number` and displays 8. After the function comes to an end, `$number` is displayed onscreen by `echo`. This time, it's 4 and not 8, as shown in the following screenshot:



This demonstrates that `$number` in the main script is totally unrelated to the variable with the same name inside the function. This is known as the **scope** of the variable. Even if the value of the variable changes inside a function, variables with the same name outside are not affected. To avoid confusion, it's a good idea to use variable names in the rest of your script that are different from those used inside functions. This isn't always possible, so it's useful to know that functions work like little black boxes and don't normally have any direct impact on the values of variables in the rest of the script.

Another aspect of variable scope is that a function cannot normally access values in the outer script unless they're passed to the function as arguments.

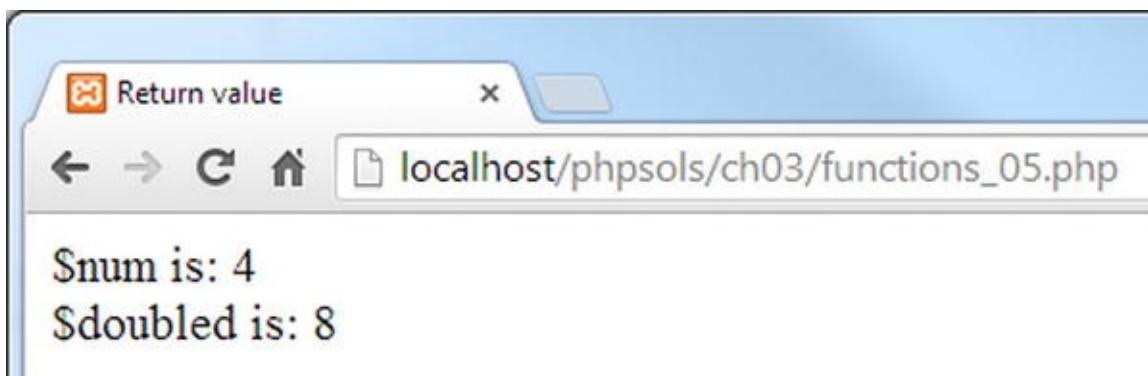
Note PHP superglobal variables, such as `$_POST` and `$_GET`, are not affected by variable scope. They're always available, which is why they're called superglobal.

Returning Values from Functions

There's more than one way to get a function to change the value of a variable passed to it as an argument, but the most important method is to use the `return` keyword and to assign the result either to the same variable or to another one.

This can be demonstrated by amending the `doubleIt()` function like this (the code is in `functions_05.php`):

```
function doubleIt($number) {
    return $number *= 2;
}
$num = 4;
$doubled = doubleIt($num);
echo '$num is: ' . $num . '<br>';
echo '$doubled is: ' . $doubled;
```



This time, I have used different names for the variables to avoid confusing them. I have also assigned the result of `doubleIt($num)` to a new variable. The benefit of doing this is that both the original value and the result of the calculation are now available. You won't always want to keep the original value, but it can be very useful at times.

Passing by Reference—Changing the Value of an Argument

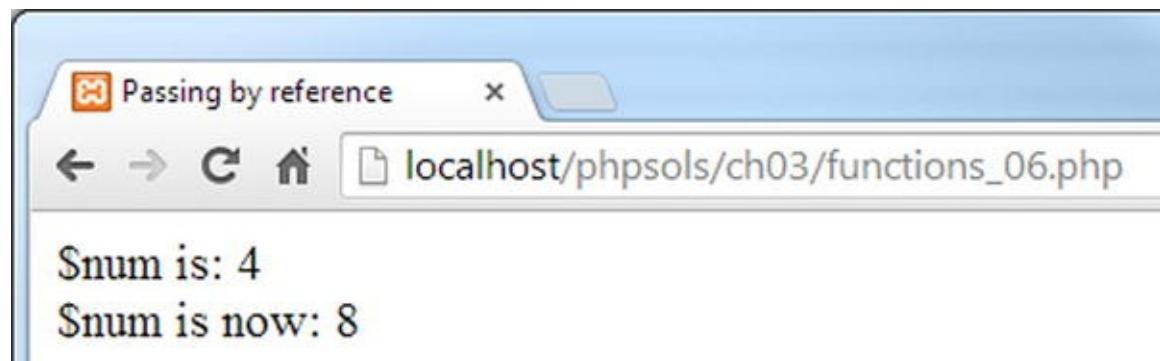
Although functions don't normally change the value of variables passed to them as arguments, there are occasions when you do want to change the original value rather than capture a return value. To do so, when defining the function, you prefix the parameter you want to change with an ampersand, like this:

```
function doubleIt(&$number) {
    $number *= 2;
}
```

Notice that this version of the `doubleIt()` function doesn't echo the value of `$number`, nor does it return the value of the calculation. Because the parameter between the parentheses is prefixed by an ampersand, the original value of a variable passed as an argument to the function will be changed. This is known as **passing by reference**.

The following code (found in `functions_06.php`) demonstrates the effect:

```
$num = 4;  
echo '$num is: ' . $num . '<br>';  
doubleIt($num);  
echo '$num is now: ' . $num;
```



The ampersand is used only in the function definition, not when the function is invoked.

Note Generally speaking, it's not a good idea to use functions to change the original values of variables passed to them as arguments because there can be unexpected consequences if the variable is used elsewhere in a script. However, there are situations in which it makes a lot of sense to do this. For example, the built-in array-sorting functions use pass by reference to affect the original array.

Where to Locate Custom-Built Functions

If your custom-built function is found on the same page it's being used, it doesn't matter where you declare the function; it can be either before or after it's used. It's a good idea, however, to store functions together, either at the top or the bottom of a page. This makes them easier to find and maintain.

Functions that are used in more than one page are best stored in an external file that is included in each page. Including external files with `include` and `require` is covered in detail in the next chapter. When functions are stored in external files, you must include the external file *before* calling any of its functions.

Creating New Variables Dynamically

PHP supports the creation of what's known as a **variable variable**. Although that looks like a typographical error, it's not. Simply put, a variable variable creates a new variable that derives its name from an existing variable. This concept can be difficult to understand, but the following examples should clarify the situation (the code is in `variable_variables.php`).

The following statement assigns the string "city" to a variable called `$location`:

```
$location = 'city';
```

You create a variable variable by using *two* dollar signs, like this:

```
$$location = 'London';
```

The variable variable takes the value of the original variable as its name. In other words, `$$location` is the same as `$city`.

```
echo $city; // London
```

Although this demonstrates how variable variables work, it's not a very practical example. So let's consider a situation that creates new variables dynamically. Let's say you have an associative array like this:

```
$fields = [
    'name'      => 'David',
    'email'     => 'david@example.com',
    'comments'  => "What's a variable variable?"
];
```

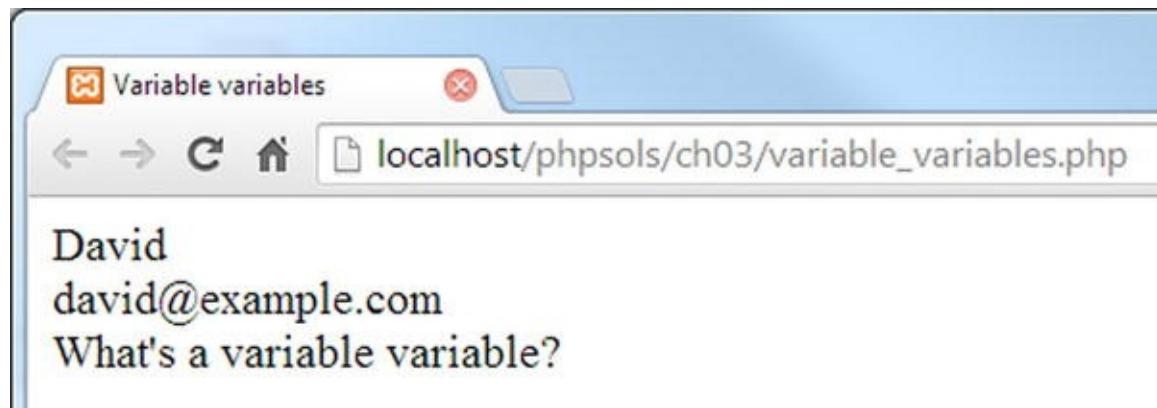
To get the value of an array element, you would use the name of its key as a string in square brackets after the array variable, like this:

```
echo $fields['name']; // David
```

Instead of using this syntax, you could use a `foreach` loop to generate `$name`, `$email`, and `$comments` variables dynamically as variable variables, as follows:

```
foreach ($fields as $key => $value) {  
    $$key = $value;  
}  
echo $name . '<br>';  
echo $email . '<br>';  
echo $comments;
```

This produces the following output:



Inside the loop, `$$key` is a variable variable that creates a new variable based on the value of `$key`. The loop also assigns `$value` to `$$key`. The first time the loop runs, `$key` is “name” and `$value` is “David.” Thus it creates a variable called `$name` with the value “David.” As the loop continues to run, `$$key` creates new variables called `$email` and `$comments`.

You’ll see this technique used in the mail-processing script in [Chapter 5](#).

Tip To indicate that the double \$ is intentional, I like to enclose the variable being used to create the variable variable in curly braces like this: `$$key`. The braces are purely optional, but make the code easier to read.

PHP Quick Checklist

This chapter contains a lot of information that is impossible to absorb in one sitting, but hopefully the first half has given you a broad overview of how PHP works. The second half fills in a lot of essential details that you can refer to as you progress through this book. Here's a reminder of some of the main points:

- Always give PHP pages the correct filename extension, normally `.php`.
- Enclose all PHP code between the correct tags: `<?php` and `?>`.
- Avoid the short form of the opening tag: `<?`. Using `<?php` is more reliable.
- It's recommended to omit the closing PHP tag in files that contain only PHP code.
- PHP variables begin with `$` followed by a letter or the underscore character.
- Choose meaningful variable names and remember they're case-sensitive.
- Use comments to remind you what your script does.
- Remember that numbers don't require quotes, but strings (text) do.
- You can use either single or double quotes, but the outer pair must match.
- Use a backslash to escape quotes of the same type inside a string.
- To store related items together, use an array.
- Use conditional statements, such as `if` and `if . . . else`, for decision making.
- Simplify repetitive tasks with loops.
- Use functions to perform preset tasks.

- Display PHP output with `echo` or `print`.
- Inspect the content of arrays with `print_r()`.
- With most error messages, work *backward* from the position indicated.
- Keep smiling—and remember that PHP is *not* difficult.

CHAPTER 4



Lightening Your Workload with Includes

The ability to include the contents of one file inside another is one of the most powerful features of PHP. It's also one of the easiest to implement.

Most pages in a website share common elements, such as a header, footer, and navigation menu. You can alter the look of those elements throughout the site by changing the style rules in an external style sheet. But CSS has only a limited ability to change the content of page elements. If you want to add a new item to your menu, you need to edit the HTML for every page that displays it. Web-authoring tools, such as Dreamweaver, have templating systems that automatically update all pages connected to a master file, but you would still need to upload all the files to your remote server.

That's not necessary with PHP, which supports server-side includes (SSI). A **server-side include** is an external file which contains dynamic code or HTML (or both) that you want to incorporate into multiple pages. PHP merges the content into each webpage on the server. Because each page uses the same external file, you can update a menu or other common element by editing and uploading a single file—a great timesaver.

As you work through this chapter, you'll learn how PHP includes work, where PHP looks for include files, and how to prevent error messages when an include file can't be found. In addition, you'll learn to do some cool tricks with PHP, such as creating a random image generator.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Understanding the different include commands
- Telling PHP where to find your include files

- Using PHP includes for common page elements
- Protecting sensitive information in include files
- Automating a “you are here” menu link
- Generating a page’s title from its filename
- Automatically updating a copyright notice
- Displaying random images complete with captions
- Handling errors with include files
- Changing your web server’s `include_path`

Figure 4-1 shows how four elements of a page benefit from a little PHP magic with include files.

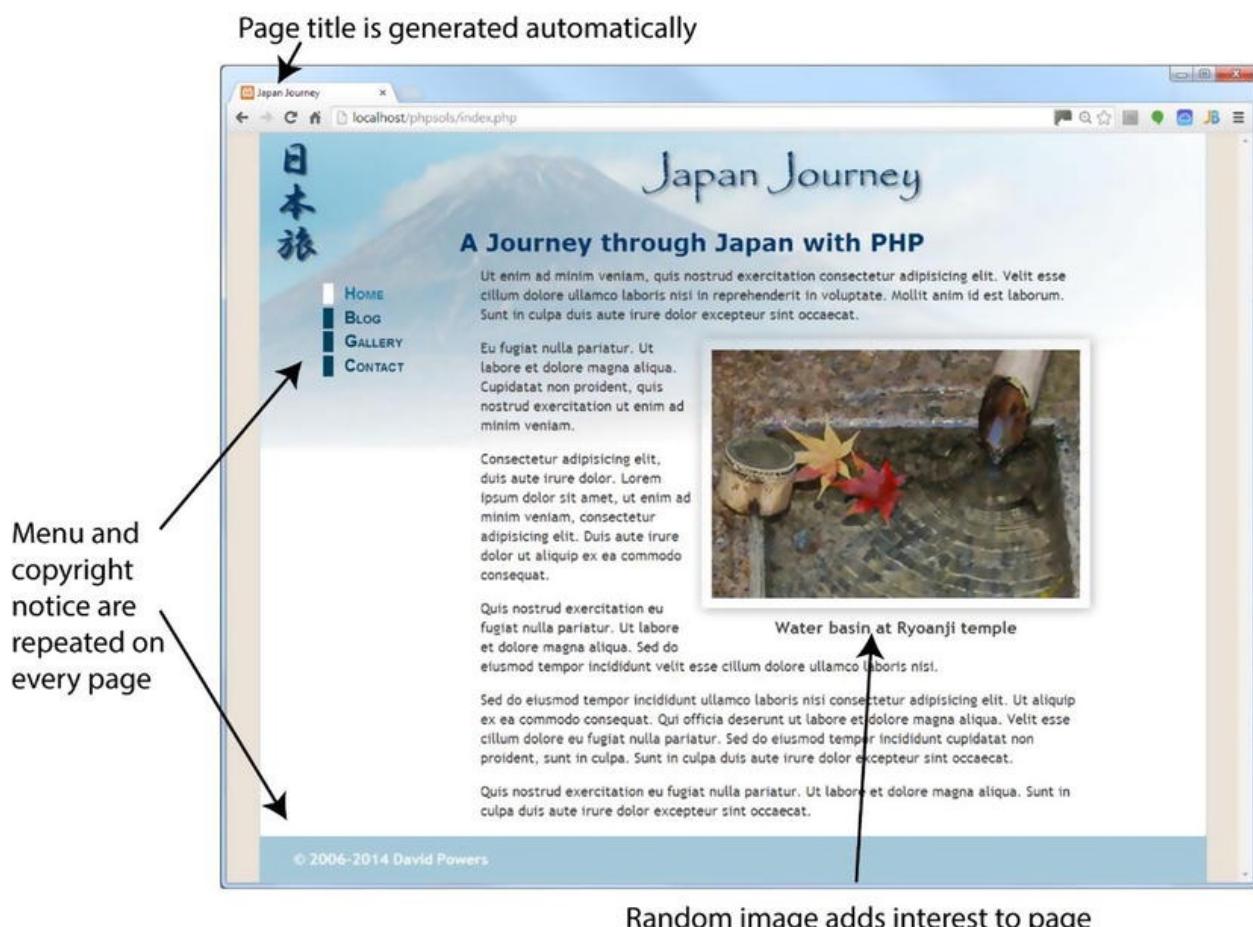


Figure 4-1. Identifying elements of a static webpage that could be improved with PHP

The menu and copyright notice appear on each page. By turning them into include files, you can make changes to just one page and see them propagate throughout the site. With PHP's conditional logic, you can also get the menu to display the correct style to indicate which page the visitor is currently on. Similar PHP wizardry automatically changes the date on the copyright notice and the text in the page title. PHP can also add variety by displaying a random image and caption. The images don't need to be the same size; a PHP function inserts the correct `width` and `height` attributes in the `` tag.

Including Code from External Files

The ability to include code from other files is a core part of PHP. All that's necessary is to use one of PHP's include commands and tell the server where to find the file.

Introducing the PHP Include Commands

PHP has four commands that can be used to include code from an external file, namely:

- `include`
- `include_once`
- `require`
- `require_once`

They all do basically the same thing, so why have four? The fundamental difference is that `include` attempts to continue processing a script, even if the external file is missing, whereas `require` is used in the sense of mandatory: if the file is missing, the PHP engine stops processing and throws a fatal error. In practical terms, this means you should use `include` if your page would remain usable even without the contents of the external file. Use `require` if the page depends on the external file.

The other two commands, `include_once` and `require_once`, work the same way, but they prevent the same file from being included more than

once in a page. This is particularly important when including files that define functions or classes. Attempting to define a function or class more than once in a script triggers a fatal error. So, using `include_once` or `require_once` ensures that functions and classes are defined only once, even if the script tries to include the external file more than once, as might happen if the commands are in conditional statements.

Tip Use `include` for external files that aren't mission critical and `require_once` for files that define functions and classes.

Where PHP Looks for Include Files

To include an external file, use one of the four include commands followed by the file path as a string—in other words, the file path must be in quotes (single or double, it doesn't matter). The file path can be either absolute or relative to the current document. For example, any of the following will work (as long as the target file exists):

```
include 'includes/menu.php';
include 'C:/xampp/htdocs/phpsols/includes/menu.php';
include
'/Applications/MAMP/htdocs/phpsols/includes/menu.php';
```

Note PHP accepts forward slashes in Windows file paths.

You can optionally use parentheses with the include commands, so the following would also work:

```
include('includes/menu.php');
include('C:/xampp/htdocs/phpsols/includes/menu.php');
include('/Applications/MAMP/htdocs/phpsols/includes/me
```

When using a relative file path, it's recommended to use `.` to indicate that the path begins in the current folder. Thus, it's more efficient to rewrite the first example like this:

```
include './includes/menu.php'; // path begins in current folder
```

What *doesn't* work is using a file path relative to the site root, like this:

```
include '/includes/menu.php'; // THIS WILL NOT WORK
```

PHP also looks in the `include_path` as defined in your PHP configuration. I'll return to this subject later in this chapter. Before that, let's put PHP includes to practical use.

PHP Solution 4-1: Moving the Menu and Footer to Include Files

Let's convert the page shown in [Figure 4-1](#) to use include files. Because the menu and footer appear on every page of the Japan Journey site, they're prime candidates for include files. [Listing 4-1](#) shows the code for the body of the page with the menu and footer highlighted in bold.

[Listing 4-1](#). The static version of index.php

```
<header>
    <h1>Japan Journey</h1>
</header>
<div id="wrapper">
    <ul id="nav">
        <li><a href="index.php" id="here">Home</a></li>
        <li><a href="blog.php">Journal</a></li>
        <li><a href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
        <li><a href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
    </ul>
    <main>
        <h2>A journey through Japan with PHP</h2>
        <p>One of the benefits of using PHP . . .</p>
        <figure>
            
            <figcaption>Water basin at Ryoanji
```

```

temple</figcaption>
    </figure>
    <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud . . .
</p>
    <p>Eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Ut labore et
dolore . . .</p>
    <p>Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ullamco . .
.</p>
</main>
<footer>
    <p>&copy; 2006&ndash;2014 David Powers</p>
</footer>
</div>

```

1. Copy `index_01.php` from the `ch04` folder to the `phpsol`s site root and rename it `index.php`. If you are using a program like Dreamweaver that offers to update the page links, don't update them. The relative links in the download file are correct. Check that the CSS and images are displaying properly by loading `index.php` into a browser. It should look the same as [Figure 4-1](#).
2. Copy `blog.php`, `gallery.php`, and `contact.php` from the `ch04` folder to your site root folder. These pages won't display correctly in a browser yet because the necessary include files still haven't been created. That'll soon change.
3. In `index.php`, highlight the `nav` unordered list as shown in bold in [Listing 4-1](#), then cut (Ctrl+X/Cmd+X) it to your computer clipboard.
4. Create a new file called `menu.php` in the `includes` folder. Remove any code inserted by your editing program; the file must be completely blank.
5. Paste (Ctrl+V/Cmd+V) the code from your clipboard into `menu.php` and save the file. The contents of `menu.php` should look like this:

```
<ul id="nav">
```

```
<li><a href="index.php"
id="here">Home</a></li>
<li><a
href="blog.php">Journal</a></li>
<li><a
href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
<li><a
href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
</ul>
```

Don't worry that your new file doesn't have a DOCTYPE declaration or any `<html>`, `<head>`, or `<body>` tags. The other pages that include the contents of this file will supply those elements.

6. Open `index.php` and insert the following in the space left by the `nav` unordered list:

```
<?php require './includes/menu.php'; ?>
```

This uses a document-relative path to `menu.php`. Using `./` at the beginning of the path is more efficient because it explicitly indicates that the path starts in the current folder.

Tip I'm using the `require` command because the navigation menu is mission critical. Without it, there would be no way to navigate around the site.

7. Save `index.php` and load the page into a browser. It should look exactly the same as before. Although the menu and the rest of the page are coming from different files, PHP merges them before sending any output to the browser.

Note Don't forget that PHP code needs to be processed by a web server. If you have stored your files in a subfolder of your server's document root called

`phpsols`, you should access `index.php` using the URL `http://localhost/phpsols/index.php`. See “Where to locate your PHP files (Windows & Mac)” in [Chapter 2](#) if you need help finding the server’s document root.

8. Do the same with the `footer`. Cut the lines highlighted in bold in [Listing 4-1](#) and paste them into a blank file called `footer.php` in the `includes` folder. Then insert the command to include the new file in the gap left by the `<footer>`:

```
<?php include './includes/footer.php';  
?>
```

This time, I’ve used `include` rather than `require`. The `<footer>` is an important part of the page, but the site remains usable if the include file can’t be found.

9. Save all pages and reload `index.php` in your browser. Again, it should look identical to the original page. If you navigate to other pages in the site, the menu and footer should appear on every page. The code in the include files is now serving all pages.
10. To prove that the menu is being drawn from a single file, change the text in the **Journal** link in `menu.php`, like this:

```
<li><a href="blog.php">Blog</a></li>
```

11. Save `menu.php` and reload the site. The change is reflected on all pages. You can check your code against `index_02.php`, `menu_01.php`, and `footer_01.php` in the `ch04` folder.

As [Figure 4-2](#) shows, there’s a problem with the code at the moment. Even when you navigate away from the home page, the style that indicates which page you’re on doesn’t change (it’s controlled by the `here` ID in the `<a>` tag).



Figure 4-2. The current page indicator still points to the Home page

Fortunately, that's easily fixed with a little PHP conditional logic. Before doing so, let's take a look at how the web server and the PHP engine handle include files.

Choosing the Right Filename Extension for Includes

As you have just seen, an include file can contain raw HTML. When the PHP engine encounters an include command, it stops processing PHP at the beginning of the external file and resumes again at the end. If you want the external file to use PHP code, the code must be enclosed in PHP tags. Because the external file is processed as part of the PHP file that includes it, an include file can have any filename extension.

Some developers use `.inc` as the filename extension to make it clear that the file is intended to be included in another file. However, most servers treat `.inc` files as plain text. This poses a security risk if the file contains sensitive information, such as the username and password to your database. If the file is stored within your website's root folder, anyone who discovers the name of the file can simply type the URL in a browser address bar, and the browser will obligingly display all your secret details!

On the other hand, any file with a `.php` extension is automatically sent to the PHP engine for parsing before it's sent to the browser. As long as your secret information is inside a PHP code block and in a file with a `.php` extension, it won't be exposed. That's why some developers use `.inc.php` as a double extension for PHP includes. The `.inc` part reminds you that it's an include file,

but servers are only interested in the .php on the end, which ensures that all PHP code is correctly parsed.

For a long time, I followed the convention of using .inc.php for include files. But since I store all my include files in a separate folder called `includes`, I've decided that the double extension is superfluous. I now use just .php.

Which naming convention you choose is up to you, but using .inc on its own is the least secure.

PHP Solution 4-2: Testing the Security of Includes

This solution demonstrates the difference between using .inc and .php (or .inc.php) as the filename extension for an include file. Use `index.php` and `menu.php` from the previous section. Alternatively, use `index_02.php` and `menu_01.php` from the `ch04` folder. If you use the download files, remove the _02 and _01 from the filenames before using them.

1. Rename `menu.php` to `menu.inc` and edit `index.php` accordingly to include it:

```
<?php require './includes/menu.inc'; ?>
```

2. Load `index.php` into a browser. You should see no difference.
3. Amend the code inside `menu.inc` to store a password inside a PHP variable, like this:

```
<ul id="nav">
    <li><a href="index.php"
        id="here">Home</a></li>
        <?php $password = 'topSecret'; ?>
        <li><a
            href="blog.php">Blog</a></li>
            <li><a
                href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
                <li><a
                    href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
                    </ul>
```

4. Reload the page. As [Figure 4-3](#) shows, the password remains hidden in the source code. Although the include file doesn't have a .php filename extension, its contents have been merged with index.php, so the PHP code is processed.

```

<body>
<header>
  <h1>Japan Journey</h1>
</header>
<div id="wrapper">
  <ul id="nav">
    <li><a href="index.php" id="here">Home</a></li>
    <li><a href="blog.php">Blog</a></li>
    <li><a href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
    <li><a href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
  </ul>

```

Figure 4-3. There's no output from the PHP code, so only the HTML is sent to the browser

5. Now load `menu.inc` directly in the browser. [Figure 4-4](#) shows what happens.

```

<ul id="nav">
  <li><a href="index.php" id="here">Home</a></li>
  <?php $password = 'topSecret'; ?>
  <li><a href="blog.php">Blog</a></li>
  <li><a href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
  <li><a href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
</ul>

```

Figure 4-4. Loading `menu.inc` directly in a browser exposes the PHP code

Neither the server nor the browser knows how to deal with

an .inc file, so the entire contents are displayed onscreen: raw HTML, your secret password, everything.

6. Change the name of the include file to menu.inc.php and load it directly into your browser by adding .php to the end of the URL you used in the previous step. This time, you should see an unordered list of links. Inspect the browser's source view. The PHP isn't exposed.
7. Change the name back to menu.php and test the include file by loading it directly in your browser and viewing the source code again.
8. Remove the password PHP code you added to menu.php in step 3 and change the include command inside index.php back to its original setting, like this:

```
<?php require './includes/menu.php'; ?>
```

PHP Solution 4-3: Automatically Indicating the Current Page

Now that you have seen the difference between using .inc and .php as filename extensions, let's fix the problem with the menu not indicating the current page. The solution involves using PHP to find out the filename of the current page and then using conditional statements to insert an ID in the corresponding <a> tag.

Continue working with the same files. Alternatively, use index_02.php, contact.php, gallery.php, blog.php, menu_01.php, and footer_01.php from the ch04 folder, making sure to remove the _01 and _02 from any filenames.

1. Open menu.php. The code currently looks like this:

```
<ul id="nav">
    <li><a href="index.php"
id="here">Home</a></li>
    <li><a href="blog.php">Blog</a>
</li>
```

```
<li><a href="gallery.php">Gallery</a></li>
    <li><a href="contact.php">Contact</a></li>
</ul>
```

The style that indicates the current page is controlled by the `id="here"` highlighted in line 2. You need PHP to insert `id="here"` into the `blog.php` `<a>` tag if the current page is `blog.php`, into the `gallery.php` `<a>` tag if the page is `gallery.php`, and into the `contact.php` `<a>` tag if the page is `contact.php`.

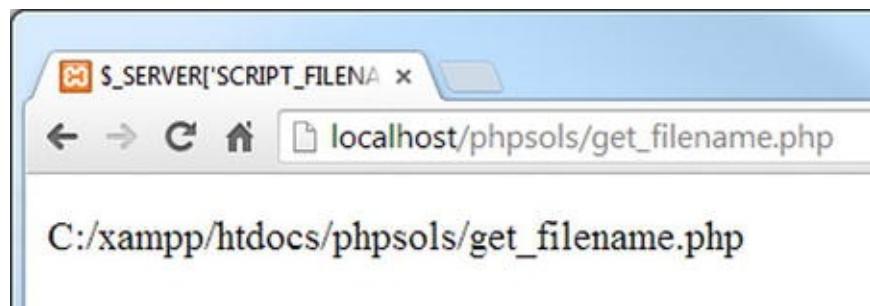
Hopefully, you have got the hint by now—you need an `if` statement see “Making decisions” in [Chapter 3](#)) in each `<a>` tag. Line 2 needs to look like this:

```
<li><a href="index.php" <?php if
($currentPage == 'index.php') {
    echo 'id="here"'; } ?>Home</a></li>
```

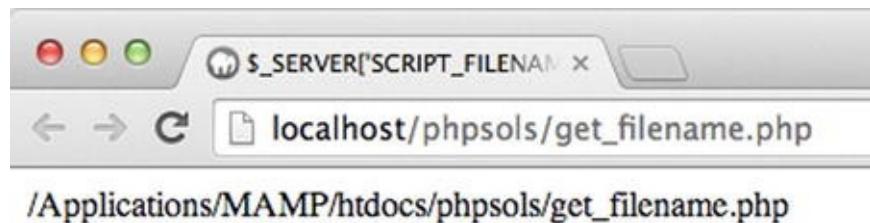
The other links should be amended in a similar way. But how does `$currentPage` get its value? You need to find out the filename of the current page.

- Leave `menu.php` to one side for the moment and create a new PHP page called `get_filename.php`. Insert the following code between a pair of PHP tags (alternatively, use `get_filename.php` in the `ch04` folder):

```
echo $_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'];
```
- Save `get_filename.php` and view it in a browser. On a Windows system, you should see something like the following screenshot. (The version in the `ch04` folder contains the code for this step and the next, together with text indicating which is which.)



On Mac OS X, you should see something similar to this:



`$_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME']` comes from one of PHP's built-in superglobal arrays, and it always gives you the absolute file path for the current page. What you need now is a way of extracting just the filename.

4. Amend the code in the previous step like this:

```
echo  
basename($_SERVER[ 'SCRIPT_FILENAME' ]);
```

5. Save `get_filename.php` and click the Reload button in your browser. You should now see just the filename: `get_filename.php`.

The built-in PHP function `basename()` takes a file path as an argument and extracts the filename. So there you have it—a way of finding the filename of the current page.

6. Amend the code in `menu.php` like this (the changes are highlighted in bold):

```
<?php $currentPage  
= basename($_SERVER[ 'SCRIPT_FILENAME' ]); ?>  
<ul id="nav">
```

```
<li><a href="index.php" <?php if  
($currentPage == 'index.php') {  
    echo 'id="here"';} ?>>Home</a></li>  
<li><a href="blog.php" <?php if  
($currentPage == 'blog.php') {  
    echo 'id="here"';} ?>>Blog</a></li>  
<li><a href="gallery.php" <?php if  
($currentPage == 'gallery.php') {  
    echo 'id="here"';} ?>>Gallery</a>  
</li>  
<li><a href="contact.php" <?php if  
($currentPage == 'contact.php') {  
    echo 'id="here"';} ?>>Contact</a>  
</li>  
</ul>
```

Caution Make sure you get the combination of single and double quotes correct. Although HTML makes quotes optional around the value of attributes, it's considered best practice to use them. Since I used double quotes around here, I wrapped the string 'id="here"' in single quotes. I could have written "id=\"here\"", but a mixture of single and double quotes is easier to read.

7. Save `menu.php` and load `index.php` into a browser. The menu should look no different from before. Use the menu to navigate to other pages. This time, as shown in [Figure 4-5](#), the border alongside the current page should be white, indicating your location within the site. If you inspect the page's source view in the browser, you'll see that the `here` ID has been automatically inserted into the correct link.

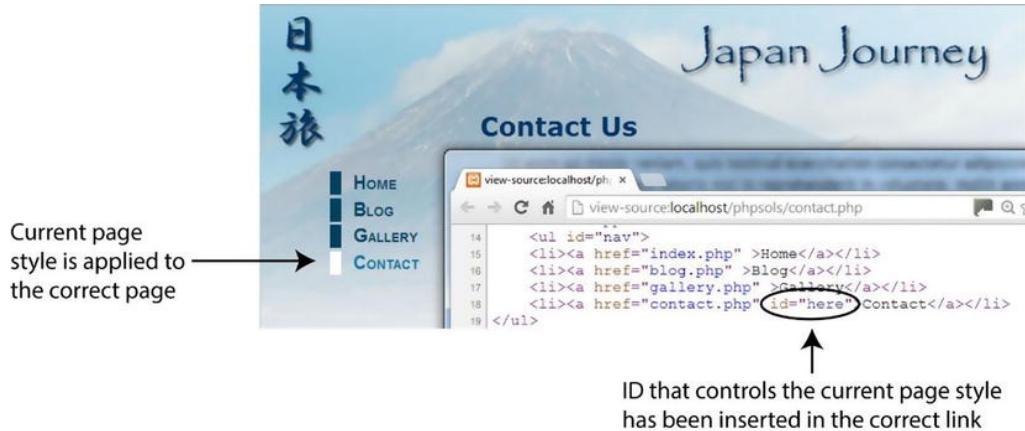


Figure 4-5. Conditional code in the include file produces different output for each page

8. If necessary, compare your code with `menu_02.php` in the `ch04` folder.

PHP Solution 4-4: Generating a Page's Title From its Filename

Now that you know how to find the filename of the current page, you might also find it useful to automate the `<title>` tag of each page. This solution uses `basename()` to extract the filename and then uses PHP string functions to format the name ready for insertion in the `<title>` tag.

This works only with filenames that tell you something about the page's contents, but since that's a good practice anyway, it's not really a restriction. Although the following steps use the Japan Journey website, you can try this out with any page.

1. Create a new PHP file called `title.php` and save it in the `includes` folder.
2. Strip out any code inserted by your script editor and type in the following code:

```
<?php
$title
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'],
'.php');
```

Tip Because this file contains only PHP code, do not add a closing PHP tag at the end. The closing PHP tag is optional when nothing follows the PHP code in the same file. Omitting the tag helps avoid a common error with include files known as “headers already sent.” You’ll learn more about this error in PHP Solution 4-8.

The `basename()` function used in PHP Solution 4-3 takes an optional second argument: a string containing the filename extension preceded by a leading period. Adding the second argument extracts the filename and strips the filename extension from it. So, this code finds the filename of the current page, strips the `.php` filename extension, and assigns the result to a variable called `$title`.

3. Open `contact.php` and include `title.php` by typing this above the DOCTYPE:

```
<?php include './includes/title.php'; ?>
```

4. Amend the `<title>` tag like this:

```
<title>Japan Journey<?php echo "&#8212;";  
{$title}"; ?></title>
```

This uses `echo` to display – (the numerical entity for an em dash) followed by the value of `$title`. Because the string is enclosed in double quotes, PHP displays the value of `$title`. The variable `$title` has been enclosed in curly braces because there is no space between the em dash and `$title`. Although not always necessary, it’s a good idea to enclose variables in braces when using them without any whitespace in a double-quoted string. It makes the variable clear to both you and the PHP engine.

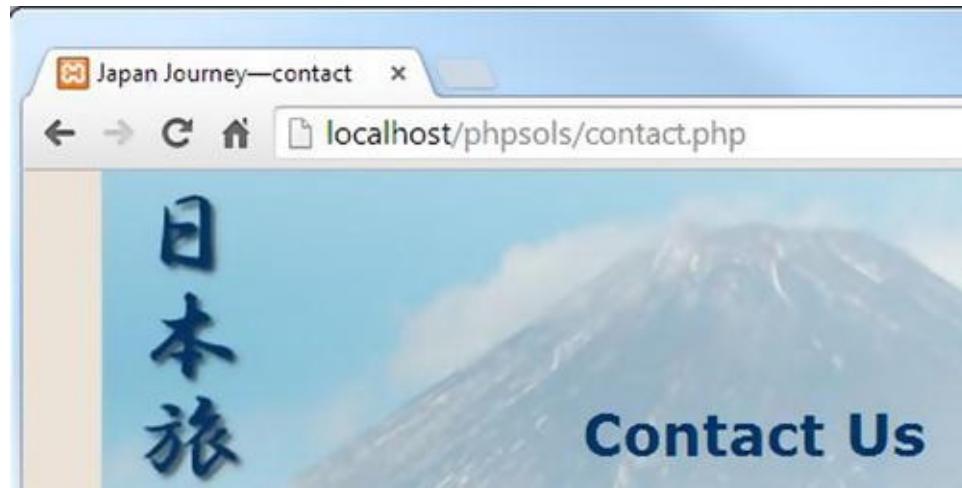
I'm not using the shorthand version of echo (<?=) because we'll be adding more script to this block.

The first few lines of your page should look like this:

```
1 <?php include './includes/title.php'; ?>
2 <!DOCTYPE HTML>
3 <html>
4 <head>
5   <meta charset="utf-8">
6   <title>Japan Journey<?php echo "&#8212;{$title}"; ?></title>
7   <link href="styles/journey.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css">
8 </head>
```

Note Normally, nothing should precede the DOCTYPE declaration in a webpage. However, this doesn't apply to PHP code, as long as it doesn't send any output to the browser. The code in `title.php` only assigns a value to `$title`, so the DOCTYPE declaration remains the first output the browser sees.

5. Save both pages and load `contact.php` into a browser. The filename without the `.php` extension has been added to the browser tab, as shown in [Figure 4-6](#).



[Figure 4-6](#). Once you extract the filename, you can generate the page title dynamically

6. Not bad, but what if you prefer an initial capital letter for the part of the title derived from the filename? PHP has a

neat little function called `ucfirst()`, which does exactly that (the name is easy to remember once you realize that UC stands for “uppercase”). Add another line to the code in step 2, like this:

```
<?php  
$title  
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'],  
'.php');  
$title = ucfirst($title);
```

If you’re new to programming, this might look confusing, but it’s actually quite simple once you analyze it: the first line of code after the PHP tag gets the filename, strips the `.php` off the end, and stores it as `$title`. The next line takes the value of `$title`, passes it to `ucfirst()` to capitalize the first letter, and stores the result back in `$title`. So, if the filename is `contact.php`, `$title` starts out as `contact`, but by the end of the following line, it has become `Contact`.

Tip You can shorten the code by combining both lines into one, like this:

```
$title =  
ucfirst(basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'])  
.php));
```

When you nest functions like this, PHP processes the innermost one first and passes the result to the outer function. It makes your code shorter, but it’s not so easy to read.

7. A drawback with this technique is that filenames consist of only one word—at least they should. Spaces are not allowed in URLs, which is why most web design software replaces spaces with `%20`, which looks ugly and unprofessional in a URL. You can get around this problem

by using an underscore.

Change the filename of `contact.php` to `contact_us.php`.

8. Amend the code in `title.php` like this:

```
<?php  
$title  
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'],  
.php');  
$title = str_replace('_', ' ', $title);  
$title = ucwords($title);
```

The middle line uses a function called `str_replace()` to look for every underscore and replace it with a space. The function takes three arguments: the character(s) you want to replace, the replacement character(s), and the string you to change.

Tip You can also use `str_replace()` to remove character(s) by using an empty string (a pair of quotes with nothing between them) as the second argument. This replaces the string in the first argument with nothing, effectively removing it.

Instead of `ucfirst()`, the final line of code uses the related function `ucwords()`, which gives each word an initial cap.

9. Save `title.php` and load the renamed `contact_us.php` into a browser. [Figure 4-7](#) shows the result. (Google Chrome truncates the title in the tab, but you can see the complete title as a tooltip.)

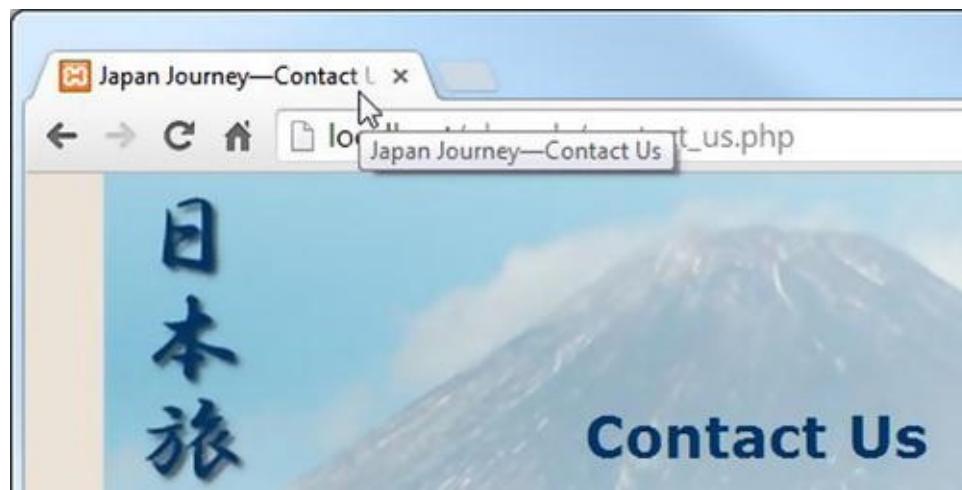


Figure 4-7. The underscore has been removed, and both words have been given initial caps

10. Change the name of the file back to `contact.php` and reload the file into a browser. The script in `title.php` still works. There are no underscores to replace, so `str_replace()` leaves the value of `$title` untouched, and `ucwords()` converts the first letter to uppercase, even though there's only one word.
11. Repeat steps 3 and 4 with `index.php`, `blog.php`, and `gallery.php`.
12. The home page of the Japan Journey site is called `index.php`. As [Figure 4-8](#) shows, applying the current solution to this page doesn't seem quite right.



Figure 4-8. Generating the page title from `index.php` produces an unsatisfactory result

There are two solutions: either don't apply this technique to such pages or use a conditional statement (an `if`

statement) to handle special cases. For instance, to display **Home** instead of **Index**, amend the code in `title.php` like this:

```
<?php  
$title  
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME'],  
.php');  
$title = str_replace('_', ' ', $title);  
if ($title == 'index') {  
    $title = 'home';  
}  
$title = ucwords($title);
```

The first line of the conditional statement uses two equal signs to check the value of `$title`. The following line uses a single equal sign to assign the new value to `$title`. If the page is called anything other than `index.php`, the line inside the curly braces is ignored, and `$title` keeps its original value.

Tip PHP is case-sensitive, so this solution works only if “index” is all lowercase. To do a case-insensitive comparison, change the fourth line of the preceding code like this:

```
if (strtolower($title) == 'index')  
{
```

The function `strtolower()` converts a **string to lowercase**—hence its name—and is frequently used to make case-insensitive comparisons. The conversion to lowercase is not permanent, because `strtolower($title)` isn’t assigned to a variable; it’s only used to make the comparison. To make a change permanent, you need to assign the result back to a variable, as in the final line, when `ucwords($title)` is assigned back to `$title`.

To convert a string to uppercase, use `strtoupper()`.

13. Save `title.php` and reload `index.php` into a browser. The page title now looks more natural, as shown in [Figure 4-9](#).



Figure 4-9. The conditional statement changes the title on `index.php` to `Home`

14. Navigate back to `contact.php`, and you'll see that the page title is still derived correctly from the page name.

There's one final refinement you should make. The PHP code inside the `<title>` tag relies on the existence of the variable `$title`, which won't be set if there's a problem with the include file. Before attempting to display the contents of a variable that comes from an external source, it's always a good idea to check that it exists, using a function called `isset()`.

Wrap the `echo` command inside a conditional statement and test for the variable's existence, like this:

```
<title>Japan Journey<?php if  
(isset($title)) {echo "-{$title}";} ?>  
</title>
```

If `$title` doesn't exist, the rest of the code is ignored, leaving the default site title, **Japan Journey**. You need to apply this change to all four pages: `index.php`, `blog.php`, `gallery.php`, and `contact.php`.

You can check your code against `title.php` and updated versions of the other files in `index_03.php`, `blog_02.php`, `gallery_02.php`, and `contact_02.php` in the `ch04` folder.

Creating Pages with Changing Content

So far, you've used PHP to generate different output depending on the page's filename. The next two solutions generate content that changes independently of the filename: a copyright notice that updates the year automatically on January 1 and a random image generator.

PHP Solution 4-5: Automatically Updating a Copyright Notice

At the moment, the copyright notice in `footer.php` contains only static HTML. This PHP solution shows how to use the `date()` function to generate the current year automatically. The code also specifies the first year of copyright and uses a conditional statement to determine whether the current year is different. If it is, both years are displayed.

Continue working with the files from PHP Solution 4-4. Alternatively, use `index_03.php` and `footer_01.php` from the `ch04` folder, and remove the numbers from the filenames. If using the files from the `ch04` folder, make sure you have copies of `title.php` and `menu.php` in the `includes` folder.

1. Open `footer.php`. It contains the following HTML:

```
<footer>
  <p>&copy; 2006&ndash;2014 David
  Powers</p>
</footer>
```

The `–` between the dates is the character entity for an en dash.

The advantage of using an include file is that you can update the copyright notice throughout the site by

changing this one file. However, it would be much more efficient to increment the year automatically, doing away with the need for annual updates altogether.

2. The PHP `date()` function takes care of this very neatly. Change the code in the paragraph like this:

```
<p>&copy; 2006&ndash;<?php echo date('Y');?  
?> David Powers</p>
```

This replaces the second date and displays the current year using four digits. Make sure you pass an uppercase Y as the argument to `date()`.

3. Save `footer.php` and load `index.php` into a browser. The copyright notice at the foot of the page should look the same as before—unless, of course, you’re reading this in 2015 or later, in which case the current year will be displayed.
4. Like most copyright notices, this covers a range of years, indicating when a site was first launched. Since the first date is in the past, it can be hard-coded. But if you’re creating a new website, you need only the current year. The range of years isn’t needed until January 1.

You don’t want to have to break away from the New Year revelries just to update the copyright notice. There needs to be a better way. Thanks to PHP, you can party to your heart’s content on New Year’s Eve.

To display a range of years, you need to know the start year and the current year. If both years are the same, display only the current year; if they’re different, display both with an en dash between them. It’s a simple `if . . . else` situation. Change the code in the paragraph in `footer.php` like this:

```
<p>&copy;  
<?php  
$startYear = 2006;  
$thisYear = date('Y');
```

```
if ($startYear == $thisYear) {  
    echo $startYear;  
} else {  
    echo "{$startYear}–{$thisYear}";  
}  
?  
David Powers</p>
```

As in PHP Solution 4-4, I've used curly braces around the variables in the `else` clause because they're in a double-quoted string that contains no whitespace.

5. Save `footer.php` and reload `index.php` in a browser. The copyright notice should look the same as before.
6. Change the argument passed to the `date()` function to a lowercase `y`, like this:

```
$thisYear = date('y');
```

7. Save `footer.php` and click the Reload button in your browser. The second year is displayed using only the last two digits, as shown in the following screenshot:



© 2006-14 David Powers

Tip This should serve as a reminder that PHP is case-sensitive. Uppercase `Y` and lowercase `y` produce different results with the `date()` function. Forgetting about case sensitivity is one of the most common causes of errors in PHP.

8. Change the argument passed to `date()` back to an uppercase `Y`. Set the value of `$startYear` to the current year and reload the page. This time, you should see only the current year displayed.

You now have a fully automated copyright notice. The

finished code is in `footer_02.php` in the `ch04` folder.

PHP Solution 4-6: Displaying a Random Image

Displaying a random image is very easy. All you need is a list of available images, which you store in an indexed array (see “Creating arrays” in [Chapter 3](#)). Since indexed arrays are numbered from 0, you can select one of the images by generating a random number between 0 and one less than the length of the array. All this is accomplished by a few lines of code . . .

Continue using the same files. Alternatively, use `index_03.php` from the `ch04` folder and rename it `index.php`. Since `index_03.php` uses `title.php`, `menu.php`, and `footer.php`, make sure all three files are in your `includes` folder. The images are already in the `images` folder.

1. Create a blank PHP page in the `includes` folder and name it `random_image.php`. Insert the following code (it’s also in `random_image_01.php` in the `ch04` folder):

```
<?php
$images = ['kinkakuji', 'maiko',
'maiko_phone', 'monk', 'fountains',
'ryoanji', 'menu', 'basin'];
$i = rand(0, count($images)-1);
$selectedImage
= "images/{$images[$i]}.jpg";
```

This is the complete script: an array of image names minus the `.jpg` filename extension (there’s no need to repeat shared information—they’re all JPEG), a random number generator, and a string that builds the correct path name for the selected file.

Note This script uses the shorthand array syntax that was introduced in PHP 5.4.

To generate a random number within a range, pass the

minimum and maximum numbers as arguments to the `rand()` function. Since there are eight images in the array, you need a number between 0 and 7. The simple way to do this would be to use `rand(0, 7)`—simple, but inefficient. Every time you change the `$images` array, you need to count how many elements it contains and change the maximum number passed to `rand()`.

It's much easier to get PHP to count them for you, and that's exactly what the `count()` function does: it counts the number of elements in an array. You need a number one less than the number of elements in the array, so the second argument passed to `rand()` becomes `count($images) - 1`, and the result is stored in `$i`.

The random number is used in the final line to build the correct path name for the selected file. The variable `$images[$i]` is embedded in a double-quoted string with no whitespace separating it from surrounding characters, so it's enclosed in curly braces. Arrays start at 0, so if the random number is 1, `$selectedImage` is `images/maiko.jpg`.

If you're new to PHP, you may find it difficult to understand code like this:

```
$i = rand(0, count($images)-1);
```

All that's happening is that the second argument passed to `rand()` is an expression rather than a number. If it makes it easier for you to follow, rewrite the code like this:

```
$numImages = count($images); //  
$numImages is 8  
$max = $numImages - 1;           // $max is  
7  
$i = rand(0, $max);            // $i  
= rand(0, 7)
```

2. Open `index.php` and include `random_image.php` by inserting the command in the same code block as `title.php`, like this:

```
<?php include './includes/title.php';  
include './includes/random_image.php'; ?>
```

Since `random_image.php` doesn't send any direct output to the browser, it's safe to put it above the DOCTYPE.

3. Scroll down inside `index.php`, and locate the code that displays the image in the `figure` element. It looks like this:

```
<figure>  
    
  <figcaption>Water basin at Ryoanji  
temple</figcaption>  
</figure>
```

4. Instead of using `images/basin.jpg` as a fixed image, replace it with `$selectedImage`. All the images have different dimensions, so delete the `width` and `height` attributes and use a generic `alt` attribute. Also remove the text in the `figcaption` element. The code in step 3 should now look like this:

```
<figure>  
    
  <figcaption></figcaption>  
</figure>
```

Note The PHP block displays only a single value, so you can use the shortcut `<?=`.

5. Save both `random_image.php` and `index.php`, then

load `index.php` into a browser. The image should now be chosen at random. Click the Reload button in your browser; you should see a variety of images, as shown in Figure 4-10.



Figure 4-10. Storing image filenames in an indexed array makes it easy to display a random image

You can check your code against `index_04.php` and `random_image_01.php` in the `ch04` folder.

This is a simple and effective way of displaying a random image, but it would be much better if you could set the width and height for different-sized images dynamically, as well as add a caption to describe the image.

PHP Solution 4-7: Adding a Caption to the Random Image

This solution uses a multidimensional array—or an array of arrays—to store the

filename and caption for each image. If you find the concept of a multidimensional array difficult to understand in abstract terms, think of it as a large box with a lot of envelopes inside, and inside each envelope is a photo and its caption. The box is the top-level array, and the envelopes inside are the subarrays.

The images are different sizes, but PHP conveniently provides a function called `getimagesize()`. Guess what it does.

This PHP solution builds on the previous one, so continue working with the same files.

1. Open `random_image.php` and change the code as follows:

```
<?php
$images = [
    ['file' => 'kinkakuji',
     'caption' => 'The Golden Pavilion in
Kyoto'],
    ['file' => 'maiko',
     'caption' => 'Maiko&#8212;trainee geishas
in Kyoto'],
    ['file' => 'maiko_phone',
     'caption' => 'Every maiko should have
one&#8212;a mobile, of course'],
    ['file' => 'monk',
     'caption' => 'Monk begging for alms in
Kyoto'],
    ['file' => 'fountains',
     'caption' => 'Fountains in central Tokyo'],
    ['file' => 'ryoanji',
     'caption' => 'Autumn leaves at Ryoanji
temple, Kyoto'],
    ['file' => 'menu',
     'caption' => 'Menu outside restaurant in
Pontocho, Kyoto'],
    ['file' => 'basin',
     'caption' => 'Water basin at Ryoanji
temple, Kyoto']
];
$i = rand(0, count($images)-1);
$selectedImage = "images/{$images[$i]}
```

```
['file']] . jpg";  
$caption = $images[$i]['caption'];
```

Caution You need to be careful with the code. Each subarray is enclosed in a pair of square brackets and is followed by a comma, which separates it from the next subarray. You'll find it easier to build and maintain multidimensional arrays if you align the array keys and values as shown.

Although the code looks complicated, it's an ordinary indexed array that contains eight items, each of which is an associative array containing definitions for 'file' and 'caption'. The definition of the multidimensional array forms a single statement, so there are no semicolons until line 19. The closing bracket on that line matches the opening one on line 2.

The variable used to select the image also needs to be changed, because `$images[$i]` no longer contains a string, but rather an array. To get the correct filename for the image, you need to use `$images[$i]['file']`. The caption for the selected image is contained in `$images[$i]['caption']` and stored in a shorter variable.

2. You now need to amend the code in `index.php` to display the caption, like this:

```
<figure>  
    <img src=<?= $selectedImage; ?>"  
    alt="Random image">  
    <figcaption><?= $caption; ?>  
    </figcaption>  
</figure>
```

3. Save `index.php` and `random_image.php` and load `index.php` into a browser. Most images will look fine,

but there's an ugly gap to the right of the image of the trainee geisha with a mobile phone, as shown in [Figure 4-11](#).



Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course

Figure 4-11. The long caption protrudes beyond the image and shifts it too far left

4. Add the following code at the end of `random_image.php`:

```
if (file_exists($selectedImage) &&
is_readable($selectedImage)) {
    $imageSize
= getimagesize($selectedImage);
}
```

The `if` statement uses two functions, `file_exists()` and `is_readable()`, to make sure `$selectedImage` not only exists but also that it's accessible (it may be corrupted or have the wrong permissions). These functions return Boolean values (`true` or `false`), so they can be used directly as part of the conditional statement.

The single line inside the `if` statement uses the function `getimagesize()` to get the image's dimensions and stores them in `$imageSize`. You'll learn more about `getimagesize()` in [Chapter 8](#). At the moment, you're interested in the following two pieces of information:

- `$imageSize[0]`: The width of the image in pixels
- `$imageSize[3]`: A string containing the image's height and width formatted for inclusion in an `` tag

5. First of all, let's fix the code in the `` tag. Change it like this:

```
>
```

This inserts the correct `width` and `height` attributes inside the `` tag.

6. Although this sets the dimensions for the image, you still need to control the width of the caption. You can't use PHP inside an external style sheet, but there's nothing stopping you from creating a `<style>` block in the `<head>` of `index.php`. Insert the following code just before the closing `</head>` tag.

```
<?php if (isset($imageSize)) { ?>  
<style>  
figcaption {  
    width: <?= $imageSize[0]; ?>px;  
}  
</style>  
<?php } ?>
```

This code consists of only seven short lines, but it's an odd mix of PHP and HTML. Let's start with the first and final lines. If you strip away the PHP tags and replace the HTML `<style>` block with a comment, this is what you

end up with:

```
if (isset($imageSize)) {  
    // do something if $imageSize has  
    been set  
}
```

In other words, if the variable `$imageSize` hasn't been set (defined), the PHP engine ignores everything between the curly braces. It doesn't matter that most of the code between the braces is HTML and CSS. If `$imageSize` hasn't been set, the PHP engine skips to the closing brace, and the intervening code isn't sent to the browser.

Tip Many inexperienced PHP coders wrongly believe that they need to use `echo` or `print` to create HTML output inside a conditional statement. As long as the opening and closing braces match, you can use PHP to hide or display sections of HTML like this. It's a lot neater and involves a lot less typing than using `echo` all the time.

If `$imageSize` has been set, the `<style>` block is created and `$imageSize[0]` is used to set the correct width for the paragraph that contains the caption.

7. Save `random_image.php` and `index.php`, then reload `index.php` into a browser. Click the Reload button until the image of the trainee geisha with the mobile phone appears. This time, it should look like [Figure 4-12](#). If you view the browser's source code, the style rule uses the correct width for the image.



Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course

Figure 4-12. The ugly gap is removed by creating a style rule directly related to the image size

Note If the caption still protrudes, make sure there's no gap between the closing PHP tag and px in the `<style>` block. CSS does not permit whitespace between the value and unit of measurement.

8. The code in `random_image.php` and the code you have just inserted prevent errors if the selected image can't be found, but the code that displays the image is devoid of similar checks. Temporarily change the name of one of the images, either in `random_image.php` or in the `images` folder. Reload `index.php` several times. Eventually, you should see an error message like that in **Figure 4-13**. It looks very unprofessional.

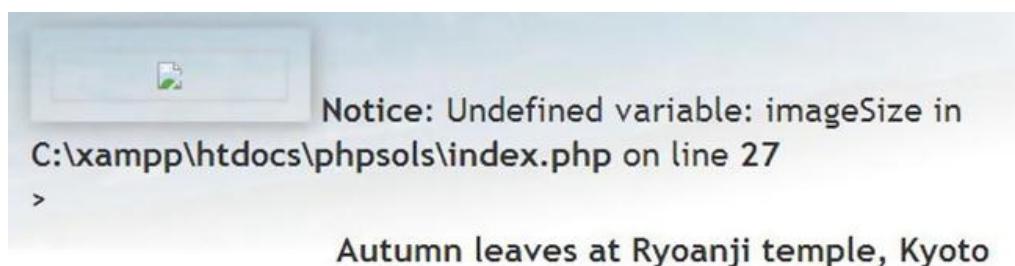


Figure 4-13. An error in an include file can destroy the look of your page

9. The conditional statement at the foot of `random_image.php` sets `$imageSize` only if the selected image both exists and is readable, so if `$imageSize` has been set, you know it's all systems go. Add the opening and closing blocks of a conditional statement around the figure element that displays the image in `index.php`, like this:

```
<?php if (isset($imageSize)) { ?>
<figure>
    >
    <figcaption><?= $caption; ?>
</figcaption>
</figure>
</?php } ?>
```

Images that exist will display normally, but you'll avoid any embarrassing error messages in case of a missing or corrupt file—a much more professional look. Don't forget to restore the name of the image you changed in the previous step.

You can check your code against `index_05.php` and `random_image_02.php` in the `ch04` folder.

Preventing Errors with Include Files

Many hosting companies turn off error reporting for notices, so you probably wouldn't be aware of the problem shown in [Figure 4-13](#) if you did all your testing on your remote server. However, it's important to eliminate all errors before deploying PHP pages on the Internet. Just because you can't see the error message doesn't mean your page is okay.

Pages that use a server-side technology such as PHP deal with a lot of unknowns, so it's wise to code defensively, checking values before using them. This section describes measures you can take to prevent and troubleshoot errors with include files.

Checking the Existence of Variables

The lesson that can be drawn from PHP Solution 4-7 is that you should always use `isset()` to verify the existence of a variable that comes from an include file and wrap any code that uses it in a conditional statement. In this particular case, you know there's no image to display if `$imageSize` doesn't exist, so the figure element is dropped. However, in other cases you might be able to assign a default value to the variable, like this:

```
if (!isset($someVariable)) {  
    $someVariable = default value;  
}
```

This uses the logical Not operator (see Table 3-6 in [Chapter 3](#)) to check whether `$someVariable` has not been set. If `$someVariable` doesn't exist, it's assigned a default value, which can then be used later in your script. If it does exist, the code inside the conditional statement is skipped, and the original value is used.

Checking Whether a Function or Class has Been Defined

Include files are frequently used to define custom functions or classes. Attempting to use a function or class that hasn't been defined triggers a fatal error. To check whether a function has been defined, pass the name of the function as a string to `function_exists()`. When passing the name of the function to `function_exists()`, omit the parentheses at the end of function name. For example, you check whether a function called `doubleIt()` has been defined like this:

```
if (function_exists('doubleIt')) {  
    // use doubleIt()  
}
```

To check whether a class has been defined, use `class_exists()` in the same way, passing a string containing the class name as the argument:

```
if (class_exists('MyClass')) {
```

```
// use MyClass  
}
```

Assuming you want to use the function or class, a more practical approach is to use a conditional statement to include the definition file if the function or class hasn't already been defined. For example, if the definition for `doubleIt()` is in a file called `utilities.php`:

```
if (!function_exists('doubleIt')) {  
    require_once './includes/utilities.php';  
}
```

Suppressing Error Messages on a Live Website

Assuming that your include files are working normally on your remote server, the measures outlined in the previous sections are probably all the error checking you need. However, if your remote server displays error messages, you should take steps to suppress them. The following techniques hide all error messages, not only those related to include files.

Using the Error Control Operator

A rather crude, but effective, technique is to use the PHP **error control operator** (@), which suppresses error messages associated with the line in which it's used. You place @ either at the beginning of the line or directly in front of the function or command that you think might generate an error, like this:

```
@ include './includes/random_image.php';
```

The problem with the error control operator is that it hides errors rather than working around them. It's only one character, so it's easy to forget you have used it. Consequently, you can waste a lot of time looking for errors in the wrong part of your script. If you use the error control operator, the @ mark should be the first thing you remove when troubleshooting a problem.

The other drawback is that you need to use the error control operator in every line that might generate an error message, because it affects only the current line.

Turning Off `display_errors` in the PHP Configuration

A better way of suppressing error messages in a live website is to turn off the `display_errors` directive in the web server's configuration. The most effective way to do this is to edit `php.ini` if your hosting company gives you control over its settings. Locate the `display_errors` directive and change `On` to `Off`.

If you don't have control of `php.ini`, many hosting companies allow you to change a limited range of configuration settings using a file called either `.htaccess` or `.user.ini`. The choice of file depends on how PHP was installed on the server, so check with your hosting company to find out which to use.

If your server supports `.htaccess` files, add the following command to the `.htaccess` file in the server root folder:

```
php_flag display_errors Off
```

In a `.user.ini` file, the command is simply this:

```
display_errors Off
```

Both `.htaccess` and `.user.ini` are plain text files. Like `php.ini`, each command should be on a separate line. If the file doesn't already exist on your remote server, you can simply create it in a text editor. Make sure your editor doesn't automatically add `.txt` to the end of the filename. Then upload the file to your website's server root folder.

 **Tip** Mac OS X hides files with names that begin with a dot, so you won't be able to see them in the Mac Finder. However, you should be able to open them with a dedicated script editor. In the File ➤ Open dialog box, select “**Enable: Everything**” and the “**Show hidden items**” check box.

Turning Off `display_errors` in an Individual File

If you don't have control over the server configuration, you can prevent error messages from being displayed by adding the following line at the top of any script:

```
<?php ini_set('display_errors', '0'); ?>
```

PHP Solution 4-8: Redirecting when an Include File Can't be Found

All the techniques suggested so far only suppress error messages if an include file can't be found. If a page would be meaningless without the include file, you should redirect the user to an error page if the include file is missing.

One way to do so is to throw an exception, like this:

```
$file = './includes/menu.php';
if (file_exists($file) && is_readable($file)) {
    include $file;
} else {
    throw new Exception("$file can't be found");
}
```

When using code that might throw an exception, you need to wrap it in a `try` block and create a `catch` block to handle the exception (see “Handling Exceptions” in [Chapter 3](#)). This PHP solution shows how to do this, using the `catch` block to redirect users to a different page if an include file can't be found.

If you have designed and tested your site thoroughly, this technique should not be necessary on most pages that use include files. However, this is by no means a pointless exercise. It demonstrates several important features of PHP: how to throw and catch exceptions and how to redirect to another page. As you'll see from the following instructions, redirection isn't always straightforward. This PHP solution shows how to overcome the most common problem.

Continue working with `index.php` from PHP Solution 4-7. Alternatively, use `index_05.php` from the `ch04` folder.

1. Copy `error.php` from the `ch04` folder to the site root.
Don't update the links in the page if your editing program prompts you to do so. This is a static page that contains a generic error message and links back to the other pages.
2. Open `index.php` in your editing program. The

navigation menu is the most indispensable include file, so edit the `require` command in `index.php` like this:

```
$file = './includes/menu.php';
if (file_exists($file) && is_readable($file)) {
    require $file;
} else {
    throw new Exception("$file can't be found");
}
```

Tip Storing the path of the include file in a variable like this avoids the need to retype it four times, reducing the likelihood of spelling

3. To redirect the user to another page, use the `header()` function. However, redirection doesn't work if any output has been sent to the browser before you call `header()`. Unless there's a syntax error, the PHP engine normally processes a page from the top, outputting the HTML until it reaches a problem. This means that output will have already begun by the time the PHP engine gets to this code. To prevent this from happening, start the `try` block before any output is generated. (This actually won't work on many setups, but bear with me, because it demonstrates an important point.)

Scroll to the top of the page and edit the opening PHP code block like this:

```
<?php try {
    include './includes/title.php';
    include
    './includes/random_image.php'; ?>
```

This opens the `try` block.

4. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and add the following code after the closing `</html>` tag:

```
<?php } catch (Exception $e) {
```

```
    header('Location:  
http://localhost/phpsols/error.php');  
} ?>
```

This closes the `try` block and creates a `catch` block to handle the exception. The code in the `catch` block uses `header()` to redirect the user to `error.php`.

The `header()` function sends an HTTP header to the browser. It takes as its argument a string containing the header and its value separated by a colon. In this case, it uses the `Location` header to redirect the browser to the page specified by the URL following the colon. Adjust the URL to match your own setup if necessary.

5. Save `index.php` and test the page in a browser. It should display as normal.
6. Change the value of `$file`, the variable you created in step 2, to point to a nonexistent include file, such as `men.php`.
7. Save `index.php` and reload it in your browser. If you're using XAMPP in your testing environment, you'll probably be correctly redirected to `error.php`. With MAMP (and probably other testing setups) you're likely to see the message in [Figure 4-14](#).



[Figure 4-14](#). The `header()` function won't work if output has already been sent to the browser

The error message in [Figure 4-14](#) is probably responsible for more heads being banged against keyboards than any other. (I, too, bear the scars.) As mentioned earlier, the

`header()` function cannot be used if output has been sent to the browser. So, what's happened?

The answer is in the error message, but it's not immediately obvious. It says the error happened on line 51, which is where the `header()` function is called. What you really need to know is where the output was generated. That information is buried here:

```
(output started at  
/Applications/MAMP/htdocs/phpsols/index.php:8)
```

The number 8 after the colon is the line number. So, what's on line 8 of `index.php`? As you can see from the following screenshot, line 8 uses `echo` to display the value of `$title`.

```
1  <?php try {  
2      include './includes/title.php';  
3      include './includes/random_image.php'; ?>  
4  <!DOCTYPE HTML>  
5  <html>  
6  <head>  
7      <meta charset="utf-8">  
8      <title>Japan Journey<?php if(isset($title)) { echo "&#8212;{$title}"; } ?></title>
```

Because there's no error in the code up to this point, the PHP engine has already output the HTML. Once that has happened, `header()` can't redirect the page.

Even if you remove this line of PHP, the error message simply reports that output started on the next line that contains a PHP block. What's happening is that the web server is outputting all the HTML following the DOCTYPE, but the PHP engine needs to process a PHP code block before it can report a line number. This poses the problem of how to redirect a page after output has been sent to the browser. Fortunately, PHP provides the answer by allowing you to store the output in a buffer (the web server's memory).

Note The reason you don't get this error message in XAMPP and some other setups is because output

buffering has been turned on in the PHP configuration. XAMPP sets the value to 4096, which means that 4 KB of output is stored in the buffer before the HTTP headers are sent to the browser. Although useful, this gives you a false sense of security because output buffering might not be enabled on your remote server. So, keep reading even if you were correctly redirected.

8. Edit the code block at the top of `index.php` like this:

```
<?php ob_start();
try {
    include './includes/title.php';
    include
'./includes/random_image.php'; ?>
```

The `ob_start()` function turns on output buffering, preventing any output from being sent to the browser before the `header()` function is called.

9. The PHP engine automatically flushes the buffer at the end of the script, but it's better to do so explicitly. Edit the PHP code block at the foot of the page like this:

```
<?php } catch (Exception $e) {
    ob_end_clean();
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/error.php');
}
ob_end_flush();
?>
```

Two different functions have been added here. When redirecting to another page, you don't want the HTML stored in the buffer. So, inside the `catch` block, a call is made to `ob_end_clean()`, which turns off the buffer and discards its contents.

However, if an exception isn't thrown, you want to

display the contents of the buffer, so `ob_end_flush()` is called at the end of the page after both the `try` and `catch` blocks. This flushes the contents of the buffer and sends it to the browser.

10. Save `index.php` and reload it in a browser. This time, you should be redirected to the error page, as shown in [Figure 4-15](#).



Figure 4-15. Buffering the output enables the browser to redirect to the error page

11. Change the value of `$file` back to `./includes/menu.php` and save `index.php`. When you click the **Home** link on the error page, `index.php` should display normally.

You can compare your code with `index_06.php` in the `ch04` folder.

Choosing where to Locate your Include Files

A useful feature of PHP include files is that they can be located anywhere, as long as the page with the `include` command knows where to find them. Include files don't even need to be inside your web server root. This means that you can protect include files that contain sensitive information, such as passwords, in a private directory (folder) that cannot be accessed through a browser. So, if your hosting company provides a storage area outside your server root, you should seriously consider locating some, if not all, of your include files there.

An `include` command expects either a relative path or a fully qualified path.

If neither is given, PHP automatically looks in the `include_path` specified in your PHP configuration. The following section explains how to change the folders in which PHP automatically searches for include files.

Adjusting your `include_path`

The advantage of locating include files in a folder specified in your web server's `include_path` is that you don't need to worry about getting the relative or absolute path correct. All you need is the filename. This can be very useful if you use a lot of includes or you have a site hierarchy several levels deep. There are three ways to change the `include_path`:

- **Edit the value in `php.ini`:** If your hosting company gives you access to `php.ini`, this is the best way to add a custom includes folder.
- **Use `.htaccess` or `.user.ini`:** If your hosting company allows changes to the configuration with an `.htaccess` or `.user.ini` file, this is a good alternative.
- **Use `set_include_path()`:** Use this only if the previous options are not available to you, because it affects the `include_path` only for the current file.

The value of the `include_path` for your web server is listed in the Core section of the configuration details when you run `phpinfo()`. It normally begins with a period, which indicates the current folder, and is followed by the absolute path of each folder to be searched. On Linux and Mac OS X, each path is separated by a colon. On Windows, the separator is a semicolon. On a Linux or Mac server your existing `include_path` directive might look like this:

```
.: /php/PEAR
```

On a Windows server, the equivalent would look like this:

```
.; C:\php\PEAR
```

Editing the `include_path` in `php.ini` or `.user.ini`

In `php.ini`, locate the `include_path` directive. To add a folder called `includes` in your own site, add a colon or semicolon—depending on your server’s operating system—at the end of the existing value, followed by the absolute path to the `includes` folder.

On a Linux or Mac server, use a colon like this:

```
include_path=".:/php/PEAR:/home/mysite/public_html/includes"
```

On a Windows server, use a semicolon:

```
include_path=".;C:\php\PEAR;C:\sites\mysite\www\includes"
```

The commands are the same for a `.user.ini` file. The value in `.user.ini` overrides the default, so make sure you copy the existing value from `phpinfo()` and add the new path to it.

Using `.htaccess` to Change the `include_path`

The value in an `.htaccess` file overrides the default, so copy the existing value from `phpinfo()` and add the new path to it. On a Linux or Mac server, the value should be similar to this:

```
php_value include_path  
".:/php/PEAR:/home/mysite/public_html/includes"
```

The command is the same on Windows, except that you separate the paths with a semicolon:

```
php_value include_path  
. ;C:\php\PEAR;C:\sites\mysite\www\includes"
```

 **Caution** In `.htaccess`, do not insert an equal sign between `include_path` and the list of path names.

Using `set_include_path()`

Although `set_include_path()` affects only the current page, you can

easily create a code snippet and paste it into pages in which you want to use it. PHP also makes it easy to get the existing `include_path` and combine it with the new one in a platform-neutral way.

Store the new path in a variable and then combine it with the existing value, like this:

```
$includes_folder  
= '/home/mysite/public_html/includes';  
set_include_path(get_include_path() . PATH_SEPARATOR  
. $includes_folder);
```

It looks as though three arguments are being passed to `set_include_path()`, but it's only one; the three elements are joined by the concatenation operator (a period), not commas.

- `get_include_path()` gets the existing `include_path`.
- `PATH_SEPARATOR` is a PHP constant that automatically inserts a colon or semicolon depending on the operating system.
- `$includes_folder` adds the new path.

The problem with this approach is that the path to the new `includes` folder won't be the same on your remote and local testing servers. You can fix that with a conditional statement. The superglobal variable `$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']` contains the domain name of the website. If your domain is www.example.com, you can set the correct path for each server like this:

```
if ($_SERVER['HTTP_HOST'] == 'www.example.com') {  
    $includes_folder  
= '/home/example/public_html/includes';  
} else {  
    $includes_folder  
= 'C:/xampp/htdocs/phpsols/includes';  
}  
set_include_path(get_include_path() . PATH_SEPARATOR  
. $includes_folder);
```

Using `set_include_path()` is probably not worthwhile for small websites that don't use many include files. However, you might find it useful on more complex projects.

Why can't I Use Site-root-relative Links with PHP Includes?

Well, you can and you can't. For the sake of clarity, I'll begin by explaining the distinction between links relative to the document and to the site root.

Document-relative Links

When you click a link to go to another page, the path in the `<a>` tag tells the browser how to get from the current page to the next one. Most web-authoring tools specify the path relative to the current document. If the target page is in the same folder, just the filename is used. If it's one level higher than the current page, the filename is preceded by `.. /`. This is known as a **document-relative path** or link. If you have a site with many levels of folders, this type of link can be difficult to understand—at least for humans.

Links Relative to the Site Root

The other type of link always begins with a forward slash, which is shorthand for the site root. The advantage of a **site-root-relative path** is that it doesn't matter how deep the current page is in the site hierarchy, the forward slash at the beginning guarantees the web server will start looking from the top level of the site. Although site-root-relative links are much easier to read, PHP include commands can't handle them. You must use a document-relative path, an absolute path, or specify the `includes` folder in your `include_path` directive.

You can convert a site-root-relative path to an absolute one by concatenating the superglobal variable `$_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT']` to the beginning of the path, like this:

```
include $_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT'] .
```

```
'/includes/filename.php';
```

Most servers support `$_SERVER['DOCUMENT_ROOT']`, but you should check the **PHP Variables** section at the bottom of the configuration details displayed by `phpinfo()` to make sure.

Links Inside Include Files

This is the point that tends to confuse many people. Although the PHP include commands don't understand site-root-relative links, the links *inside* an include file should normally be relative to the site root. This is because an include file can be included at any level of the site hierarchy, so document-relative links break when a file is included at a different level.

 **Note** The navigation menu in `menu.php` uses document-relative links rather than ones relative to the site root. They have been deliberately left like that because, unless you have created a virtual host, the site root is `localhost`, not `phpsol.s`. This is a disadvantage of testing a site in a subfolder of the web server's document root. The Japan Journey site used throughout this book has only one level, so the document-relative links work. When developing a site that uses multiple levels of folders, use site-root-relative links inside your include files and consider setting up a virtual host for testing (see [Chapter 2](#) for details).

Nesting Include Files

Once a file has been included in another, relative paths are calculated from the parent file, not from the included file. This presents problems for functions or class definitions in an external file that need to include another external file.

If both external files are in the same folder, you include a nested file with just the filename, like this:

```
require_once 'Thumbnail.php';
```

In this case, the relative path should *not* begin with `./` because `./` means "start from this folder." With an include file, "this folder" means the parent file's folder, not the include file's folder, resulting in an incorrect path to the nested

file.

When the include files are in different folders, you can build an absolute path to the target file using the PHP constant `__DIR__`. This constant returns the absolute path of the include file's directory (folder) without a trailing slash. Concatenating `__DIR__`, a forward slash, and a document-relative path converts the relative path into an absolute one. For example, let's say this is the relative path from one include file to another:

```
' ../File/Upload.php '
```

You convert it into an absolute path like this:

```
__DIR__ . '/ ../File/Upload.php '
```

For convenience, the forward slash is added to the beginning of the document-relative path. This has the effect of finding the parent folder of the include file, then going back up one level to find the correct path.

You'll see an example of this in use in [Chapter 8](#), where an include file needs to include another file that's in a different folder.

Security Considerations with Includes

Include files are a very powerful feature of PHP. With that power come security risks. As long as the external file is accessible, PHP includes it and incorporates any code into the main script. But, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, include files can be located anywhere. Technically speaking, they can even be on a different server. However, this was considered such a security risk that a new configuration directive, `allow_url_include`, was introduced in PHP 5.2. The default setting is `Off`, so it's now impossible to include files from a different server unless you have complete control over your server's configuration. Unlike `include_path`, the `allow_url_include` directive cannot be overridden except by the server administrator.

Even if you control both servers yourself, you should never include a file from a different server. It's possible for an attacker to spoof the address and try to execute a malicious script on your site.

Chapter Review

This chapter has plunged you headlong into the world of PHP, using includes, arrays, and multidimensional arrays. It has shown you how to extract the name of the current page, display a random image, and get the image's dimensions. You have also learned how to throw and catch exceptions and to redirect to a different page. There's a lot to absorb, so don't worry if it doesn't all sink in the first time. The more you use PHP, the more familiar you'll become with the basic techniques. In the next chapter you'll learn how PHP processes input from online forms and will use that knowledge to send feedback from a website to your email inbox.

CHAPTER 5



Bringing Forms to Life

Forms lie at the very heart of working with PHP. You use forms for logging in to restricted pages, registering new users, placing orders with online stores, entering and updating information in a database, sending feedback . . . and the list goes on. The same principles lie behind all these uses, so the knowledge you gain from this chapter will have practical value in most PHP applications. To demonstrate how to process information from a form, I'm going to show you how to gather feedback from visitors to your site and send it to your mailbox.

Unfortunately, user input can expose your site to malicious attacks. It's important to check data submitted from a form before accepting it. Although HTML5 form elements validate user input in the most recent browsers, you still need to check the data on the server. HTML5 validation helps legitimate users avoid submitting a form with errors, but malicious users can easily sidestep checks performed in the browser. Server-side validation is not optional, but essential. The PHP solutions in this chapter show you how to filter out or block anything suspicious or dangerous. It doesn't take a lot of effort to keep marauders at bay. It's also a good idea to preserve user input and redisplay it if the form is incomplete or errors are discovered.

These solutions build a complete mail-processing script that can be reused in different forms, so it's important to read them in sequence.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- Understanding how user input is transmitted from an online form
- Displaying errors without losing user input
- Validating user input
- Sending user input by email

How PHP Gathers Information from a Form

Although HTML contains all the necessary tags to construct a form, it doesn't provide any means to process the form when submitted. For that, you need a server-side solution, such as PHP.

The Japan Journey website contains a simple feedback form (see [Figure 5-1](#)). Other elements—such as radio buttons, check boxes, and drop-down menus—will be added later.

The screenshot shows a contact form titled "Contact Us" with a placeholder text about user rights. It includes fields for "Name" (text input), "Email" (text input), and "Comments" (text area). A "Send message" button is at the bottom.

Contact Us

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation consectetur adipisicing elit. Velit esse cillum dolore ullamco laboris nisi in reprehenderit in voluptate. Mollit anim id est laborum. Sunt in culpa duis aute irure dolor excepteur sint occaecat.

Name:

Email:

Comments:

Send message

Figure 5-1. Processing a feedback form is one of the most popular uses of PHP

First, let's take a look at the HTML code for the form (it's in `contact_01.php` in the `ch05` folder):

```
<form method="post" action="">
<p>
```

```
<label for="name">Name:</label>
<input name="name" id="name" type="text">
</p>
<p>
    <label for="email">Email:</label>
    <input name="email" id="email" type="text">
</p>
<p>
    <label for="comments">Comments:</label>
    <textarea name="comments" id="comments">
</textarea>
</p>
<p>
    <input name="send" type="submit" value="Send
message">
</p>
</form>
```

The first two `<input>` tags and the `<textarea>` tag contain both `name` and `id` attributes set to the same value. The reason for this duplication is that HTML, CSS, and JavaScript all refer to the `id` attribute. Form-processing scripts, however, rely on the `name` attribute. So, although the `id` attribute is optional, you *must* use the `name` attribute for each element that you want to be processed.

Two other things to notice are the `method` and `action` attributes inside the opening `<form>` tag. The `method` attribute determines how the form sends data. It can be set to either `post` or `get`. The `action` attribute tells the browser where to send the data for processing when the Submit button is clicked. If the value is left empty, as here, the page attempts to process the form itself.

 **Note** I have deliberately avoided using any of the new HTML5 form features, such as `type="email"` and the `required` attribute. This makes it easier to test the PHP server-side validation scripts. After testing, you can update your forms to use the HTML5 validation features. Validation in the browser is mainly a courtesy to the user to prevent incomplete information from being submitted, so it's optional. Server-side validation should never be skipped.

Understanding the Difference Between Post and get

The best way to demonstrate the difference between the `post` and `get` methods is with a real form. If you completed the previous chapter, you can continue working with the same files.

Otherwise, the `ch05` folder contains a complete set of files for the Japan Journey site with all the code from [Chapter 4](#) incorporated in them. Copy `contact_01.php` to the site root and rename it `contact.php`. Also copy the contents of the `ch05/includes` folder to the `includes` folder in the site root.

1. Locate the opening `<form>` tag in `contact.php` and change the value of the `method` attribute from `post` to `get`, like this:

```
<form method="get" action="">
```

2. Save `contact.php` and load the page in a browser. Type your name, email address, and a short message into the form, then click **Send message**.

Name:

David Powers

Email:

david@example.com

Comments:

I hope you get this. ;-)

Send message

3. Look in the browser address bar. You should see the contents of the form attached to the end of the URL, like this:



If you break up the URL, it looks like this:

```
http://localhost/phpsol/contact.php  
?name=David+Powers  
&email=david%40example.com  
&comments=I+hope+you+get+this.+%3B-%29  
&send=Send+message
```

Each line after the basic URL begins with the name attribute of one of the form elements, followed by an equal sign and the contents of the input fields. URLs

cannot contain spaces or certain characters (such as my smiley), so the browser encodes them as hexadecimal values, a process known as **URL encoding** (for a full list of values, see www.w3schools.com/tags/ref_urlencode.asp).

The first `name` attribute is preceded by a question mark (?) and the others by an ampersand (&). You'll see this type of URL when using search engines, which helps explain why everything after the question mark is known as a **query string**.

4. Go back into the code of `contact.php` and change `method` back to `post`, like this:

```
<form method="post" action="">
```

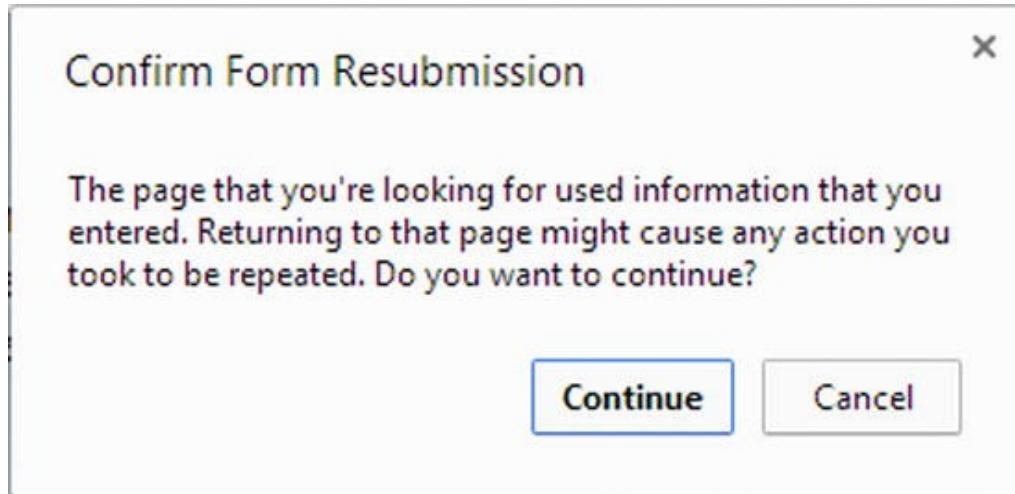
5. Save `contact.php` and reload the page in your browser. Type another message and click **Send message**. Your message should disappear, but nothing else happens. It hasn't been lost, but you haven't done anything to process it yet.
6. In `contact.php`, add the following code immediately below the closing `</form>` tag:

```
<pre>
<?php if ($_POST) { print_r($_POST);
} ?>
</pre>
```

This displays the contents of the `$_POST` superglobal array if any `post` data has been sent. As explained in [Chapter 3](#), the `print_r()` function allows you to inspect the contents of arrays; the `<pre>` tags simply make the output easier to read.

7. Save the page and click the **Refresh** button in your browser. You'll probably see a warning similar to the following. This tells you that the data will be resent, which is exactly what you want. Confirm that you want to

send the information again.



8. The code from step 6 should now display the contents of your message below the form, as shown in [Figure 5-2](#). Everything has been stored in one of PHP's superglobal arrays, `$_POST`, which contains data sent using the `post` method. The `name` attribute of each form element is used as the array key, making it easy to retrieve the content.

```
Send message  
  
Array  
(  
    [name] => David Powers  
    [email] => david@example.com  
    [comments] => So what does post do then?  
    [send] => Send message  
)
```

[Figure 5-2](#). The `$_POST` array uses the form's `name` attributes to identify each element of data

As you have just seen, the `get` method sends your data in a very exposed way, making it vulnerable to alteration. Also, some browsers limit the maximum length of a URL to about 2,000 characters, so the `get` method can be used only for small amounts of data. The `post` method is more secure and can be used for much larger amounts of data. By default, PHP permits up to 8 MB of post data, although hosting companies may set a different limit.

Consequently, you should normally use the `post` method with forms. The `get` method is used mainly in conjunction with database searches; bookmarking your search result is useful because all the search criteria are in the URL. We'll return to the `get` method later in the book. This chapter concentrates on the `post` method and its associated superglobal array, `$_POST`.

■ **Caution** Although the `post` method is more secure than `get`, you shouldn't assume that it's 100% safe. For secure transmission, you need to use encryption or the Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) with a URL that begins with `https://`.

Getting form Data with PHP Superglobals

The `$_POST` superglobal array contains data sent using the `post` method. It should come as no surprise that data sent by the `get` method is in the `$_GET` array.

To access values submitted by a form, just put the `name` attribute of the form element in quotes between square brackets after `$_POST` or `$_GET`, depending on the form's `method` attribute. So `email` becomes `$_POST['email']` if sent by the `post` method, and `$_GET['email']` if sent by the `get` method. That's all there is to it.

You may come across scripts that use `$_REQUEST`, which avoids the need to distinguish between `$_POST` or `$_GET`. It's less secure. Always use `$_POST` or `$_GET`.

Old scripts may use `$HTTP_POST_VARS` or `$HTTP_GET_VARS`, which have the same meaning as `$_POST` and `$_GET`. The old versions don't work on most servers. Use `$_POST` and `$_GET` instead.

■ **Caution** Ignore any "advice" you see about making it easier to get form data by enabling `register_globals` in the PHP configuration. The `register_globals` directive was permanently disabled in PHP 5.4 to improve security. You cannot turn it back on.

Processing and Validating User Input

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to send the input from the form in `contact.php` by email to your inbox. Using the PHP `mail()` function is relatively simple. It takes a minimum of three arguments: the address(es) the email is being sent to, a string containing the subject line, and a string containing the body of the message. You build the body of the message by concatenating (joining) the contents of the input fields into a single string.

Security measures implemented by most Internet service providers (ISPs) make it difficult if not impossible to test the `mail()` function in a local testing environment. Instead of jumping straight into the use of `mail()`, PHP Solutions 5-1 through 5-4 concentrate on validating user input to make sure required fields are filled in and displaying error messages. Implementing these measures makes your online forms more user friendly and secure.

For many years, web designers have used JavaScript to check user input when the Submit button is clicked. That role is being gradually taken over by browsers that support HTML5. This is called **client-side validation** because it happens on the user's computer (or client). It's useful because it's almost instantaneous and can alert the user to a problem without making an unnecessary round trip to the server. However, you should never rely on client-side validation alone because it's too easy to sidestep. All a malicious user has to do is to submit data from a custom script and your checks are rendered useless. It's vital to check user input on the server side with PHP, too.

Creating a Reusable Script

The ability to reuse the same script—perhaps with only a few edits—for multiple websites is a great timesaver. However, sending the input data to a separate file for processing makes it difficult to alert users to errors without losing their input. To get around this problem, the approach taken in this chapter is to use what's known as a **self-processing form**.

When the form is submitted, the page reloads and a conditional statement runs the processing script. If the server-side validation detects errors, the form can be redisplayed with error messages while preserving the user's input.

Parts of the script that are specific to the form will be embedded above the DOCTYPE declaration. The generic, reusable parts of the script will be in a

separate file that can be included in any page that requires an email-processing script.

PHP Solution 5-1: Making Sure Required Fields aren't Blank

When required fields are left blank, you don't get the information you need and the user may never get a reply, particularly if contact details have been omitted.

Continue using the file from the previous exercise. Alternatively, use `contact_02.php` from the `ch05` folder and remove `_02` from the filename.

1. The processing script uses two arrays called `$errors` and `$missing` to store details of errors and required fields that haven't been filled in. These arrays will be used to control the display of error messages alongside the form labels. There won't be any errors when the page first loads, so initialize `$errors` and `$missing` as empty arrays in the PHP code block at the top of `contact.php`, like this:

```
<?php
include './includes/title.php';
$errors = [];
$missing = [];
?>
```

2. The email-processing script should run only if the form has been submitted. As [Figure 5-2](#) shows, the `$_POST` array contains a name/value pair for the Submit button, which is called `send` in `contact.php`. The value of `$_POST['send']` will be defined (set) only if the form has been submitted. So you can use a conditional statement and the `isset()` function to control whether to run the processing script. Add the code highlighted in bold to the PHP block at the top of the page.

```
<?php
include './includes/title.php';
```

```
$errors = [];
$missing = [];
// check if the form has been submitted
if (isset($_POST['send'])) {
    // email processing script
}
?>
```

Note The name attribute of the Submit button in this form is `send`. If you give your Submit button a different name, you need to use that name.

3. Although you won't be sending the email just yet, define two variables to store the destination address and subject line of the email. The following code goes inside the conditional statement that you created in the previous step:

```
if (isset($_POST['send'])) {
    // email processing script
    $to = 'david@example.com'; // use your own
email address
    $subject = 'Feedback from Japan Journey';
}
```

4. Next, create two arrays: one listing the name attribute of each field in the form and the other listing all *required* fields. For the sake of this demonstration, make the `email` field optional, so that only the `name` and `comments` fields are required. Add the following code inside the conditional block immediately after the code that defines the subject line:

```
$subject = 'Feedback from Japan
Journey';
// list expected fields
$expected = ['name', 'email', 'comments'];
// set required fields
$required = ['name', 'comments'];
}
```

Tip Why is the `$expected` array necessary? It's to prevent an attacker from injecting other variables into the `$_POST` array in an attempt to overwrite your default values. By processing only those variables that you expect, your form is much more secure. Any spurious values are ignored.

5. The next section of code is not specific to this form, so it should go in an external file that can be included in any email-processing script. Create a new PHP file called `processmail.php` in the `includes` folder. Then include it in `contact.php` immediately after the code you entered in the previous step, like this:

```
$required = ['name', 'comments'];
require './includes/processmail.php';
}
```

6. The code in `processmail.php` begins by checking the `$_POST` variables for required fields that have been left blank. Strip any default code inserted by your editor and add the following to `processmail.php`:

```
<?php
foreach ($_POST as $key => $value) {
    // assign to temporary variable and
    // strip whitespace if not an array
    $temp = is_array($value) ? $value
    : trim($value);
    // if empty and required, add to
    $missing array
    if (empty($temp) && in_array($key,
$required)) {
        $missing[] = $key;
        ${$key} = '';
    } elseif (in_array($key,
$expected)) {
        // otherwise, assign to
```

```
a variable of the same name as $key  
    ${$key} = $temp;  
}  
}
```

In simple terms, this `foreach` loop goes through the `$_POST` array, strips out any whitespace from text fields, and assigns the field's contents to a variable with the same name (so `$_POST['email']` becomes `$email`, and so on). If a required field is left blank, its `name` attribute is added to the `$missing` array and the related variable is set to an empty string. Only elements in the `$_POST` array with keys listed in the `$required` and `$expected` arrays are processed.

Removing leading and trailing whitespace prevents anyone from pressing the space bar several times in an attempt to avoid filling in a required field. We also get a list of required fields that haven't been filled in, and all the values from the form are assigned to simplified variables. This makes them easier to handle later.

If you don't need to know the details of how the code works, skip to step 7. But if you want to understand the code in depth, read on.

The first line of code inside the loop uses the ternary operator (see “Using the ternary operator” in [Chapter 3](#)). This is a convenient shorthand way of assigning a value depending on whether a condition is true or false. The same line of code could be rewritten like this:

```
if (is_array($value) {  
    $temp = $value;  
} else {  
    $temp = trim($value);  
}
```

The `is_array()` function checks whether the current

value is an array. If it is, the value is assigned, unchanged, to a variable called `$temp`. But if it's not an array, the `trim()` function strips leading and trailing whitespace from the value before assigning it to `$temp`.

The rest of the loop uses a conditional statement to process both the key and value of each element in the `$_POST` array. The first condition uses the `empty()` function to check whether `$temp` still contains a value after any leading and trailing whitespace was stripped off in the previous line. If `empty()` returns true, the `in_array()` function checks if the current array key is in the `$required` array. If that also returns `true`, it means that no value has been set for a required field. So, the two lines of code in the `if` block add the key to the `$missing` array and then dynamically create a variable based on the key's name and set its value to an empty string.

The `elseif` part of the conditional statement checks if the key is in the `$expected` array. If it is, a variable based on the key's name is created dynamically, and the value of `$temp` is assigned to it.

Note For a detailed explanation of how the array key is used to create a new variable with the same name, see “Creating new variables dynamically” in [Chapter 3](#).

7. Save `processmail.php`. You'll add more code to it later, but let's turn now to the main body of `contact.php`. You need to display a warning if anything is missing. Add a conditional statement at the top of the page content between the `<h2>` heading and the first paragraph, like this:

```
<h2>Contact us</h2>
<?php if ($missing || $errors) { ?>
    <p class="warning">Please fix the item(s)
```

```
indicated.</p>
<?php } ?>
<p>Ut enim ad minim veniam . . . </p>
```

This checks `$missing` and `$errors`, which you initialized as empty arrays in step 1. As explained in “The truth according to PHP” in [Chapter 3](#), an empty array is treated as `false`, so the paragraph inside the conditional statement isn’t displayed when the page first loads. However, if a required field hasn’t been filled in when the form is submitted, its name is added to the `$missing` array. An array with at least one element is treated as `true`. The `||` means “or,” so this warning paragraph will be displayed if a required field is left blank or if an error is discovered. (The `$errors` array comes into play in PHP Solution 5-3.)

8. To make sure it works so far, save `contact.php` and load it normally in a browser (don’t click the Refresh button). The warning message is not displayed. Click **Send message** without filling in any of the fields. You should now see the message about missing items, as shown in the following screenshot.



9. To display a suitable message alongside each missing required field, use a PHP conditional statement to insert a `` inside the `<label>` tag, like this:

```
<label for="name">Name:
<?php if ($missing && in_array('name',
$missing)) { ?>
    <span class="warning">Please enter your
```

```
name</span>
<?php } ?>
</label>
```

The first condition checks the `$missing` array. If it's empty, the conditional statement fails and the `` is never displayed. But if `$missing` contains any values, the `in_array()` function checks if the `$missing` array contains the value `name`. If it does, the `` is displayed.

10. Insert similar warnings for the `email` and `comments` fields like this:

```
<label for="email">Email:
<?php if ($missing && in_array('email',
$missing)) { ?>
    <span class="warning">Please enter your
email address</span>
<?php } ?>
</label>
<input name="email" id="email"
type="text">
</p>
<p>
    <label for="comments">Comments:
    <?php if ($missing && in_array('comments',
$missing)) { ?>
        <span class="warning">Please enter your
comments</span>
        <?php } ?>
    </label>
```

The PHP code is the same except for the value you are looking for in the `$missing` array. It's the same as the `name` attribute for the form element.

11. Save `contact.php` and test the page again, first by entering nothing into any of the fields. The form labels should look like [Figure 5-3](#).

Contact Us

Please fix the item(s) indicated.

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercita
cillum dolore ullamco laboris nisi in reprehende
Sunt in culpa duis aute irure dolor excepteur sir

Name: Please enter your name

Email:

Comments: Please enter your comments

Figure 5-3. By validating user input, you can display warnings about required fields

Although you added a warning to the <label> for the email field, it's not displayed because email hasn't been added to the \$required array. As a result, it's not added to the \$missing array by the code in processmail.php.

12. Add email to the \$required array in the code block at the top of comments.php, like this:

```
$required = ['name', 'comments',  
'email'];
```

13. Click Send message again without filling in any fields. This time, you'll see a warning message alongside each label.
14. Type your name in the **Name** field. In the **Email** and **Comments** fields, just press the spacebar several times, then click **Send message**. The warning message alongside the **Name** field disappears, but the other two warning messages remain. The code in processmail.php strips whitespace from text fields, so it rejects attempts to bypass required fields by entering a series of spaces.

If you have any problems, compare your code with

`contact_02.php` and
`includes/processmail_01.php` in the ch05
folder.

All that needs to be done to change the required fields is to change the names in the `$required` array and add a suitable alert inside the `<label>` tag of the appropriate input element inside the form. It's easy to do because you always use the `name` attribute of the form input element.

Preserving User Input when a Form is Incomplete

Imagine you have spent ten minutes filling in a form. You click the Submit button, and back comes the response that a required field is missing. It's infuriating if you have to fill in every field all over again. Since the content of each field is in the `$_POST` array, it's easy to redisplay it when an error occurs.

PHP Solution 5-2: Creating Sticky form fields

This PHP solution shows how to use a conditional statement to extract the user's input from the `$_POST` array and redisplay it in text input fields and text areas.

Continue working with the same files as before. Alternatively, use `contact_02.php` and `includes/processmail_01.php` from the ch05 folder.

- When the page first loads, you don't want anything to appear in the input fields, but you *do* want to redisplay the content if a required field is missing or there's an error. That's the key: if the `$missing` or `$errors` arrays contain any values, the content of each field should be redisplayed. You set default text for a text input field with the `value` attribute of the `<input>` tag, so amend the `<input>` tag for name like this:

```
<input name="name" id="name"  
type="text"
```

```
<?php if ($missing || $errors) {  
    echo 'value="" . htmlentities($name) . ""';  
} ?>>
```

The line inside the curly braces contains a combination of quotes and periods that might confuse you. The first thing to realize is that there's only one semicolon—right at the end—so the `echo` command applies to the whole line. As explained in [Chapter 3](#), a period is called the concatenation operator, which joins strings and variables. You can break down the rest of the line into three sections, as follows:

- `'value="" .`
- `htmlentities($name)`
- `. ""'`

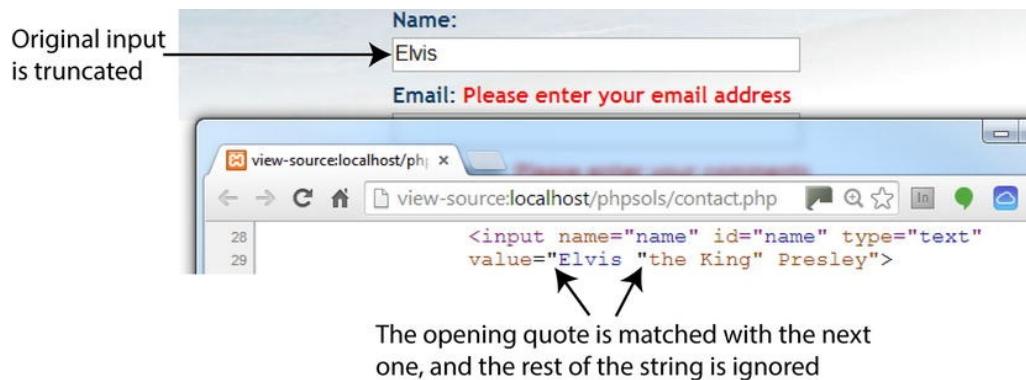
The first section outputs `value=""` as text and uses the concatenation operator to join it to the next section, which passes `$name` to a function called `htmlentities()`. I'll explain what the function does in a moment, but the third section uses the concatenation operator again to join the next section, which consists solely of a double quote. So, if `$missing` or `$errors` contain any values, and `$_POST['name']` contains Joe, you'll end up with this inside the `<input>` tag:

```
<input name="name" id="name"  
type="text" value="Joe">
```

The `$name` variable contains the original user input, which was transmitted through the `$_POST` array. The `foreach` loop that you created in `processmail.php` in PHP Solution 5-1 processes the `$_POST` array and assigns each element to a variable with the same name. This allows you to access `$_POST['name']` simply as `$name`.

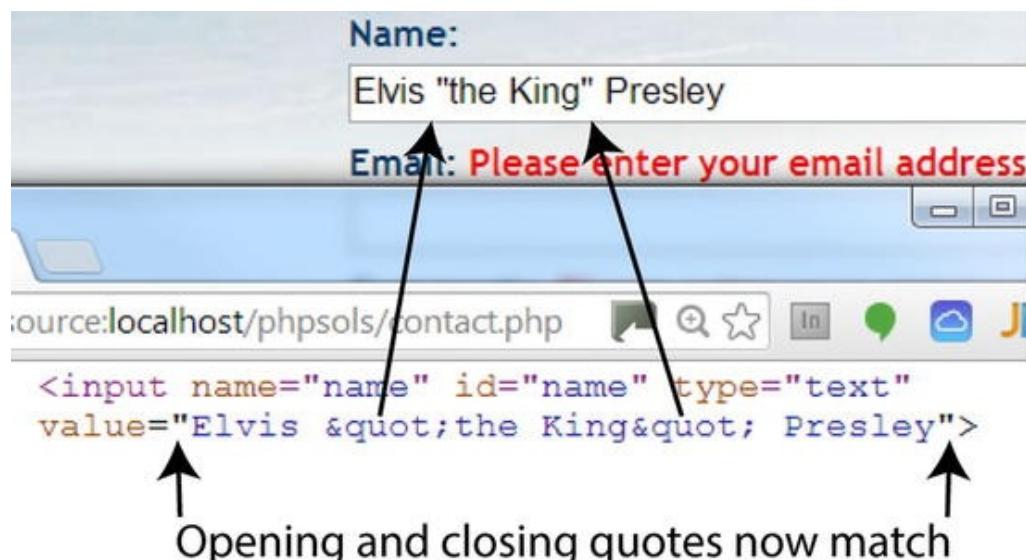
So, what's the `htmlentities()` function for? As the

function name suggests, it converts certain characters to their equivalent HTML character entities. The one you're concerned with here is the double quote. Let's say Elvis really is still alive and decides to send feedback through the form. If you use `$name` on its own, [Figure 5-4](#) shows what happens when a required field is omitted and you don't use `htmlentities()`.



[Figure 5-4](#). Quotes need special treatment before form fields can be redisplayed

Passing the content of the `$_POST` array element to the `htmlentities()`, however, converts the double quotes in the middle of the string to `"`. And, as [Figure 5-5](#) shows, the content is no longer truncated.



[Figure 5-5](#). Passing the value to `htmlentities()` before it's displayed

solves the problem

What's cool about this is that the character entity " is converted back to double quotes when the form is resubmitted. As a result, there's no need for further conversion before the email can be sent.

Note Prior to PHP 5.4, `htmlentities()` used ISO-8859-1 (Western European) as the default encoding for conversion. This was changed to UTF-8 in PHP 5.4. It changed again in PHP 5.6 to the value of `default_charset` in the server's PHP configuration. This latest change won't affect most people because UTF-8 is the default value for `default_charset`. But it does mean you can set your own default encoding if you have particular requirements.

If `htmlentities()` corrupts your text, you can set the encoding directly within a script by passing the second and third optional arguments to the function. For example, to set the encoding to Simplified Chinese, use `htmlentities($name, ENT_COMPAT, 'GB2312')`. For details, see the documentation at <http://php.net/manual/en/function.htmlentities.php>.

2. Edit the `email` field the same way, using `$email` instead of `$name`.
3. The `comments` text area needs to be handled slightly differently because `<textarea>` tags don't have a `value` attribute. You must place the PHP block between the opening and closing tags of the text area, like this (new code is shown in bold):

```
<textarea name="comments"
id="comments"><?php
if ($missing || $errors) {
    echo htmlentities($comments);
```

```
 } ?></textarea>
```

It's important to position the opening and closing PHP tags right up against the `<textarea>` tags. If you don't, you'll get unwanted whitespace inside the text area.

4. Save `contact.php` and test the page in a browser. If any required fields are omitted, the form displays the original content along with any error messages.

You can check your code with `contact_03.php` in the `ch05` folder.

 **Caution** Using this technique prevents a form's reset button from clearing any fields that have been changed by the PHP script. This is a minor inconvenience in comparison with the greater usability offered by preserving existing content when an incomplete form is submitted.

Filtering Out Potential Attacks

A particularly nasty exploit known as **email header injection** seeks to turn online forms into spam relays. A simple way of preventing this is to look for the strings "Content-Type:", "Cc:", and "Bcc:", as these are email headers that the attacker injects into your script to trick it into sending HTML email with copies to many people. If you detect any of these strings in user input, it's a pretty safe bet that you're the target of an attack, so you should block the message. An innocent message may also be blocked, but the advantages of stopping an attack outweigh that small risk.

PHP Solution 5-3: Blocking Emails that Contain Specific Phrases

This PHP solution checks the user input for suspect phrases. If one is detected, a Boolean variable is set to `true`. This will be used later to prevent the email

from being sent.

Continue working with the same page as before. Alternatively, use `contact_03.php` and `includes/processmail_01.php` from the `ch05` folder.

1. PHP conditional statements rely on a true/false test to determine whether to execute a section of code. The way to filter out suspect phrases is to create a Boolean variable that is switched to `true` as soon as one of those phrases is detected. The detection is done using a search pattern or **regular expression**. Add the following code at the top of `processmail.php` before the existing `foreach` loop:

```
// assume nothing is suspect
$suspect = false;
// create a pattern to locate suspect phrases
$pattern = '/Content-Type:|Bcc:|Cc:/i';
foreach ($_POST as $key => $value) {
```

The string assigned to `$pattern` will be used to perform a case-insensitive search for any of the following: “Content-Type:”, “Bcc:”, or “Cc:”. It’s written in a format called Perl-compatible regular expression (PCRE). The search pattern is enclosed in a pair of forward slashes, and the `i` after the final slash makes the pattern case-insensitive.

Tip For a basic introduction to regular expressions (regex), see my tutorial at www.adobe.com/devnet/dreamweaver/articles/regular_expressions.html. For a more in-depth treatment, *Regular Expressions Cookbook, 2nd Edition* by Jan Goyvaerts and Steven Levithan (O’Reilly, 2012, ISBN: 978-1-4493-1943-4) is excellent.

2. You can now use the PCRE stored in `$pattern` to filter out any suspect user input from the `$_POST` array. At the moment, each element of the `$_POST` array contains only

a string. However, multiple-choice form elements, such as check-box groups, return an array of results. So you need to tunnel down any subarrays and check the content of each element separately. That's what the following custom-built function `isSuspect()` does. Insert it immediately after the `$pattern` variable from step 1:

```
$pattern = '/Content-Type:|Bcc:|Cc:/i';

// function to check for suspect phrases
function isSuspect($val, $pattern, &$suspect) {
    // if the variable is an array, loop through
    // each element
    // and pass it recursively back to the same
    function
    if (is_array($val)) {
        foreach ($val as $item) {
            isSuspect($item, $pattern,
$suspect);
        }
    } else {
        // if one of the suspect phrases is
        found, set Boolean to true
        if (preg_match($pattern, $val)) {
            $suspect = true;
        }
    }
}
foreach ($_POST as $key => $value) {
```

The `isSuspect()` function is a piece of code that you may want to just copy and paste without delving too deeply into how it works. The important thing to notice is that the third argument has an ampersand (&) in front of it (`&$suspect`). This means that any changes made to the variable passed as the third argument to `isSuspect()` will affect the value of that variable elsewhere in the script. This technique is known as **passing by reference** (see “Passing by reference—changing the value of an argument” in [Chapter 3](#)).

The other feature of this function is that it's what's known

as a **recursive function**. It keeps on calling itself until it finds a value that it can compare against the regex using the `preg_match()` function, which returns `true` if it finds a match.

3. To call the function, pass it as arguments the `$_POST` array, the pattern, and the `$suspect` Boolean variable. Insert the following code immediately after the function definition:

```
// check the $_POST array and any  
// subarrays for suspect content  
isSuspect($_POST, $pattern, $suspect);
```

Note You don't put an ampersand in front of `$suspect` this time. The ampersand is required only when you define the function in step 2, not when you call it.

4. If suspect phrases are detected, the value of `$suspect` changes to `true`. There's also no point in processing the `$_POST` array any further. Wrap the code that processes the `$_POST` variables in a conditional statement like this:

```
if (!$suspect) {  
    foreach ($_POST as $key => $value)  
    {  
        // assign to temporary variable  
        // and strip whitespace if not an array  
        $temp = is_array($value)  
        ? $value : trim($value);  
        // if empty and required, add to  
        // $missing array  
        if (empty($temp) &&  
            in_array($key, $required)) {  
            $missing[] = $key;  
            ${$key} = '';  
        } elseif (in_array($key,
```

```

$expected)) {
    // otherwise, assign to
    a variable of the same name as $key
    ${$key} = $temp;
}
}
}

```

This processes the variables in the `$_POST` array only if `$suspect` is not `true`.

Don't forget the extra curly brace to close the conditional statement.

5. Edit the PHP block after the `<h2>` heading in `contact.php` to add a new warning message above the form, like this:

```

<h2>Contact Us</h2>
<?php if ($_POST && $suspect) { ?>
    <p class="warning">Sorry, your mail could
    not be sent.
    Please try later.</p>
<?php } elseif ($missing || $errors) { ?>
    <p class="warning">Please fix the
    item(s) indicated.</p>
<?php } ?>

```

This sets a new condition that takes priority over the original warning message by being considered first. It checks if the `$_POST` array contains any elements—in other words, the form has been submitted—and if `$suspect` is `true`. The warning is deliberately neutral in tone. There's no point in provoking attackers. More important, it avoids offending anyone who may have innocently used a suspect phrase.

6. Save `contact.php` and test the form by typing one of the suspect phrases in one of the fields. You should see the second warning message, but your input won't be preserved.

You can check your code against `contact_04.php` and `includes/processmail_02.php` in the `ch05` folder.

Sending Email

Before proceeding any further, it's necessary to explain how the PHP `mail()` function works, because it will help you understand the rest of the processing script.

The PHP `mail()` function takes up to five arguments, all of them strings, as follows:

- The address(es) of the recipient(s)
- The subject line
- The message body
- A list of other email headers (optional)
- Additional parameters (optional)

Email addresses in the first argument can be in either of the following formats:

```
'user@example.com'  
'Some Guy <user2@example.com>'
```

To send to more than one address, use a comma-separated string like this:

```
'user@example.com, another@example.com, Some Guy  
<user2@example.com>'
```

The message body must be presented as a single string. This means that you need to extract the input data from the `$_POST` array and format the message, adding labels to identify each field. By default, the `mail()` function supports only plain text. New lines must use both a carriage return and newline character. It's also recommended to restrict the length of lines to no more than 78 characters. Although it sounds complicated, you can build the message body automatically with about 20 lines of PHP code, as you'll see in PHP Solution 5-

5.

Adding other email headers is covered in detail in the next section.

Many hosting companies now make the fifth argument a requirement. It ensures that the email is sent by a trusted user, and it normally consists of your own email address prefixed by `-f` (without a space in between), all enclosed in quotes. Check your hosting company's instructions to see whether this is required and the exact format it should take.

Using Additional Email Headers Safely

You can find a full list of email headers at www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc2076, but some of the most well-known and useful ones enable you to send copies of an email to other addresses (Cc and Bcc) or to change the encoding. Each new header, except the final one, must be on a separate line terminated by a carriage return and new line character. This means using the `\r` and `\n` escape sequences in double-quoted strings (see Table 3-4 in [Chapter 3](#)).

By default, `mail()` uses Latin1 (ISO-8859-1) encoding, which doesn't support accented characters. Webpage editors these days frequently use Unicode (UTF-8), which supports most written languages, including the accents commonly used in European languages, as well as nonalphabetic scripts, such as Chinese and Japanese. To ensure that email messages aren't garbled, use the `Content-Type` header to set the encoding to UTF-8, like this:

```
$headers = "Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8\r\n";
```

You also need to add UTF-8 as the `charset` attribute in a `<meta>` tag in the `<head>` of your webpages like this in HTML5:

```
<meta charset="utf-8">
```

If you're still using HTML 4.01, the `<meta>` tag is more verbose:

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8">
```

Let's say you also want to send copies of messages to other departments, plus a copy to another address that you don't want the others to see. Email sent by `mail()` is often identified as coming from `nobody@yourdomain` (or

whatever username is assigned to the web server), so it's a good idea to add a more user-friendly "From" address. This is how you build those additional headers, using the combined concatenation operator (.=) to add each one to the existing variable:

```
$headers .= "From: Japan  
Journey<feedback@example.com>\r\n";  
$headers .= "Cc: sales@example.com,  
finance@example.com\r\n";  
$headers .= 'Bcc:  
secretplanning@example.comSPI_AMP#x0027;;'
```

After building the set of headers you want to use, you pass the variable containing them as the fourth argument to `mail()`, like this (assuming that the destination address, subject, and message body have already been stored in variables):

```
$mailSent = mail($to, $subject, $message, $headers);
```

Hard-coded additional headers like this present no security risk, but anything that comes from user input must be filtered before it's used. The biggest danger comes from a text field that asks for the user's email address. A widely used technique is to incorporate the user's email address into a `From` or `Reply-To` header, which enables you to reply directly to incoming messages by clicking the Reply button in your email program. It's very convenient, but attackers frequently try to pack an email input field with a large number of spurious headers.

Although email fields are the prime target for attackers, the destination address and subject line are both vulnerable if you let users change the value. User input should always be regarded as suspect. PHP Solution 5-3 performs only a basic test for suspect phrases. Before using external input directly in a header you need to apply a more rigorous test, as seen in PHP Solution 5-4.

PHP Solution 5-4: Adding Headers and Automating the Reply Address

This PHP solution adds three headers to the email: `From`, `Content-Type` (to set the encoding to UTF-8), and `Reply-To`. Before adding the user's email

address to the final header, it uses a built-in PHP filter to verify that the submitted value conforms to the format of a valid email address.

Continue working with the same page as before. Alternatively, use `contact_04.php` and `includes/processmail_02.php` from the `ch05` folder.

1. Headers are often specific to a particular website or page, so the `From` and `Content-Type` headers will be added to the script in `contact.php`. Add the following code to the PHP block at the top of the page just before `processmail.php` is included:

```
$required = ['name', 'comments',
'email'];
// create additional headers
$headers = "From: Japan
Journey<feedback@example.com>\r\n";
$headers .= 'Content-Type: text/plain;
charset=utf-8';
require './includes/processmail.php';
```

The `\r\n` at the end of the `From` header is an escape sequence that inserts a carriage return and newline character, so the string must be in double quotes. At the moment, `Content-Type` is the final header, so it isn't followed by a carriage return or newline character, and the string is in single quotes.

2. The purpose of validating the email address is to make sure it's in a valid format, but the field might be empty because you decide not to make it required or because the user simply ignored it. If the field is required but empty, it will be added to the `$missing` array, and the warning you added in PHP Solution 5-1 will be displayed. If the field isn't empty, but the input is invalid, you need to display a different message.

Switch to `processmail.php` and add this code at the bottom of the script:

```
// validate the user's email
```

```
if (!$suspect && !empty($email)) {
    $validemail
= filter_input(INPUT_POST, 'email',
FILTER_VALIDATE_EMAIL);
    if ($validemail) {
        $headers .= "\r\nReply-To:
$validemail";
    } else {
        $errors['email'] = true;
    }
}
```

This begins by checking that no suspect phrases have been found and that the `email` field isn't empty. Both conditions are preceded by the logical Not operator (`!`), so they return `true` if `$suspect` and `empty($email)` are both `false`. The `foreach` loop you added in PHP Solution 5-1 assigns all expected elements in the `$_POST` array to simpler variables, so `$email` contains the same value as `$_POST['email']`.

The next line uses `filter_input()` to validate the email address. The first argument is a PHP constant, `INPUT_POST`, which specifies that the value must be in the `$_POST` array. The second argument is the name of the element you want to test. The final argument is another PHP constant that specifies you want to check that the element conforms to the valid format for an email.

The `filter_input()` function returns the value being tested if it's valid. Otherwise, it returns `false`. So, if the value submitted by the user looks like a valid email address, `$validemail` contains the address. If the format is invalid, `$validemail` is `false`. The `FILTER_VALIDATE_EMAIL` constant accepts only a single email address, so any attempt to insert multiple email addresses will be rejected.

Note FILTER_VALIDATE_EMAIL checks the format, not whether the address is genuine.

If \$validemail isn't false, it's safe to incorporate into a Reply-To email header. Since the last value added to \$headers in step 1 doesn't end with a carriage return and newline character, they're added before Reply-To. When building the \$headers string, it doesn't matter whether you put the \r\n at the end of a header or at the beginning of the next one, as long as a carriage return and newline character separate them.

If \$validemail is false, \$errors['email'] is added to the \$errors array.

3. You now need to amend the <label> for the email field in contact.php, like this:

```
<label for="email">Email:  
<?php if ($missing && in_array('email',  
$missing)) { ?>  
    <span class="warning">Please enter  
your email address</span>  
<?php } elseif (isset($errors['email'])) { ?>  
    <span class="warning">Invalid email  
address</span>  
<?php } ?>  
</label>
```

This adds an elseif clause to the first conditional statement and displays a different warning if the email address fails validation.

4. Save contact.php and test the form by leaving all fields blank and clicking **Send message**. You'll see the original error message. Test it again by entering a value that isn't an email address in the Email field. This time, you'll see the invalid message. The same happens if you enter two email addresses.

You can check your code against `contact_05.php` and `includes/processmail_03.php` in the `ch05` folder.

PHP Solution 5-5: Building the message Body and Sending the Mail

Many PHP tutorials show how to build the message body manually like this:

```
$message = "Name: $name\r\n\r\n";
$message .= "Email: $email\r\n\r\n";
$message .= "Comments: $comments";
```

This adds labels to identify which field the input comes from and inserts two carriage returns and newline characters between each one. This is fine for a small number of fields, but it soon becomes tedious with more fields. As long as you give your form fields meaningful `name` attributes, you can build the message body automatically with a `foreach` loop, which is the approach taken in this PHP solution.

 **Caution** The `name` attribute must not contain spaces. To use multiple words to name form fields, join them with an underscore or hyphen; for example, `first_name` or `first-name`.

Continue working with the same files as before. Alternatively, use `contact_05.php` and `includes/processmail_03.php` from the `ch05` folder.

1. Add the following code at the bottom of the script in `processmail.php`:

```
$mailSent = false;
```

This initializes a variable that will be used to redirect the user to a thank you page after the mail has been sent. It needs to be set to `false` until you know the `mail()` function has succeeded.

- Now add the code that builds the message. It goes immediately after the variable you just initialized:

```
// go ahead only if not suspect, all
// required fields OK, and no errors
if (!$suspect && !$missing && !$errors)
{
    // initialize the $message variable
    $message = '';
    // loop through the $expected array
    foreach($expected as $item) {
        // assign the value of the
        current item to $val
        if (isset(${$item}) &&
            !empty(${$item})) {
            $val = ${$item};
        } else {
            // if it has no value, assign
            'Not selected'
            $val = 'Not selected';
        }
        // if an array, expand as comma-
        separated string
        if (is_array($val)) {
            $val = implode(', ', $val);
        }
        // replace underscores and
        hyphens in the label with spaces
        $item = str_replace(['_', '-'],
                           ' ', $item);
        // add label and value to the
        message body
        $message .= ucfirst($item).":"
        $val\r\n\r\n";
    }
    // limit line length to 70
    characters
    $message = wordwrap($message, 70);
    $mailSent = true;
```

```
}
```

This is another complex block of code that you might prefer to just copy and paste. Still, you need to know what it does. In brief, the code checks that `$suspect`, `$missing`, and `$errors` are all `false`. If they are, it builds the message body by looping through the `$expected` array, storing the result in `$message` as a series of label/value pairs.

The key to understanding how this code works lies in the following conditional statement:

```
if (isset(${$item}) &&
!empty(${$item})) {
    $val = ${$item};
}
```

The rather odd-looking `${$item}` dynamically creates a variable based on the value of `$item`. This is another example of using a variable variable (see “Creating new variables dynamically” in [Chapter 3](#)). Each time the loop runs, `$item` contains the value of the current element in the `$expected` array. The first element is `name`, so `${$item}` dynamically creates a variable called `$name`. In effect, the conditional statement becomes this:

```
if (isset($name) && !empty($name)) {
    $val = $name;
}
```

On the next pass through the loop, `${$item}` creates a variable called `$email`, and so on.

Caution The vital point about this script is that it builds the message body only from items in the `$expected` array. You must list the names of all form fields in the `$expected` array for it to work.

If a field that's not specified as required is left empty, its value is set to "Not selected." The code also processes values from multiple-choice elements, such as check-box groups and <select> lists, which are transmitted as subarrays of the \$_POST array. The `implode()` function converts the subarrays into comma-separated strings.

Each label is derived from the input field's `name` attribute in the current element of the `$expected` array. The first argument to `str_replace()` is an array containing an underscore and a hyphen. If either character is found in the `name` attribute, it's replaced by the second argument, a string consisting of a single space. The first letter is then set to uppercase by `ucfirst()`.

After the message body has been combined into a single string, it's passed to the `wordwrap()` function to limit the line length to 70 characters. The code that sends the email still needs to be added, but for testing purposes, `$mailSent` has been set to `true`.

3. Save `processmail.php`. Locate this code block at the bottom of `contact.php`:

```
<pre>
<?php if ($_POST) {print_r($_POST);} ?>
</pre>
```

Change it to this:

```
<pre>
<?php if ($_POST && $mailSent) {
    echo "Message body\n\n";
    echo htmlentities($message) . "\n";
    echo 'Headers: ' . htmlentities($headers);
} ?>
</pre>
```

This checks that the form has been submitted and the mail

is ready to send. It then displays the values in `$message` and `$headers`. Both values are passed to `htmlentities()` to ensure they display correctly in the browser.

4. Save `contact.php`, and test the form by entering your name, email address, and a brief comment. When you click **Send message**, you should see the message body and headers displayed at the bottom of the page, as shown in [Figure 5-6](#).

The screenshot shows a web page with a form and its resulting output. At the top is a 'Send message' button. Below it is a 'Message body' section containing form inputs: 'Name: David Powers' and 'Email: david@example.com'. Underneath is a 'Comments:' section with the text: 'Comments: This is a test of the email processing script. If all goes well, the message body and headers should be displayed at the bottom of the page.' At the very bottom of the page, the 'Headers:' section displays the generated email headers: 'Headers: From: Japan Journey<feedback@example.com>', 'Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8', and 'Reply-To: david@example.com'.

Figure 5-6. Verifying that the message body and headers are correctly formed

Assuming that the message body and headers display correctly at the bottom of the page, you're ready to add the code to send the email. If your code didn't work, check it against `contact_06.php` and `includes/processmail_04.php` in the `ch05` folder.

5. In `processmail.php`, add the code to send the mail. Locate the following line:

```
$mailSent = true;
```

Change it to this:

```
$mailSent = mail($to, $subject, $message,  
$headers);
```

```
if (!$mailSent) {
    $errors['mailfail'] = true;
}
```

This passes the destination address, subject line, message body, and headers to the `mail()` function, which returns `true` if it succeeds in handing the email to the web server's mail transport agent (MTA). If it fails—perhaps because the mail server is down—`$mailSent` is set to `false`, and the conditional statement adds an element to the `$errors` array, allowing you to preserve the user's input when the form is redisplayed.

6. In the PHP block at the top of `contact.php`, add the following conditional statement immediately after the command that includes `processmail.php`:

```
require
'./includes/processmail.php';
if ($mailSent) {
    header('Location:
http://www.example.com/thank\_you.php');
    exit;
}
?>
```

Replace `www.example.com` with your own domain name. This checks if `$mailSent` is `true`. If it is, the `header()` function redirects the user to `thank_you.php`, a page acknowledging that the message has been sent. The `exit` command on the following line ensures that the script is terminated after the page has been redirected.

There's a copy of `thank_you.php` in the `ch05` folder.

7. If `$mailSent` is `false`, `contact.php` is redisplayed; you need to warn the user that the message couldn't be sent. Edit the conditional statement just after the `<h2>` heading, like this:

```
<h2>Contact Us </h2>
<?php if (($_POST && $suspect) || ($_POST
&& isset($errors['mailfail']))) { ?>
    <p class="warning">Sorry, your mail
could not be sent. . . .
```

The original and new conditions have been wrapped in parentheses, so each pair is considered as a single entity. The warning about the message not being sent is displayed if the form has been submitted and suspect phrases have been found, *or* if the form has been submitted and `$errors['mailfail']` has been set.

8. Delete the code block (including the `<pre>` tags) that displays the message body and headers at the bottom of `contact.php`.
9. Testing this locally is likely to result in the thank you page being shown, but the email never arriving. This is because most testing environments don't have an MTA. Even if you set one up, most mail servers reject mail from unrecognized sources. Upload `contact.php` and all related files, including `processmail.php` and `thank_you.php`, to your remote server and test the contact form there. Don't forget that `processmail.php` needs to be in a subfolder called `includes`.

You can check your code with `contact_07.php` and `includes/processmail_05.php` in the `ch05` folder.

Troubleshooting mail()

It's important to understand that `mail()` isn't an email program. PHP's responsibility ends as soon as it passes the address, subject, message, and headers to the MTA. It has no way of knowing if the email is delivered to its intended destination. Normally, email arrives instantaneously, but network logjams can delay it by hours or even a couple of days.

If you're redirected to the thank you page after sending a message from `contact.php`, but nothing arrives in your inbox, check the following:

- Has the message been caught by a spam filter?
- Have you checked the destination address stored in `$to`? Try an alternative email address to see if it makes a difference.
- Have you used a genuine address in the `From` header? Using a fake or invalid address is likely to cause the mail to be rejected. Use a valid address that belongs to the same domain as your web server.
- Check with your hosting company to see if the fifth argument to `mail()` is required. If so, it should normally be a string composed of `-f` followed by your email address. For example, `david@example.com` becomes '`-fdavid@example.com`'.

If you still don't receive messages from `contact.php`, create a file with this script:

```
<?php
ini_set('display_errors', '1');
$mailSent = mail('you@example.com', 'PHP mail test',
'This is a test email');
if ($mailSent) {
    echo 'Mail sent';
} else {
    echo 'Failed';
}
```

Replace `you@example.com` with your own email address. Upload the file to your website and load the page into a browser.

If you see an error message about there being no `From` header, add one as a fourth argument to the `mail()` function, like this:

```
$mailSent = mail('you@example.com', 'PHP mail test',
'This is a test email',
'From: me@example.com');
```

It's usually a good idea to use a different address from the destination address in the first argument.

If your hosting company requires the fifth argument, adjust the code like this:

```
$mailSent = mail('you@example.com', 'PHP mail test',
'This is a test email', null,
'-fme@example.com');
```

Using the fifth argument normally replaces the need to supply a `From` header, so using `null` (without quotes) as the fourth argument indicates that it has no value.

If you see “**Mail sent**” and no mail arrives, or you see “**Failed**” after trying all five arguments, consult your hosting company for advice.

If you receive the test email from this script but not from `contact.php`, it means you have made a mistake in the code or that you have forgotten to upload `processmail.php`. Also turn on the display of errors temporarily, as described in “Why is my page blank?” in [Chapter 3](#), to check that `contact.php` is able to find `processmail.php`.

Handling Multiple-Choice Form Elements

The form in `contact.php` uses only text input fields and a text area. To work successfully with forms, you also need to know how to handle multiple-choice elements, namely:

- Radio buttons
- Check boxes
- Drop-down option menus
- Multiple-choice lists

The principle behind them is the same as the text input fields you have been working with: the `name` attribute of the form element is used as the key in the `$_POST` array. However, there are some important differences:

- Check-box groups and multiple-choice lists store selected values as an array, so you need to add an empty pair of square brackets at the end of the `name` attribute for these types of input. For example, for a check-box group called `interests`, the `name` attribute in each `<input>` tag should be `name="interests[]"`. If you omit the square brackets, only the last item selected is transmitted through the `$_POST` array.
- The values of selected items in a check-box group or multiple-choice list are transmitted as a subarray of the `$_POST` array. The code in PHP Solution 5-5 automatically converts these subarrays to comma-separated strings. However, when using a form for other purposes, you need to extract the values from the subarrays. You'll see how to do so in later chapters.
- Radio buttons, check boxes, and multiple-choice lists are *not* included in the `$_POST` array if no value is selected. Consequently, it's vital to use `isset()` to check for their existence before attempting to access their values when processing the form.

The remaining PHP solutions in this chapter show how to handle multiple-choice form elements. Rather than go through each step in detail, I'll just highlight the important points. Bear the following points in mind when working through the rest of this chapter:

- Processing these elements relies on the code in `processmail.php`.
- You must add the `name` attribute of each element to the `$expected` array for it to be added to the message body.
- To make a field required, add its `name` attribute to the `$required` array.
- If a field that's not required is left blank, the code in `processmail.php` sets its value to "Not selected."

[Figure 5-7](#) shows `contact.php` with each type of input added to the

original design.

Contact Us

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation consectetur adipisicing elit. Velit esse cillum dolore ullamco laboris nisi in reprehenderit in voluptate. Mollit anim id est laborum. Sunt in culpa duis aute irure dolor excepteur sint occaecat.

Name:

Email:

Comments:

Subscribe to newsletter?

Yes No

Interests in Japan

<input type="checkbox"/> Anime/manga	<input type="checkbox"/> Language/literature
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts & crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Science & technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Judo, karate, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel

How did you hear of Japan Journey?

Select one ▾

What characteristics do you associate with Japan?

Dynamic
Honest
Pacifist
Devious
Inscrutable
Warlike ▾

I accept the terms of using this website

Figure 5-7. The feedback form with examples of multiple-choice form elements

Tip HTML5 adds many new types of form input. They all use the `name` attribute and send values as text or as a subarray of the `$_POST` array, so you should be able to adapt the code accordingly.

PHP Solution 5-6: Handling Radio-Button Groups

Radio-button groups let you pick only one value. Although it's common to set a default value in the HTML markup, it's not obligatory. This PHP solution shows how to handle both scenarios.

1. The simple way to deal with radio buttons is to make one of them the default. The radio group is always included in the `$_POST` array because a value is always selected.

The code for a radio group with a default value looks like this (the `name` attributes and PHP code are highlighted in bold):

```
<fieldset id="subscribe">
    <h2>Subscribe to newsletter?</h2>
    <p>
        <input name="subscribe" type="radio"
value="Yes" id="subscribe-yes"
        <?php
            if ($_POST && $_POST['subscribe'] == 'Yes')
{
            echo 'checked';
        } ?>>
        <label for="subscribe-
yes">Yes</label>
        <input name="subscribe" type="radio"
value="No" id="subscribe-no"
        <?php
            if (!$POST || $POST['subscribe'] == 'No')
{
            echo 'checked';
        } ?>>
        <label for="subscribe-
```

```
no">No</label>
</p>
</fieldset>
```

All members of the radio group share the same `name` attribute. Because only one value can be selected, the `name` attribute does *not* end with a pair of empty brackets.

The conditional statement related to the Yes button checks `$_POST` to see if the form has been submitted. If it has and the value of `$_POST['subscribe']` is “Yes,” the `checked` attribute is added to the `<input>` tag.

In the **No** button, the conditional statement uses `||` (or). The first condition is `!$_POST`, which is `true` when the form hasn’t been submitted. If `true`, the `checked` attribute is added as the default value when the page first loads. If `false`, it means the form has been submitted, so the value of `$_POST['subscribe']` is checked.

- When a radio button doesn’t have a default value, it’s not included in the `$_POST` array, so it isn’t detected by the loop in `processmail.php` that builds the `$missing` array. To ensure that the radio button element is included in the `$_POST` array, you need to test for its existence after the form has been submitted. If it isn’t included, you need to set its value to an empty string, like this:

```
$required = ['name', 'comments',
'email', 'subscribe'];
// set default values for variables that might
not exist
if (!isset($_POST['subscribe'])) {
    $_POST['subscribe'] = '';
}
```

- If the radio-button group is required but not selected, you need to display an error message when the form reloads. You also need to change the conditional statements in the `<input>` tags to reflect the different behavior.

The following listing shows the subscribe radio-button group from `contact_08.php`, with all the PHP code highlighted in bold:

```
<fieldset id="subscribe">
    <h2>Subscribe to newsletter?
    <?php if ($missing && in_array('subscribe',
$missing)) { ?>
        <span class="warning">Please make
a selection</span>
    <?php } ?>
    </h2>
    <p>
        <input name="subscribe"
type="radio" value="Yes" id="subscribe-
yes"
        <?php
        if ($_POST && $_POST['subscribe'] == 'Yes')
{
            echo 'checked';
        } ?>>
        <label for="subscribe-
yes">Yes</label>
        <input name="subscribe"
type="radio" value="No" id="subscribe-
no"
        <?php
        if ($_POST && $_POST['subscribe'] == 'No') {
            echo 'checked';
        } ?>>
        <label for="subscribe-
no">No</label>
    </p>
</fieldset>
```

The conditional statement that controls the warning message in the `<h2>` tag uses the same technique as for the text input fields. The message is displayed if the radio group is a required item and it's in the `$missing` array.

The conditional statement surrounding the checked attribute is the same in both radio buttons. It checks if the form has been submitted and displays the checked attribute only if the value in `$_POST['subscribe']` matches.

PHP Solution 5-7: Handling Check-Box Groups

Check boxes can be used individually or in groups. The method of handling them is slightly different. This PHP solution shows how to deal with a check-box group called `interests`. PHP Solution 5-10 explains how to handle a single check box.

When used as a group, all check boxes in the group share the same `name` attribute, which needs to end with an empty pair of square brackets in order for PHP to transmit the selected values as an array. To identify which check boxes have been selected, each one needs a unique `value` attribute.

If no items are selected, the check-box group is not included in the `$_POST` array. After the form has been submitted, you need to check the `$_POST` array to see if it contains a subarray for the check-box group. If it doesn't, you need to create an empty subarray as the default value for the script in `processmail.php`.

1. To save space, just the first two check boxes of the group are shown. The `name` attribute and PHP sections of code are highlighted in bold.

```
<fieldset id="interests">
<h2>Interests in Japan</h2>
<div>
    <p>
        <input type="checkbox"
name="interests[]" value="Anime/manga"
            id="anime"
            <?php
                if ($_POST && in_array('Anime/manga',
                    $_POST['interests'])) {
                    echo 'checked';
                } ?>>
```

```

<label
for="anime">Anime/manga</label>
</p>
<p>
    <input type="checkbox"
name="interests[]" value="Arts & crafts"
id="art"
<?php
    if ($_POST && in_array('Arts & crafts',
$_POST['interests'])) {
        echo 'checked';
    } ?>
    <label for="art">Arts &
crafts</label>
</p>
.
.
</div>
</fieldset>
```

Each check box shares the same `name` attribute, which ends with an empty pair of square brackets, so the data is treated as an array. If you omit the brackets, `$_POST['interests']` contains the value of only the first check box selected.

Note Although the brackets must be added to the `name` attribute for multiple selections, the subarray of selected values is in `$_POST['interests']`, not `$_POST['interests[]']`.

The PHP code inside each check-box element performs the same role as in the radio-button group, wrapping the `checked` attribute in a conditional statement. The first condition checks that the form has been submitted. The second condition uses the `in_array()` function to check whether the `value` associated with that check box is in the `$_POST['interests']` subarray. If it is, it means the check box was selected.

- After the form has been submitted, you need to check for the existence of `$_POST['interests']`. If it hasn't been set, you must create an empty array as the default value for the rest of the script to process. The code follows the same pattern as for the radio group:

```
$required = ['name', 'comments',
'email', 'subscribe', 'interests'];
// set default values for variables
that might not exist
if (!isset($_POST['subscribe'])) {
    $_POST['subscribe'] = '';
}
if (!isset($_POST['interests'])) {
    $_POST['interests'] = [];
}
```

- To set a minimum number of required check boxes, use the `count()` function to confirm the number of values transmitted from the form. If it's less than the minimum required, add the group to the `$errors` array, like this:

```
if (!isset($_POST['interests'])) {
    $_POST['interests'] = [];
}
// minimum number of required check boxes
$minCheckboxes = 2;
if (count($_POST['interests']) < $minCheckboxes)
{
    $errors['interests'] = true;
}
```

The `count()` function returns the number of elements in an array, so this creates `$errors['interests']` if fewer than two check boxes have been selected. You might be wondering why I have used a variable instead of the number like this:

```
if (count($_POST['interests']) < 2) {
```

This certainly works and it involves less typing, but

`$minCheckboxes` can be reused in the error message. Storing the number in a variable means this condition and the error message always remain in sync.

4. The error message in the body of the form looks like this:

```
<h2>Interests in Japan
<?php if (isset($errors['interests'])) { ?>
    <span class="warning">Please select at least
<?= $minCheckboxes;?></span>
<?php } ?>
</h2>
```

PHP Solution 5-8: Using a Drop-down Option Menu

Drop-down option menus created with the `<select>` tag are similar to radio-button groups in that they normally allow the user to pick only one option from several. Where they differ is one item is always selected in a drop-down menu, even if it's only the first item inviting the user to select one of the others. As a result, the `$_POST` array always contains an element referring to a `<select>` menu, whereas a radio-button group is ignored unless a default value is preset.

1. The following code shows the first two items from the drop-down menu in `contact_08.php`, with the PHP code highlighted in bold. As with all multiple-choice elements, the PHP code wraps the attribute that indicates which item has been chosen. Although this attribute is called `checked` in both radio buttons and check boxes, it's called `selected` in `<select>` menus and lists. It's important to use the correct attribute to redisplay the selection if the form is submitted with required items missing. When the page first loads, the `$_POST` array contains no elements, so you can select the first `<option>` by testing for `!$_POST`. Once the form is submitted, the `$_POST` array always contains an element from a drop-down menu, so you don't need to test for its existence.

```
<p>
```

```

        <label for="howhear">How did you
        hear of Japan Journey?</label>
        <select name="howhear"
        id="howhear">
            <option value="No reply"
            <?php
            if (!$_POST || $_POST['howhear'] == 'No
            reply') {
                echo 'selected';
            } ?>>Select one</option>
            <option value="Apress"
            <?php
            if (isset($_POST && $_POST['howhear'] ==
            'Apress') {
                echo 'selected';
            } ?>>Apress</option>
            .
            .
            </select>
        </p>
    
```

- Even though an option is always selected in a drop-down menu, you might want to force users to make a selection other than the default. To do so, add the `name` attribute of the `<select>` menu to the `$required` array, then set the `value` attribute and the `$_POST` array element for the default option to an empty string, like this:

```

<option value=""
<?php
if (!$_POST || $_POST['howhear'] == '') {
    echo 'selected';
} ?>>Select one</option>
    
```

The `value` attribute is not required in the `<option>` tag, but if you leave it out, the form uses the text between the opening and closing tags as the selected value. Therefore, it's necessary to set the `value` attribute explicitly to an empty string. Otherwise, “Select one” is transmitted as the selected value.

- The code that displays a warning message if no selection

has been made follows a familiar pattern:

```
<label for="select">How did you hear of  
Japan Journey?  
<?php if ($missing && in_array('howhear',  
$missing)) { ?>  
    <span class="warning">Please make  
a selection</span>  
<?php } ?>  
</label>
```

PHP Solution 5-9: Handling a Multiple-choice List

Multiple-choice lists are similar to check-box groups: they allow the user to choose zero or more items, so the result is stored in an array. If no items are selected, the multiple-choice list is not included in the `$_POST` array, so you need to add an empty subarray in the same way as with a check-box group.

1. The following code shows the first two items from the multiple-choice list in `contact_08.php`, with the name attribute and PHP code highlighted in bold. The square brackets appended to the name attribute ensure that it stores the results as an array. The code works in an identical way to the check-box group in PHP Solution 5-7.

```
<p>  
    <label for="characteristics">What  
characteristics do you associate with  
Japan?</label>  
    <select name="characteristics[]"  
size="6" multiple="multiple"  
id="characteristics">  
        <option value="Dynamic"  
        <?php  
            if ($_POST && in_array('Dynamic',  
$_POST['characteristics'])) {  
                echo 'selected';  
            } ?>>Dynamic</option>  
        <option value="Honest"  
        <?php
```

```

        if ($_POST && in_array('Honest',
$_POST['characteristics'])) {
    echo 'selected';
} ?>>Honest</option>
.
.
</select>
</p>

```

2. In the code that processes the message, set a default value for a multiple-choice list in the same way as for an array of check boxes:

```

if (!isset($_POST['interests'])) {
    $_POST['interests'] = [];
}
if (!isset($_POST['characteristics'])) {
    $_POST['characteristics'] = [];
}

```

3. To make a multiple-choice list required and to set a minimum number of choices, use the same technique used for a check-box group in PHP Solution 5-7.

PHP Solution 5-10: Handling a Single Check Box

The way you handle a single check box is slightly different from a check-box group. With an individual check box, you don't append square brackets to the name attribute because it doesn't need to be processed as an array. Also, the value attribute is optional. If you don't set the value attribute, it defaults to "On" if the check box is selected. However, if the check box isn't selected, its name isn't included in the \$_POST array, so you need to test for its existence.

This PHP solution shows how to add a single check box that seeks confirmation that the site's terms have been accepted. It assumes that selecting the check box is required.

1. The following code shows the single check box, with the name attribute and PHP code highlighted in bold.

```

<p>
<input type="checkbox" name="terms"
```

```

value="accepted" id="terms"
<?php
if ($_POST && !isset($errors['terms'])) {
    echo 'checked';
} ?>>
<label for="terms">I accept the
terms of using this website
<?php if (isset($errors['terms'])) { ?>
    <span class="warning">Please select the
check box</span>
<?php } ?></label>
</p>

```

The PHP block inside the `<input>` element inserts the `checked` attribute only if the `$_POST` array contains values and `$errors['terms']` hasn't been set. This ensures that the check box is not selected when the page first loads. It also remains unchecked if the user submitted the form without confirming acceptance of the terms.

The second PHP block displays an error message alongside the label if `$errors['terms']` has been set.

2. In addition to adding terms to the `$expected` and `$required` arrays, you need to set a default value for `$_POST['terms']`; then set `$errors['terms']` in the code that processes the data when the form is submitted:

```

if (!isset($_POST['characteristics']))
{
    $_POST['characteristics'] = [];
}
if (!isset($_POST['terms'])) {
    $_POST['terms'] = '';
    $errors['terms'] = true;
}

```

You need to create `$errors['terms']` only if the check box is required. For an optional check box, just set

the value to an empty string if it's not included in the `$_POST` array.

Chapter Review

A lot of work has gone into building `processmail.php`, but the beauty of this script is that it works with any form. The only parts that need changing are the `$expected` and `$required` arrays and details specific to the form, such as the destination address, headers, and default values for multiple-choice elements that won't be included in the `$_POST` array if no value is selected.

I've avoided talking about HTML email because the `mail()` function handles only plain-text email. The PHP online manual at www.php.net/manual/en/function.mail.php shows a way of sending HTML mail by adding an additional header. However, it's not a good idea, as HTML mail should always contain an alternative text version for email programs that don't accept HTML. If you want to send HTML mail or attachments, try PHPMailer (<https://github.com/Synchro/PHPMailer/>).

As you'll see in later chapters, online forms lie at the heart of just about everything you do with PHP. They're the gateway between the browser and the web server. You'll come back time and again to the techniques that you have learned in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6



Uploading Files

PHP's ability to handle forms isn't restricted to text. It can also be used to upload files to a server. For instance, you could build a real estate website for clients to upload pictures of their properties or a site for all your friends and relatives to upload their holiday photos. However, just because you can do it, doesn't necessarily mean that you should. Allowing others to upload material to your website could expose you to all sorts of problems. You need to make sure that images are the right size, that they're of suitable quality, and that they don't contain any illegal material. You also need to ensure that uploads don't contain malicious scripts. In other words, you need to protect your website just as carefully as your own computer.

PHP makes it relatively simple to restrict the type and size of files accepted. What it cannot do is check the suitability of the content. Think carefully about security measures, such as restricting uploads to registered and trusted users by placing the upload form in a password-protected area.

Until you learn how to restrict access to pages with PHP in [Chapters 9](#) and [17](#), use the PHP solutions in this chapter only in a password-protected directory if deployed on a public website. Most hosting companies provide simple password protection through the site's control panel.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to understanding the mechanics of file uploads, which will make it easier to understand the code that follows. This is a fairly intense chapter, not a collection of quick solutions. But by the end of the chapter, you will have built a PHP class capable of handling single and multiple file uploads. You can then use the class in any form by writing only a few lines of code.

You'll learn about the following:

- Understanding the `$_FILES` array

- Restricting the size and type of uploads
- Preventing files from being overwritten
- Handling multiple uploads

How PHP Handles File Uploads

The term upload means moving a file from one computer to another, but as far as PHP is concerned, all that's happening is that a file is being moved from one location to another. This means you can test all the scripts in this chapter on your local computer without the need to upload files to a remote server.

PHP supports file uploads by default, but hosting companies can restrict the size of uploads or disable them altogether. Before going any further, it's a good idea to check the settings on your remote server.

Checking whether your server supports uploads

All the information you need is displayed in the main PHP configuration page that you can display by running `phpinfo()` on your remote server, as described in [Chapter 2](#). Scroll down until you find `file_uploads` in the **Core** section.

If the **Local Value** is **On**, you're ready to go, but you should also check the other configuration settings listed in [Table 6-1](#).

Table 6-1. PHP configuration settings that affect file uploads

Directive	Default value	Description
<code>max_execution_time</code>	30	The maximum number of seconds that a PHP script can run. If the script takes longer, PHP generates a fatal error.
<code>max_file_uploads</code>	20	The maximum number of files that can be uploaded simultaneously. If the limit is exceeded, excess files are silently ignored.
<code>max_input_time</code>	60	The maximum number of seconds that a PHP script is allowed to parse the <code>\$_POST</code> and <code>\$_GET</code> arrays and file uploads. Very large uploads are likely to run out of memory.

		ot time.
post_max_size	8M	The maximum permitted size of all <code>\$_POST</code> data, <i>including</i> file uploads. Although the default is 8 MB, hosting companies may impose a smaller limit.
upload_tmp_dir		This is where PHP stores uploaded files until your script moves them to a permanent location. If no value is defined in <code>php.ini</code> , PHP uses the system default temporary directory (C:\Windows\Temp or /tmp on Mac/Linux).
upload_max_filesize	2M	The maximum permitted size of a single upload file. Although the default is 2 MB, hosting companies may impose a smaller limit. A number on its own indicates the number of bytes permitted. A number followed by K indicates the number of kilobytes permitted.

As of PHP 5.6, PHP can handle uploads of individual files larger than 2 gigabytes, but the actual limits are determined by the settings in [Table 6-1](#). The default 8 MB value of `post_max_size` includes the content of the `$_POST` array, so the total size of files that can be uploaded simultaneously on a typical server is less than 8 MB, with no single file greater than 2 MB. The server administrator can change these defaults, so it's important to check the limits set by your hosting company. If you exceed those limits, an otherwise perfect script will fail.

If the **Local Value** of `file_uploads` is **Off**, uploads have been disabled. There is nothing you can do about it, other than ask your hosting company if it offers a package with file uploading enabled. Your only alternatives are to move to a different host or to use a different solution, such as uploading files by FTP.

 **Tip** After using `phpinfo()` to check your remote server's settings, it's a good idea to remove the script or put it in a password-protected directory.

Adding a file upload field to a form

Adding a file upload field to an HTML form is easy. Just add `enctype="multipart/form-data"` to the opening `<form>` tag and set the `type` attribute of an `<input>` element to `file`. The following code is a simple example of an upload form (it's in `file_upload_01.php` in the `ch06` folder):

```

<form action="" method="post" enctype="multipart/form-data" id="uploadImage">
    <p>
        <label for="image">Upload image:</label>
        <input type="file" name="image" id="image">
    </p>
    <p>
        <input type="submit" name="upload" id="upload" value="Upload">
    </p>
</form>

```

Although this is standard HTML, how it's rendered in a webpage depends on the browser (see [Figure 6-1](#)). Most modern browsers display a **Choose File** or **Browse** button with a status message or the name of the selected file on the right. Internet Explorer displays a text input field with a **Browse** button on the right. Recent versions of Internet Explorer make it read-only and launch a file-selection panel as soon as you click inside the field. These differences don't affect the operation of an upload form, but you need to take them into account when designing the layout.

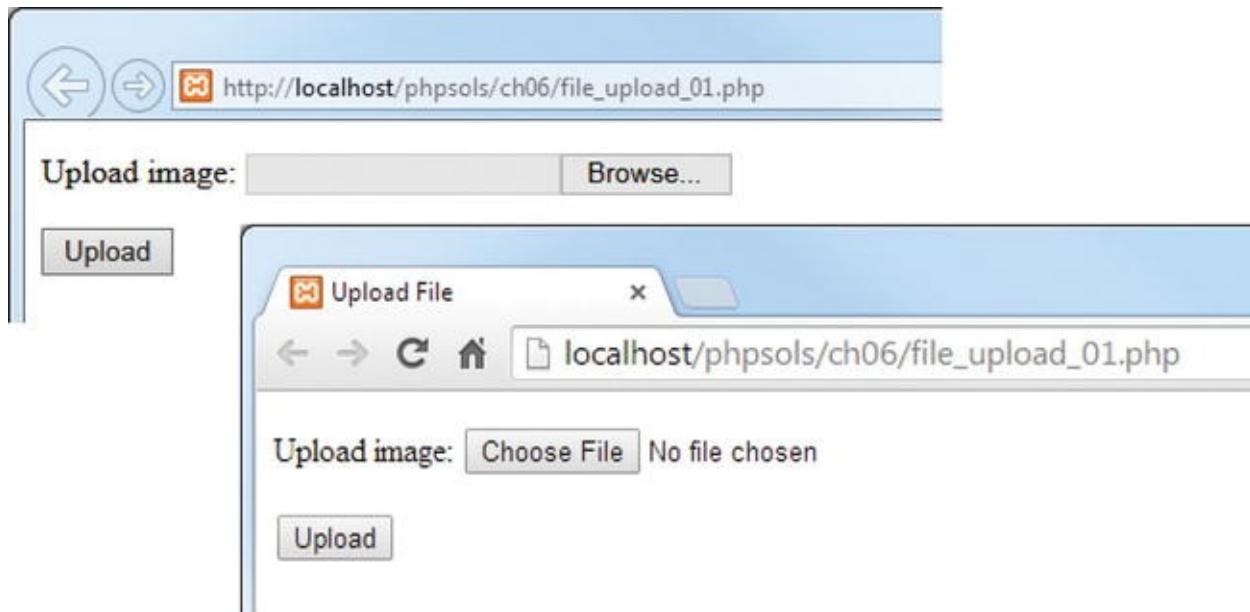


Figure 6-1. The look of a file input field depends on the browser

Understanding the `$_FILES` array

What confuses many people is that their file seems to vanish after it has been uploaded. This is because you can't refer to an uploaded file in the `$_POST` array in the same way you do with text input. PHP transmits the details of uploaded files in a separate superglobal array called, not unreasonably, `$_FILES`. Moreover, files are uploaded to a temporary folder and are deleted unless you explicitly move them to the desired location. Although this sounds like a nuisance, it's done for a very good reason: you can subject the file to security checks before accepting the upload.

Inspecting the `$_FILES` array

The best way to understand how the `$_FILES` array works is to see it in action. If you have installed a local test environment, you can test everything on your computer. It works in exactly the same way as uploading a file to a remote server.

1. Create a new folder called `uploads` in the `phpsols` site root. Create a new PHP file called `file_upload.php` in the `uploads` folder and insert the code from the previous section. Alternatively, copy `file_upload_01.php` from the `ch06` folder and rename the file `file_upload.php`.
2. Insert the following code right after the closing `</form>` tag (it's also in `file_upload_02.php`):

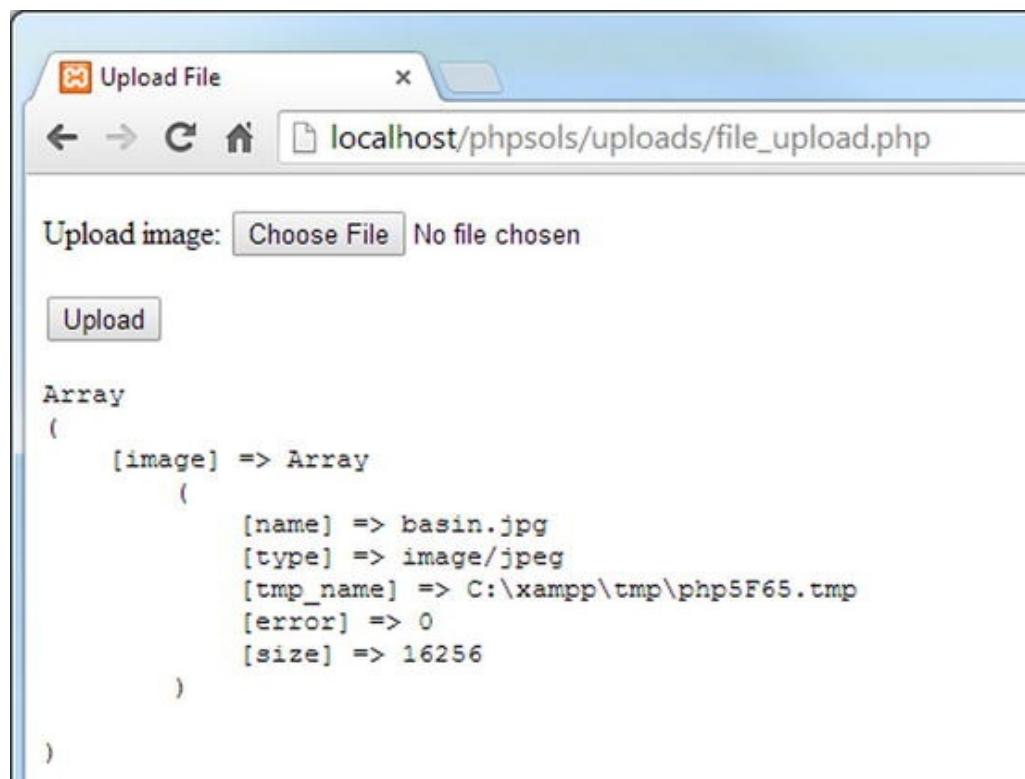
```
</form>
<pre>
<?php
if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {
    print_r($_FILES);
}
?>
</pre>
</body>
```

This uses `isset()` to check whether the `$_POST` array contains `upload`, the `name` attribute of the Submit button. If it does, you know the form has been submitted, so you can use `print_r()` to inspect the `$_FILES`

array. The `<pre>` tags make the output easier to read.

3. Save `file_upload.php` and load it into a browser.
4. Click the **Browse** (or **Choose File**) button and select a file on your hard disk. Click **Open** (or Choose on a Mac) to close the file selection dialog box, and then click **Upload**. You should see something similar to [Figure 6-2](#).

You can see that the `$_FILES` array is actually a multidimensional array—an array of arrays. The top-level array contains just one element, which gets its key (or index) from the `name` attribute of the file input field, in this case, `image`.



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Upload File". The address bar displays "localhost/phpsols/uploads/file_upload.php". The page content includes a file input field labeled "Upload image:" with a "Choose File" button and a message "No file chosen". Below this is a "Upload" button. Further down, the PHP code output is shown:

```
Array
(
    [image] => Array
        (
            [name] => basin.jpg
            [type] => image/jpeg
            [tmp_name] => C:\xampp\tmp\php5F65.tmp
            [error] => 0
            [size] => 16256
        )
)
```

[Figure 6-2](#). The `$_FILES` array contains the details of an uploaded file

The `image` element contains another array (or subarray) that consists of five elements, namely:

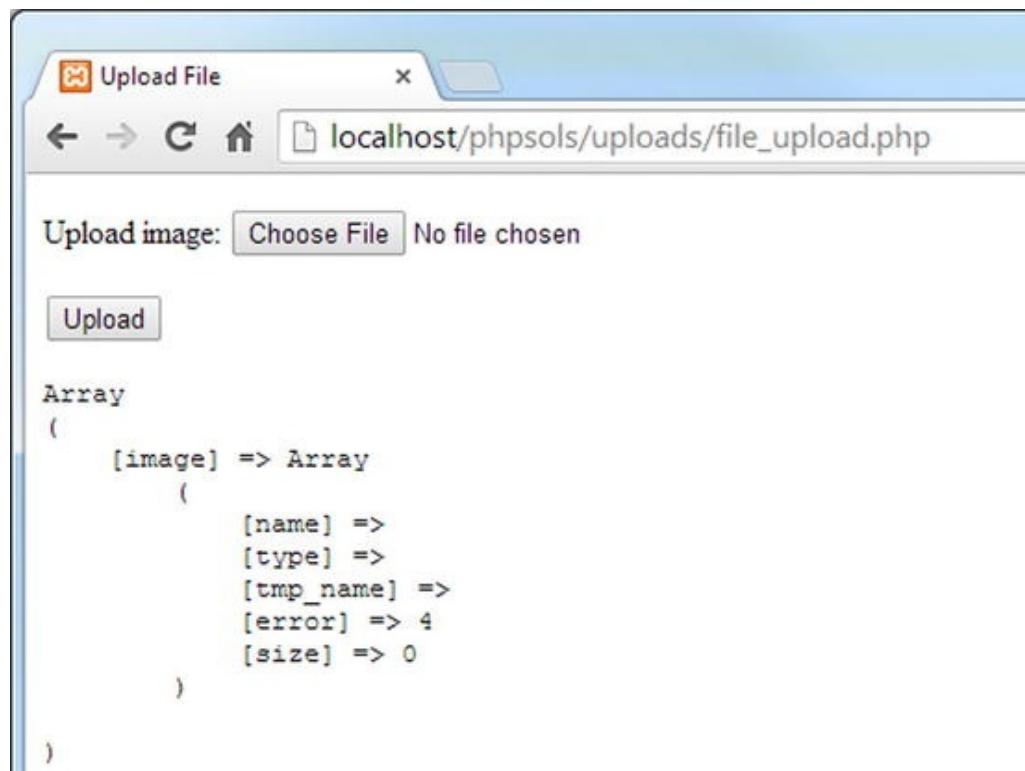
- `name`: The original name of the uploaded file
- `type`: The uploaded file's MIME type

- `tmp_name`: The location of the uploaded file
- `error`: An integer indicating the status of the upload
- `size`: The size of the uploaded file in bytes

Don't waste time searching for the temporary file indicated by `tmp_name`: it won't be there. If you don't save it immediately, PHP discards it.

5. Click **Upload** without selecting a file. The `$_FILES` array should look like [Figure 6-3](#).

An error level of 4 indicates that no file was uploaded; 0 means the upload succeeded. [Table 6-2](#) later in this chapter lists all the error codes.



[Figure 6-3](#). The `$_FILES` array still exists when no file is uploaded

6. Select a program file and click the **Upload** button. In many cases, the form will happily try to upload the program and will display its type as **application/zip**,

application/octet-stream, or something similar. This is a warning that it's important to check the MIME type of uploaded files.

Establishing an upload directory

Another source of confusion is the question of permissions. An upload script that works perfectly locally may confront you with a message like this when you transfer it to your remote server:

```
Warning: move_uploaded_file(/home/user/htdocs/testarea/): failed to open stream: Permission denied in /home/user/htdocs/testarea/upload_test.php on line 3
```

Why is permission denied? Most hosting companies use Linux servers, which impose strict rules about the ownership of files and directories. In most cases, PHP doesn't run in *your* name, but as the web server—usually *nobody* or *apache*. Unless PHP has been configured to run in your name, you need to give global access (`chmod 777`) to every directory to which you want to upload files.

Since 777 is the least secure setting, begin by testing uploads with a setting of 700. If that doesn't work, try 770, and use 777 only as a last resort. The upload directory doesn't need to be within your site root. If your hosting company gives you a private directory outside the site root, create a subdirectory for uploads inside the private one. Alternatively, create a directory inside your site root, but don't link to it from any webpages. Give it an innocuous name, such as `lastyear`.

Creating an upload folder for local testing on Windows

For the following exercises, I suggest you create a folder called `upload_test` at the top level of the C drive. There are no permissions issues on Windows, so that's all that you need to do.

Creating an upload folder for local testing on Mac OS

Creating an upload folder for local testing on Mac OS X

Mac users might need to do a little more preparation because file permissions are similar to Linux. Create a folder called `upload_test` in your home folder and follow the instructions in PHP Solution 6-1.

If everything goes smoothly, you won't need to do anything extra. But if you get a warning that PHP "failed to open stream," change the permissions for the `upload_test` folder like this:

1. Select `upload_test` in the Mac Finder and select **File ➤ Get Info** (Cmd-I) to open its info panel.
2. In **Sharing & Permissions** click the padlock icon at the bottom right to unlock the settings, then change the setting for **everyone** from **Read only** to **Read & Write**, as shown in the following screenshot.



3. Click the padlock icon again to preserve the new settings and close the info panel. You should now be able to use the `upload_test` folder to continue with the rest of the chapter.

Uploading Files

Before building the file upload class it's a good idea to create a simple file upload script to make sure that your system handles uploads correctly.

Moving the temporary file to the upload folder

The temporary version of an uploaded file has only a fleeting existence. If you don't do anything with the file, it's discarded immediately. You need to tell PHP where to move it and what to call it. You do this with the `move_uploaded_file()` function, which takes the following two arguments:

- The name of the temporary file
- The full path name of the file's new location, including the filename itself

Obtaining the name of the temporary file itself is easy: it's stored in the `$_FILES` array as `tmp_name`. Because the second argument requires a full path name, it gives you the opportunity to rename the file. For the moment, let's keep things simple and use the original filename, which is stored in the `$_FILES` array as `name`.

PHP Solution 6-1: Creating a basic file upload script

Continue working with the same file as in the previous exercise. Alternatively, use `file_upload_03.php` from the `ch06` folder. The final script for this PHP solution is in `file_upload_04.php`.

1. If you are using the file from the previous exercise, delete the code highlighted in bold between the closing `</form>` and `</body>` tags:

```
</form>
<pre>
<?php
if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {
    print_r($_FILES);
}
?>
</pre>
</body>
```

2. In addition to the automatic limits set in the PHP

configuration (see [Table 6-1](#)), you can specify a maximum size for an upload file in your HTML form. Add the following line highlighted in bold immediately before the file input field:

```
<label for="image">Upload image:  
</label>  
<input type="hidden" name="MAX_FILE_SIZE"  
value="<?= $max; ?>">  
<input type="file" name="image"  
id="image">
```

This is a hidden form field, so it won't be displayed onscreen. However, it's vital to place it *before* the file input field, otherwise it won't work. The `name` attribute, `MAX_FILE_SIZE`, is fixed and case-sensitive. The `value` attribute sets the maximum size of the upload file in bytes.

Instead of specifying a numeric value, I have used a variable called `$max`. This value will also be used in the server-side validation of the file upload, so it makes sense to define it once, avoiding the possibility of changing it in one place but forgetting to change it elsewhere.

3. Define the value of `$max` in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration, like this:

```
<?php  
// set the maximum upload size in bytes  
$max = 51200;  
?>  
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
```

This sets the maximum upload size to 50 KB (51,200 bytes).

4. The code that moves the uploaded file from its temporary location to its permanent one needs to be run after the form has been submitted. Insert the following code in the PHP block you have just created at the top of the page:

```

$max = 51200;
if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {
    // define the path to the upload folder
    $destination = '/path/to/upload_test/';
    // move the file to the upload folder and
    rename it
    move_uploaded_file($_FILES['image']
    ['tmp_name'],
    $destination . $_FILES['image']
    ['name']);
}
?>

```

Although the code is quite short, there's a lot going on. The conditional statement executes the code only if the **Upload** button has been clicked by checking to see if its key is in the `$_POST` array.

The value of `$destination` depends on your operating system and the location of the `upload_test` folder.

- If you are using Windows and you created the `upload_test` folder at the top level of the C drive, it should look like this:

```
$destination = 'C:/upload_test/';
```

Note that I have used forward slashes instead of the Windows convention of backslashes. You can use either, but if you use backslashes, the final one needs to be escaped by another backslash, like this (otherwise the backslash escapes the quote):

```
$destination = 'C:\upload_test\\';
```

- On a Mac, if you created the `upload_test` folder in your home folder, it should look like this (replace `username` with your Mac username):

```
$destination
= '/Users/username/upload_test/';
```

- On a remote server, you need the fully qualified

file path as the second argument. On Linux, it will probably be something like this:

```
$destination  
= '/home/user/private/upload_test/';
```

The final line inside the `if` statement moves the file with the `move_uploaded_file()` function. The function takes two arguments: the name of the temporary file and the full path to where the file is to be saved.

`$_FILES` is a multidimensional array that takes its name from the file input field. So, `$_FILES['image']['tmp_name']` is the temporary file, and `$_FILES['image']['name']` contains the name of the original file. The second argument, `$destination . $_FILES['image']['name']`, stores the uploaded file under its original name inside the upload folder.

Caution You may come across scripts that use `copy()` instead of `move_uploaded_file()`. Without other checks in place, `copy()` can expose your website to serious security risks. For example, a malicious user could try to trick your script into copying files that it should not have access to, such as password files. Always use `move_uploaded_file()`; it's much more secure.

5. Save `file_upload.php`, and load it into your browser. Click the **Browse** or **Choose** File button and select a file from the `images` folder in the `phpsol`s site. If you choose one from elsewhere, make sure it's less than 50 KB. Click **Open (Choose** on a Mac) to display the filename in the form. In browsers that display a file input field, you might not be able to see the full path. That's a cosmetic matter that I'll leave you to sort out yourself with CSS. Click the **Upload** button. If you're testing

locally, the form input field should clear almost instantly.

6. Navigate to the `upload_test` folder and confirm that a copy of the image you selected is there. If it isn't, check your code against `file_upload_04.php`. Also check that the correct permissions have been set on the upload folder, if necessary.

Note The download files use `C:/upload_test/`. Adjust this to your own setup.

If you get no error messages and cannot find the file, make sure that the image didn't exceed `upload_max_filesize` (see [Table 6-1](#)). Also check that you didn't leave the trailing slash off the end of `$destination`. Instead of `myfile.jpg` in the `upload_test` folder, you may find `upload_testmyfile.jpg` one level higher in your disk structure.

7. Change the value of `$max` to `3000`, save `file_upload.php`, and test it again by selecting a file bigger than 2.9 KB to upload (any file in the `images` folder will do). Click the **Upload** button and check the `upload_test` folder. The file shouldn't be there.
8. If you're in the mood for experimentation, move the `MAX_FILE_SIZE` hidden field below the file input field, and try it again. Make sure you choose a different file from the one you used in step 6, because `move_uploaded_file()` overwrites existing files of the same name. You'll learn later how to give files unique names.

This time the file should be copied to your upload folder. Move the hidden field back to its original position before continuing.

The advantage of using `MAX_FILE_SIZE` is that PHP

abandons the upload if the file is bigger than the stipulated value, avoiding unnecessary delays if the file is too big. Unfortunately, users can get around this restriction by faking the value submitted by the hidden field, so the script you'll develop in the rest of this chapter will check the size on the server side, too.

Creating a PHP File Upload Class

As you have just seen, it takes just a few lines of code to upload a file, but this is not enough on its own to call the job complete. You need to make the process more secure by implementing the following steps:

- Check the error level.
- Verify on the server that the file doesn't exceed the maximum permitted size.
- Check that the file is of an acceptable type.
- Remove spaces from the filename.
- Rename files that have the same name as an existing one to prevent overwriting.
- Handle multiple file uploads automatically.
- Inform the user of the outcome.

You need to implement these steps every time you want to upload files, so it makes sense to build a script that can be easily reused. That's why I have chosen to use a custom class. Building PHP classes is generally regarded as an advanced subject, but don't let that put you off.

A **class** is a collection of functions designed to work together. That's an oversimplification, but it's sufficiently accurate to give you the basic idea. Each function inside a class should normally focus on a single task, so you'll build separate functions to implement the steps outlined in the previous list. The code should also be generic so it isn't tied to a specific webpage. Once you have built the class, you can reuse it in any form. Although the class definition is long, using the class involves writing only a few lines of code.

If you're in a hurry, the finished class is in the ch06/PhpSolutions folder.

Even if you don't build the script yourself, read through the descriptions so you have a clear understanding of how it works.

Defining a PHP class

Defining a PHP class is very easy. You use the `class` keyword followed by the class name and then put all the code for the class between a pair of curly braces. By convention, class names begin with an uppercase letter and are stored in a separate file with the same name as the class.

Using a namespace to avoid naming conflicts

If you're writing your own scripts, you rarely need to worry about naming conflicts. We're going to create a class to upload files, so `Upload` or `FileUpload` seems like a logical name. But once you start using scripts and classes created by others (including those in this book), there's a danger of multiple classes having the same name.

The original strategy to avoid conflicts with common names was to store class definitions in a folder structure that described their functionality, and to give the top-level folder a unique name based on a domain or company name. The class name was then created from the folder structure using underscores instead of slashes. This frequently led to unwieldy class names such as `Zend_File_Transfer_Adapter_Http`.

 **Note** Storing class definitions in files and folders based on the class name and namespace makes it easy to load classes automatically using an autoloader script. We won't be using an autoloader because there's only one class definition to include in the file that contains the upload form. An autoloader mainly comes in handy when working with multiple classes.

PHP 5.3 introduced a less cumbersome system using namespaces. PHP namespaces are still based on the folder structure, but they use backslashes instead of underscores. The namespace is also declared separately, allowing you to use simple class names.

The class we're going to build is called `Upload`, but to avoid naming

conflicts, it will be created in a namespace called `PhpSolutions\File`.

You declare a namespace at the top of a file using the `namespace` keyword followed by the namespace like this:

```
namespace PhpSolutions\File;
```

Caution PHP uses a backslash as the namespace separator on all operating systems. Don't be tempted to change it to forward slashes on Linux or Mac OS X.

So, if we create a class called `Upload` in this namespace, its fully qualified name is `PhpSolutions\File\Upload`. On the face of it, this hardly seems like progress. The class still has an unwieldy name that uses backslashes instead of underscores. The difference is that you can import a namespaced class and use a shorter name.

Importing a namespaced class

To avoid having to use the fully qualified name every time you refer to a namespaced class, you can import the class at the start of a script with the `use` keyword like this:

```
use PhpSolutions\File\Upload;
```

After importing the class, you can then refer to it as `Upload` rather than using the fully qualified name. Importing a namespaced class is not the same as including it. It's simply a declaration that you want to use the class with a shorter name. In fact, you can assign an alias to the imported class with the `as` keyword, like this:

```
use PhpSolutions\File\Upload as FileUploader;
```

The class can then be referred to as `FileUploader`. Using an alias is mainly useful in large applications where two classes from different frameworks have the same name.

Caution You still need to include the class definition separately. In fact, it's

common to import a namespaced class before the class definition is loaded, because the `use` keyword must be declared at the top level of a script. It cannot be nested inside a conditional statement.

PHP Solution 6-2: Creating the basic file upload class

In this PHP solution, you'll create the basic definition for a class called `Upload` to handle file uploads. You'll also create an instance of the class (an `Upload` object) and use it to upload an image. Give yourself plenty of time to go through the following steps. They're not difficult, but they introduce concepts that might be unfamiliar if you have never worked with PHP classes.

1. Create a subfolder called `PhpSolutions` in the `phpsols` site root folder. Use the same combination of uppercase and lowercase letters in the folder name.
2. Create a subfolder called `File` (with an uppercase F) in the `PhpSolutions` folder.
3. In the new `PhpSolutions/File` folder, create a file called `Upload.php`. Again, use the same combination of uppercase and lowercase letters in the filename. Then insert the following code:

```
<?php  
namespace PhpSolutions\File;  
class Upload {  
  
}
```

All the remaining code goes between the curly braces. This file will contain only PHP code, so you don't need a closing PHP tag.

4. PHP classes hide their inner workings by declaring some variables and functions as protected. If you prefix a variable or function with the keyword `protected`, it can be accessed only inside the class or a subclass. This prevents values from being changed accidentally.

The Upload class needs protected variables for the following items:

- Path to the upload folder
- Maximum file size
- Messages to report the status of uploads
- Permitted MIME types

Create the variables by adding them inside the curly braces, like this:

```
class Upload {  
  
    protected $destination;  
    protected $max = 51200;  
    protected $messages = [];  
    protected $permitted = [  
        'image/gif',  
        'image/jpeg',  
        'image/pjpeg',  
        'image/png'  
    ];  
}
```

These properties can be accessed elsewhere in the class using `$this->`, which refers to the current object. For example, inside the class definition, you access `$destination` as `$this->destination`.

Note When you first declare a property inside a class, it begins with a dollar sign like any other variable. However, you omit the dollar sign from the property name after the `->` operator.

With the exception of `$destination`, each protected property has been given a default value:

- `$max` sets the maximum file size to 50 KB (51200 bytes).

- `$messages` is an empty array.
- `$permitted` contains an array of image MIME types.

The value of `$destination` will be set when an instance of the class is created. The other values will be controlled internally by the class, but you'll also create functions (or **methods**, as they're called in classes) to change the values of `$max` and `$permitted`.

5. When you create an instance of a class (an **object**), the class definition file automatically calls the class's constructor method, which initializes the object. The constructor method for all classes is called `__construct()` (with two underscores). Unlike the properties you defined in the previous step, the constructor needs to be accessible outside the class, so you precede its definition with the `public` keyword.

Note The `public` and `protected` keywords control the **visibility** of properties and methods. Public properties and methods can be accessed anywhere. Any attempt to access protected properties or methods outside the class definition or a subclass triggers a fatal error.

The constructor for the `Upload` class takes as an argument the path to the folder where you want to upload the file and assigns it to `$destination`. Add the following code after the list of protected properties, making sure it's before the closing curly brace of the class definition:

```
public function __construct($path) {  
    if (!is_dir($path) ||  
    !is_writable($path)) {  
        throw new \Exception("$path must  
be a valid,writable directory.");
```

```
    }
    $this->destination = $path;
}
```

The conditional statement inside the constructor passes `$path` to the `is_dir()` and `is_writable()` functions, which check that the value submitted is a valid directory (folder) that is writable. If either condition fails, the constructor throws an exception with a message indicating the problem.

Note The backslash in front of `Exception` indicates that a core PHP command is to be used rather than one defined within the namespace. You only need to prefix core commands with a backslash if there's any ambiguity. Classes can define their own exceptions, so it's necessary here.

If `$path` is okay, it's assigned the `$destination` property of the current object.

6. Next, create a public method called `upload()`. This will initiate a series of tests on the file before uploading it. Insert this code immediately after the constructor method that you defined in the previous step:

```
public function upload() {
    $uploaded = current($_FILES);
    if ($this->checkFile($uploaded)) {
        $this->moveFile($uploaded);
    }
}
```

To access the file in the `$_FILES` array in PHP Solution 6-1, you needed to know the `name` attribute of the file input field. The form in `file_upload.php` uses `image`, so you accessed the filename as `$_FILES['image']['name']`. But if the field had a

different name, such as `upload`, you would need to use `$_FILES['upload']['name']`. To make the script more flexible, the first line of the `upload()` method passes the `$_FILES` array to the `current()` function, which returns the current element of an array. As a result, `$uploaded` holds a reference to the first element in the `$_FILES` array regardless of the name used in the form. This is the first benefit of building generic code. It takes more effort initially, but saves time in the end.

Tip `$_FILES` is one of PHP's superglobal arrays, so it's available in all parts of a script. That's why there's no need to pass it as an argument to the class constructor method.

7. The conditional statement in the `upload()` method calls `checkFile()` using the `$this` keyword. The `$this` keyword is also used to call functions (methods) defined within the class. We need to define `checkFile()` next. For the time being, we'll assume that the file is okay, so `checkFile()` will simply return `true`. Add the following code to the class definition:

```
protected function checkFile($file) {  
    return true;  
}
```

Preceding the definition with the `protected` keyword means this method can be accessed only inside the class. We'll return to `checkFile()` in PHP Solution 6-3 to add a series of tests before uploading the file.

Tip The order of function (method) definitions inside a class doesn't matter, as long as they're within the curly braces that enclose the class. However, it's common practice to keep all public methods together at the top,

with protected methods at the bottom.

8. If the file passes the series of tests, the conditional statement in the `upload()` method passes the file to another internal method called `moveFile()`, which is basically a wrapper for the `move_uploaded_file()` function that we used in PHP Solution 6-1. The code looks like this:

```
protected function moveFile($file) {  
    $success  
= move_uploaded_file($file['tmp_name'],  
                     $this->destination  
. $file['name']);  
    if ($success) {  
        $result = $file['name'] . ' was  
uploaded successfully';  
        $this->messages[] = $result;  
    } else {  
        $this->messages[] = 'Could not  
upload ' . $file['name'];  
    }  
}
```

If the upload succeeds, `move_uploaded_file()` returns `true`. Otherwise, it returns `false`. By storing the return value in `success`, an appropriate message is stored in the `$messages` array.

9. Since `$messages` is a protected property, you need to create a public method to retrieve the contents of the array.

```
public function getMessages() {  
    return $this->messages;  
}
```

This simply returns the contents of the `$messages` array. Since that's all it does, why not make the array

public in the first place? Public properties can be accessed—and changed—outside the class definition. Protecting `$messages` ensures that the contents of the array cannot be altered, so you know the message has been generated by the class. This might not seem like such a big deal with a message like this, but it becomes very important when you start working with more complex scripts or in a team.

10. Save `Upload.php` and switch to `file_upload.php`.
11. At the top of `file_upload.php`, import the `Upload` class by adding the following line immediately after the opening PHP tag:

```
use PhpSolutions\File\Upload;
```

Caution You must import namespaced classes in the top level of a script, even if the class definition is loaded later. Putting `use` inside a conditional statement generates a parse error.

12. Inside the conditional statement, delete the code that calls the `move_uploaded_file()` function, then use `require_once` to include the `Upload` class definition:

```
if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {  
    // define the path to the upload  
    folder  
    $destination = 'C:/upload_test/';  
    require_once  
    './PhpSolutions/File/Upload.php';  
}
```

13. We can now create an instance of the `Upload` class, but because we're using a class that might throw an exception, it's best to create a `try/catch` block (see “Handling exceptions” in [Chapter 3](#)). Add the following code immediately after the code you inserted in the previous step:

```
try {
    $loader = new Upload($destination);
    $loader->upload();
    $result = $loader->getMessages();
} catch (Exception $e) {
    echo $e->getMessage();
}
```

This creates an instance of the `Upload` class, called `$loader`, by passing it the path to the `upload_test` folder. It then calls the `$loader` object's `upload()` and `getMessages()` methods, storing the result of `getMessages()` in `$result`.

The `catch` block doesn't need to prefix `Exception` with a backslash because the script in `file_upload.php` is not in a namespace. Only the class definition is in a namespace

Caution The `Upload` class has a `getMessages()` method, while the exception uses `getMessage()`. That extra "s" makes a difference.

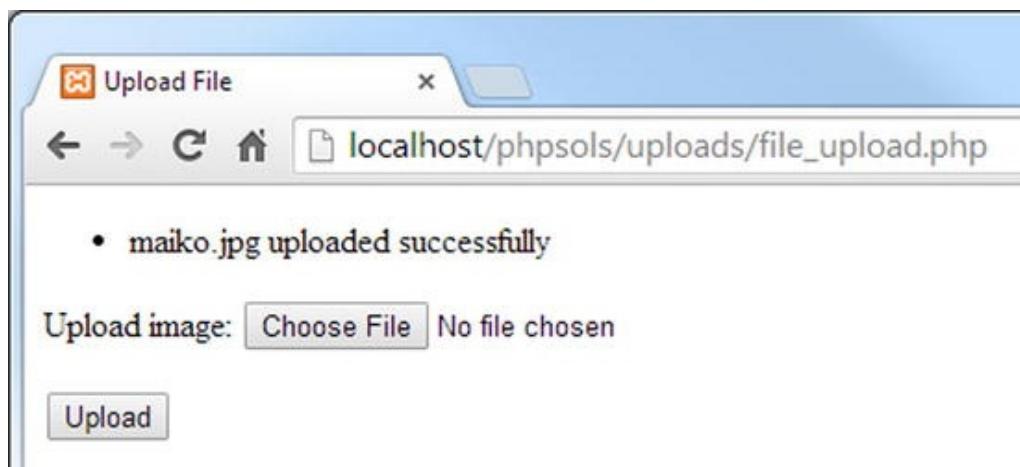
14. Add the following PHP code block above the form to display any messages returned by the `$loader` object:

```
<body>
<?php
if (isset($result)) {
    echo '<ul>';
    foreach ($result as $message) {
        echo "<li>$message</li>";
    }
    echo '</ul>';
}
?>
<form action="" method="post"
enctype="multipart/form-data"
id="uploadImage">
```

This is a simple `foreach` loop that displays the contents of `$result` as an unordered list. When the page first loads, `$result` isn't set, so this code runs only after the form has been submitted.

15. Save `file_upload.php` and test it in a browser. As long as you choose an image that's less than 50 KB, you should see confirmation that the file was uploaded successfully, as shown in [Figure 6-4](#).

You can compare your code with `file_upload_05.php` and `PhpSolutions/File/Upload_01.php` in the `ch06` folder.



[Figure 6-4](#). The `UpLoad` class reports a successful upload

The class does exactly the same as PHP Solution 6-1: it uploads a file, but it requires a lot more code to do so. However, you have laid the foundation for a class that's going to perform a series of security checks on uploaded files. This is code that you'll write once. When you use the class, you won't need to write this code again.

If you haven't worked with objects and classes before, some of the concepts might seem strange. Think of the `$loader` object simply as a way of accessing the functions (methods) you have defined in the `UpLoad` class. You often create separate objects to store different values, for example, when working with `DateTime` objects. In this case, a single object is sufficient to handle the file upload.

Checking upload errors

As it stands, the `Upload` class uploads any type of file indiscriminately. Even the 50 KB limit can be circumvented, because the only check is made in the browser. Before handing the file to the `moveFile()` method, the `checkFile()` method needs to run a series of tests. One of the most important is to inspect the error level reported by the `$_FILES` array. [Table 6-2](#) shows a full list of error levels.

Error level 8 is the least helpful, because PHP has no way of detecting which PHP extension was responsible for stopping the upload. Fortunately, it's rarely encountered.

Table 6-2. Meaning of the different error levels in the `$_FILES` array

Error level	Meaning
0	Upload successful
1	File exceeds maximum upload size specified in <code>php.ini</code> (default 2 MB)
2	File exceeds size specified by <code>MAX_FILE_SIZE</code> (see PHP Solution 6-1)
3	File only partially uploaded
4	Form submitted with no file specified
6	No temporary folder
7	Cannot write file to disk
8	Upload stopped by an unspecified PHP extension

Error level 5 is currently not defined.

PHP Solution 6-3: Testing the error level, file size, and MIME type

This PHP solution updates the `checkFile()` method to call a series of internal (protected) methods to verify that the file is okay to accept. If a file fails for any reason, an error message reports the reason to the user.

Continue working with `Upload.php`. Alternatively, use `Upload_01.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder, move it to

`PhpSolutions/File` at the top level of the `phpsols` site, and rename it `Upload.php`. (Always remove the underscore and number from partially completed files.)

1. The `checkFile()` method needs to run three tests: on the error level, the size of the file, and the file's MIME type. Update the method definition like this:

```
protected function checkFile($file) {  
    $accept = true;  
    if ($file['error'] != 0) {  
        $this->getErrorMessage($file);  
        // stop checking if no file submitted  
        if ($file['error'] == 4) {  
            return false;  
        } else {  
            $accept = false;  
        }  
    }  
    if (!$this->checkSize($file)) {  
        $accept = false;  
    }  
    if (!$this->checkType($file)) {  
        $accept = false;  
    }  
    return $accept;  
}
```

Originally, `checkFile()` simply returned `true`. Now, a variable called `$accept` is used as the method's return value, and is initialized to `true`. Three conditional statements conduct a series of tests, which are carried out by protected methods that will be defined shortly. If the file fails any of the tests, `$accept` is set to `false`. The method returns `true` only if all three tests are passed.

Using `$accept` as the return value makes it possible to generate error messages detailing all problems with a file. This avoids the annoying situation in which an upload is rejected for one reason only for it to be rejected for a different reason once the first problem is resolved.

The argument passed to the `checkFile()` method is the top-level element in the `$_FILES` array. The upload field in the form we’re using is called `image`, so `$file` is the equivalent of `$_FILES ['image']`. That means you can access `$_FILES ['image'] ['error']` as `$file ['error']`.

Note As explained in PHP Solution 6-2, the name of the upload field is unimportant, because the `upload()` method automatically gets the current element from the `$_FILES` array.

The first conditional statement checks the error level. If it’s not zero, there’s a problem with the upload; `$file` is passed as an argument to the `getErrorMessage()` method, which you’ll define next.

If the error level is 4, no file was selected. There’s no point in checking any further, so the method immediately returns `false`. Otherwise, `$accept` is set to `false`, and the next two conditional statements carry out checks on the file’s size and MIME type.

2. The `getErrorMessage()` method is a `switch` statement (see “Using the switch statement for decision chains” in [Chapter 3](#)) that uses the error levels listed in Table 6-2 to add a suitable message to the `$messages` array. The code looks like this:

```
protected function  
getErrorMessage($file) {  
    switch($file['error']) {  
        case 1:  
        case 2:  
            $this->messages[]  
= $file['name'] . ' is too big: (max: '  
.  
            $this->getMaxSize()
```

```

        . ')';
            break;
        case 3:
            $this->messages[]
= $file['name'] . ' was only partially
            uploaded.';
            break;
        case 4:
            $this->messages[] = 'No file
submitted.';
            break;
        default:
            $this->messages[] = 'Sorry,
there was a problem uploading ' .
            $file['name'];
            break;
    }
}

```

Part of the message for error levels 1 and 2 is created by a method called `getMaxSize()`, which converts the value of `$max` from bytes to kilobytes. You'll define `getMaxSize()` shortly.

Only the first four error levels have descriptive messages. The `default` keyword catches other error levels, including any that might be added in future, and adds a generic reason.

3. Before defining `getMaxSize()`, let's deal with the other tests. The `checkSize()` method looks like this:

```

protected function checkSize($file) {
    if ($file['error'] == 1 ||
$file['error'] == 2 ) {
        return false;
    } elseif ($file['size'] == 0) {
        $this->messages[]
= $file['name'] . ' is an empty file.';
        return false;
    }
}

```

```

        } elseif ($file['size'] > $this->max) {
            $this->messages[]
            = $file['name'] . ' exceeds the maximum
            size
                for a file (' . $this-
            >getMaxSize() . '.');
                return false;
        } else {
            return true;
        }
    }
}

```

The conditional statement starts by checking the error level. If it's 1 or 2, the file is too big, so the method simply returns `false`. The appropriate error message has already been set by the `getErrorMessage()` method.

The next condition checks if the reported size is zero. Although this happens if the file is too big or no file was selected, those scenarios have already been covered by the `getErrorMessage()` method. So, the assumption is that the file is empty.

Next, the reported size is compared with the value stored in the `$max` property. Although files that are too big should trigger error level 2, you still need to make this comparison in case the user has managed to sidestep `MAX_FILE_SIZE`. The error message also uses `getMaxSize()` to display the maximum size.

If the size is okay, the method returns `true`.

4. The third test checks the MIME type. Add the following code to the class definition:

```

protected function checkType($file) {
    if (in_array($file['type'], $this-
>permitted)) {
        return true;
    }
}

```

```

    } else {
        $this->messages[]
= $file['name'] . ' is not permitted
type of file.';
        return false;
    }
}

```

The conditional statement checks the type reported by the `$_FILES` array against the array stored in the `$permitted` property. If it's in the array, the method returns `true`. Otherwise, the reason for rejection is added to the `$messages` array, and the method returns `false`.

5. The `getMaxSize()` method used by `getErrorMessages()` and `checkSize()` converts the raw number of bytes stored in `$max` into a friendlier format. Add the following definition to the class file:

```

public function getMaxSize() {
    return number_format($this-
>max/1024, 1) . ' KB';
}

```

This uses the `number_format()` function, which normally takes two arguments: the value you want to format and the number of decimal places you want the number to have. The first argument is `$this->max/1024`, which divides `$max` by 1024 (the number of bytes in a kilobyte). The second argument is 1, so the number is formatted to one decimal place. The `. ' KB'` at the end concatenates KB to the formatted number.

The `getMaxSize()` method has been declared public in case you want to display the value in another part of a script that uses the `Upload` class.

6. Save `Upload.php` and test it again with `file_upload.php`. With images smaller than 50 KB, it works the same as before. But if you try uploading a file

that's too big and of the wrong MIME type, you get a result similar to [Figure 6-5](#).

You can check your code against `Upload_02.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

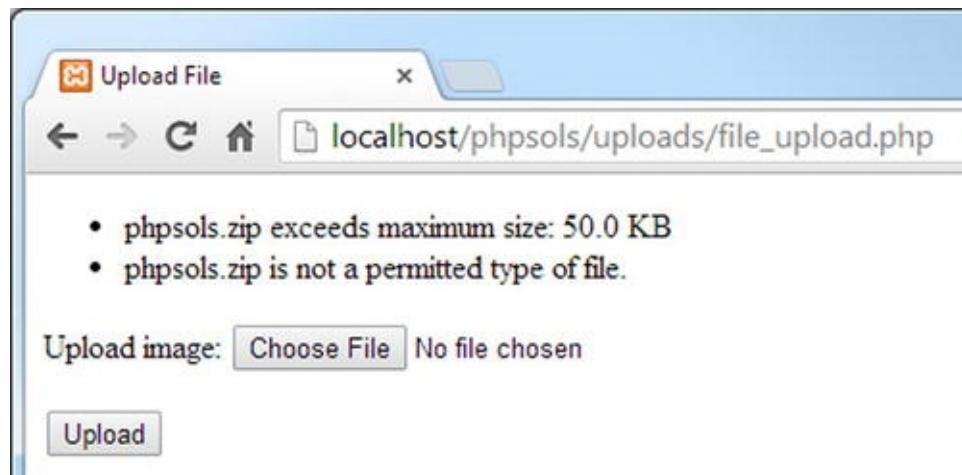


Figure 6-5. The class now reports errors with invalid size and MIME types

Changing protected properties

The `$permitted` property allows only images to be uploaded, and the `$max` property limits files to no more than 50 KB, but these limits might be too restrictive. Instead of diving into the class definition file every time you have different requirements, you can create public methods that allow you to make changes to protected properties on the fly.

A problem with using the MIME type to filter permitted types of files is that there are hundreds of different MIME types. What's more, the value reported in the `$_FILES` array is dependent on the browser. MIME types work well for images, but the values reported for other types of files are often inconsistent. For example, Firefox reports the MIME type of Microsoft Word documents as `application/vnd.ms-word.document.12`, whereas Internet Explorer and Chrome use `application/vnd.openxmlformats-officedocument.wordprocessingml.document`.

To make the `Upload` class more flexible, we'll create a public method to turn off MIME-type checking. This will permit any type of file to be uploaded. Removing all restrictions on the type of upload is risky, so we'll need a strategy

later to neutralize potentially dangerous files. We'll also create a public method to change the maximum permitted size of file.

PHP Solution 6-4: Allowing different types and sizes to be uploaded

This PHP solution shows you how to allow all types of files to be uploaded by skipping the MIME-types check. You'll also add a public method to change the maximum permitted size.

Continue working with `Upload.php` from the previous PHP solution. Alternatively, use `Upload_02.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

1. To control whether the MIME type should be checked, create a protected property called `$typeCheckingOn` and set its value to `true`. Add the following line of code to the list of properties at the top of the class definition in `Upload.php`:

```
protected $typeCheckingOn = true;
```

2. Next, create a public method called `allowAllTypes()` to set the value of `$typeCheckingOn` to `false`:

```
public function allowAllTypes() {  
    $this->typeCheckingOn = false;  
}
```

`$typeCheckingOn` is a class property, so you need to access it using `$this->`.

3. You can now control type checking by using the `$typeCheckingOn` property as a condition in the `checkFile()` method. Amend the method definition like this:

```
protected function checkFile($file) {  
    $accept = true;  
    if ($file['error'] != 0) {
```

```

        $this->getErrorMessage($file);
        // stop checking if no file
submitted
    if ($file['error'] == 4) {
        return false;
    } else {
        $accept = false;
    }
}
if (!$this->checkSize($file)) {
    $accept = false;
}
if ($this->typeCheckingOn) {
    if (!$this->checkType($file)) {
        $accept = false;
    }
}
return $accept;
}

```

This simply nests the final conditional statement in `checkFile()` in another condition. By default, `$typeCheckingOn` is `true`, so the MIME type will be checked by `checkType()`. But if you call the `Upload` object's `allowAllTypes()` method before the `upload()` method, `$typeCheckingOn` will be `false`, and any type of file can be uploaded. You'll see how to do this shortly, but first let's create a public method to adjust the maximum size of a file that can be uploaded.

4. The method for changing the maximum permitted size needs to check that the submitted value is a number and assign it to the `$max` property. Add the following method definition to the class file:

```

public function setMaxSize($num) {
    if (is_numeric($num) && $num > 0) {
        $this->max = (int) $num;
    }
}

```

```
}
```

The conditional statement passes the submitted value to the `is_numeric()` function, which checks that it's a number. It also checks that `$num` is greater than zero.

If both conditions are true, `$num` is assigned to the `$max` property using what's known as a casting operator, which forces the value to be an integer (see "Explicitly changing a data type" at the end of this PHP solution for a detailed explanation). The `is_numeric()` function accepts any type of number, including a hexadecimal one or a string containing a numeric value. This ensures that the value is converted to an integer.

Caution PHP also has a function called `is_int()` that checks for an integer. However, the value cannot be anything else. For example, it rejects `'102400'` even though it's a numeric value because the quotes make it a string.

5. Save `Upload.php` and test `file_upload.php` again. It should continue to upload images smaller than 50 KB, as before.
6. Amend `file_upload.php` to change the maximum permitted size to 3000 bytes, like this (the code is just before the conditional statement that processes the upload):

```
$max = 3000;
```

7. You also need to invoke the `setMaxSize()` method on the `$loader` object in the `try` block, like this:

```
$loader = new Upload($destination);
$loader->setMaxSize($max);
$loader->upload();
$result = $loader->getMessages();
```

By changing the value of `$max` and passing it as the argument to `setMaxSize()`, you affect both `MAX_FILE_SIZE` in the form's hidden field and the maximum value stored inside the class.

Caution The call to `setMaxSize()` must come before you use the `upload()` method. There's no point changing the maximum size in the class after the file has already been saved.

8. Save `file_upload.php` and test it again. Select an image you haven't used before, or delete the contents of the `upload_test` folder. The first time you try it, you might see only a message that the file is too big. Check the `upload_test` folder to confirm that it hasn't been transferred.

Try it again. This time, you should see a result similar to [Figure 6-6](#).

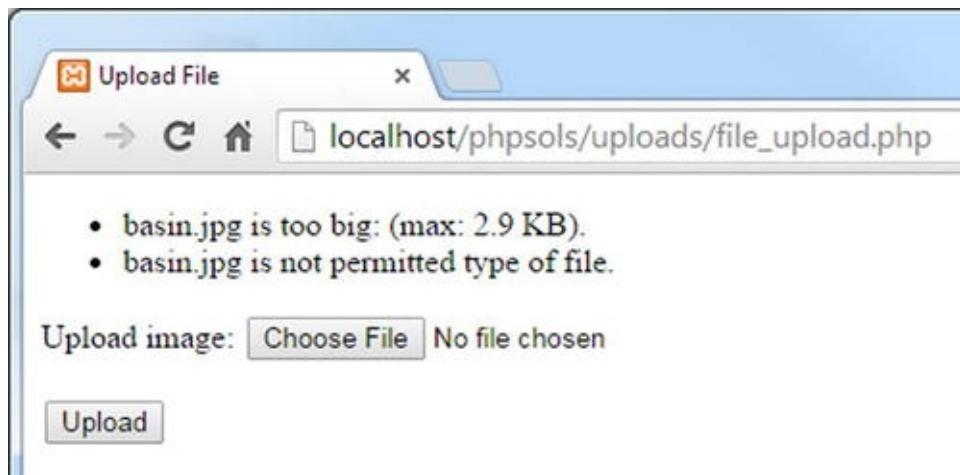


Figure 6-6. The size restriction is working, but there's an error in checking the MIME type

What's going on? The reason you probably didn't see the message about the permitted type of file the first time is because the value of `MAX_FILE_SIZE` in the hidden

field isn't refreshed until you reload the form in the browser. The error message appears the second time because the updated value of `MAX_FILE_SIZE` prevents the file from being uploaded. As a result, the `type` element of the `$_FILES` array is empty. You need to tweak the `checkType()` method to fix this problem.

9. In `Upload.php`, amend the `checkType()` definition like this:

```
protected function checkType($file) {
    if (in_array($file['type'], $this->permitted)) {
        return true;
    } else {
        if (!empty($file['type'])) {
            $this->messages[]
= $file['name'] . ' is not permitted
type of file.';
        }
        return false;
    }
}
```

If a file is bigger than the limit specified by `MAX_FILE_SIZE` in the form's hidden field, nothing is uploaded, so the `type` element of the `$_FILES` array is empty. The code highlighted in bold adds a new condition that creates an error message only if `$file['type']` is not empty.

Note This has the disadvantage that it doesn't warn the user if the file type isn't acceptable. However, it's preferable to displaying a false warning about permitted types simply because the file is too big.

10. Save the class definition and test `file_upload.php` again. This time you should see only the message about

the file being too big.

11. Reset the value of \$max at the top of `file_upload.php` to 51200. You should now be able to upload the image. If it fails the first time, it's because `MAX_FILE_SIZE` hasn't been refreshed in the form.
12. Test the `allowAllTypes()` method by calling it on the `Upload` object like this (the new line of code must go before you call the `upload()` method):

```
$loader = new Upload($destination);
$loader->setMaxSize($max);
$loader->allowAllTypes();
$loader->upload();
$result = $loader->getMessages();
```

Try uploading any type of file. As long as it's smaller than 50 KB, it should be uploaded. Change the value of \$max to a suitably large number, if necessary.

Tip Use a calculation to set the value of \$max. For example, `$max = 600 * 1024; // 600 KB.`

You can check your class definition against `Upload_03.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder. There's an updated version of the upload form in `file_upload_06.php` in the `ch06` folder.

By now I hope you're getting the idea of how a PHP class is built from functions (methods) dedicated to doing a single job. Fixing the incorrect error message about the image not being a permitted type was made easier by the fact that the message could only have come from the `checkType()` method. Most of the code used in the method definitions relies on built-in PHP functions. Once you learn which functions are best suited to the task in hand, building a class—or any other PHP script—becomes much easier.

Explicitly changing a data type

Most of the time you don't need to worry about the data type of a variable or value. Strictly speaking, all values submitted through a form are strings, but PHP silently converts numbers to the appropriate data type. This automatic **type juggling**, as it's called, is very convenient. There are times, though, when you want to make sure a value is a specific data type. In such cases, you can **cast** (or change) a value to the desired type by preceding it with the name of the data type in parentheses. You saw an example of this in PHP Solution 6-4, which casts a numeric value to an integer, like this:

```
$this->max = (int) $num;
```

If the value is already of the desired type, it remains unchanged. [Table 6-4](#) lists the casting operators used in PHP.

Table 6-4. PHP casting operators

Operator	Alternatives	Converts to
(array)		Array
(bool)	(boolean)	Boolean (true or false)
(float)	(double), (real)	Floating-point number
(int)	(integer)	Integer
(object)		Object
(string)		String
(unset)		Null

To learn more about what happens when casting between certain types, see the online documentation at <http://php.net/manual/en/language.types.type-juggling.php>.

Neutralizing potentially dangerous files

The `allowAllTypes()` method added in PHP Solution 6-4 makes the `Upload` class more flexible, but it exposes your server to the danger of someone uploading an executable file and then trying to run it. To mitigate these risks, you can automatically append a suffix to the filename of certain types of

files. If someone uploads `dosomedamage.php` to your site, you can render it harmless by changing the name to `dosomedamage.php.upload`.

PHP Solution 6-5: Checking and amending filenames

This PHP solution demonstrates how to neutralize potentially dangerous files by optionally appending `.upload` to the filename of files that don't have a filename extension or that have an extension that's not trusted. It also checks filenames to replace spaces with underscores.

Continue working with `Upload.php` from the previous PHP solution. Alternatively, use `Upload_03.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

1. Add the following three new protected properties to the existing ones at the top of the class definition in `Upload.php`:

```
protected $notTrusted = ['bin', 'cgi',  
'exe', 'js', 'pl', 'php', 'py', 'sh'];  
protected $suffix = '.upload';  
protected $newName;
```

The first property defines an array of filename extensions that are potentially unsafe. The second one sets the default suffix that will be appended to the filename of risky files. The third one will be used to store the file's new name if it is changed.

Note The filename extensions in the `$notTrusted` array don't have a preceding dot. This is because the built-in PHP function that detects the filename extension strips off the leading dot.

2. By default, the class will append the `.upload` suffix to files with extensions in the not trusted list. But you don't want that to happen if only registered (and trusted) users can upload files. To make the suffix optional, amend the

definition of the `allowAllTypes()` method, like this:

```
public function allowAllTypes($suffix  
= true) {  
    $this->typeCheckingOn = false;  
    if (!$suffix) {  
        $this->suffix = ''; // empty string  
    }  
}
```

This adds `$suffix` as an argument to the `allowAllTypes()` method and sets its value to `true`. Assigning a value to an argument in a function (method) definition makes it optional.

The conditional statement that has been added to the method definition uses the negation operator (`!`). So, if the argument passed to `allowAllTypes()` is `false`, the value of the class's `$suffix` property is set to an empty string (a pair of quotes with nothing in between). In effect, this turns off appending a suffix to the filename. Instead of adding `.upload`, it adds nothing.

3. We need to add another check to the series of tests a file undergoes before it's uploaded. Amend the `checkFile()` method like this (part of the existing code has been omitted to save space):

```
protected function checkFile($file) {  
    $accept = true;  
    // error and size checking code  
    omitted  
    if ($this->typeCheckingOn) {  
        if (!$this->checkType($file)) {  
            $accept = false;  
        }  
    }  
    if ($accept) {  
        $this->checkName($file);  
    }  
    return $accept;
```

```
}
```

You don't need to check the filename if the file has failed any of the previous tests, so the code highlighted in bold uses a conditional statement to call a new method `checkName()` only if `$accept` is true.

4. Define `checkName()` as a protected method. The first part of the code looks like this:

```
protected function checkName($file) {  
    $this->newName = null;  
    $nospaces = str_replace(' ', '_',  
    $file['name']);  
    if ($nospaces != $file['name']) {  
        $this->newName = $nospaces;  
    }  
}
```

The method begins by setting the `$newName` property to `null` (in other words, no value). The class will eventually be capable of handling multiple file uploads. Consequently, the property needs to be reset each time.

Then, the `str_replace()` function replaces spaces in the filename with underscores and assigns the result to `$nospaces`. The `str_replace()` function was described in PHP Solution 4-4.

The value of `$nospaces` is compared with `$file['name']`. If they're not the same, `$nospaces` is assigned as the value of the `$newName` property.

That deals with spaces in filenames. Next, you need to add the suffix to the names of potentially unsafe files.

5. To determine if a file is potentially unsafe, you need to extract the filename extension. You can do that with the `pathinfo()` function. Add the following line of code to the `checkName()` method just before the closing curly

brace:

```
$extension = pathinfo($nospaces,  
PATHINFO_EXTENSION);
```

The first argument to `pathinfo()` is the filename with the space removed. The second argument is a PHP constant that tells the function to return only the filename extension.

 **Caution** PHP constants are case-sensitive.
`PATHINFO_EXTENSION` must be all uppercase.

6. You need to add the suffix only if the `$typeCheckingOn` property is `false` and the `$suffix` property is not an empty string. So, the code to add the suffix needs to be enclosed in a conditional statement that checks for both conditions.

Then, a second conditional statement nested inside the first one needs to check if the filename extension is in the `$notTrusted` array. It's also a good idea to add the suffix to files that don't have an extension, as they're frequently used as executable files on Linux servers. Add the following code to the `checkName()` method after the line you inserted in the previous step:

```
if (! $this->typeCheckingOn &&  
! empty($this->suffix)) {  
    if (in_array($extension, $this-  
>notTrusted) || empty($extension)) {  
        $this->newName = $nospaces  
        . $this->suffix;  
    }  
}
```

The code inside the nested conditional statement concatenates the suffix onto the version of the filename

without spaces and assigns the result to the `$newName` property.

7. If the name has been changed by removing spaces, adding a suffix, or both, the `moveFile()` method needs to use the amended name when saving the file to its destination. Update the beginning of the `moveFile()` method like this:

```
protected function moveFile($file) {  
    $filename = isset($this->newName) ? $this->newName : $file['name'];  
    $success  
    = move_uploaded_file($file['tmp_name'],  
        $this->destination . $filename);  
    if ($success) {
```

The new first line uses the ternary operator (see “Using the ternary operator” in [Chapter 3](#)) to assign a value to `$filename`. The condition before the question mark checks if the `$newName` property has been set by the `checkName()` method. If it has, the new name is used. Otherwise, `$file['name']`, which contains the original value from the `$_FILES` array, is assigned to `$filename`.

In the second line, `$filename` replaces the value concatenated to the `$destination` property. So, if the name has been changed, the new name is used to store the file. But if no change has been made, the original name is used.

8. It’s a good idea to let the user know if the filename has been changed. Make the following change to the conditional statement in `moveFile()` that creates the message if the file has been successfully uploaded:

```
if ($success) {  
    $result = $file['name'] . ' was  
uploaded successfully';  
    if (!is_null($this->newName)) {
```

```

        $result .= ', and was renamed ' . $this->newName;
    }
    $this->messages[] = $result;
}

```

If the `$newName` property is not `null`, you know the file has been renamed, and that information is added to the message stored in `$result` using the combined concatenation operator (`.=`).

9. Save `Upload.php` and test uploading files that have spaces in their names and/or have filename extensions listed in the `$notTrusted` array. The spaces should be replaced by underscores, and a suffix should be added to potentially risky file types, as shown in [Figure 6-7](#).

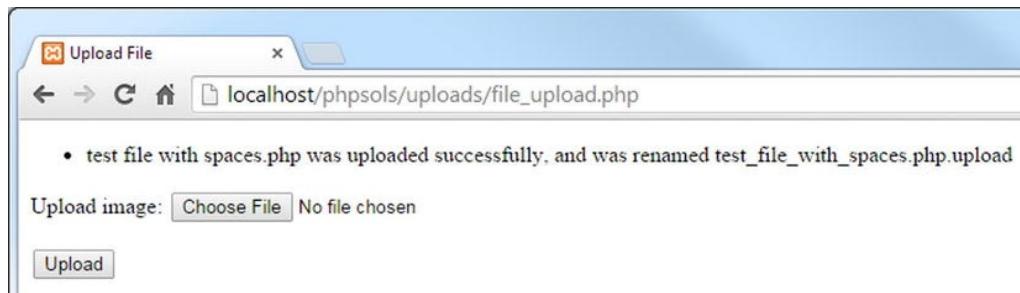


Figure 6-7. The spaces have been replaced, and a suffix has been added to the filename

10. In `file_upload.php`, pass `false` as an argument to `allowAllTypes()`, like this:

```
$loader->allowAllTypes(false);
```

11. Save `file_upload.php` and test the upload form again with a file that has an extension listed in the `$notTrusted` array. This time, only spaces will be replaced in the filename. The `.upload` suffix won't be added (see [Figure 6-8](#)).

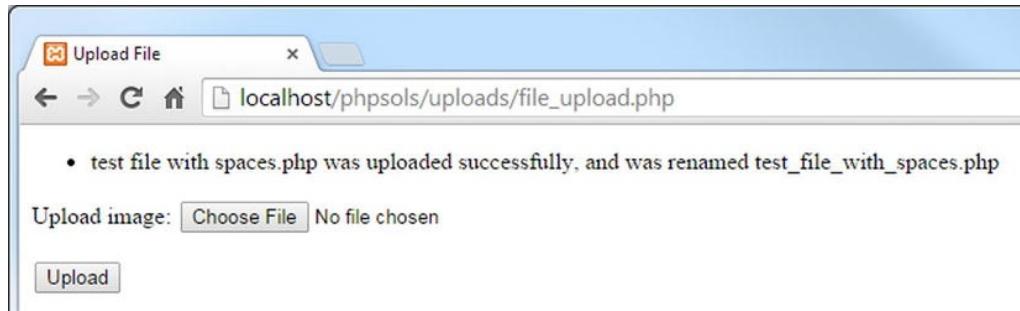


Figure 6-8. This time, the suffix hasn't been appended to the filename

You can check your code against `Upload_04.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

Preventing files from being overwritten

As the script stands, PHP automatically overwrites existing files without warning. That may be exactly what you want. On the other hand, it may be your worst nightmare. The class needs to offer a choice of whether to overwrite an existing file or to give it a unique name.

PHP Solution 6-6: Renaming duplicate files

This PHP solution improves the `Upload` class by adding the option to insert a number before the filename extension of an uploaded file to avoid overwriting an existing file of the same name. By default, this option is turned on.

Continue working with the same class definition file as before. Alternatively, use `Upload_04.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

1. Renaming duplicate files needs to be optional, so add a new property to the list at the top of the class definition:

```
protected $renameDuplicates;
```

2. Rather than create a public method to set the value of this property, let's make it an optional argument to the `upload()` method. Amend the method definition like this:

```

public function upload($renameDuplicates
= true) {
    $this->renameDuplicates = $renameDuplicates;
    $uploaded = current($_FILES);
    if ($this->checkFile($uploaded)) {
        $this->moveFile($uploaded);
    }
}

```

As explained in the previous PHP solution, you can make an argument optional by assigning it a value in the function (method) definition. This automatically sets the `$renameDuplicates` property to `true` unless you pass `false` as an argument to the `upload()` method.

3. All the code for renaming duplicate files needs to be added to the `checkName()` method, which you created in the previous PHP solution. Add the following code just before the method's closing curly brace:

```

if ($this->renameDuplicates) {
    $name = isset($this->newName)
? $this->newName : $file['name'];
    $existing = scandir($this-
>destination);
    if (in_array($name, $existing)) {
        // rename file
    }
}

```

The conditional statement checks whether the `$renameDuplicates` property is `true` or `false`. The code inside the braces is executed only if it's `true`.

The first line of code inside the conditional block uses the ternary operator to set the value of `$name`. This is the same technique used in the `moveFile()` method. If the `$newName` property has a value, that value is assigned to `$name`. Otherwise, the original name is used.

The next line uses the `scandir()` function, which returns an array of all the files and folders in a directory. The argument passed to `scandir()` is the `upload_folder`, so `$existing` contains an array of files already in that folder.

The conditional statement on the next line passes `$name` to the `in_array()` function to determine if the `$existing` array contains a file with the same name. If there's no match, nothing remains to be done.

4. If `$name` is found the `$existing` array, a new name needs to be generated. Add the following code under the “rename file” comment inside the nested conditional statement:

```
// rename file
$basename = pathinfo($name, PATHINFO_FILENAME);
$extension = pathinfo($name,
PATHINFO_EXTENSION);
$i = 1;
do {
    $this->newName = $basename . '_' . $i++;
    if (!empty($extension)) {
        $this->newName .= ".$extension";
    }
} while (in_array($this->newName, $existing));
```

In the previous PHP solution, we used `pathinfo()` to get the filename extension. This time, you need to get both the file’s base name and the extension. You need to get the extension again because a suffix might have been appended to the filename if the file is of a type that’s not trusted.

To get the base name, the second argument passed to `pathinfo()` is `PATHINFO_FILENAME`. Now that we’ve got both the base name and the extension stored in separate variables, it’s easy to build a new name by inserting a number between the base name and the extension.

A counter variable, `$i`, is initialized at 1, and then a `do . . . while` loop builds the new name from `$basename`, an underscore, and the counter `$i`, which is incremented each time the loop runs. The conditional statement adds a dot and the extension if `$extension` isn't an empty string. The loop's condition keeps checking if the new name is in the `$existing` array.

Note See “Using loops with while and do . . . while” in [Chapter 3](#) for an explanation of how the loop works.

Let's say you're uploading a file called `menu.jpg` and there's already a file with the same name in the upload folder. The loop rebuilds the name as `menu_1.jpg` and assigns the result to the `$newName` property. The loop's condition then uses `in_array()` to check whether `menu_1.jpg` is in the `$existing` array.

If `menu_1.jpg` already exists, the loop continues, but the increment operator (`++`) has increased `$i` to 2, so `$newName` becomes `menu_2.jpg`, which is again checked by `in_array()`. The loop continues until `in_array()` no longer finds a match. Whatever value remains in the `$newName` property is used as the new filename.

5. Save `Upload.php` and test the revised class in `file_upload.php`. Start by passing `false` as an argument to the `upload()` method, like this:

```
$loader->upload(false);
```

6. Upload the same file several times. You should receive a message that the upload has been successful, but when you check the contents of the `upload_test` folder, there should be only one copy of the file. It has been overwritten each time.

7. Remove the argument from the call to `upload()`:

```
$loader->upload();
```

8. Save `file_upload.php` and repeat the test, uploading the same file several times. Each time you upload the file, you should see a message that it has been renamed.
9. Try it also with a file that has an extension in the `$notTrusted` array. By default, the number is inserted before the suffix. If you pass `false` as an argument to `allowAllTypes()`, no suffix is added, and the number is inserted before the file's normal extension.
10. Check the results by inspecting the contents of the `upload_test` folder. You should see something similar to [Figure 6-9](#).

You can check your code, if necessary, against `Upload_05.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

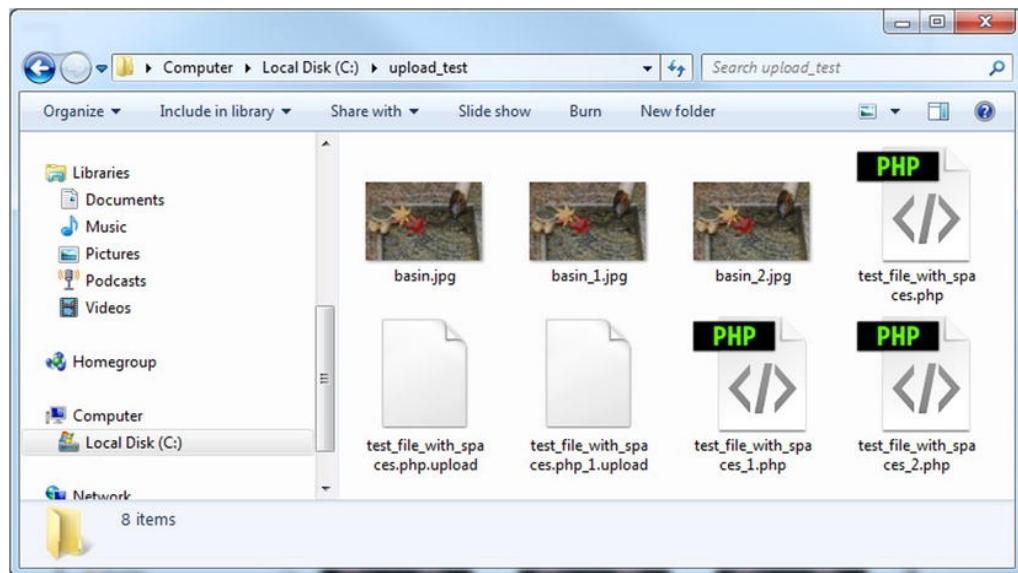


Figure 6-9. The class removes spaces from filenames and prevents files from being overwritten

Uploading Multiple Files

You now have a flexible class for file uploads, but it can handle only one file at a time. Adding the `multiple` attribute to the file field's `<input>` tag permits the selection of multiple files in an HTML5-compliant browser. Older browsers also support multiple uploads if you add extra file fields to your form.

The final stage in building the `Upload` class is to adapt it to handle multiple files. To understand how the code works, you need to see what happens to the `$_FILES` array when a form allows for multiple uploads.

How the `$_FILES` array handles multiple files

Since `$_FILES` is a multidimensional array, it's capable of handling multiple uploads. In addition to adding the `multiple` attribute to the `<input>` tag, you need to add an empty pair of square brackets to the `name` attribute, like this:

```
<input type="file" name="image[]" id="image" multiple>
```

As you learned in [Chapter 5](#), adding square brackets to the `name` attribute submits multiple values as an array. You can examine how this affects the `$_FILES` array by using `multi_upload_01.php` or `multi_upload_02.php` in the `ch06` folder. [Figure 6-10](#) shows the result of selecting four files in a modern desktop browser that supports the `multiple` attribute.

Upload images (multiple selections permitted): No file chosen

```
Array
(
    [image] => Array
        (
            [name] => Array
                (
                    [0] => basin.jpg
                    [1] => fountains.jpg
                    [2] => kinkakuji.jpg
                    [3] => maiko.jpg
                )

            [type] => Array
                (
                    [0] => image/jpeg
                    [1] => image/jpeg
                    [2] => image/jpeg
                    [3] => image/jpeg
                )

            [tmp_name] => Array
                (
                    [0] => C:\xampp\temp\php9D3F.tmp
                    [1] => C:\xampp\temp\php9D40.tmp
                    [2] => C:\xampp\temp\php9D41.tmp
                    [3] => C:\xampp\temp\php9D42.tmp
                )

            [error] => Array
                (
                    [0] => 0
                    [1] => 0
                    [2] => 0
                    [3] => 0
                )

            [size] => Array
                (
                    [0] => 16256
                    [1] => 9603
                    [2] => 13342
                    [3] => 15521
                )
        )
)
```

Figure 6-10. The `$_FILES` array can upload multiple files in a single operation

Although this structure is not as convenient as having the details of each file stored in a separate subarray, the numeric keys keep track of the details that refer to each file. For example, `$_FILES['image']['name'][2]` relates directly to `$_FILES['image']['tmp_name'][2]`, and so on.

At the time of this writing, all modern desktop browsers support the `multiple` attribute, as does Safari on iOS (since version 6.1). This attribute is not supported in Internet Explorer 9 or earlier, nor in Android (the current version is 4.4).

Browsers that don't support the `multiple` attribute upload a single file using the same structure, so the name of the file is stored as `$_FILES['image']['name'][0]`.

Tip If you need to support multiple file uploads on older browsers, omit the `multiple` attribute and create separate file input fields for however many files you want to upload simultaneously. Give each `<input>` tag the same `name` attribute followed by square brackets. The resulting structure of the `$_FILES` array is the same as in [Figure 6-10](#).

PHP Solution 6-7: Adapting the class to handle multiple uploads

This PHP solution shows how to adapt the `upload()` method of the `Upload` class to handle multiple file uploads. The class automatically detects when the `$_FILES` array is structured as in [Figure 6-10](#) and uses a loop to handle however many files are uploaded.

When you upload a file from a form designed to handle only single uploads, the `$_FILES` array stores the filename as a string in `$_FILES['image']['name']`. But when you upload from a form capable of handling multiple uploads, `$_FILES['image']['name']` is an array. Even if only one file is uploaded, its name is stored as `$_FILES['image']['name'][0]`.

So, by detecting if the `name` element is an array, you can decide how to process the `$_FILES` array. If the `name` element is an array, you need to loop through it, using its index to extract the current file's other details, and then

storing them in a variable that can be passed to the `checkFile()` method.

With that in mind, continue working with your existing class file.

Alternatively, use `Upload_05.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

1. Amend the `upload()` method by adding a conditional statement to check if the `name` element of `$uploaded` is an array:

```
public function  
upload($renameDuplicates = true) {  
    $this->renameDuplicates  
= $renameDuplicates;  
    $uploaded = current($_FILES);  
    if (is_array($uploaded['name'])) {  
        // deal with multiple uploads  
    } else {  
        if ($this->checkFile($uploaded))  
{  
            $this->moveFile($uploaded);  
        }  
    }  
}
```

The conditional statement checks if `$uploaded['name']` is an array. If it is, it needs special handling. The existing call to `checkFile()` now goes inside the `else` block.

Note Refer to PHP Solution 6-2 if you need reminding how `$uploaded` contains the reference to the first element in the `$_FILES` array.

2. In order to deal with multiple uploads, the challenge is to gather the five values associated with a single file (`name`, `type`, and so on) before passing them to the `checkFile()` and `moveFile()` methods.

If you refer to [Figure 6-10](#), `$uploaded['name']` is an indexed array that contains the names of the uploaded files. By running that array through a `foreach` loop, you can access both the key and value, like this:

```
foreach ($uploaded['name'] as $key =>
$value) { }
```

The first time the loop runs, `$key` is 0. Using the key, you can get access to the other elements in the `$_FILES` array for the first file and assign them to a new array called `$currentFile`. The second time it runs, you get the details of the second file, and so on.

The revised code for the `upload()` method looks like this:

```
public function
upload($renameDuplicates = true) {
    $this->renameDuplicates
= $renameDuplicates;
    $uploaded = current($_FILES);
    if (is_array($uploaded['name'])) {
        // deal with multiple uploads
        foreach ($uploaded['name'] as $key =>
$value) {
            $currentFile['name']
= $uploaded['name'][$key];
            $currentFile['type']
= $uploaded['type'][$key];
            $currentFile['tmp_name']
= $uploaded['tmp_name'][$key];
            $currentFile['error']
= $uploaded['error'][$key];
            $currentFile['size']
= $uploaded['size'][$key];
            if ($this->checkFile($currentFile))
{
                $this->moveFile($currentFile);
}
    }
} else {
```

```

        if ($this->checkFile($uploaded))
{
    $this->moveFile($uploaded);
}
}
}

```

All you're interested in is `$key`, so `$value` is never used. The first time the loop runs, `$uploaded['name'][$key]` accesses the value stored in `$uploaded['name'][0]` and assigns it to `$currentFile['name']`; `$uploaded['type'][$key]` accesses `$uploaded['type'][0]` and assigns it to `$currentFile['type']`, and so on. You never loop through the arrays for `type`, `tmp_name`, `error`, and `size`. Their values are accessible through the key thanks to the predictable nature of the `$_FILES` array.

Each time the loop runs, `$currentFile` contains the details of a single file, which are then passed to the `checkFile()` and `moveFile()` methods exactly as before.

3. Save `Upload.php` and test it with `file_upload.php`. It should work the same as before, uploading only one file at a time.
4. Add a pair of square brackets at the end of the `name` attribute in the file field and insert the `multiple` attribute, like this:

```
<input type="file" name="image[]"
id="image" multiple>
```

You don't need to make any changes to the PHP code above the DOCTYPE declaration. The code is the same for both single and multiple uploads.

Note Internet Explorer prior to IE 10 will upload only the last file selected.

5. Save `file_upload.php` and reload it in your browser. Test it by selecting multiple files. When you click **Upload**, you should see messages relating to each file. Files that meet your criteria are uploaded. Those that are too big or of the wrong type are rejected.

You can check your code against `Upload_06.php` in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

Using the Upload Class

The `Upload` class is simple to use—just import the namespace as described in “Using a namespaced class” earlier in this chapter. Include the class definition in your script and create an `Upload` object by passing the file path to the `upload_test` folder as an argument, like this:

```
$destination = 'C:/upload_test/';  
$loader = new Upload($destination);
```

Caution The path to the upload folder must end in a trailing slash.

By default, the class permits only images to be uploaded, but this can be overridden. The class has the following public methods:

- `setMaxSize()`: Takes an integer and sets the maximum size for each upload file, overriding the default 51200 bytes (50 KB). The value must be expressed as bytes.
- `getMaxSize()`: Reports the maximum size in KB formatted to one decimal place.
- `allowAllTypes()`: Allows any type of file to be uploaded. By default, `.upload` is appended as a suffix to

files with filename extensions listed in the `$notTrusted` property. To prevent the suffix from being appended, pass `false` as an argument to this method.

- `upload()`: Saves the file(s) to the destination folder. Spaces in filenames are replaced by underscores. By default, files with the same name as an existing file are renamed by inserting a number in front of the filename extension. To overwrite files, pass `false` as an argument to this method.
- `getMessages()`: Returns an array of messages reporting the status of uploads.

Points to Watch with File Uploads

Uploading files from a web form is fairly straightforward with PHP. The main causes of failure are not setting the correct permissions on the upload directory or folder, and forgetting to move the uploaded file to its target destination before the end of the script. Letting other people upload files to your server, however, exposes you to risk. In effect, you're allowing visitors the freedom to write to your server's hard disk. It's not something you would allow strangers to do on your own computer, so you should guard access to your upload directory with the same degree of vigilance.

Ideally, uploads should be restricted to registered and trusted users, so the upload form should be in a password-protected part of your site. Also, the upload folder does not need to be inside your site root, so locate it in a private directory whenever possible unless you want uploaded material to be displayed immediately in your webpages. Remember, though, there is no way PHP can check that material is legal or decent, so immediate public display entails risks that go beyond the merely technical. You should also bear the following security points in mind:

- Set a maximum size for uploads both in the web form and on the server side.
- Restrict the types of uploaded files by inspecting the MIME type in the `$_FILES` array. Alternatively, add a suffix to the name of executable files to prevent them from being run

remotely.

- Replace spaces in filenames with underscores or hyphens.
- Inspect your upload folder on a regular basis. Make sure there's nothing in there that shouldn't be, and do some housekeeping from time to time. Even if you limit file upload sizes, you may run out of your allocated space without realizing it.

Chapter Review

This chapter has introduced you to creating a PHP class. If you're new to PHP or programming, you might have found it tough going. Don't be disheartened. The `Upload` class contains more than 180 lines of code, some of it complex, although I hope the descriptions have explained what the code is doing at each stage. Even if you don't understand all the code, the `Upload` class will save you a lot of time. It implements the main security measures necessary for file uploads, yet using it involves as little as a dozen lines of code:

```
use PhpSolutions\File\Upload;

if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {
    require_once 'PhpSolutions/File/Upload.php';
    try {
        $loader = new Upload('C:/upload_test/');
        $loader->upload();
        $result = $loader->getMessages();
    } catch (Exception $e) {
        echo $e->getMessage();
    }
}
```

If you found this chapter to be a struggle, come back to it later when you have more experience, and you should find the code easier to understand.

In the next chapter, you'll learn some techniques for inspecting the contents of files and folders, including how to use PHP to read and write text files.

CHAPTER 7



Using PHP to Manage Files

PHP has a huge range of functions designed to work with the server's file system, but finding the right one for the job isn't always easy. This chapter cuts through the tangle to show you some practical uses of these functions, such as reading and writing text files to store small amounts of information without a database. Loops play an important role in inspecting the contents of the file system, so you'll also explore some of the Standard PHP Library (SPL) iterators that are designed to make loops more efficient.

As well as opening local files, PHP can read public files, such as news feeds, on other servers. News feeds are normally formatted as XML (Extensible Markup Language). In the past, extracting information from an XML file was a tortuous process, but that's no longer the case thanks to the very aptly named SimpleXML. In this chapter, you'll see how to create a drop-down menu that lists all images in a folder, to create a function to select files of a particular type from a folder, to pull in a live news feed from another server, and to prompt a visitor to download an image or PDF file rather than open it in the browser. As an added bonus, you'll learn how to change the time zone of a date retrieved from another website.

This chapter covers the following subjects:

- Reading and writing files
- Listing the contents of a folder
- Inspecting files with the `SplFileInfo` class
- Controlling loops with SPL iterators
- Using SimpleXML to extract information from an XML file
- Consuming an RSS feed

- Creating a download link

Checking that PHP Can Open a File

As I explained in the previous chapter, PHP runs on most Linux servers as nobody or apache. Consequently, a folder must have minimum access permissions of 755 for scripts to open a file. To create or alter files, you normally need to set global access permissions of 777, the least secure setting. If PHP is configured to run in your own name, you can be more restrictive, because your scripts can create and write to files in any folder for which you have read, write, and execute permissions. On a Windows server you need write permission to create or update a file. If you need assistance with changing permissions, consult your hosting company.

Configuration Settings that Affect File Access

Hosting companies can impose further restrictions on file access through `php.ini`. To find out what restrictions have been imposed, run `phpinfo()` on your website and check the settings in the Core section. [Table 7-1](#) lists the settings you need to check. Unless you run your own server, you normally have no control over these settings.

Table 7-1. PHP configuration settings that affect file access

Directive	Default value	Description
<code>allow_url_fopen</code>	On	Allows PHP scripts to open public files on the Internet
<code>allow_url_include</code>	Off	Controls the ability to include remote files

The settings in [Table 7-1](#) both control access to files through a URL (as opposed to the local file system), but there's an important difference between them. The first one, `allow_url_fopen`, allows you to read remote files but not to include them directly in your scripts. This is generally safe, so the default is for it to be enabled. If `allow_url_fopen` is disabled on your website, you cannot access useful external data sources, such as news feeds and public XML

documents.

On the other hand, `allow_url_include` lets you include remote files directly in your scripts. This is a major security risk, so the default is for `allow_url_include` to be disabled.

Tip If your hosting company has disabled `allow_url_fopen`, ask for it to be enabled. Otherwise, you won't be able to use PHP Solution 7-5. But don't get the names mixed up: `allow_url_include` should always be turned off in a hosting environment.

Prior to PHP 5.4, some servers placed restrictions on access to local files. These restrictions have now been removed. Access to files on the local file system is controlled by the permissions set on each file and folder.

Creating a File Storage Folder for Local Testing

Storing data inside your site root is highly insecure, particularly if you need to set global access permissions on the folder. If you have access to a private folder outside the site root, create your data store as a subfolder and give it the necessary permissions.

For the purposes of this chapter, I suggest that Windows users create a folder called `private` on their C drive.

Mac users should create a `private` folder inside their home folder. If necessary, set Read & Write permissions in the folder's info panel as described in the previous chapter.

If you're testing on Linux, you also need to make sure the web server has read and write permissions for the `private` folder.

Reading and Writing Files

The ability to read and write files has a wide range of applications. For example, you can open a file on another website, read the contents into your server's memory, extract information using string and XML manipulation functions, and then write the results to a local file. You can also query a database on your own

server and output the data as a text or CSV (comma-separated values) file. You can even generate files in Open Document Format or as Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. But first, let's look at the basic operations.

Tip If you subscribe to the lynda.com Online Training Library, you can learn how to export data from a database to various formats, such as Microsoft Excel and Word, in my *Exporting Data to Files with PHP* course (www.lynda.com/PHP-tutorials/Exporting-Data-Files-PHP/158375-2.html).

Reading Files in a Single Operation

PHP has three functions that read the contents of a text file in a single operation.

- **readfile()** opens a file and directly outputs its contents.
- **file_get_contents()** reads the whole contents of a file into a single string but doesn't generate direct output.
- **file()** reads each line into an array.

PHP Solution 7-1: Getting the Contents of a Text File

This PHP solution demonstrates the difference between using `readfile()`, `file_get_contents()`, and `file()` to access the contents of a file.

1. Copy `sonnet.txt` to your `private` folder. It's a text file that contains Shakespeare's Sonnet 116.
2. Create a new folder called `filesystem` in your `phpsol1` site root, then create a PHP file called `get_contents.php` in the new folder. Insert the following code inside a PHP block (`get_contents_01.php` in the `ch07` folder shows the code embedded in a webpage, but you can use just the PHP code for testing purposes):

```
readfile('C:/private/sonnet.txt');
```

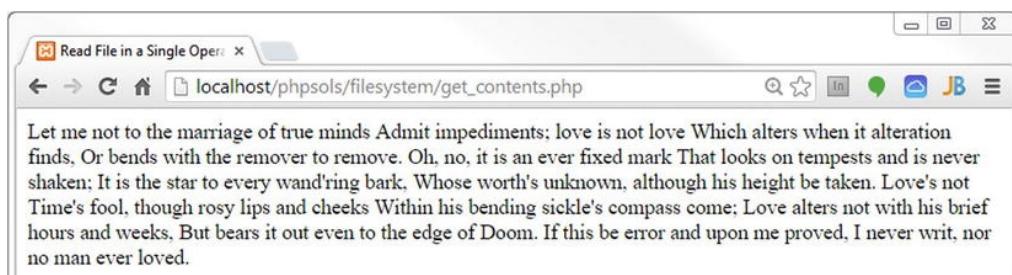
If you're on a Mac, amend the path name like this, using your own Mac username:

```
readfile('/Users/username/private/sonnet.txt
```

If you're testing on Linux or on a remote server, amend the path name accordingly.

Note For brevity, the remaining examples in this chapter show only the Windows path name.

3. Save `get_contents.php` and view it in a browser. You should see something similar to the following screenshot. The browser ignores the line breaks in the original text and displays Shakespeare's sonnet as a solid block.



Tip If you see an error message, check that you typed the code correctly and that the correct file and folder permissions have been set on a Mac or Linux.

4. PHP has a function called `nl2br()` that converts newline characters to `
` tags. Change the code in `get_contents.php` like this (it's in `get_contents_02.php`):

```
nl2br(readfile('C:/private/sonnet.txt'));
```

Note `nl2br()` inserts a trailing slash before the closing angle bracket of `
` for compatibility with XHTML. The trailing slash is optional in HTML5. Both `
` and `
` are valid.

5. Save `get_contents.php` and reload it in your browser. The output is still a solid block of text. When you pass one function as an argument to another one like this, the result of the inner function is normally passed to the outer one, performing both operations in a single expression. So, you would expect the file's contents to be passed to `nl2br()` before being displayed in the browser. However, `readfile()` outputs the file's contents immediately. By the time it's finished, there's nothing for `nl2br()` to insert `
` tags into. The text is already in the browser.
-

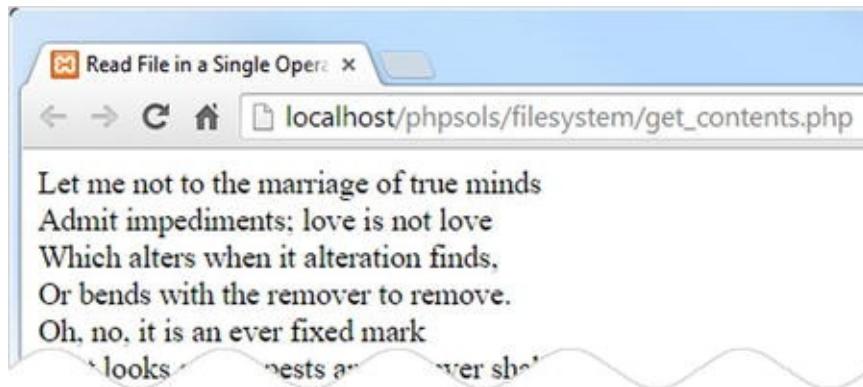
Note When two functions are nested like this, the inner function is executed first, and the outer function processes the result. But the return value of the inner function needs to be meaningful as an argument to the outer function. The return value of `readfile()` is the number of bytes read from the file. Even if you add `echo` at the beginning of the line, all you get is 594 added to the end of text. Nesting functions doesn't work in this case, but it's often a very useful technique, avoiding the need to store the result of the inner function in a variable before processing it with another function.

6. Instead of `readfile()`, you need to use `file_get_contents()` to convert the newline characters to `
` tags. Whereas `readfile()` simply outputs the content of a file, `file_get_contents()` returns the contents of a file as a single string. It's up to you to decide what to do with it. Amend the code like this

(or use `get_contents_03.php`):

```
echo  
nl2br(file_get_contents('C:/private/sonnet.txt'))
```

7. Reload the page in a browser. Each line of the sonnet is now on a line of its own.



8. The advantage of `file_get_contents()` is that you can assign the file contents to a variable and process it in some way before deciding what to do with it. Change the code in `get_contents.php` like this (or use `get_contents_04.php`) and load the page into a browser:

```
$sonnet =  
file_get_contents('C:/private/sonnet.txt');  
// replace new lines with spaces  
$words = str_replace("\r\n", ' ', $sonnet);  
// split into an array of words  
$words = explode(' ', $words);  
// extract the first nine array  
elements  
$first_line = array_slice($words, 0, 9);  
// join the first nine elements and  
display  
echo implode(' ', $first_line);
```

This stores the contents of `sonnet.txt` in a variable called `$sonnet`, which is passed to `str_replace()`, which then replaces the carriage return and newline

characters with a space and stores the result as `$words`.

Note See “Using escape sequences inside double quotes” in [Chapter 3](#) for an explanation of “`\r\n`”). The text file was created in Windows, so line breaks are represented by a carriage return and newline character. Files created on Mac OS X and Linux use only a newline character (“`\n`”).

Then `$words` is passed to the `explode()` function. This alarmingly named function “blows apart” a string and converts it into an array, using the first argument to determine where to break the string. In this case a space is used, so the contents of the text file are split into an array of words.

The array of words is then passed to the `array_slice()` function, which takes a slice out of an array starting from the position specified in the second argument. The third argument specifies the length of the slice. PHP counts arrays from 0, so this extracts the first nine words.

Finally, `implode()` does the opposite of `explode()`, joining the elements of an array and inserting the first argument between each one. The result is displayed by `echo`, producing the following outcome:



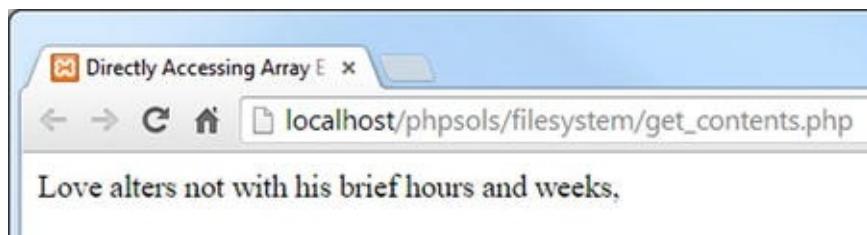
Instead of displaying the entire contents of the file, the script now displays only the first line. The full string is still stored in `$sonnet`.

9. However, if you want to process each line individually, it's simpler to use `file()`, which reads each line of a file into an array. To display the first line of `sonnet.txt`, the previous code can be simplified to this (see `get_contents_05.php`):

```
$sonnet  
= file('C:/private/sonnet.txt');  
echo $sonnet[0];
```

10. In fact, if you don't need the full array, you can access a single line directly by adding its index number in square brackets after the call to the `file()` function. The following code displays the eleventh line of the sonnet (see `get_contents_06.php`):

```
echo file('C:/private/sonnet.txt')[10];
```



Note Directly accessing an array element that's the result of a function like this is a technique known as “array dereferencing.” It was introduced in PHP 5.4. The code in `get_contents_06.php` won’t work in older versions of PHP.

Of the three functions we've just explored, `readfile()` is probably the least useful. It simply reads the contents of a file and dumps it directly into the output. You can't manipulate the file content or extract information from it. However, a practical use of `readfile()` is to force a file to be downloaded, as you'll see later in this chapter.

The other two functions, `file_get_contents()` and

`file()`, are more useful because you can capture the contents in a variable that is ready for reformatting or extracting information. The only difference is that `file_get_contents()` reads the contents into a single string, whereas `file()` generates an array in which each element corresponds to a line in the file.

Tip The `file()` function preserves newline characters at the end of each array element. If you want to strip the newline characters, pass the constant `FILE_IGNORE_NEW_LINES` as the second argument to the function. You can also skip empty lines by using `FILE_SKIP_EMPTY_LINES` as the second argument. To remove newline characters and skip empty lines, separate the two constants with a vertical pipe, like this: `FILE_IGNORE_NEW_LINES | FILE_SKIP_EMPTY_LINES`.

Although we've tested `file_get_contents()` and `file()` only with a local text file, they can also retrieve the contents from public files on other domains. This makes them very useful for accessing information on other webpages, although extracting the information usually requires a solid understanding of string functions and the Document Object Model (DOM).

The disadvantage of `file_get_contents()` and `file()` is that they read the whole file into memory. With very large files, it's preferable to use functions that process only a part of a file at a time. We'll look at those next.

Opening and Closing Files for Read/Write Operations

The functions we have looked at so far do everything in a single pass. However, PHP also has a set of functions that allow you to open a file, read it and/or write to it, and then close the file. The file can be either on the local file system or a publicly available file on a different domain.

The following are the most important functions used for this type of operation:

- `fopen()`: Opens a file

- `fgets()`: Reads the contents of a file, normally one line at a time
- `fgetcsv()`: Gets the current line from a CSV file and converts it into an array
- `fread()`: Reads a specified amount of a file
- `fwrite()`: Writes to a file
- `feof()`: Determines whether the end of the file has been reached
- `rewind()`: Moves the internal pointer back to the top of the file
- `fseek()`: Moves the internal pointer to a specific location in the file
- `fclose()`: Closes a file

The first of these, `fopen()`, offers a bewildering choice of options for how the file is to be used once it's open: `fopen()` has one read-only mode, four write-only modes, and five read/write modes. There are so many because they give you control over whether to overwrite the existing content or append new material. At other times, you may want PHP to create a file if it doesn't already exist.

Each mode determines where to place the internal pointer when it opens the file. It's like the cursor in a word processor: PHP starts reading or writing from wherever the pointer happens to be when you call `fread()` or `fwrite()`.

[Table 7-2](#) guides you through all the options.

Table 7-2. Read/write modes used with `fopen()`

Type	Mode	Description
Read-only	r	Internal pointer initially placed at beginning of file.
Write-only	w	Existing data deleted before writing. Creates a file if it doesn't already exist.
	a	Append mode. New data added at end of file. Creates a file if it doesn't already exist.
	c	Existing content is preserved, but the internal pointer is placed at the beginning of the file. Creates a file if it doesn't already exist.

	x	Creates a file only if it doesn't already exist. Fails if there's already a file with the same name.
Read/write	r+	Read/write operations can take place in either order and begin wherever the internal pointer is at the time. Pointer initially placed at beginning of file. File must already exist for operation to succeed.
	w+	Existing data deleted. Data can be read back after writing. Creates a file if it doesn't already exist.
	a+	Opens a file ready to add new data at end of file. Also permits data to be read back after internal pointer has been moved. Creates a file if it doesn't already exist.
	c+	Existing content is preserved, and the internal pointer is placed at the beginning of the file. Creates a new file if it doesn't already exist.
	x+	Creates a new file, but fails if a file of the same name already exists. Data can be read back after writing.

Choose the wrong mode, and you could end up deleting valuable data. You also need to be careful about the position of the internal pointer. If the pointer is at the end of the file, and you try to read the contents, you end up with nothing. On the other hand, if the pointer is at the beginning of the file, and you start writing, you overwrite the equivalent amount of existing data. “Moving the internal pointer” later in this chapter explains this in more detail.

You work with `fopen()` by passing it the following two arguments:

- The path to the file you want to open, or URL if the file is on a different domain
- A string containing one of the modes listed in [Table 7-2](#)

The `fopen()` function returns a reference to the open file, which can then be used with the other read/write functions. This is how you would open a text file for reading:

```
$file = fopen('C:/private/sonnet.txt', 'r');
```

Thereafter, you pass `$file` as the argument to other functions, such as `fgets()` and `fclose()`. Things should become clearer with a few practical demonstrations. Rather than building the files yourself, you'll probably find it easier to use the files in the `ch07` folder. I'll run quickly through each mode.

 **Note** Mac and Linux users need to adjust the path to the `private` folder in

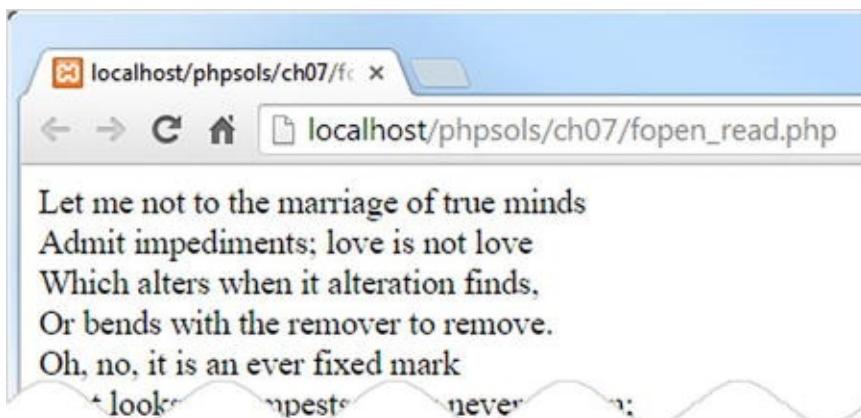
the example files to match their setup.

Reading a File with fopen()

The file `fopen_read.php` contains the following code:

```
// store the pathname of the file
$filename = 'C:/private/sonnet.txt';
// open the file in read-only mode
$file = fopen($filename, 'r');
// read the file and store its contents
$contents = fread($file, filesize($filename));
// close the file
fclose($file);
// display the contents with <br/> tags
echo nl2br($contents);
```

If you load this into a browser, you should see the following output:



The result is identical to using `file_get_contents()` in `get_contents_03.php`. Unlike `file_get_contents()`, the function `fread()` needs to know how much of the file to read. You need to supply a second argument indicating the number of bytes. This can be useful if you want, say, only the first 100 or so characters from a very big file. However, if you want the whole file, you need to pass the file's path name to `filesize()` to get the correct figure.

The other way to read the contents of a file with `fopen()` is to use

`fgets()`, which retrieves one line at a time. This means you need to use a `while` loop in combination with `feof()` to read right to the end of the file. The code in `fopen_readloop.php` looks like this:

```
$filename = 'C:/private/sonnet.txt';
// open the file in read-only mode
$file = fopen($filename, 'r');
// create variable to store the contents
$contents = '';
// loop through each line until end of file
while (!feof($file)) {
    // retrieve next line, and add to $contents
    $contents .= fgets($file);
}
// close the file
fclose($file);
// display the contents
echo nl2br($contents);
```

The `while` loop uses `fgets()` to retrieve the contents of the file one line at a time—`!feof($file)` is the same as saying “until the end of `$file`”—and stores them in `$contents`.

Using `fgets()` is very similar to using the `file()` function in that it handles one line at a time. The difference is that you can break out of the loop with `fgets()` once you have found the information you’re looking for. This is a significant advantage if you’re working with a very large file. The `file()` function loads the entire file into an array, consuming memory.

PHP Solution 7-2: Extracting data from a CSV file

Text files can be used as a flat-file database, where each record is stored in a single line with a comma, tab, or other delimiter between each field. This type of file is called a **CSV file**. Usually, CSV stands for comma-separated values, but it can also mean character-separated values when a tab or different delimiter is used. This PHP solution shows how to extract the values from a CSV file into a multidimensional associative array using `fopen()` and `fgetcsv()`.

1. Copy `users.csv` from the `ch07` folder to your `private` folder. The file contains the following data as

comma-separated values:

```
name,password  
david,codeslave  
ben,bigboss
```

The first line consists of titles for the data in the rest of the file. There are just two lines of data, each containing a name and password. This file will also be used in [Chapter 9](#) to create a simple file-based login system.

Caution When storing data as comma-separated values, there should be no space after the comma. If you add a space, it's considered to be the first character of a data field. Each line in a CSV file must have the same number of items.

2. Create a file called `getcsv.php` in the `filesystem` folder and use `fopen()` to open `users.csv` in read mode:

```
$file = fopen('C:/private/users.csv',  
'r');
```

3. Use `fgetcsv()` to extract the first line from the file as an array, then assign it to a variable called `$titles`:

```
$titles = fgetcsv($file);
```

This creates `$titles` as an array containing the values from the first line (name and password).

The `fgetcsv()` function requires a single argument, the reference to the file you have opened. It also accepts up to four optional arguments:

- The maximum length of the line: The default value is 0, which means no limit
- The delimiter between fields: Comma is the

default.

- The enclosure character: If fields contain the delimiter as part of the data, they must be enclosed in quotes. Double quotes are the default.
- The escape character: The default is a backslash.

The CSV file that we're using doesn't require any of the optional arguments to be set.

4. On the next line, initialize an empty array for the values that will be extracted from the CSV data:

```
$users = [];
```

5. After extracting values from a line, `fgetcsv()` moves to the next line. To get the remaining data from the file, you need to create a loop. In `fopen_readloop.php`, `!feof($file)` was used as the condition. This time, assign the return value of `fgetcsv()` to a variable in the condition, like this:

```
while (($data = fgetcsv($file)) !==  
false) {  
    $users[] = array_combine($titles,  
    $data);  
}
```

Note that the statement that assigns the return value from `fgetcsv()` is enclosed in a separate pair of parentheses and then compared to `false` using the not identical operator (`!==`). This has the effect of running the loop until `fgetcsv()` produces no more data.

The code inside the loop uses the `array_combine()` function to generate an associative array, which is added to the `$users` array. This function requires two arguments, both of which must be arrays with the same number of elements. The two arrays are merged, drawing the keys for the resulting associative array from the first

argument and the values from the second one.

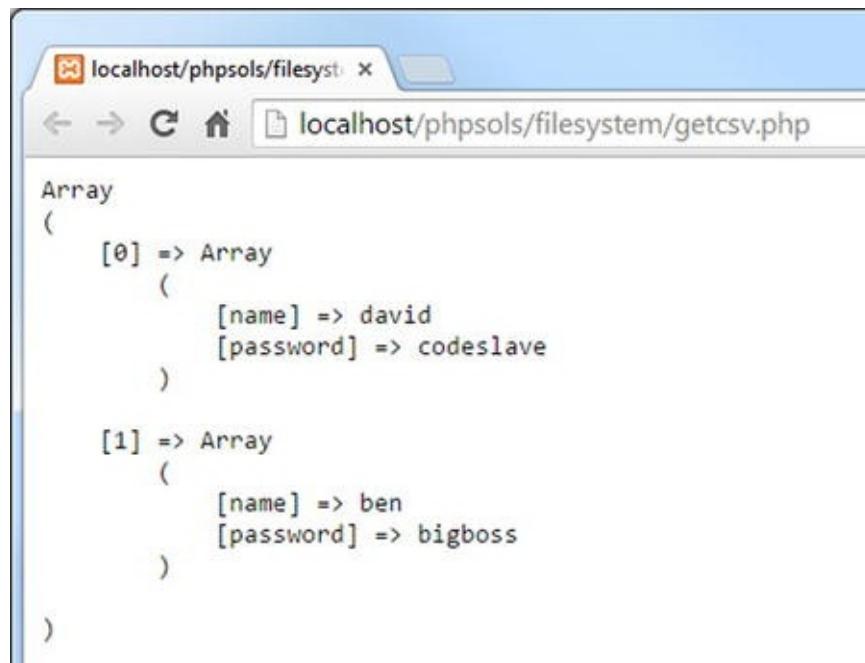
6. Close the CSV file:

```
fclose($file);
```

7. To inspect the result, use `print_r()`. Surround it with `<pre>` tags to make the output easier to read:

```
echo '<pre>';
print_r($users);
echo '</pre>';
```

8. Save `getcsv.php` and load it in a browser. You should see the result shown in [Figure 7-1](#).



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `localhost/phpsols/filesystem/getcsv.php`. The page content displays the following PHP code output:

```
Array
(
    [0] => Array
        (
            [name] => david
            [password] => codeslave
        )

    [1] => Array
        (
            [name] => ben
            [password] => bigboss
        )
)
```

Figure 7-1. The CSV data has been converted into a multidimensional associative array

9. This works well with `users.csv`, but the script can be made more robust. If `fgetcsv()` encounters a blank line, it returns an array containing a single `null` element, which generates an error when passed as an argument to `array_combine()`. Amend the `while` loop by adding the conditional statement highlighted in bold:

```

while (($data = fgetcsv($file)) !==
false) {
    if (count($data) == 1 && is_null($data[0]))
{
        continue;
}
    $users[] = array_combine($titles,
$data);
}

```

The conditional statement uses the `count()` method to find out how many elements are in the array. If there's only one, and the value of the first element is `null`, the `continue` keyword returns to the top of the loop without executing the next line.

You can check your code against `getcsv.php` in the `ch07` folder.

CSV FILES CREATED ON MAC OS

PHP often has difficulty detecting the line endings in CSV files created on Mac operating systems. If `fgetcsv()` fails to extract data correctly from a CSV file, add the following line of code at the top of the script:

```
ini_set('auto_detect_line_endings', true);
```

This has a marginal effect on performance, so it should be used only if Mac line endings cause problems with CSV files.

Replacing Content with `fopen()`

The first of the write-only modes (`w`) deletes any existing content in a file, so it's useful for working with files that need to be updated frequently. You can test the `w` mode with `fopen_write.php`, which has the following PHP code above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
<?php
// if the form has been submitted, process the input
text
if (isset($_POST['putContents'])) {
    // open the file in write-only mode
    $file = fopen('C:/private/write.txt', 'w');
    // write the contents
    fwrite($file, $_POST['contents']);
    // close the file
    fclose($file);
}
?>
```

When the form in the page is submitted, this code writes the value of `$_POST['contents']` to a file called `write.txt`. The `fwrite()` function takes two arguments: the reference to the file and whatever you want to write to it.

 **Note** You may come across `fputs()` instead of `fwrite()`. The two functions are identical: `fputs()` is a synonym for `fwrite()`.

If you load `open_write.php` into a browser, type something into the text area, and click **Write to file**, PHP creates `write.txt` and inserts whatever you typed into the text area. Since this is just a demonstration, I've omitted any checks to make sure that the file was successfully written. Open `write.txt` to verify that your text has been inserted. Now, type something different into the text area and submit the form again. The original content is deleted from `write.txt` and replaced with the new text. The deleted text is gone forever.

Appending Content with `fopen()`

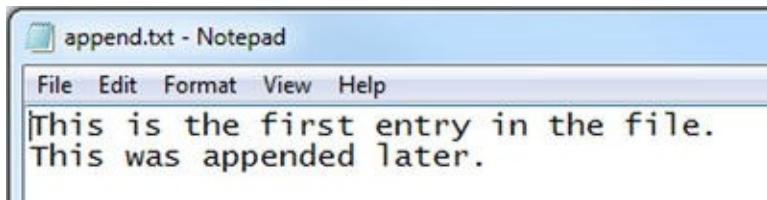
The append mode not only adds new content at the end, preserving any existing content, but it can also create a new file if it doesn't already exist. The code in `open_append.php` looks like this:

```
// open the file in append mode
$file = fopen('C:/private/append.txt', 'a');
```

```
// write the contents followed by a new line
fwrite($file, $_POST['contents'] . PHP_EOL);
// close the file
fclose($file);
```

Notice that I have concatenated PHP_EOL after \$_POST['contents']. This is a PHP constant that represents a new line using the correct characters for the operating system. On Windows, it inserts a carriage return and newline character, but on Macs and Linux only a newline character.

If you load `fopen_append.php` into a browser, type some text, and submit the form, it creates a file called `append.txt` in the private folder and inserts your text. Type something else and submit the form again; the new text should be added to the end of the previous text, as shown in the following screenshot.



We'll come back to append mode in [Chapter 9](#).

Locking a File Before Writing

The purpose of using `fopen()` with `c` mode is to give you the opportunity to lock the file with `flock()` before modifying it.

The `flock()` function takes two arguments: the file reference and a constant specifying how the lock should operate. There are three types of operation:

- `LOCK_SH` acquires a shared lock for reading
- `LOCK_EX` acquires an exclusive lock for writing
- `LOCK_UN` releases the lock

To lock a file before writing to it, open the file in `c` mode and immediately call `flock()`, like this:

```
// open the file in c mode
$file = fopen('C:/private/lock.txt', 'c');
// acquire an exclusive lock
flock($file, LOCK_EX);
```

This opens the file, or creates it if it doesn't already exist, and places the internal pointer at the beginning of the file. This means you need to move the pointer to the end of the file or delete the existing content before you can start writing with `fwrite()`.

To move the pointer to the end of the file, use the `fseek()` function, like this:

```
// move to end of file
fseek($file, 0, SEEK_END);
```

Alternatively, delete the existing contents by calling `ftruncate()`:

```
// delete the existing contents
ftruncate($file, 0);
```

After you have finished writing to the file, you must unlock it manually before calling `fclose()`:

```
// unlock the file before closing
flock($file, LOCK_UN);
fclose($file);
```

 **Caution** According to the documentation for `flock()`, the file is no longer automatically unlocked when the file is closed (see <http://php.net/manual/en/function.flock.php>). Even if you can reopen the file, it remains locked to other users and processes.

Preventing Overwriting an Existing File

Unlike other write modes, `x` mode won't open an existing file. It only creates a new file ready for writing. If a file of the same name already exists, `fopen()` returns `false`, preventing you from overwriting it. The processing code in `fopen_exclusive.php` looks like this:

```

// create a file ready for writing only if it doesn't
already exist
// error control operator prevents error message from
being displayed
if ($file = @ fopen('C:/private/once_only.txt', 'x'))
{
    // write the contents
    fwrite($file, $_POST['contents']);
    // close the file
    fclose($file);
} else {
    $error = 'File already exists, and cannot be
overwritten.';
}

```

Attempting to write to an existing file in x mode generates a series of PHP error messages. Wrapping the write and close operations in a conditional statement deals with most of them, but `fopen()` still generates a warning. The error control operator (@) in front of `fopen()` suppresses the warning.

Load `fopen_exclusive.php` into a browser, type some text, and click Write to file. The content should be written to `once_only.txt` in your target folder.

If you try it again, the message stored in `$error` is displayed above the form.

Combined Read/Write Operations with `fopen()`

By adding a plus sign (+) after any of the previous modes, the file is opened for both reading and writing. You can perform as many read or write operations as you like—and in any order—until the file is closed. The difference between the combined modes is as follows:

- r+: The file must already exist; a new one will not be automatically created. The internal pointer is placed at the beginning, ready for reading existing content.
- w+: Existing content is deleted, so there is nothing to read when the file is first opened.

- **a+:** The file is opened with the internal pointer at the end, ready to append new material, so the pointer needs to be moved back before anything can be read.
- **c+:** The file is opened with the internal pointer at the beginning.
- **x+:** Always creates a new file, so there's nothing to read when the file is first opened.

Reading is done with `fread()` or `fgets()` and writing with `fwrite()`, exactly the same as before. What's important is to understand the position of the internal pointer.

Moving the Internal Pointer

Reading and writing operations always start wherever the internal pointer happens to be, so you normally want it to be at the beginning of the file for reading, and at the end of the file for writing.

To move the pointer to the beginning, pass the file reference to `rewind()` like this:

```
rewind($file);
```

To move the pointer to the end of a file use `fseek()` like this:

```
fseek($file, 0, SEEK_END);
```

You can also use `fseek()` to move the internal pointer to a specific position or relative to its current position. For details, see <http://php.net/manual/en/function.fseek.php>.

 **Tip** In append mode (`a` or `a+`), content is always written to the end of the file regardless of the pointer's current position.

Exploring the File System

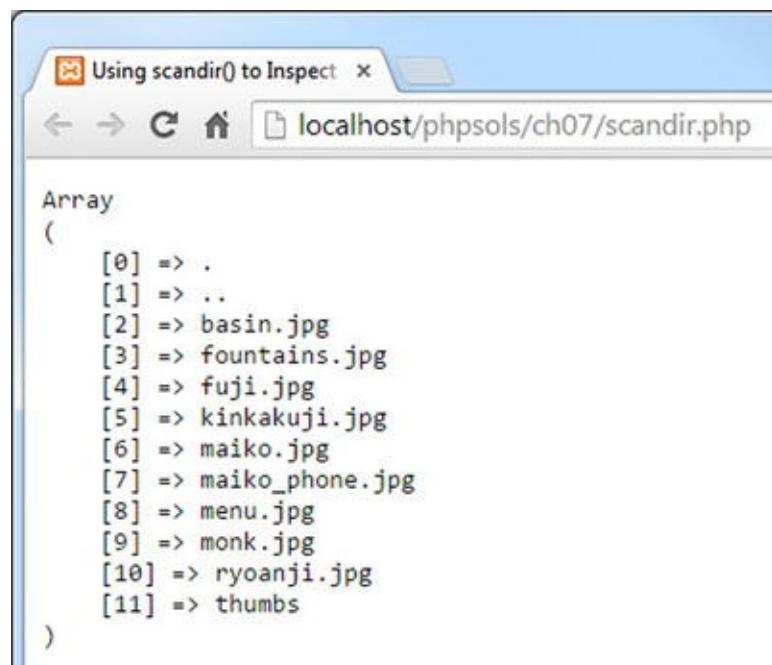
PHP's file system functions can also open directories (folders) and inspect their contents. You put one of these functions to practical use in PHP Solution 6-6 by using `scandir()` to create an array of existing filenames in the `images` folder and looping through the array to create a unique name for an uploaded file. From the web developer's point of view, other practical uses of the file system functions are building drop-down menus that display the contents of a folder and creating a script that prompts a user to download a file, such as an image or PDF document.

Inspecting a Folder with `Scandir()`

Let's take a closer look at the `scandir()` function, which you used in PHP Solution 6-6. It returns an array consisting of the files and folders within a specified folder. Just pass the path name of the folder (directory) as a string to `scandir()` and store the result in a variable like this:

```
$files = scandir('..../images');
```

You can examine the result by using `print_r()` to display the contents of the array, as shown in the following screenshot (the code is in `scandir.php` in the `ch07` folder):



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title "Using scandir() to Inspect". The address bar shows "localhost/phpsols/ch07/scandir.php". The page content displays the following PHP code output:

```
Array
(
    [0] => .
    [1] => ..
    [2] => basin.jpg
    [3] => fountains.jpg
    [4] => fuji.jpg
    [5] => kinkakuji.jpg
    [6] => maiko.jpg
    [7] => maiko_phone.jpg
    [8] => menu.jpg
    [9] => monk.jpg
    [10] => ryoanji.jpg
    [11] => thumbs
)
```

The array returned by `scandir()` doesn't contain just files. The first two items are known as dot files, which represent the current and parent folders. The final item is a folder called `thumbs`.

The array contains only the names of each item. If you want more information about the contents of a folder, it's better to use the `FilesystemIterator` class.

Inspecting the Contents of a Folder with `FilesystemIterator`

The `FilesystemIterator` class is part of the Standard PHP Library (SPL). In spite of its name, SPL is not an external library or framework; it's a core part of PHP. Among its features is a collection of specialized iterators that create sophisticated loops with very little code.

The `FilesystemIterator` class was added in PHP 5.3. It adds new features to the original `DirectoryIterator` class, which lets you loop through the contents of a directory or folder.

Because it's a class, you instantiate a `FilesystemIterator` object with the `new` keyword and pass the path of the folder you want to inspect to the constructor, like this:

```
$files = new FilesystemIterator('..../images');
```

Unlike `scandir()`, this doesn't return an array of filenames, so you can't use `print_r()` to display its contents. Instead, it creates an object that gives you access to everything inside the folder. To display the filenames, use a `foreach` loop like this (the code is in `iterator_01.php` in the `ch07` folder):

```
$files = new FilesystemIterator('..../images');
foreach ($files as $file) {
    echo $file . '<br>';
}
```

This produces the following result:

```
../images\basin.jpg
../images\fountains.jpg
../images\fuji.jpg
../images\kinkakuji.jpg
../images\maiko.jpg
../images\maiko_phone.jpg
../images\menu.jpg
../images\monk.jpg
../images\ryoanji.jpg
../images\thumbs
```

The following observations can be made about this output:

- The dot files representing the current and parent folders are omitted.
- The value displayed represents the relative path to the file rather than just the filename.
- Because the screenshot was taken on Windows, a backslash is used in the relative path.

In most circumstances, the backslash is unimportant, because PHP accepts either forward- or backslashes in Windows paths. However, if you want to generate URLs from the output of `FilesystemIterator`, there's an option to use Unix-style paths. One way to set the option is to pass a constant as the second argument to `FilesystemIterator()`, like this (see `iterator_02.php`):

```
$files = new FilesystemIterator('..../images',
FilesystemIterator::UNIX_PATHS);
```

Alternatively, you can invoke the `setFlags()` method on the `FilesystemIterator` object like this (see `iterator_03.php`):

```
$files = new FilesystemIterator('..../images');
$files->setFlags(FilesystemIterator::UNIX_PATHS);
```

Both produce the output shown in the following screenshot.

```
../images/basin.jpg
../images/fountains.jpg
../images/fuji.jpg
../images/kinkakuji.jpg
../images/maiko.jpg
../images/maiko_phone.jpg
../images/menu.jpg
../images/monk.jpg
../images/ryoanji.jpg
../images/thumbs
```

Of course, this won't make any difference on Mac OS X or Linux, but setting this option makes your code more portable.

Tip The constants used by SPL classes are all class constants. They're always prefixed by the class name and the scope resolution operator (two colons). Lengthy names like this make it really worthwhile to use an editing program with PHP code hints and code completion.

Although it's useful to be able to display the relative paths of the folder's contents, the real value of using the `FilesystemIterator` class is that each time the loop runs, it gives you access to an `SplFileInfo` object. The `SplFileInfo` class has nearly 30 methods that can be used to extract useful information about files and folders. [Table 7-3](#) lists a selection of the most useful `SplFileInfo` methods.

Table 7-3. File information accessible through `SplFileInfo` methods

Method	Returns
<code>getFilename()</code>	The name of the file
<code>getPath()</code>	The current object's relative path minus the filename, or minus the folder name if the current object is a folder
<code>getPathName()</code>	The current object's relative path, including the filename or folder name, depending on the current type
<code>getRealPath()</code>	The current object's full path, including filename if appropriate

	The size of the file or folder in bytes
getSize()	
isDir()	True, if the current object is a folder (directory)
isFile()	True, if the current object is a file
isReadable()	True, if the current object is readable
isWritable()	True, if the current object is writable

To access the contents of subfolders, use the `RecursiveDirectoryIterator` class. This burrows down through each level of the folder structure, but you need to use it in combination with the curiously named `RecursiveIteratorIterator`, like this (the code is in `iterator_04.php`):

```
$files = new RecursiveDirectoryIterator('..../images');
$files-
>setFlags(RecursiveDirectoryIterator::SKIP_DOTS);
$files = new RecursiveIteratorIterator($files);
foreach ($files as $file) {
    echo $file->getRealPath() . '<br>';
}
```

Note By default, the `RecursiveDirectoryIterator` includes the dot files that represent the current and parent folders. To exclude them, you need to pass the class's `SKIP_DOTS` constant as the second argument to the constructor method or use the `setFlags()` method

As the following screenshot shows, the `RecursiveDirectoryIterator` inspects the contents of all subfolders, revealing the contents of the `thumbs` folder, in a single operation:

```
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\basin.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\fountains.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\fuji.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\kinkakuji.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\maiko.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\maiko_phone.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\menu.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\monk.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\ryoanji.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\basin.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\fountains.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\kinkakuji.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\maiko.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\maiko_phone.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\menu.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\monk.jpg
C:\xampp\htdocs\phpsols\images\thumbs\ryoanji.jpg
```

What if you want to find only certain types of files? Cue another iterator... .

Restricting File Types with the RegexIterator

The `RegexIterator` acts as a wrapper to another iterator, filtering its contents using a regular expression (regex) as a search pattern. Let's say you want to find the text and CSV files in the `ch07` folder. The regex used to search for `.txt` and `.csv` filename extensions looks like this:

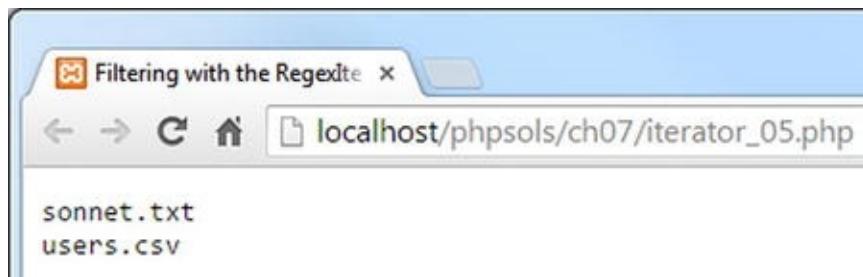
```
'/\.(?:txt|csv)$/i'
```

This regex matches those two filename extensions in a case-insensitive manner. The code in `iterator_05.php` looks like this:

```
$files = new FilesystemIterator('.');
$files = new RegexIterator($files, '/\.
(?:txt|csv)$/i');
foreach ($files as $file) {
    echo $file->getFilename() . '<br>';
}
```

The first line passes a dot to the `FilesystemIterator` constructor, which tells it to inspect the current folder.

The original `$files` object is then passed as the first argument to the `RegexIterator` constructor, with the regex as the second argument, and the filtered set is reassigned to `$files`. Inside the `foreach` loop, the `getFilename()` method retrieves the file's name. The result is this:



Only the text and CSV files are now listed. All the PHP files have been ignored.

Tip As you progress through this book, you'll see I make frequent use of regexes. They're a useful tool to add to your skill set.

I expect that by this stage, you might be wondering if this can be put to any practical use. Let's build a drop-down menu of images in a folder.

PHP Solution 7-3: Building a Drop-Down Menu of Files

When you work with a database, you often need a list of images or other files in a particular folder. For instance, you may want to associate a photo with a product detail page. Although you can type the name of the image into a text field, you need to make sure that the image is there and that you spell its name correctly. Get PHP to do the hard work by building a drop-down menu automatically. It's always up-to-date, and there's no danger of misspelling the name.

1. Create a PHP page called `imagelist.php` in the `filesystem` folder. Alternatively, use

`imagelist_01.php` in the ch07 folder.

2. Create a form inside `imagelist.php` and insert a `<select>` element with just one `<option>`, like this (the code is already in `imagelist_01.php`):

```
<form method="post" action="">
    <select name="pix" id="pix">
        <option value="">Select an
        image</option>
    </select>
</form>
```

This `<option>` is the only static element in the drop-down menu.

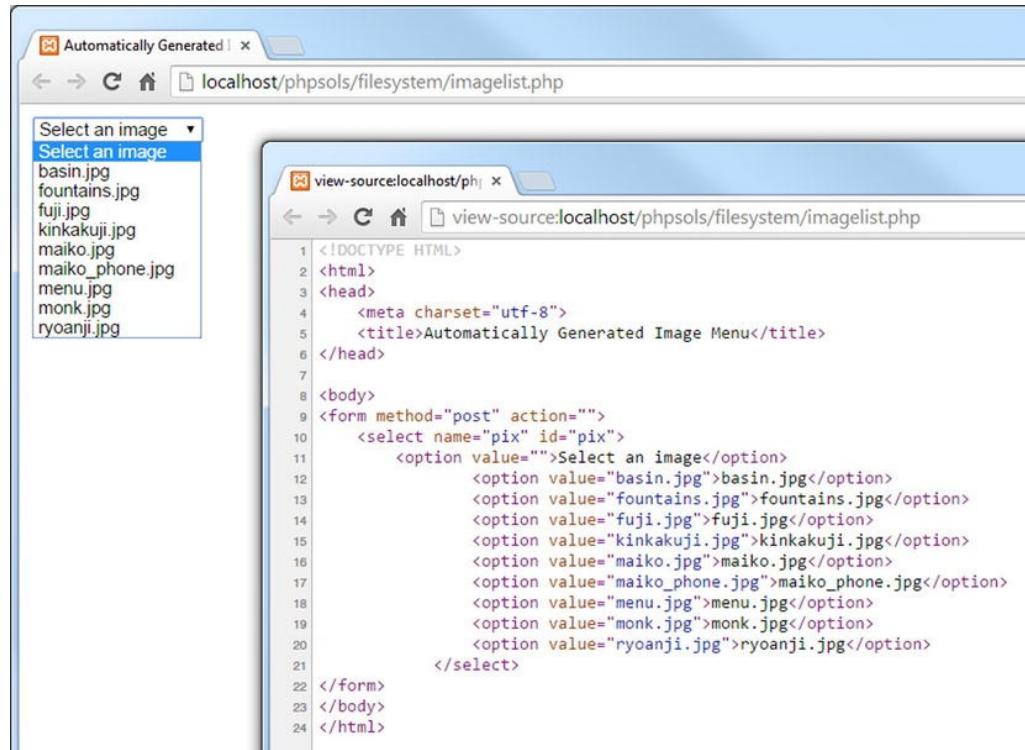
3. Amend the `<select>` element in the form like this:

```
<select name="pix" id="pix">
    <option value="">Select an
    image</option>
    <?php
        $files = new
        FilesystemIterator('../images');
        $images = new RegexIterator($files, '/\.
        (?i:(?:jpg|png|gif))$/i');
        foreach ($images as $image) {
            $filename = $image->getFilename();
        }
        <option value="<?= $filename; ?>"><?=
        $filename; ?></option>
    <?php } ?>
</select>
```

Make sure that the path to the `images` folder is correct for your site's folder structure. The regex used as the second argument to the `RegexIterator` constructor matches case-insensitive files with the filename extensions `.jpg`, `.png`, and `.gif`.

The `foreach` loop simply gets the filename of the current image and inserts it into the `<option>` element.

Save `imagelist.php` and load it into a browser. You should see a drop-down menu listing all the images in your `images` folder, as shown in [Figure 7-2](#).

A screenshot of a web browser window titled "Automatically Generated". The address bar shows "localhost/phpsols/filesystem/imagelist.php". The main content area displays a dropdown menu with the placeholder "Select an image". Below the menu, a list of image filenames is visible: basin.jpg, fountains.jpg, fuji.jpg, kinkakuji.jpg, maiko.jpg, maiko_phone.jpg, menu.jpg, monk.jpg, and ryoanji.jpg. To the right of the browser window, the source code for the page is displayed in a code editor. The code is a standard PHP script that generates an HTML dropdown menu. It includes a title, a form with a method of "post" and action of "", and a select element named "pix" with an id of "pix". The select element contains an option for "Select an image" and nine other options, each corresponding to one of the image files listed in the dropdown menu.

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
<html>
<head>
<meta charset="utf-8">
<title>Automatically Generated Image Menu</title>
</head>

<body>
<form method="post" action="">
<select name="pix" id="pix">
<option value="">Select an image</option>
<option value="basin.jpg">basin.jpg</option>
<option value="fountains.jpg">fountains.jpg</option>
<option value="fuji.jpg">fuji.jpg</option>
<option value="kinkakuji.jpg">kinkakuji.jpg</option>
<option value="maiko.jpg">maiko.jpg</option>
<option value="maiko_phone.jpg">maiko_phone.jpg</option>
<option value="menu.jpg">menu.jpg</option>
<option value="monk.jpg">monk.jpg</option>
<option value="ryoanji.jpg">ryoanji.jpg</option>
</select>
</form>
</body>
</html>
```

[Figure 7-2](#). PHP makes light work of creating a drop-down menu of images in a specific folder

When incorporated into an online form, the filename of the selected image appears in the `$_POST` array and is identified by the `name` attribute of the `<select>` element—in this case, `$_POST['pix']`. That's all there is to it!

You can compare your code with `imagelist_02.php` in the `ch07` folder.

PHP Solution 7-4: Creating a Generic File Selector

The previous PHP solution relies on an understanding of regular expressions. Adapting it to work with other filename extensions isn't difficult, but you need to be careful that you don't accidentally delete a vital character. Unless regexes

are your specialty, it's probably easier to wrap the code in a function that can be used to inspect a specific folder and create an array of filenames of specific types. For example, you might want to create an array of PDF document filenames or one that contains both PDFs and Word documents. Here's how you do it.

1. Create a new file called `buildlist.php` in the `filesystem` folder. The file will contain only PHP code, so delete any HTML inserted by your editing program.
2. Add the following code to the file:

```
function buildFileList($dir,  
$extensions) {  
    if (!is_dir($dir) ||  
    !is_readable($dir)) {  
        return false;  
    } else {  
        if (is_array($extensions)) {  
            $extensions = implode(' | ',  
$extensions);  
        }  
    }  
}
```

This defines a function called `buildFileList()`, which takes two arguments:

- `$dir`: The path to the folder from which you want to get the list of filenames.
- `$extensions`: This can be either a string containing a single filename extension or an array of filename extensions. To keep the code simple, the filename extensions should not include a leading period.

The function begins by checking whether `$dir` is a folder and is readable. If it isn't, the function returns `false`, and no more code is executed.

If `$dir` is okay, the `else` block is executed. It also begins with a conditional statement that checks whether `$extensions` is an array. If it is, it's passed to `implode()`, which joins the array elements with a vertical pipe (`|`) between each one. A vertical pipe is used in regexes to indicate alternative values. Let's say the following array is passed to the function as the second argument:

```
['jpg', 'png', 'gif']
```

The conditional statement converts it to `jpg|png|gif`. So, this looks for `jpg`, or `png`, or `gif`. However, if the argument is a string, it remains untouched.

3. You can now build the regex search pattern and pass both arguments to the `FilesystemIterator` and `RegexIterator`, like this:

```
function build fileList($dir,  
$extensions) {  
    if (!is_dir($dir) ||  
    !is_readable($dir)) {  
        return false;  
    } else {  
        if (is_array($extensions)) {  
            $extensions = implode('|',  
$extensions);  
        }  
        $pattern = "/^.({:$extensions})$/i";  
        $folder = new FilesystemIterator($dir);  
        $files = new RegexIterator($folder,  
$pattern);  
    }  
}
```

The regex pattern is built using a string in double quotes and wrapping `$extensions` in curly braces to make sure it's interpreted correctly by the PHP engine. Take care when copying the code. It's not exactly easy to read.

4. The final section of the code extracts the filenames to build an array, which is sorted and then returned. The finished function definition looks like this:

```
function buildFileList($dir,
$extensions) {
    if (!is_dir($dir) ||
is_readable($dir)) {
        return false;
    } else {
        if (is_array($extensions)) {
            $extensions = implode('|,
$extensions);
        }
        $pattern = "/\.(?:
{$extensions})$/i";
        $folder = new
FilesystemIterator($dir);
        $files = new
RegexIterator($folder, $pattern);
        $filenames = [];
        foreach ($files as $file) {
            $filenames[] = $file->getFilename();
        }
        natcasesort($filenames);
        return $filenames;
    }
}
```

This initializes an array and uses a `foreach` loop to assign the filenames to it with the `getFilename()` method. Finally, the array is passed to `natcasesort()`, which sorts it in a natural, case-insensitive order. What “natural” means is that strings that contain numbers are sorted in the same way as a person would. For example, a computer normally sorts `img12.jpg` before `img2.jpg`, because the 1 in 12 is lower than 2. Using `natcasesort()` results in `img2.jpg` preceding `img12.jpg`.

5. To use the function, use as arguments the path to the folder and the filename extensions of the files you want to find. For example, you could get all Word and PDF documents from a folder like this:

```
$docs = buildFileList('folder_name',
['doc', 'docx', 'pdf']);
```

The code for the `buildFileList()` function is in `buildlist.php` in the `ch07` folder.

Accessing Remote Files

Reading, writing, and inspecting files on your local computer or on your own website is useful. But `allow_url_fopen` also gives you access to publicly available documents anywhere on the Internet. You can't directly include files from other servers—not unless `allow_url_include` is on—but you can read the content, save it to a variable, and manipulate it with PHP functions before incorporating it in your own pages or saving the information to a database. You can also write to documents on a remote server as long as the owner sets the appropriate permissions.

A word of caution is in order here. When extracting material from remote sources for inclusion in your own pages, there's a potential security risk. For example, a remote page might contain malicious scripts embedded in `<script>` tags or hyperlinks. Unless the remote page supplies data in a known format from a trusted source—such as product details from the Amazon.com database, weather information from a government meteorological office, or a newsfeed from a newspaper or broadcaster—sanitize the content by passing it to `htmlentities()` (see PHP Solution 5-2). As well as converting double quotes to `"`, `htmlentities()` converts `<` to `<` and `>` to `>`. This displays tags in plain text, rather than treating them as HTML.

If you want to permit some HTML tags, use the `strip_tags()` function instead. If you pass a string to `strip_tags()`, it returns the string with all HTML tags and comments stripped out. It also removes PHP tags. A second, optional argument is a list of tags that you want preserved. For example, the following strips out all tags except paragraphs and first- and second-level headings:

```
$stripped = strip_tags($original, '<p><h1><h2>');
```

Tip For an in-depth discussion of security issues, see *Pro PHP Security, 2nd Edition* by Chris Snyder and Michael Southwell (Apress, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-4302-3318-3).

Consuming News and Other RSS Feeds

Some of the most useful remote sources of information that you might want to incorporate in your sites come from RSS feeds. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication, and it's a dialect of XML. XML is similar to HTML in that it uses tags to mark up content. Instead of defining paragraphs, headings, and images, XML tags are used to organize data in a predictable hierarchy. XML is written in plain text, so it's frequently used to share information between computers that might be running on different operating systems.

Figure 7-3 shows the typical structure of an RSS 2.0 feed. The whole document is wrapped in a pair of `<rss>` tags. This is the root element, similar to the `<html>` tags of a webpage. The rest of the document is wrapped in a pair of `<channel>` tags, which always contain the following three elements that describe the RSS feed: `<title>`, `<description>`, and `<link>`.

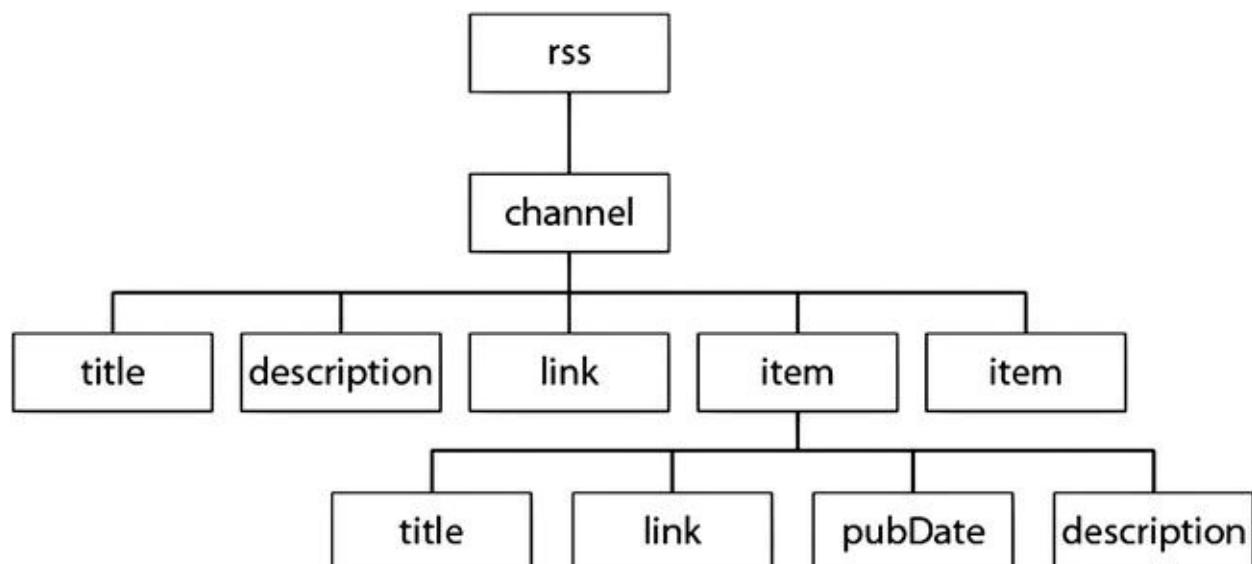


Figure 7-3. The main contents of an RSS feed are in the item elements

In addition to the three required elements, the `<channel>` can contain many other elements, but the interesting material is to be found in the `<item>` elements. In the case of a news feed, this is where the individual news items can be found. If you're looking at the RSS feed from a blog, the `<item>` elements normally contain summaries of the blog posts.

Each `<item>` element can contain several elements, but those shown in [Figure 7-3](#) are the most common, and usually the most interesting:

- `<title>`: The title of the item
- `<link>`: The URL of the item
- `<pubDate>`: Date of publication
- `<description>`: Summary of the item

This predictable format makes it easy to extract the information from an RSS feed using SimpleXML.

 **Note** You can find the full RSS specification at www.rssboard.org/rss-specification. Unlike most technical specifications, it's written in plain language and is easy to read.

Using SimpleXML

As long as you know the structure of an XML document, SimpleXML does what it says on the tin: it makes extracting information from XML simple. The first step is to pass the URL of the XML document to `simplexml_load_file()`. You can also load a local XML file by passing the path as an argument. For example, this gets the world news feed from the BBC:

```
$feed  
= simplexml_load_file('http://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/wo
```

This creates an instance of the `SimpleXMLElement` class. All the elements in the feed can now be accessed as properties of the `$feed` object by using the names of the elements. With an RSS feed, the `<item>` elements can

be accessed as `$feed->channel->item`.

To display the `<title>` of each `<item>`, create a `foreach` loop like this:

```
foreach ($feed->channel->item as $item) {  
    echo $item->title . '<br>';  
}
```

If you compare this with [Figure 7-3](#), you can see that you access elements by chaining the element names with the `->` operator until you reach the target. Since there are multiple `<item>` elements, you need to use a loop to tunnel further down. Alternatively, use array notation, like this:

```
$feed->channel->item[2]->title
```

This gets the `<title>` of the third `<item>` element. Unless you want only a specific value, it's simpler to use a loop.

With that background out of the way, let's use SimpleXML to display the contents of a news feed.

PHP Solution 7-5: Consuming an RSS news feed

This PHP solution shows how to extract the information from a live news feed using SimpleXML and then display it in a webpage. It also shows how to format the `<pubDate>` element to a more user-friendly format and how to limit the number of items displayed using the `LimitIterator` class.

1. Create a new page called `newsfeed.php` in the `filesystem` folder. This page will contain a mixture of PHP and HTML.
2. The news feed chosen for this PHP solution is BBC World News. A condition of using most news feeds is that you acknowledge the source. So add **The Latest from BBC News** formatted as an `<h1>` heading at the top of the page.

Note For the terms and conditions of using a BBC news feed on your own site, see www.bbc.co.uk/news/10628494#mysite and

www.bbc.co.uk/terms/additional_rss.shtml.

-
3. Create a PHP block below the heading and add the following code to load the feed:

```
$url  
= 'http://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/world/rss.xml';  
$feed = simplexml_load_file($url);
```

4. Use a `foreach` loop to access the `<item>` elements and display the `<title>` of each one:

```
foreach ($feed->channel->item as $item)  
{  
    echo $item->title . '<br>';  
}
```

5. Save `newsfeed.php` and load the page in a browser. You should see a long list of news items similar to [Figure 7-4](#).

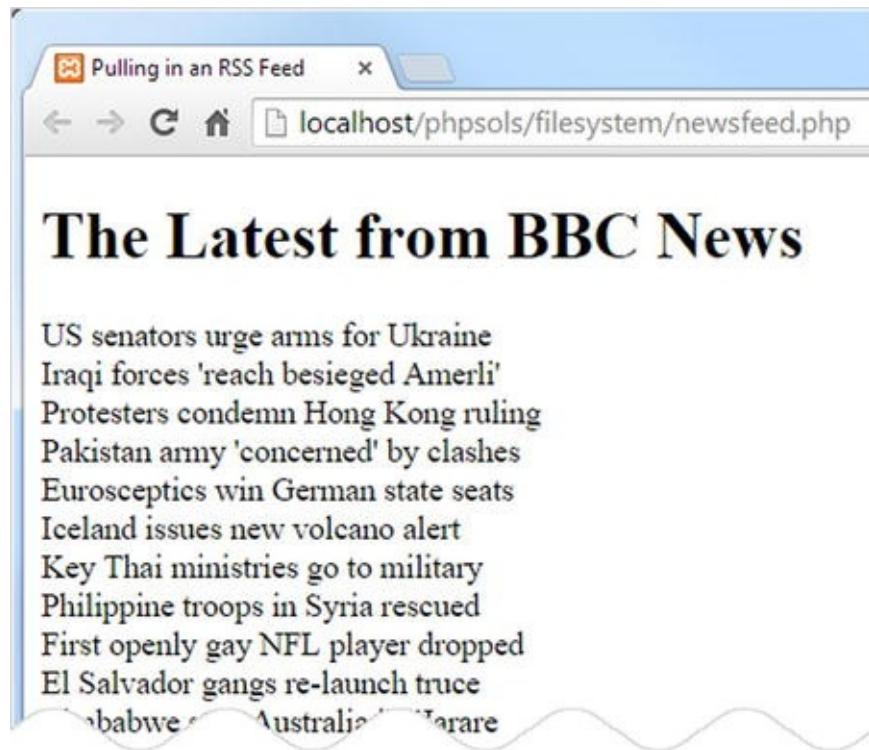


Figure 7-4. The news feed contains a large number of items

6. The normal feed often contains 50 or more items. That's fine for a news site, but you probably want a shorter selection in your own site. Use another SPL iterator to select a specific range of items. Amend the code like this:

```
$url  
= 'http://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/world/rss.xml';  
$feed = simplexml_load_file($url,  
'SimpleXMLIterator');  
$filtered = new LimitIterator($feed->channel-  
>item, 0, 4);  
foreach ($filtered as $item) {  
    echo $item->title . '<br>';  
}
```

To use SimpleXML with an SPL iterator, you need to supply the name of the `SimpleXMLIterator` class as the second argument to `simplexml_load_file()`. You can then pass the SimpleXML element you want to affect to an iterator constructor.

In this case, `$feed->channel->item` is passed to the `LimitIterator` constructor. The `LimitIterator` takes three arguments: the object you want to limit, the starting point (counting from 0), and the number of times you want the loop to run. This code starts at the first item and limits the number of items to four.

The `foreach` loop now loops over the `$filtered` result. If you test the page again, you'll see just four titles, as shown in [Figure 7-5](#). Don't be surprised if the selection of headlines is different from before. The BBC News website is updated every minute.

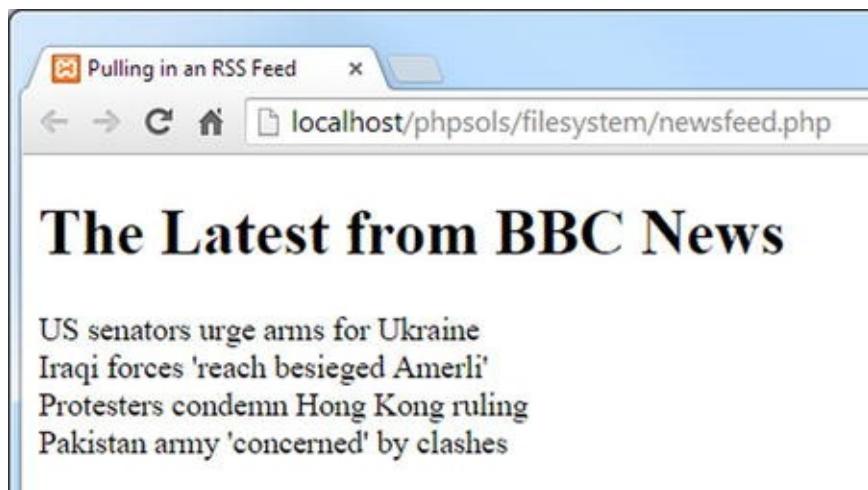


Figure 7-5. The LimitIterator restricts the number of items displayed

7. Now that you have limited the number of items, amend the `foreach` loop to wrap the `<title>` elements in a link to the original article, then display the `<pubDate>` and `<description>` items. The loop looks like this:

```
foreach ($filtered as $item) { ?>
    <h2><a href="= $item-&gt;link; ?&gt;"&gt;&lt;?= $item-
&gt;title;?&gt;&lt;/a&gt;&lt;/h2&gt;
    &lt;p class="datetime"&gt;&lt;?php echo $item-
&gt;pubDate; ?&gt;&lt;/p&gt;
    &lt;p&gt;&lt;?php echo $item-&gt;description; ?&gt;&lt;/p&gt;
&lt;?php } ?&gt;</pre
```

8. Save the page and test it again. The links take you directly to the relevant news story on the BBC website. The news feed is now functional, but the `<pubDate>` format follows the format laid down in the RSS specification, as shown in the next screenshot:

US senators urge arms for Ukraine

Sun, 31 Aug 2014 20:23:12 GMT

9. To format the date and time in a more user-friendly way, pass `$item->pubDate` to the `DateTime` class constructor, then use the `DateTime::format()` method to display it. Change the code in the `foreach` loop, like

this:

```
<p class="datetime"><?php $date = new  
DateTime($item->pubDate);  
echo $date->format('M j, Y, g:ia'); ?></p>
```

This reformats the date as below:

[US senators urge arms for Ukraine](#)

Aug 31, 2014, 8:23pm

The mysterious PHP formatting strings for dates are explained in [Chapter 14](#).

10. That looks a lot better, but the time is still expressed in GMT (London time). If most of your site's visitors live on the east coast of the United States, you probably want to show the local time. That's no problem with a `DateTime` object. Use the `setTimezone()` method to change to New York time. You can even automate the display of EDT (Eastern Daylight Time) or EST (Eastern Standard Time) depending on whether daylight saving time is in operation. Amend the code like this:

```
<p class="datetime"><?php $date = new  
DateTime($item->pubDate);  
$date->setTimezone(new  
DateTimeZone('America/New_York'));  
$offset = $date->getOffset();  
$timezone = ($offset == -14400) ? ' EDT' : '  
EST';  
echo $date->format('M j, Y, g:ia') .  
$timezone; ?></p>
```

To create a `DateTimeZone` object, pass to it as an argument one of the time zones listed at <http://php.net/manual/en/timezones.php>. This is the only place that the `DateTimeZone` object is needed, so it has been created directly as the argument to the `setTimezone()` method.

There isn't a dedicated method that tells you whether daylight saving time is in operation, but the `getOffset()` method returns the number of seconds the time is offset from Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). The following line determines whether to display EDT or EST:

```
$timezone = ($offset == -14400) ? '  
EDT' : ' EST';
```

This uses the value of `$offset` with the ternary operator. In summer, New York is four hours behind UTC (`-14440` seconds). So, if `$offset` is `-14400`, the condition equates to `true`, and EDT is assigned to `$timezone`. Otherwise, EST is used.

Finally, the value of `$timezone` is concatenated to the formatted time. The string used for `$timezone` has a leading space to separate the time zone from the time. When the page is loaded, the time is adjusted to the east coast of the United States, like this:

US senators urge arms for Ukraine

Aug 31, 2014, 4:23pm EDT

11. All the page needs now is smartening up with CSS. [Figure 7-6](#) shows the finished news feed styled with `newsfeed.css` in the `styles` folder.

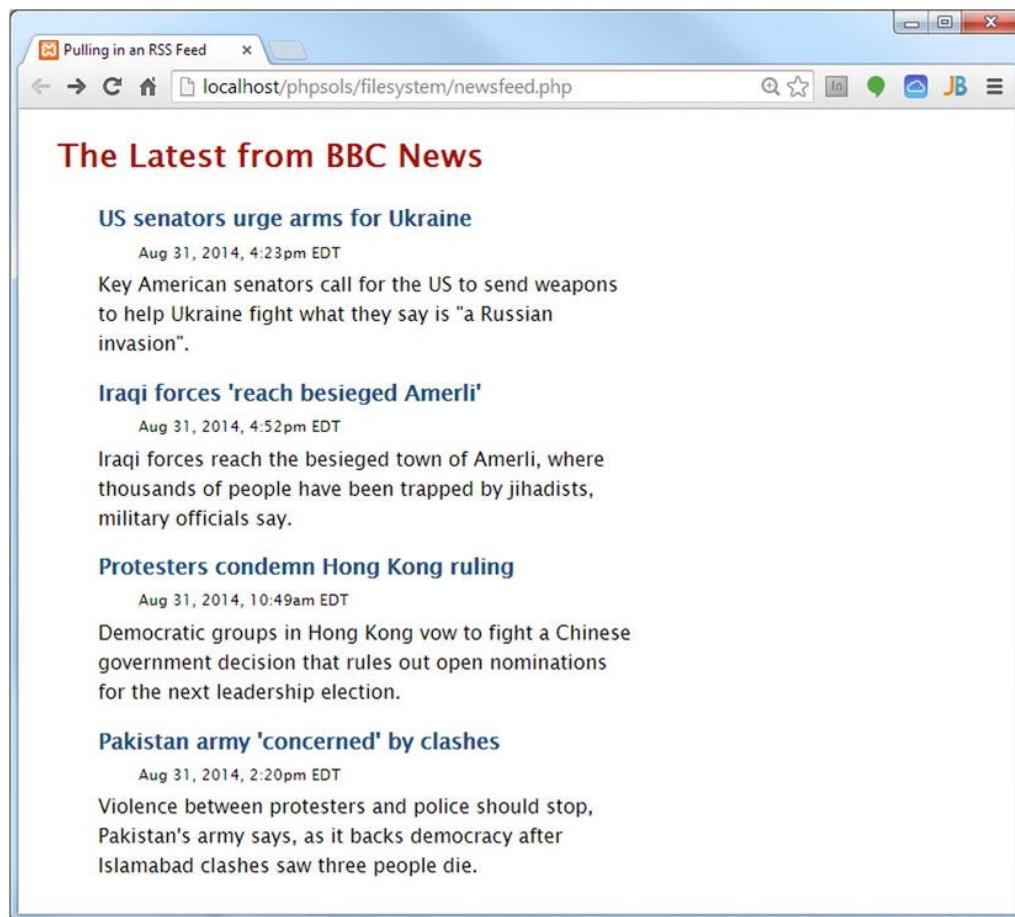


Figure 7-6. The live news feed requires only a dozen lines of PHP code

Tip If you have a subscription to the lynda.com Online Training Library, you can learn more about SPL and SimpleXML in my course *Up and Running with the Standard PHP Library* (www.lynda.com/PHP-tutorials/Up-Running-Standard-PHP-Library/175038-2.html).

Although I have used the BBC news feed for this PHP solution, it should work with any RSS 2.0 feed. For example, you can try it locally with <http://rss.cnn.com/rss/edition.rss>. Using a CNN news feed in a public website requires permission from CNN. Always check with the copyright holder for terms and conditions before incorporating a feed into a website.

Creating a Download Link

A question that crops up regularly in online forums is, “How do I create a link to an image (or PDF file) that prompts the user to download it?” The quick solution is to convert the file into a compressed format, such as ZIP. This frequently results in a smaller download, but the downside is that inexperienced users may not know how to unzip the file, or they may be using an older operating system that doesn’t include an extraction facility. With PHP file system functions, it’s easy to create a link that automatically prompts the user to download a file in its original format.

PHP Solution 7-6: Prompting a User to Download an Image

This PHP solution sends the necessary HTTP headers and uses `readfile()` to output the contents of a file as a binary stream, forcing the browser to download it.

1. Create a PHP file called `download.php` in the `filesystem` folder. The full listing is given in the next step. You can also find it in `download.php` in the `ch07` folder.
2. Remove any default code created by your script editor and insert the following code:

```
<?php
// define error page
$error = 'http://localhost/phpsols/error.php';
// define the path to the download
// folder
$filepath =
'C:/xampp/htdocs/phpsols/images/';
$getFile = NULL;

// block any attempt to explore the
// filesystem
```

```

if (isset($_GET['file'])) &&
basename($_GET['file']) ==
$_GET['file']) {
    $getfile = $_GET['file'];
} else {
    header("Location: $error");
    exit;
}

if ($getfile) {
    $path = $filepath . $getfile;
    // check that it exists and is
readable
    if (file_exists($path) &&
is_readable($path)) {
        // send the appropriate headers
        header('Content-Type:
application/octet-stream');
        header('Content-Length: '.
filesize($path));
        header('Content-Disposition:
attachment; filename=' . $getfile);
        header('Content-Transfer-
Encoding: binary');
        // output the file content
        readfile($path);
    } else {
        header("Location: $error");
    }
}

```

The only two lines that you need to change in this script are highlighted in bold type. The first defines **\$error**, a variable that contains the URL of your error page. The second line that needs to be changed defines the path to the folder where the download file is stored.

The script works by taking the name of the file to be downloaded from a query string appended to the URL and

saving it as `$getfile`. Because query strings can be easily tampered with, `$getfile` is initially set to `NULL`. If you fail to do this, you could give a malicious user access to any file on your server.

The opening conditional statement uses `basename()` to make sure that an attacker cannot request a file, such as one that stores passwords, from another part of your file structure. As explained in [Chapter 4](#), `basename()` extracts the filename component of a path, so if `basename($_GET['file'])` is different from `$_GET['file']`, you know there's an attempt to probe your server. You can then stop the script from going any further by using the `header()` function to redirect the user to the error page.

After checking that the requested file exists and is readable, the script sends the appropriate HTTP headers and uses `readfile()` to send the file to the output buffer. If the file can't be found, the user is redirected to the error page.

3. Test the script by creating another page; add a couple of links to `download.php`. Add a query string at the end of each link with `file=` followed by the name a file to be downloaded. You'll find a page called `getdownloads.php` in the `ch07` folder that contains the following two links:

```
<p><a href="download.php?  
file=maiko.jpg">Download image 1</a>  
</p>  
<p><a href="download.php?  
file=basin.jpg">Download image 2</a>  
</p>
```

4. Click one of the links. Depending on your browser settings, the file will either be downloaded to your default downloads folder or you will be presented with a dialog box asking you what to do with the file.

I've demonstrated `download.php` with image files, but it can be used for any type of file, as the headers send the file as a binary stream.

Caution This script relies on `header()` to send the appropriate HTTP headers to the browser. It is vital to ensure that there are no new lines or whitespace ahead of the opening PHP tag. If you have removed all whitespace and still get an error message saying "headers already sent," your editor may have inserted invisible control characters at the beginning of the file. Some editing programs insert the byte order mark (BOM), which is known to cause problems with the `header()` function. Check your program preferences to make sure the option to insert the BOM is deselected.

Chapter Review

The file system functions aren't particularly difficult to use, but there are many subtleties that can turn a seemingly simple task into a complicated one. It's important to check that you have the right permissions. Even when handling files in your own website, PHP needs permission to access any folder where you want to read files or write to them.

The `SPL FilesystemIterator` and `RecursiveDirectoryIterator` classes make it easy to examine the contents of folders. Used in combination with the `SplFileInfo` methods and the `RegexIterator`, you can quickly find files of a specific type within a folder or folder hierarchy.

When dealing with remote data sources, you need to check that `allow_url_fopen` hasn't been disabled. One of the most common uses of remote data sources is to extract information from RSS news feeds or XML documents, a task that takes only a few lines of code thanks to SimpleXML.

In the next two chapters, we'll put some of the PHP solutions from this chapter to further practical use when working with images and building a simple user-authentication system.

CHAPTER 8



Generating Thumbnail Images

PHP has an extensive range of functions designed to work with images. You've already met one of them, `getimagesize()`, in [Chapter 4](#). As well as providing useful information about an image's dimensions, PHP can manipulate images by resizing or rotating them. It can also add text dynamically without affecting the original and can even create images on the fly.

To give you just a taste of PHP image manipulation, I'm going to show you how to generate a smaller copy of an uploaded image. Most of the time you'll want to use a dedicated graphics program, such as Adobe Photoshop, to generate thumbnail images because it will give you much better quality control. However, automatic thumbnail generation with PHP can be very useful if you want to allow registered users to upload images while ensuring they conform to a maximum size. You can save just the resized copy or the copy along with the original.

In [Chapter 6](#) you built a PHP class to handle file uploads. In this chapter you'll create two classes: one to generate thumbnail images, the other to upload and resize images in a single operation. Rather than build the second class from scratch, you'll base it on the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#). A great advantage of using classes is that they're **extensible**—a class based on another can inherit the functionality of its parent class. Building the classes to upload images and generate thumbnails from them involves a lot of code. But once you have defined the classes, using them involves only a few lines of script. If you're in a rush or if writing a lot of code makes you break out in a cold sweat, you can just use the finished classes. Come back later to learn how the code works. It uses many basic PHP functions that you'll find useful in other situations.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- Scaling an image

- Saving a rescaled image
- Automatically resizing and renaming uploaded images
- Creating a subclass by extending an existing one

Checking Your Server's Capabilities

Working with images in PHP relies on the GD extension. Originally, GD stood for GIF Draw, but problems with the GIF patent led to support for GIF files being dropped in 1999, but the name GD stuck. The problematic patent expired in 2004, and GIF is once again supported. The all-in-one PHP packages recommended in [Chapter 2](#) support GD by default, but you need to make sure the GD extension has also been enabled on your remote web server.

As in previous chapters, run `phpinfo()` on your website to check the server's configuration. Scroll down until you reach the section shown in the following screenshot (it should be about halfway down the page):

gd

GD Support	enabled
GD Version	bundled (2.1.0 compatible)
FreeType Support	enabled
FreeType Linkage	with freetype
FreeType Version	2.4.10
GIF Read Support	enabled
GIF Create Support	enabled
JPEG Support	enabled
libJPEG Version	unknown
PNG Support	enabled
libPNG Version	1.5.14
WBMP Support	enabled
XPM Support	enabled
libXpm Version	30411
XBM Support	enabled
WebP Support	enabled

Directive	Local Value	Master Value
<code>gd.jpeg_ignore_warning</code>	0	0

If you can't find this section, the GD extension isn't enabled, so you won't be able to use any of the scripts in this chapter on your website. Ask for it to be enabled or move to a different host.

Note Strictly for abbreviation/acronym freaks: GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format. JPEG is the standard created by the Joint Photographic Experts Group, and PNG is short for Portable Network Graphics. Although JPEG is the correct name for the standard, the "E" is frequently dropped, particularly when used as a filename extension.

Manipulating Images Dynamically

The GD extension allows you to generate images entirely from scratch or work with existing images. Either way, the underlying process always follows four basic steps:

1. Create a resource for the image in the server's memory while it's being processed.
2. Process the image.
3. Display and/or save the image.
4. Remove the image resource from the server's memory.

This process means that you are always working on an image in memory only and not on the original. Unless you save the image to disk before the script terminates, any changes are discarded. Working with images requires a lot of memory, so it's vital to destroy the image resource as soon as it's no longer needed. If a script runs very slowly or crashes, it probably indicates that the original image is too large.

Making a Smaller Copy of an Image

The aim of this chapter is to show you how to resize images automatically on upload. This involves extending the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#). However, to

make it easier to understand how to work with PHP's image manipulation functions, I propose to start by using images already on the server and then create a separate class to generate the thumbnail images.

Getting Ready

The starting point is the following simple form, which uses PHP Solution 7-3 to create a drop-down menu of the photos in the `images` folder. You can find the code in `create_thumb_01.php` in the `ch08` folder. Copy it to a new folder called `gd` in the `phpsol5` site root and rename it `create_thumb.php`.

At the top of the page is a PHP block that assigns to a variable called `$folder` the fully qualified path to the `images` folder in the `phpsol5` site in XAMPP on Windows. The default location for MAMP on Mac OS X is commented out on the next line. Make any adjustments to match your own setup.

The form in the body of the page looks like this:

```
<form method="post" action="">
<p>
    <select name="pix" id="pix">
        <option value="">Select an image</option>
        <?php
            $files = new
FilesystemIterator('..../images');
            $images = new RegexIterator($files, '/^.
(?:jpg|png|gif)$/i');
            foreach ($images as $image) {
                $filename = $image->getFilename();
            ?>
                <option value="<?= $folder . $filename; ?>"><?= $filename; ?></option>
            <?php } ?>
        </select>
    </p>
    <p>
        <input type="submit" name="create"
value="Create Thumbnail">
    </p>
```

```
</form>
```

When loaded into a browser, the drop-down menu should display the names of the photos in the `images` folder. This makes it easier to pick images quickly for testing.

Inside the `upload_test` folder that you created in [Chapter 6](#), create a new folder called `thumbs`, making sure it has the necessary permissions for PHP to write to it. Refer to “Establishing an upload directory” in [Chapter 6](#) if you need to refresh your memory.

Building the Thumbnail Class

To generate a thumbnail image, the class needs to execute the following steps:

1. Get the dimensions of the original image.
2. Get the image’s MIME type.
3. Calculate the scaling ratio.
4. Create an image resource of the correct MIME type for the original image.
5. Create an image resource for the thumbnail.
6. Create the resized copy.
7. Save the resized copy to the destination folder using the correct MIME type.
8. Destroy the image resources to free memory.

In addition to generating a thumbnail image, the class automatically inserts `_thb` before the filename extension, but a public method allows you to alter this value. The class also needs public methods to set the destination folder and the maximum size of the thumbnail, as well as to retrieve messages generated by the class. To keep the calculations simple, the maximum size controls only the larger of the thumbnail’s dimensions.

To avoid naming conflicts, the `Thumbnail` class will use a namespace. Because it’s exclusively for images, we’ll create a new folder called `Image` in the `PhpSolutions` folder and use `PhpSolutions\Image` as the namespace.

There's a lot to do, so I'll break up the code into sections. They're all part of the same class definition, but presenting the script this way should make it easier to understand, particularly if you want to use some of the code in a different context.

PHP Solution 8-1: Getting the Image Details

This PHP solution describes how to get the dimensions and MIME type of the original image.

1. Create a new folder called `Image` in the `PhpSolutions` folder. Then create a page called `Thumbnail.php` inside the folder. The file will contain only PHP, so strip out any HTML code inserted by your editing program.
2. Declare the namespace at the top of the new file:

```
namespace PhpSolutions\Image;
```

3. The class needs to keep track of quite a few properties. Begin the class definition by listing them, like this:

```
class Thumbnail {  
    protected $original;  
    protected $originalwidth;  
    protected $originalheight;  
    protected $basename;  
    protected $thumbwidth;  
    protected $thumbheight;  
    protected $maxSize = 120;  
    protected $canProcess = false;  
    protected $imageType;  
    protected $destination;  
    protected $suffix = '_thb';  
    protected $messages = [];  
}
```

As in the `Upload` class, all the properties have been declared as protected, which means they can't be changed

accidentally outside the class definition. The names are descriptive, so they need little explanation. The `$maxSize` property has been given a default value of 120 (pixels). This determines the maximum size of the thumbnail's longer dimension.

The `$canProcess` Boolean is initially set to `false`. This is to prevent the script from attempting to process a file that isn't an image. The value will be reset to `true` if the MIME type matches that of an image. You can also use it to prevent the generation of a thumbnail if another error occurs.

4. The constructor takes one argument, the path to an image. Add the constructor definition after the list of protected properties, but inside the closing curly brace:

```
public function __construct($image) {
    if (is_file($image) &&
        is_readable($image)) {
        $details = getimagesize($image);
    } else {
        $details = null;
        $this->messages[] = "Cannot open
$image.";
    }
    // if getimagesize() returns an
array, it looks like an image
    if (is_array($details)) {
        $this->original = $image;
        $this->originalwidth
= $details[0];
        $this->originalheight
= $details[1];
        $this->basename
= pathinfo($image, PATHINFO_FILENAME);
        // check the MIME type
        $this-
>checkType($details['mime']);
    } else {
```

```
    $this->messages[] = "$image  
doesn't appear to be an image.";  
}  
}
```

The constructor begins with a conditional statement that checks that `$image` is a file and is readable. If it is, it's passed to `getimagesize()`, and the result is stored in `$details`. Otherwise, `$details` is set to `null`, and an error message is added to the `$messages` property.

When you pass an image to `getimagesize()`, it returns an array containing the following elements:

- 0: Width (in pixels)
- 1: Height
- 2: An integer indicating the type of image
- 3: A string containing the correct width and height attributes ready for insertion in an `` tag
- `mime`: The image's MIME type
- `channels`: 3 for RGB and 4 for CMYK images
- `bits`: The number of bits for each color

If the value passed as an argument to `getimagesize()` isn't an image, it returns `false`. Consequently, if `$details` is an array, you know you're dealing with an image. The image's path is stored in the `$original` property, and its width and height are stored in `$originalWidth` and `$originalHeight`, respectively.

The file's name without the filename extension is extracted using `pathinfo()` with the `PATHINFO_FILENAME` constant in the same way as in PHP Solution 6-6. This is stored in the `$basename` property and will be used to build the thumbnail's name

with the suffix.

However, the image might not be a suitable type, so the final check is to pass its MIME type to an internal method called `checkType()`, which you'll define next.

5. The `checkType()` method compares the MIME type with an array of acceptable image types. If it finds a match, it resets the `$canProcess` property to `true` and stores the type in the `$imageType` property. The method is used internally, so it needs to be declared as protected. Add the following code to the class definition:

```
protected function checkType($mime) {  
    $mimetypes = ['image/jpeg',  
    'image/png', 'image/gif'];  
    if (in_array($mime, $mimetypes)) {  
        $this->canProcess = true;  
        // extract the characters after  
        'image/'  
        $this->imageType = substr($mime,  
        6);  
    }  
}
```

There are many types of images, but JPEG, PNG, and GIF are the only ones universally supported by browsers; the `$canProcess` property is set to `true` only if the image's MIME type matches one of those listed in the `$mimetypes` array. If the MIME type isn't in the list, `$canProcess` remains `false`, which later prevents the class from attempting to create a thumbnail.

All image MIME types begin with `image/`. To make the value easier to use later, the `substr()` function extracts the characters after the slash and stores them in the `$imageType` property. When used with two arguments, `substr()` starts at the position (counting from 0) specified in the second argument and returns the rest of

the string.

Note Although PHP 5.5 and later can process WebP images, I decided against including them in the Thumbnail class because of limited browser support. At the time of this writing, the WebP image format is supported by only Google Chrome, Opera, and Android 4.

6. It's a good idea to test your code as you build the class. Catching errors early is much easier than hunting for a problem in a long script. To test the code, create a new public method called `test()` inside the class definition.

It doesn't matter in which order your methods appear inside the class definition, but it's common practice to keep all public methods together after the constructor and to put protected methods at the bottom of the file. This makes the code easier to maintain.

Insert the following definition between the constructor and the `checkType()` definition:

```
public function test() {  
    echo 'File: ' . $this->original  
    . '<br>';  
    echo 'Original width: ' . $this-  
    >originalwidth . '<br>';  
    echo 'Original height: ' . $this-  
    >originalheight . '<br>';  
    echo 'Base name: ' . $this-  
    >basename . '<br>';  
    echo 'Image type: ' . $this-  
    >imageType . '<br>';  
    if ($this->messages) {  
        print_r($this->messages);  
    }  
}
```

This uses `echo` and `print_r()` to display the value of the properties.

7. To test the class definition so far, save `Thumbnail.php` and add the following code to the PHP block above the `DOCTYPE` declaration in `create_thumb.php` (the code can be found in `create_thumb_02.php` in the `ch08` folder):

```
use PhpSolutions\Image\Thumbnail;

if (isset($_POST['create'])) {
    require_once('../PhpSolutions/Image/Thumb
    try {
        $thumb = new
Thumbnail($_POST['pix']);
        $thumb->test();
    } catch (Exception $e) {
        echo $e->getMessage();
    }
}
```

This imports the `Thumbnail` class from the `PhpSolutions\Image` namespace, then adds the code that is to be executed when the form is submitted.

The `name` attribute of the submit button in `create_thumb.php` is `create`, so this code runs only when the form has been submitted. It includes the `Thumbnail` class definition, creates an instance of the class, passing the selected value from the form as an argument, and calls the `test()` method.

8. Save `create_thumb.php` and load it into a browser. Select an image and click Create Thumbnail. This produces output similar to [Figure 8-1](#).

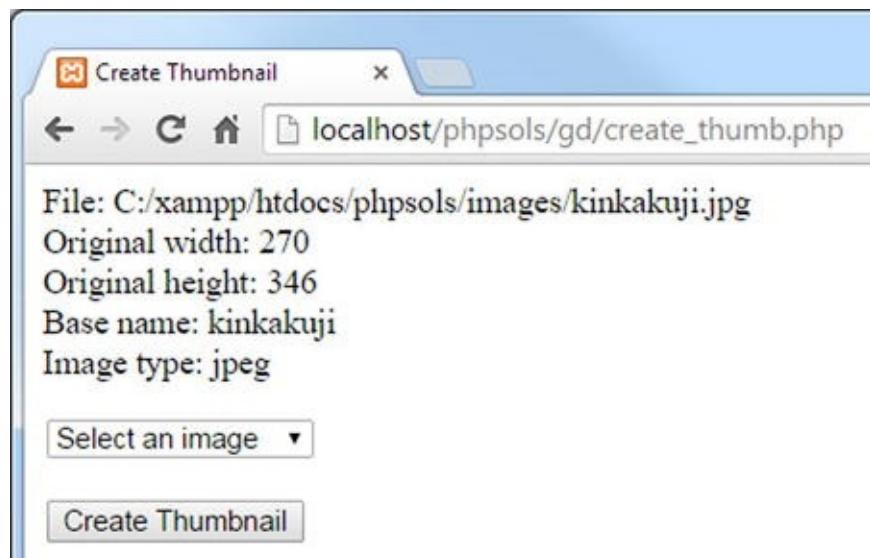


Figure 8-1. Displaying the details of the selected image confirms the code is working

If necessary, check your code against `Thumbnail_01.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Images` folder.

Although some properties have default values, you need to provide the option to change them by creating public methods to set the maximum size of the thumbnail image, and the suffix applied to the base of the filename. You also need to tell the class where to create the thumbnail. The formal term for this type of method is a **mutator method**. However, because it sets a value, it's commonly referred to as a **setter method**. The next step is to create the setter methods.

PHP Solution 8-2: Creating the Setter Methods

In addition to setting the value of protected properties, setter methods play an important role in ensuring the validity of the value being assigned. Continue working with the same class definition. Alternatively, use `Thumbnail_01.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folder.

1. Begin by creating the setter method for the folder where the thumbnail is to be created. Add the following code to `Thumbnail.php` after the constructor definition:

```

public function
setDestination($destination) {
    if (is_dir($destination) &&
        is_writable($destination)) {
        // get last character
        $last = substr($destination,
        -1);
        // add a trailing slash if
        missing
        if ($last == '/' || $last ==
        '\\') {
            $this->destination
            = $destination;
        } else {
            $this->destination
            = $destination . DIRECTORY_SEPARATOR;
        }
    } else {
        $this->messages[] = "Cannot
        write to $destination.";
    }
}

```

This begins by checking that `$destination` is a folder (directory) and that it's writable. If it isn't, the error message in the `else` clause at the end of the method definition is added to the `$messages` property. Otherwise, the rest of the code is executed.

Before assigning the value of `$destination` to the `$destination` property, the code checks whether the value submitted ends in a forward slash or backslash. It does this by extracting the final character in `$destination` using the `substr()` function. The second argument to `substr()` determines the position from which to start the extract. A negative number counts from the end of the string. If the third argument is omitted, the function returns the rest of the string. So, `$last = substr($destination, -1)` has the effect of

extracting the last character and storing it in `$last`.

The conditional statement checks whether `$last` is a forward slash or a backslash. Two backslashes are needed because PHP uses a backslash to escape quotes (see “Understanding when to use quotes” and “Using escape sequences” in [Chapter 3](#)).

It’s necessary to check for both forward slashes and backslashes in `$destination` because a Windows user might use backslashes out of habit. If the conditional statement confirms that the final character is a forward slash or a backslash, `$destination` is assigned to the `$destination` property. Otherwise, the `else` block concatenates the PHP constant `DIRECTORY_SEPARATOR` to the end of `$destination` before assigning it to the `$destination` property. The `DIRECTORY_SEPARATOR` constant automatically chooses the right type of slash depending on the operating system.

Tip PHP treats forward slashes or backslashes equally in a path. Even if this results in adding the opposite type of slash, the path remains valid as far as PHP is concerned.

2. The setter method for the maximum size of the thumbnail simply needs to check that the value is a number. Add the following code to the class definition:

```
public function setMaxSize($size) {  
    if (is_numeric($size)) {  
        $this->maxSize = abs($size);  
    }  
}
```

The `is_numeric()` function checks that the submitted

value is a number. If it is, it's assigned to the `$maxSize` property. As a precaution, the value is passed to the `abs()` function, which converts a number to its absolute value. In other words, a negative number is converted into a positive one.

If the submitted value isn't a number, nothing happens. The property's default value remains unchanged.

3. The setter function for the suffix inserted in the filename needs to make sure the value doesn't contain any special characters. The code looks like this:

```
public function setSuffix($suffix) {
    if (preg_match('/^\w+$/ ', $suffix))
    {
        if (strpos($suffix, '_') !== 0)
        {
            $this->suffix = '_'
            . $suffix;
        } else {
            $this->suffix = $suffix;
        }
    } else {
        $this->suffix = '';
    }
}
```

This uses `preg_match()`, which takes a regular expression as its first argument and searches for a match in the value passed as the second argument. Regular expressions need to be wrapped in a pair of matching delimiter characters—normally forward slashes, as used here. Stripped of the delimiters, the regex looks like this:

`^\w+$`

In this context, the caret (`^`) tells the regex to start at the beginning of the string. The `\w` is a regex token that matches any alphanumeric character or an underscore.

The `+` means match the preceding token or character one or more times, and the `$` means match the end of the string. In other words, the regex matches a string that contains only alphanumeric characters and underscores. If the string contains spaces or special characters, it won't match.

If the match fails, the `else` clause at the end of the method definition sets the `$suffix` property to an empty string. Otherwise, this conditional statement is executed:

```
if (strpos($suffix, '_') !== 0) {
```

The condition equates to `true` if the first character of `$suffix` is *not* an underscore. It uses the `strpos()` function to find the position of the first underscore. If the first character is an underscore, the value returned by `strpos()` is `0`. However, if `$suffix` doesn't contain an underscore, `strpos()` returns `false`. As explained in [Chapter 3](#), `0` is treated by PHP as `false`, so the condition needs to use the “not identical” operator (with two equal signs). So, if the suffix doesn't begin with an underscore, one is added. Otherwise, the original value is preserved.

Caution Don't confuse `strpos()` and `strrpos()`. The former finds the position of the first matching character. The latter searches the string in reverse.

4. Update the `test()` method to display the values of the properties for which you have just created setter methods. The revised code looks like this:

```
public function test() {
    echo 'File: ' . $this->original
    . '<br>';
    echo 'Original width: ' . $this-
>originalwidth . '<br>';
```

```

        echo 'Original height: ' . $this-
>originalheight . '<br>';
        echo 'Base name: ' . $this-
>basename . '<br>';
        echo 'Image type: ' . $this-
>imageType . '<br>';
        echo 'Destination: ' . $this->destination
. '<br>';
        echo 'Max size: ' . $this->maxSize
. '<br>';
        echo 'Suffix: ' . $this->suffix . '<br>';
        if ($this->messages) {
            print_r($this->messages);
        }
    }
}

```

5. Test the updated class by using the new setter methods in `create_thumb.php`, like this:

```

$thumb = new Thumbnail($_POST['pix']);
$thumb-
>setDestination('C:/upload_test/thumbs/');
$thumb->setMaxSize(100);
$thumb->setSuffix('small');
$thumb->test();

```

Adjust the path to `upload_test/thumbs` to match your setup.

6. Save both pages and select an image from the list in `create_thumb.php`. You should see results similar to those in [Figure 8-2](#).

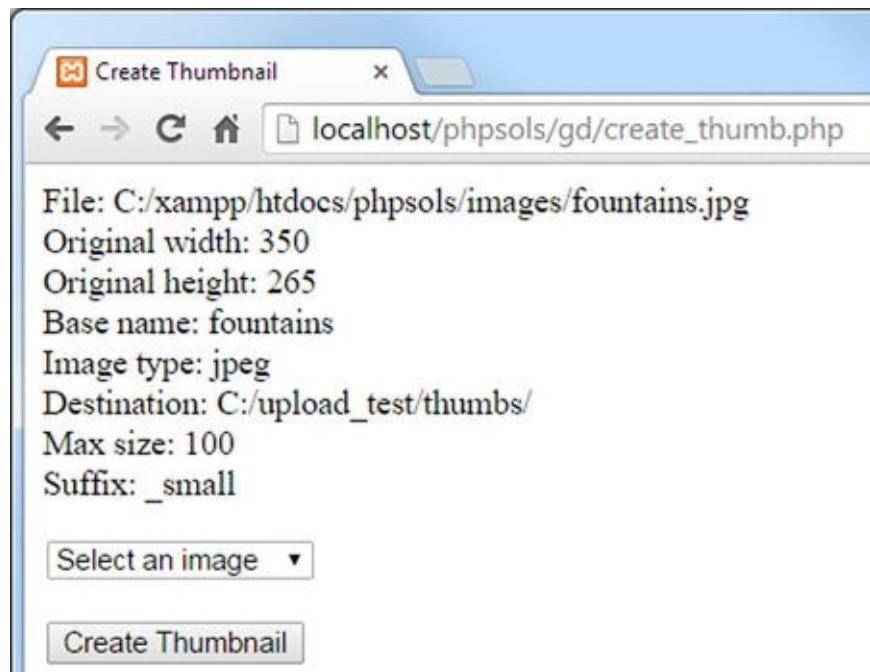


Figure 8-2. Verifying that the setter methods work

7. Try a number of tests, omitting the trailing slash from the value passed to `setDestination()` or selecting a nonexistent folder. Also pass invalid values to the setters for the maximum size and suffix. An invalid destination folder produces an error message, but the others fail silently, using the default value for the maximum size or an empty string for the suffix.

If necessary, compare your code with `Thumbnail_02.php` in `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` and `create_thumb_03.php` in the `ch08` folder.

You might not agree with my decision to fail silently when the values passed as arguments are invalid. By now, though, you should have sufficient experience of conditional statements to adapt the code to your own requirements. For example, if you want the setter method for the thumbnail's maximum size to return an error message instead of failing silently, check that the value is greater than zero and add an `else` block to generate the

error message. The `else` block should also set the `$canProcess` property to `false` to prevent the class from attempting to create a thumbnail image. This is how you would adapt the `setMaxSize()` method:

```
public function setMaxSize($size) {
    if (is_numeric($size) && $size > 0) {
        $this->maxSize = $size;
    } else {
        $this->messages[] = 'The value for setMaxSize()
            must be a positive number.';
        $this->canProcess = false;
    }
}
```

PHP Solution 8-3: Calculating the thumbnail's dimensions

This PHP solution adds a protected method to the `Thumbnail` class that will calculate the thumbnail's dimensions. The value set in the `$maxSize` property determines the width or height, depending on which is larger. To avoid distorting the thumbnail, you need to calculate the scaling ratio for the shorter dimension. The ratio is calculated by dividing the maximum thumbnail size by the larger dimension of the original image.

For example, the original image of the Golden Pavilion (`kinkakuji.jpg`) is 270×346 pixels. If the maximum size is set at 120, dividing 120 by 346 produces a scaling ratio of 0.3468. Multiplying the width of the original image by this ratio fixes the thumbnail's width at 94 pixels (rounded up to the nearest whole number), maintaining the correct proportions. [Figure 8-3](#) shows how the scaling ratio works.

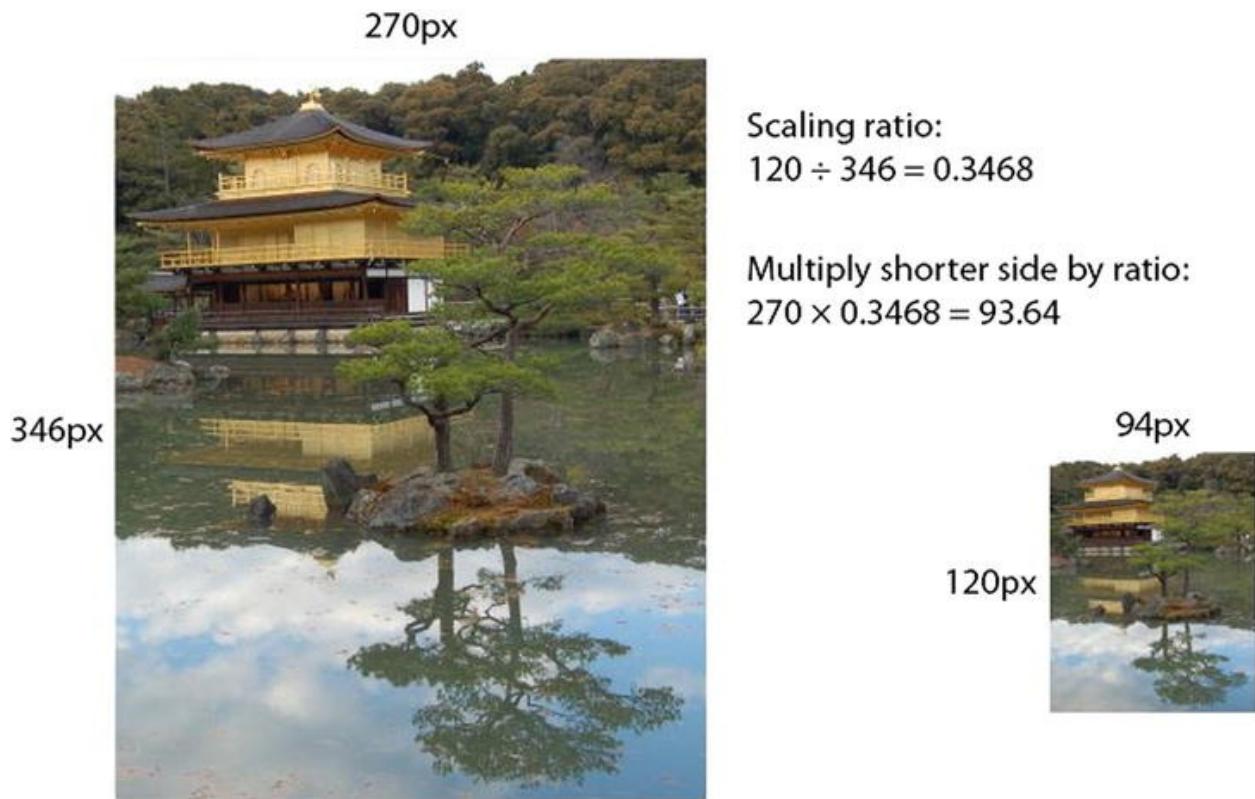


Figure 8-3. Working out the scaling ratio for a thumbnail image

Continue working with your existing class definition. Alternatively, use `Thumbnail_02.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folder.

1. Calculating the thumbnail dimensions doesn't require any further user input, so it can be handled by a protected method. Add the following code to the class definition. Put it at the end of the file, just inside the closing curly brace.

```
protected function
calculateSize($width, $height) {
    if ($width <= $this->maxSize &&
    $height <= $this->maxSize) {
        $ratio = 1;
    } elseif ($width > $height) {
        $ratio = $this->maxSize/$width;
    } else {
        $ratio = $this->maxSize/$height;
    }
}
```

```
    $this->thumbwidth = round($width  
* $ratio);  
    $this->thumbheight = round($height  
* $ratio);  
}
```

The dimensions of the original image are stored as properties of the `Thumbnail` object, so you could refer to them directly as `$this->originalWidth` and `$this->originalHeight`. However, the method needs to refer to these values often, so I decided to pass them as arguments to make the code easier to read and type.

The conditional statement begins by checking if the width and height of the original image are less than or equal to the maximum size. If they are, the image doesn't need to be resized, so the scaling ratio is set to 1.

The `elseif` block checks if the width is greater than the height. If it is, the width is used to calculate the scaling ratio. The `else` block is invoked if the height is greater or both sides are equal. In either case, the height is used to calculate the scaling ratio.

The last two lines multiply the original width and height by the scaling ratio and assign the results to the `$thumbwidth` and `$thumbheight` properties. The calculation is wrapped in the `round()` function, which rounds the result to the nearest whole number.

2. This method needs to be called by the method that creates the thumbnail image. Add the following public method to the class definition above the protected methods:

```
public function create() {  
    if ($this->canProcess && $this->originalwidth != 0) {  
        $this->calculateSize($this->originalwidth, $this->originalheight);
```

```

        } elseif ($this->originalwidth ==
0) {
    $this->messages[] = 'Cannot
determine size of ' . $this->original;
}
}

```

This checks that `$canProcess` is `true` and that the width of the original image is not 0. The second test is necessary because `getimagesize()` sets the width and height to 0 if it can't determine the size. This usually happens if the image format contains multiple images. If the `$originalwidth` property is 0, an error message is added to the `$messages` array.

3. To test the new method, amend the `test()` method like this:

```

public function test() {
    echo 'File: ' . $this->original
. '<br>';
    echo 'Original width: ' . $this-
>originalwidth . '<br>';
    echo 'Original height: ' . $this-
>originalheight . '<br>';
    echo 'Base name: ' . $this-
>basename . '<br>';
    echo 'Image type: ' . $this-
>imageType . '<br>';
    echo 'Destination: ' . $this-
>destination . '<br>';
    echo 'Max size: ' . $this->maxSize
. '<br>';
    echo 'Suffix: ' . $this->suffix
. '<br>';
    echo 'Thumb width: ' . $this->thumbwidth
. '<br>';
    echo 'Thumb height: ' . $this->thumbheight
. '<br>';
    if ($this->messages) {

```

```
        print_r($this->messages);
    }
}
```

4. Update the code in `create_thumb.php` to call the `create()` method. It must come before the `test()` method. Otherwise, the width and height of the thumbnail won't be calculated. The revised code looks like this:

```
$thumb = new Thumbnail($_POST['pix']);
$thumb-
>setDestination('C:/upload_test/thumbs/');
$thumb->setMaxSize(100);
$thumb->setSuffix('small');
$thumb->create();
$thumb->test();
```

5. Test the updated class by selecting an image in `create_thumb.php` and clicking Create Thumbnail. You should see the values displayed onscreen, as shown in [Figure 8-4](#).

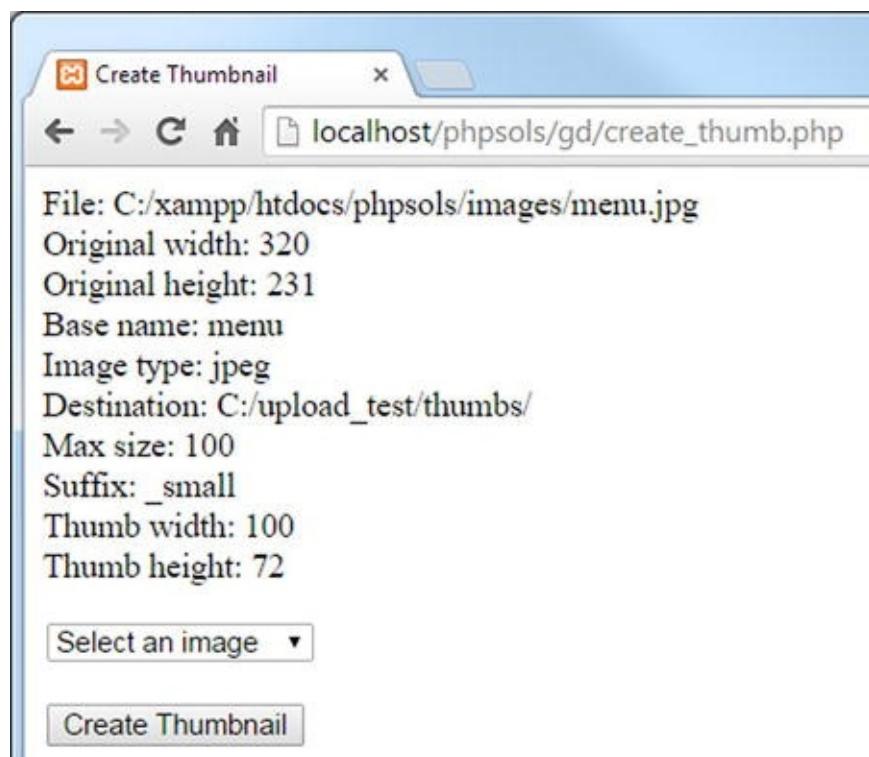


Figure 8-4. The class is now generating all the values needed to create the thumbnail image

If necessary, check your code against `Thumbnail_03.php` in the `ch08` folder.

Using GD Functions to Create a Scaled Copy of an Image

After you have gathered all the necessary information, you can generate a thumbnail image from a larger one. This involves creating image resources for both the original image and the thumbnail. For the original image, you need to use a function that matches the image's MIME type. Each of the following functions takes a single argument: the path to the file.

- `imagecreatefromjpeg()`
- `imagecreatefrompng()`
- `imagecreatefromgif()`

Because the thumbnail doesn't yet exist, you use a different function, `imagecreatetruecolor()`, which takes two arguments—the width and height (in pixels).

Yet another function creates a resized copy of an image: `imagecopyresampled()`. This takes no fewer than ten arguments—all of them required. The arguments fall into five pairs, as follows:

- References to the two image resources—copy first, original second
- The x and y coordinates of where to position the top-left corner of the copied image
- The x and y coordinates of the top-left corner of the original
- The width and height of the copy
- The width and height of the area to copy from the original

[Figure 8-5](#) shows how the last four pairs of arguments can be used to extract

a specific area, using the following arguments to `imagecopyresampled()`:

```
imagecopyresampled($thumb, $source, 0, 0, 170, 20,  
$thbwidht,$thbheight, 170, 102);
```

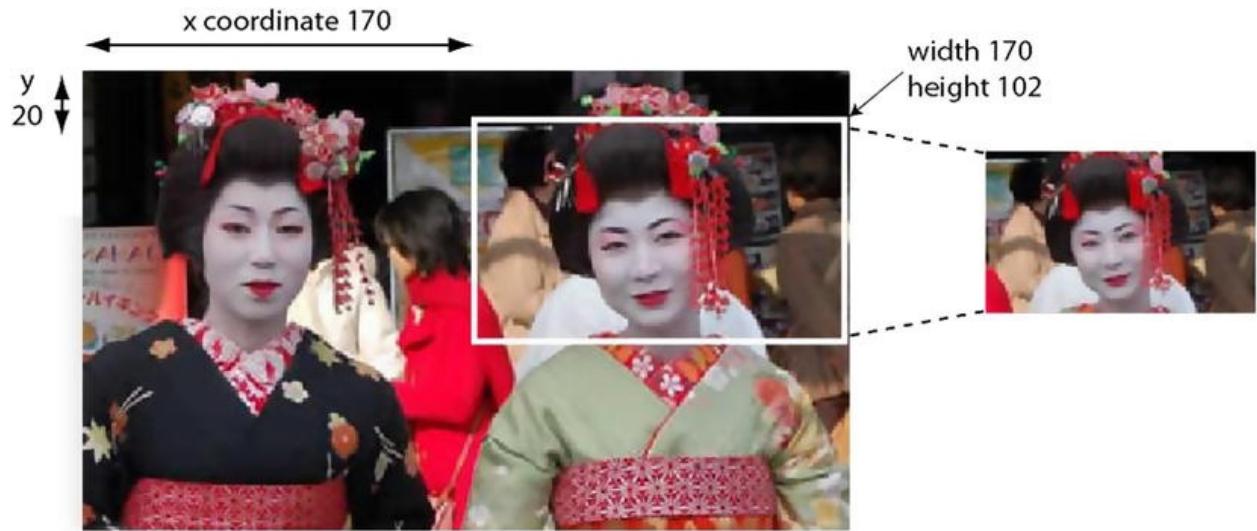


Figure 8-5. The `imagecopyresampled()` function allows you to copy part of an image

The x and y coordinates of the area to copy are measured in pixels from the top left of the image. The x and y axes begin at 0 at the top left, and increase to the right and down. By setting the width and height of the area to copy to 170 and 102, respectively, PHP extracts the area outlined in white.

So now you know how websites manage to crop uploaded images. They calculate the coordinates dynamically using JavaScript or some other technology. For the `Thumbnail` class, you'll use the whole of the original image to generate the thumbnail.

After creating the copy with `imagecopyresampled()`, you need to save it, again using a function specific to the MIME type, namely:

- `imagejpeg()`
- `imagepng()`
- `imagegif()`

Each function takes as its first two arguments the image resource and the path to where you want to save it.

The `imagejpeg()` and `imagepng()` functions take an optional third

argument to set the image quality. For `imagejpeg()`, you set the quality by specifying a number in the range of 0 (worst) to 100 (best). If you omit the argument, the default is 75. For `imagepng()`, the range is 0 to 9. Confusingly, 0 produces the best quality (no compression).

Finally, once you have saved the thumbnail you need to destroy the image resources by passing them to `imagedestroy()`. In spite of its destructive name, this function has no effect on the original image or the thumbnail. It simply frees the server memory by destroying the image resources required during processing.

PHP Solution 8-4: Generating the thumbnail image

This PHP solution completes the `Thumbnail` class by creating the image resources, copying the thumbnail, and saving it in the destination folder.

Continue working with your existing class definition. Alternatively, use `Thumbnail_03.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folder.

1. The image resource for the original image needs to be specific to its MIME type, so start by creating an internal method to select the correct type. Add the following code to the class definition. It's a protected method, so put it at the bottom of the page (but inside the class's closing curly brace).

```
protected function  
createImageResource() {  
    if ($this->imageType == 'jpeg') {  
        return  
    imagecreatefromjpeg($this->original);  
    } elseif ($this->imageType ==  
    'png') {  
        return imagecreatefrompng($this-  
    >original);  
    } elseif ($this->imageType ==  
    'gif') {  
        return imagecreatefromgif($this-  
    >original);  
    }  
}
```

```
}
```

The `checkType()` method that you created in PHP Solution 8-1 stores the MIME type as `jpeg`, `png`, or `gif`. So, the conditional statement checks the MIME type, matches it to the appropriate function, and passes the original image as an argument. The method then returns the resulting image resource.

2. Now it's time to define the internal method that does all the hard work. It contains a lot of code, so I'll break it into sections. Start by defining the `createThumbnail()` method, like this:

```
protected function createThumbnail() {  
    $resource = $this->createImageResource();  
    $thumb  
    = imagecreatetruecolor($this->thumbwidth, $this->thumbheight);  
}
```

This calls the `createImageResource()` method that you created in step 1 and then creates an image resource for the thumbnail, passing the thumbnail's width and height to `imagecreatetruecolor()`.

3. The next stage in creating the thumbnail involves passing both image resources to `imagecopyresampled()` and setting the coordinates and dimensions. Amend the `createThumbnail()` method like this:

```
protected function createThumbnail() {  
    $resource = $this->createImageResource();  
    $thumb  
    = imagecreatetruecolor($this->thumbwidth, $this->thumbheight);  
    imagecopyresampled($thumb, $resource, 0, 0,  
    0, 0, $this->thumbwidth,  
    $this->thumbheight, $this-
```

```
>originalwidth, $this->originalheight);  
}
```

The first two arguments are the image resources you have just created for the thumbnail and original image. The next four arguments set the x and y coordinates for both the copy and the original to the top-left corner. Next come the width and height calculated for the thumbnail, followed by the original image's width and height. Setting arguments 3–6 to the top-left corner and both sets of dimensions to the full amounts copies the whole original image to the whole of the thumbnail. In other words, it creates a smaller copy of the original.

You don't need to assign the result of `imagecopyresampled()` to a variable. The scaled-down image is now stored in `$thumb`, but you still need to save it.

4. Complete the definition of `createThumbnail()` like this:

```
protected function createThumbnail() {  
    $resource = $this->createImageResource();  
    $thumb  
    = imagecreatetruecolor($this->thumbwidth, $this->thumbheight);  
    imagecopyresampled($thumb,  
    $resource, 0, 0, 0, 0, $this->thumbwidth,  
    $this->thumbheight, $this->originalwidth, $this->originalheight);  
    $newname = $this->basename . $this->suffix;  
    if ($this->imageType == 'jpeg') {  
        $newname .= '.jpg';  
        $success = imagejpeg($thumb, $this->destination . $newname, 100);  
    } elseif ($this->imageType == 'png') {  
        $newname .= '.png';  
        $success = imagepng($thumb, $this-
```

```

>destination . $newname, 0);
} elseif ($this->imageType == 'gif') {
    $newname .= '.gif';
    $success = imagegif($thumb, $this-
>destination . $newname);
}
if ($success) {
    $this->messages[] = "$newname created
successfully.";
} else {
    $this->messages[] = "Couldn't create
a thumbnail for " .
        basename($this->original);
}
imagedestroy($resource);
imagedestroy($thumb);
}

```

The first line of new code concatenates the suffix to the filename stripped of its filename extension. So, if the original file is called `menu.jpg` and the default `_thb` suffix is used, `$newname` becomes `menu_thb`.

The conditional statement checks the image's MIME type and appends the appropriate filename extension. In the case of `menu.jpg`, `$newname` becomes `menu_thb.jpg`. The scaled-down image is then passed to the appropriate function to save it, using the destination folder and `$newname` as the path for where it is saved. For JPEG and PNG images, the optional quality argument is set to the highest level: 100 for JPEG and 0 for PNG.

The result of the save operation is stored in `$success`. Depending on the outcome, `$success` is either `true` or `false`, and an appropriate message is added to the `$messages` property. The message is created using the `basename()` function rather than the `$basename` property because the filename extension has been stripped from the property, whereas the function preserves it.

Finally, `imagedestroy()` frees the server memory by

destroying the resources used to create the thumbnail image.

5. Update the definition of the `create()` method to call the `createThumbnail()` method:

```
public function create() {  
    if ($this->canProcess && $this->originalwidth != 0) {  
        $this->calculateSize($this->originalwidth, $this->originalheight);  
        $this->createThumbnail();  
    } elseif ($this->originalwidth == 0) {  
        $this->messages[] = 'Cannot determine size of ' . $this->original;  
    }  
}
```

6. You no longer need the `test()` method. You can either delete it from the class definition or comment it out. If you plan to experiment further or make enhancements to the class, commenting it out saves the effort of creating it again from scratch.
7. Up to now, you have used the `test()` method to display error messages. Create a public method to get the messages:

```
public function getMessages() {  
    return $this->messages;  
}
```

8. Save `Thumbnail.php`. In `create_thumb.php`, replace the call to the `test()` method with a call to `getMessages()` and assign the result to a variable, like this:

```
$thumb->create();  
$messages = $thumb->getMessages();
```

9. Add a PHP code block just after the opening `<body>` tag

to display any messages:

```
<?php
if (isset($messages) &&
!empty($messages)) {
    echo '<ul>';
    foreach ($messages as $message) {
        echo "<li>$message</li>";
    }
    echo '</ul>';
}
?>
```

You've seen this code in previous chapters, so it needs no explanation.

10. Save `create_thumb.php`, load it in a browser, and test it by selecting an image from the list and clicking Create Thumbnail. If all goes well, you should see a message reporting the creation of the thumbnail and you can confirm its existence in the `thumbs` subfolder of `upload_test`, as shown in [Figure 8-6](#).

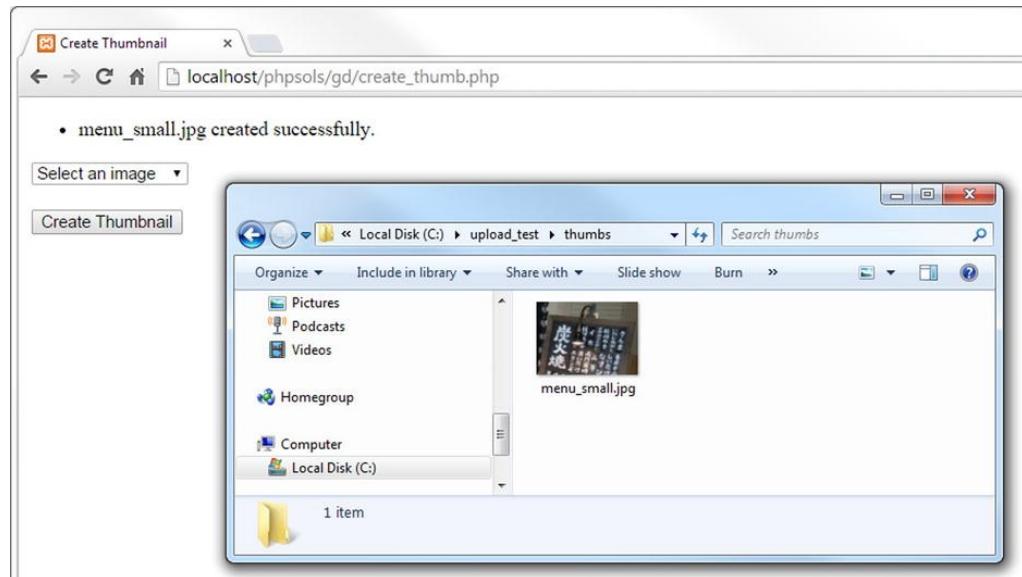


Figure 8-6. The thumbnail has been successfully created in the destination folder

11. If the thumbnail isn't created, the error message generated by the `Thumbnail` class should help you detect the source of the problem. Also, check your code carefully against `Thumbnail_04.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folder. If the tests in the previous PHP solutions worked, the error is likely in the `create()`, `createImageResource()`, or `createThumbnail()` method definitions. The other place to check is, of course, your PHP configuration. The class depends on the GD extension being enabled. Although GD is widely supported, it's not always on by default.

Resizing an Image Automatically on Upload

Now that you have a class that creates a thumbnail from a larger image, it's relatively simple to adapt the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#) to generate a thumbnail from an uploaded image—in fact, not only from a single image but also from multiple images.

Instead of changing the code in the `Upload` class, it's more efficient to extend the class and create a subclass. You then have the choice of using the original class to perform uploads of any type of file, or the subclass to create thumbnail images on upload. The subclass also needs to provide the option to save or discard the larger image after the thumbnail has been created.

Before diving into the code, let's take a quick look at how you create a subclass.

Extending a Class

A major advantage of using classes is that they're extensible. To extend a class, you simply include the original class definition and define the subclass using the `extends` keyword, like this:

```
require_once 'OriginalClass.php';
```

```
class MyNewClass extends OriginalClass {  
    // subclass definition  
}
```

This creates a new **subclass** or **child class** called `MyNewClass` from the original or **parent class**, `OriginalClass`. The parent-child analogy is apposite, because the child inherits all the features of its parent but can adapt some of them and acquire new ones of its own. This means that `MyNewClass` shares the same properties and methods as `OriginalClass`, but you can add new properties and methods. You can also redefine (or **override**) some of the parent's methods and properties. This simplifies the process of creating a class to perform a more specialized task. The `Upload` class you created in [Chapter 6](#) performs basic file uploads. In this chapter, you'll extend it to create a child class called `ThumbnailUpload` that uses the basic upload features of its parent but adds specialized features that create thumbnail images. The subclass will be created in the `PhpSolutions/Image` folder, so it will use `PhpSolutions\Image` as its namespace.

Like all children, a child class often needs to borrow from its parent. This frequently happens when you override a method in the child class but need to use the original version as well. To refer to the parent version, you prefix it with the `parent` keyword followed by two colons, like this:

```
parent::originalMethod();
```

You'll see how this works in PHP Solution 8-5, because the child class defines its own constructor to add an extra argument but also needs to use the parent constructor.

 **Note** This description of inheritance covers only the bare minimum you need to understand PHP Solution 8-5. For a more detailed insight into PHP classes, see my *PHP Object-Oriented Solutions* (friends of ED, 2008, ISBN: 978-1-4302-1011-5).

Let's create a class capable of uploading images and generating thumbnails at the same time.

PHP Solution 8-5: Creating the `ThumbnailUpload`

Class

This PHP solution extends the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#) and uses it in conjunction with the `Thumbnail` class to upload and resize images. It demonstrates how to create a child class and override parent methods. To create the child class, you need `Upload.php` from [Chapter 6](#) and `Thumbnail.php` from this chapter. There's a copy of these files in the `ch06/PhpSolutions/File` and `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folders, respectively.

1. Create a new file called `ThumbnailUpload.php` in the `PhpSolutions\Image` folder. It will contain only PHP code, so strip out any HTML inserted by your script editor and add the following code:

```
<?php
namespace PhpSolutions\Image;

use PhpSolutions\File\Upload;

require_once __DIR__
. '/../File/Upload.php';
require_once 'Thumbnail.php';

class ThumbnailUpload extends Upload {

}
```

This declares the `PhpSolutions\Image` namespace and imports the `Upload` class from the `PhpSolutions\File` namespace before including the definitions of the `Upload` and `Thumbnail` classes.

Note When used in an include file, `__DIR__` returns the directory of the included file without a trailing slash. Adding the slash at the beginning of the relative path to `Upload.php` allows PHP to build a complete path, moving back up one level to find it in the `PhpSolutions/File` folder. `Thumbnail.php` is in

the same folder as `ThumbnailUpload.php`, so it's included using only the filename. See "Nesting include files" in [Chapter 4](#).

The `ThumbnailUpload` class then declares that it extends `Upload`. Although `Upload` is in a different namespace, you can refer to it simply as `Upload` because it has been imported. All subsequent code needs to be inserted between the curly braces of the class definition.

2. The child class needs three properties: the folder where the thumbnail is to be saved, a Boolean that determines whether to delete the original image, and the suffix to be added to the thumbnail. The last of these is required in case you don't want to use the default suffix defined in `Thumbnail`. Add the following property definitions inside the curly braces:

```
protected $thumbDestination;  
protected $deleteOriginal;  
protected $suffix = '_thb';
```

3. When you extend a class, the only time you need to define a constructor method is when you want to change how the constructor works. The `ThumbnailUpload` class takes an extra argument that determines whether to delete the original image, giving you the option to retain only the thumbnail or to keep both versions of the image. When testing locally, a `Thumbnail` object can access the original image on your own hard drive. However, generating the thumbnail is a server-side operation, so it won't work on a website without first uploading the original image to the server.

The constructor also needs to call the parent constructor to define the path to the upload folder. Add the following definition to the class:

```
public function __construct($path,
```

```
$deleteOriginal = false) {  
    parent::__construct($path);  
    $this->thumbDestination = $path;  
    $this->deleteOriginal  
= $deleteOriginal;  
}
```

The constructor takes two arguments: the path to the upload folder and a Boolean variable that determines whether to delete the original image. The second argument is set to `false` in the constructor signature, making it optional.

Note When defining a function or a class method, the arguments (strictly speaking, parameters) passed to the function (method) are known as its **signature**.

The first line of code inside the constructor passes `$path` to the parent constructor in order to set the destination folder for the file uploads. The second line also assigns `$path` to the `$thumbDestination` property, making the same folder the default for both images.

The final line assigns the value of the second argument to the `$deleteOriginal` property. Because the second argument is optional, it's automatically set to `false`, and both images are retained unless you set it explicitly to `true`.

4. Create the setter method for the thumbnail destination folder like this:

```
public function  
setThumbDestination($path) {  
    if (!is_dir($path) ||  
    !is_writable($path)) {  
        throw new \Exception("$path must  
be a valid, writable directory.");
```

```
    }
    $this->thumbDestination = $path;
}
```

This takes a path as its only argument, checks that it's a folder (directory) and is writable, and assigns the value to the `$thumbDestination` property. If the value passed as an argument is invalid, the class throws an exception. `Exception` is preceded by a backslash to indicate you're using the core `Exception` class, not one specific to this namespace.

Tip Instead of creating a setter method for the thumbnail destination folder, I could have added an extra argument to the constructor. However, my choice simplifies the constructor for occasions when you want to save the thumbnail and original image in the same folder. Also, I could have silently used the original upload folder instead of throwing an exception if there's a problem with the thumbnail destination. I decided that a problem with the destination folder is too serious to ignore. Decisions like this are an integral part of writing any script, not just of designing a class.

5. Apart from the name, the setter method for the thumbnail suffix is identical to the one in `Thumbnail.php`. It looks like this:

```
public function setThumbSuffix($suffix) {
    if (preg_match('/\w+/', $suffix)) {
        if (strpos($suffix, '_') !== 0)
    {
        $this->suffix = '_'
        . $suffix;
    } else {
        $this->suffix = $suffix;
    }
}
```

```
    } else {
        $this->suffix = '';
    }
}
```

You need to define the method here because the class inherits from `Upload`, not `Thumbnail`. A PHP class can have only a single parent.

Note To solve the problem of single inheritance, PHP 5.4 introduced a feature called traits. A **trait** defines methods intended to be used by multiple classes. The structure of a trait is the same as a class, except that it's declared using the keyword `trait` instead of `class`. You import traits into a class definition with the `use` keyword. I decided against moving `setThumbSuffix()` to a trait because it's so short and is used by only two classes. To learn more about traits, see <http://php.net/manual/en/language.oop5.traits>.

6. The parent `Upload` class has an `allowAllTypes()` method that removes restrictions on the MIME types of files that can be uploaded. The `ThumbnailUpload` class is for image types only. To prevent this inherited method from allowing other types of files to be uploaded, add the following code to override it:

```
public function allowAllTypes() {
    $this->typeCheckingOn = true;
}
```

Unlike the parent method, this sets the `$typeCheckingOn` property to `true`, enforcing MIME-type checking. In other words, calling `allowAllTypes()` on a `ThumbnailUpload` object will have no effect.

7. Next, create a protected method to generate the thumbnail

using the following code:

```
protected function  
createThumbnail($image) {  
    $thumb = new Thumbnail($image);  
    $thumb->setDestination($this-  
>thumbDestination);  
    $thumb->setSuffix($this->suffix);  
    $thumb->create();  
    $messages = $thumb->getMessages();  
    $this->messages  
= array_merge($this->messages,  
$messages);  
}
```

This takes a single argument, the path to an image, and creates a `Thumbnail` object. The code is similar to `create_thumb.php` so it shouldn't need explanation.

The final line uses `array_merge()` to merge any messages generated by the `Thumbnail` object with the `$messages` property of the `ThumbnailUpload` class. Although the properties you defined in step 2 don't include a `$messages` property, the child class automatically inherits it from its parent.

8. In the parent class, the `moveFile()` method saves an uploaded file to its target destination. The thumbnail needs to be generated from the original image, so you need to override the parent's `moveFile()` method and use it to call the `createThumbnail()` method that you have just defined. Copy the `moveFile()` method from `Upload.php` and amend it by adding the code highlighted in bold.

```
protected function moveFile($file) {  
    $filename = isset($this->newName)  
? $this->newName : $file['name'];  
    $success  
= move_uploaded_file($file['tmp_name'],
```

```

        $this->destination . $filename);
    if ($success) {
        // add a message only if the original
image is not deleted
        if (!$this->deleteOriginal) {
            $result = $file['name'] . '
was uploaded successfully';
            if (!is_null($this->newName))
{
                $result .= ', and was
renamed ' . $this->newName;
}
            $this->messages[] = $result;
}
        // create a thumbnail from the uploaded
image
        $this->createThumbnail($this-
>destination . $filename);
        // delete the uploaded image if required
        if ($this->deleteOriginal) {
            unlink($this->destination
. $filename);
}
    } else {
        $this->messages[] = 'Could not
upload ' . $file['name'];
}
}

```

If the original image has been uploaded successfully, the new code adds a conditional statement to generate the message only if `$deleteOriginal` is `false`. It then calls the `createThumbnail()` method, passing it the uploaded image as the argument. Finally, if `$deleteOriginal` has been set to `true`, it uses `unlink()` to delete the uploaded image, leaving only the thumbnail.

9. Save `ThumbnailUpload.php`. To test it, copy `create_thumb_upload_01.php` from the `ch08` folder to the `gd` folder and save it as

`create_thumb_upload.php`. The file contains a simple form with a file field and a PHP block that displays messages. Add the following PHP code block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
<?php
use PhpSolutions\Image\ThumbnailUpload;

if (isset($_POST['upload'])) {
    require_once('..../PhpSolutions/Image/Thumb
    try {
        $loader = new
ThumbnailUpload('C:/upload_test/');
        $loader-
>setThumbDestination('C:/upload_test/thumbs/
        $loader->upload();
        $messages = $loader-
>getMessages();
    } catch (Exception $e) {
        echo $e->getMessage();
    }
}
?>
```

Adjust the paths in the constructor and `setThumbDestination()` method, if necessary.

10. Save `create_thumb_upload.php` and load it in a browser. Click the Browse or Choose Files button and select multiple images. When you click the Upload button, you should see messages informing you of the successful upload and creation of the thumbnails. Check the destination folders, as shown in [Figure 8-7](#).

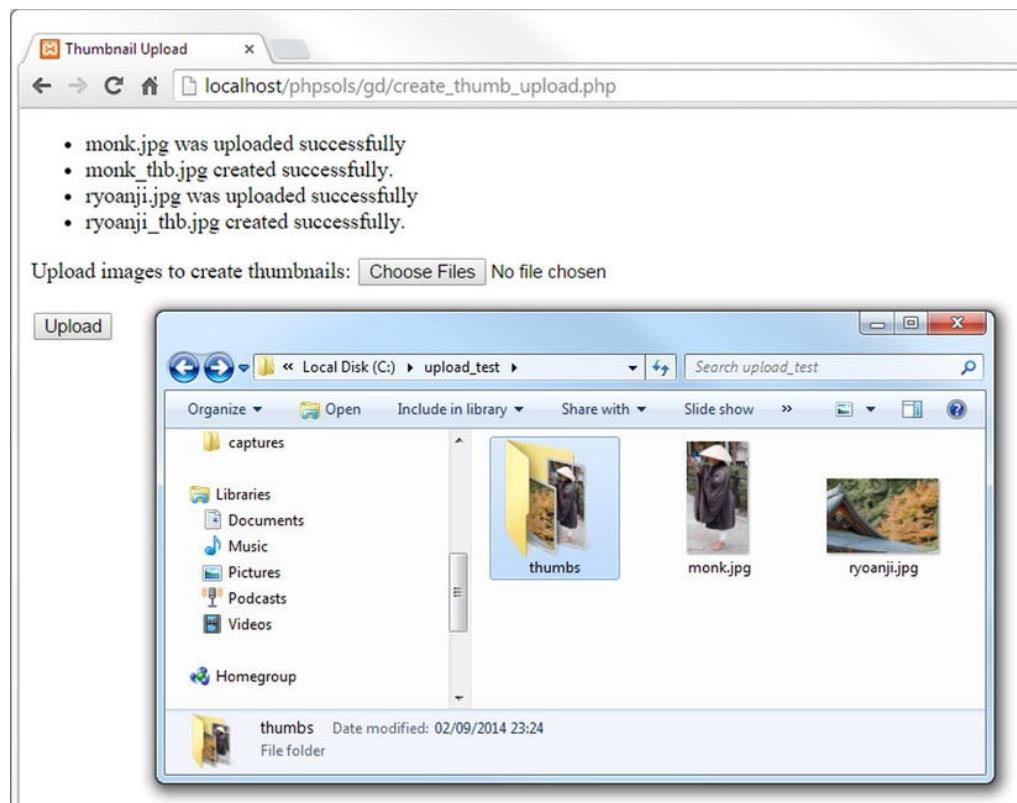


Figure 8-7. The thumbnails are created at the same time as the images are uploaded

11. Test the `ThumbnailUpload` class by uploading the same images again. This time, the original images and thumbnails should be renamed in the same way as in [Chapter 6](#) through the addition of a number before the filename extension.
12. Try different tests, changing the suffix inserted into the thumbnail names or deleting the original image after the thumbnail has been created. If you run into problems, check your code against `ThumbnailUpload.php` in the `ch08/PhpSolutions/Image` folder.

Tip In older browsers that don't support the `multiple` attribute on form fields, the class uploads a single image and creates a thumbnail from it. To support multiple uploads from older browsers, create multiple file fields in the form and give them all the same `name` attribute followed by an empty pair of square brackets, like this: `name="image[]"`.

Using the ThumbnailUpload Class

The `ThumbnailUpload` class is easy to use. Because it uses a namespace, import the class at the top level of your file like this:

```
use PhpSolutions\Image\ThumbnailUpload;
```

Then include the class definition and pass the path for the upload folder to the class constructor method:

```
$loader = new ThumbnailUpload('C:/upload_test/');
```

If you want to delete the original image after the thumbnail has been created, pass `true` as the second argument to the constructor, as follows:

```
$loader = new ThumbnailUpload('C:/upload_test/', true);
```

The class has the following public methods:

- `setThumbDestination()`: This sets the path to the folder where the thumbnail images are to be saved. If you don't call this method, the thumbnails are stored in the same folder as the original images.
- `setThumbSuffix()`: Use this to change the suffix inserted into the thumbnail names. The default is `_thb`.
- `upload()`: This uploads the original image(s) and generates the thumbnail(s). By default, images that have the same name as an existing one are renamed. To overwrite existing images, pass `false` as an argument to this method.

The class also inherits the following methods from the parent `Upload` class:

- `getMessages()`: Retrieves messages generated by the upload and the thumbnail.
- `getMaxSize()`: Gets the maximum upload size for an individual image. The default is 50 KB.

- `setMaxSize()`: Changes the maximum upload size. The argument should be expressed as the number of bytes permitted.

Because the `ThumbnailUpload` class is dependent on the `Upload` and `Thumbnail` classes, you need to upload all three class definition files to your remote web server when using this class on a live website.

Chapter Review

This has been another intense chapter, showing not only how to generate thumbnails from larger images, but also introducing you to extending an existing class and overriding inherited methods. Designing and extending classes can be confusing at first, but it becomes less intimidating if you concentrate on what each method is doing. A key principle of class design is to break large tasks down into small, manageable units. Ideally, a method should perform a single task, such as creating the image resource for the original image.

The real advantage of using classes is the time and effort they save once you have defined them. Instead of typing dozens of lines of code each time you want to add file or thumbnail upload functionality to a website, calling the class involves just a few simple lines. Also, don't think of the code in this chapter as being exclusively for creating and uploading thumbnail images. Many of the subroutines in the class files could be adapted for use in other situations.

In the next chapter, you'll learn all about PHP sessions, which preserve information related to a specific user and play a vital role in password-protecting webpages.

CHAPTER 9



Pages That Remember: Simple Login and Multipage Forms

The Web is a brilliant illusion. When you visit a well-designed website, you get a great feeling of continuity, as though flipping through the pages of a book or a magazine. Everything fits together as a coherent entity. The reality is quite different. Each part of an individual page is stored and handled separately by the web server. Apart from needing to know where to send the relevant files, the server has no interest in who you are. Each time a PHP script runs, the variables exist only in the server's memory and are normally discarded as soon as the script finishes. Even variables in the `$_POST` and `$_GET` arrays have only a brief lifespan. Their value is passed once to the next script and then removed from memory unless you do something with it, such as storing the information in a hidden form field. Even then, it persists only if the form is submitted.

To get around these problems, PHP uses **sessions**. After briefly describing how sessions work, I'll show you how you can use session variables to create a simple, file-based login system and pass information from one page to another without the need to use hidden form fields.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- Understanding what sessions are and how to create them
- Creating a file-based login system
- Checking password strength with a custom-built class
- Setting a time limit for sessions
- Using sessions to keep track of information over multiple pages

What Sessions Are and How They Work

A session ensures continuity by storing a random identifier—the session ID—on the web server and as a cookie on the visitor’s computer. The web server uses the cookie to recognize that it’s communicating with the same person (or, to be more precise, with the same computer). [Figures 9-1](#) through [9-3](#) show the details of a simple session created in my local testing environment.

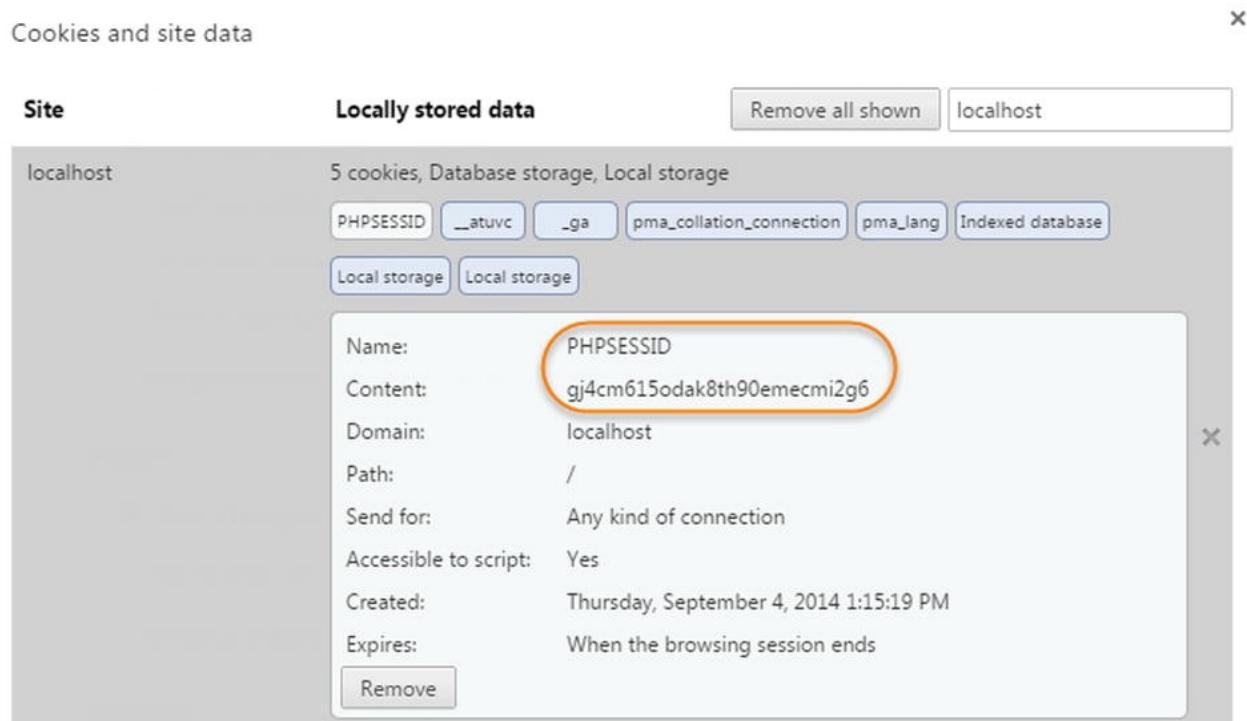


Figure 9-1. PHP sessions store a unique identifier as a cookie in the browser

As [Figure 9-1](#) shows, the cookie stored in the browser is called PHPSESSID, and the content is a jumble of letters and numbers. This random string is the session’s ID.

A matching file, which contains the same jumble of letters and numbers as part of its filename, is created on the web server, as shown in [Figure 9-2](#).

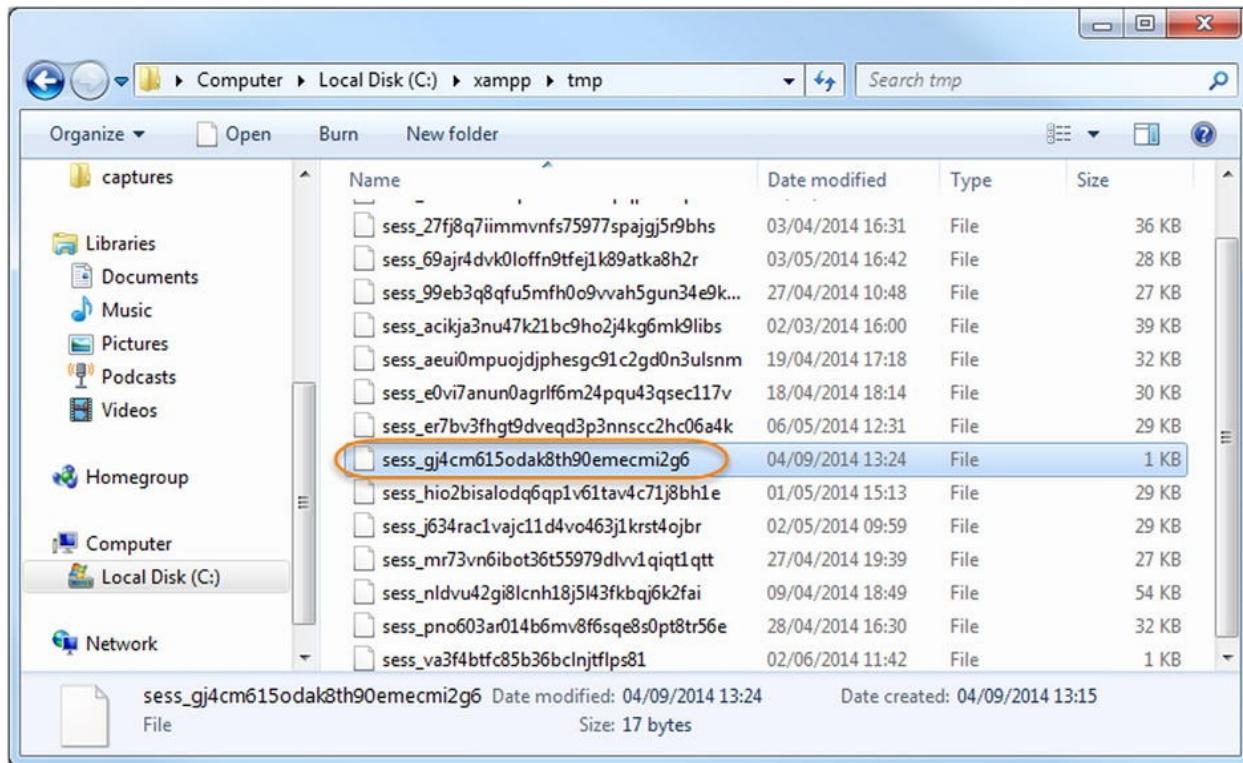


Figure 9-2. The content of the cookie identifies the session data stored on the web server

When a session is initiated, the server stores information in session variables that can be accessed by other pages as long as the session remains active (normally until the browser is closed). Because the session ID is unique to each visitor, the information stored in session variables cannot be seen by anyone else. This means sessions are ideal for user authentication, although they can be used for any situation where you want to preserve information for the same user when passing from one page to the next, such as with a multipage form or a shopping cart.

The only information stored on the user's computer is the cookie that contains the session ID, which is meaningless by itself. This means private information cannot be exposed simply by examining the contents of this cookie.

The session variables and their values are stored on the web server. [Figure 9-3](#) shows the contents of a simple session file. As you can see, it's in plain text, and the content isn't difficult to decipher. The session shown in the figure has one variable: name. The variable's name is followed by a vertical pipe, then the letter "s", a colon, a number, another colon, and the variable's value in quotes. The "s" stands for string, and the number indicates how many characters the string contains. So, this session variable contains my name as a string that is five characters long.

```
sess_gj4cm615odak8th90emecmi2g6 (Generic Document)
```

```
name|s:5:"David";
```

Figure 9-3. The details of the session are stored on the server in plain text

This setup has several implications. The cookie containing the session ID normally remains active until the browser is closed. So, if several people share the same computer, they all have access to each other's sessions unless they always close the browser before handing over to the next person, something over which you have no control. So, it's important to provide a logout mechanism to delete both the cookie and the session variables, keeping your site secure. You can also create a timeout mechanism, which automatically prevents anyone from regaining access after a certain period of inactivity.

Storing session variables in plain text on the web server is not, in itself, a cause for concern. As long as the server is correctly configured, the session files cannot be accessed through a browser. Inactive files are also routinely deleted by PHP (in theory, the lifetime is 1,440 seconds—24 minutes, but this cannot be relied upon). Nevertheless, it should be obvious that, if an attacker manages to compromise the server or hijack a session, the information could be exposed. So, although sessions are generally secure enough for password protecting parts of a website or working with multipage forms, you should never use session variables to store sensitive information, such as passwords or credit card details. As you'll see in "Using sessions to restrict access" later in this chapter, although a password is used to gain access to a protected site, the password itself is stored (preferably encrypted) in a separate location and not as a session variable.

Sessions are supported by default, so you don't need any special configuration. However, sessions won't work if cookies are disabled in the user's browser. It is possible to configure PHP to send the session ID through a query string, but this is considered a security risk.

Creating PHP Sessions

Just put the following command in every PHP page that you want to use in a session:

```
session_start();
```

This command should be called only once in each page, and it must be called

before the PHP script generates any output, so the ideal position is immediately after the opening PHP tag. If any output is generated before the call to `session_start()`, the command fails and the session won't be activated for that page. (See “The ‘Headers already sent’ error” section later for an explanation).

Creating and Destroying Session Variables

You create a session variable by adding it to the `$_SESSION` superglobal array in the same way you would assign an ordinary variable. Say you want to store a visitor's name and display a greeting. If the name is submitted in a login form as `$_POST['name']`, you assign it like this:

```
$_SESSION['name'] = $_POST['name'];
```

`$_SESSION['name']` can now be used in any page that begins with `session_start()`. Because session variables are stored on the server, you should get rid of them as soon as they are no longer required by your script or application. Unset a session variable like this:

```
unset($_SESSION['name']);
```

To unset *all* session variables—for instance, when you're logging someone out—set the `$_SESSION` superglobal array to an empty array, like this:

```
$_SESSION = [];
```

 **Caution** Do not be tempted to try `unset($_SESSION)`. It works all right—but it's a little too effective. It not only clears the current session but also prevents any further session variables from being stored.

Destroying a Session

By itself, unsetting all the session variables effectively prevents any of the information from being reused, but you should also invalidate the session cookie like this:

```
if (isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {  
    setcookie(session_name(), '', time()-86400, '/');  
}
```

This uses the function `session_name()` to get the name of the session dynamically and resets the session cookie to an empty string and to expire 24 hours ago (86,400 is the number of seconds in a day). The final argument ('/') applies the cookie to the whole domain.

Finally, destroy the session with the following command:

```
session_destroy();
```

By destroying a session like this, there is no risk of an unauthorized person gaining access either to a restricted part of the site or to any information exchanged during the session. However, a visitor may forget to log out, so it's not always possible to guarantee that the `session_destroy()` command will be triggered, which is why it's so important not to store sensitive information in a session variable.

 **Caution** You may find `session_register()` and `session_unregister()` in old scripts. These functions were removed from PHP 5.4 and are no longer available. Use `$_SESSION['variable_name']` and `unset($_SESSION['variable_name'])` instead.

Regenerating the Session ID

When a user changes status, such as after logging in, it's recommended as a security measure to regenerate the session ID. This changes the random string of letters and numbers that identify the session but preserves all the information stored in session variables. In *PHP Pro Security, 2nd Edition* (Apress, 2010, ISBN 978-1-4302-3318-3), Chris Snyder and Michael Southwell explain that “the goal of generating a fresh session ID is to remove the possibility, however slight, that an attacker with knowledge of the low-level security session might be able to perform high-security tasks.”

To regenerate the session ID, simply call `session_regenerate_id()` and redirect the user to another page or reload the same one.

The “Headers Already Sent” Error

Although using PHP sessions is very easy, there’s one problem that causes beginners a great deal of head banging. Instead of everything working the way you expect, you see the following message:

```
Warning: Cannot add header information - headers already sent
```

I’ve mentioned this problem several times before in conjunction with the `header()` function. It affects `session_start()` and `setcookie()` as well. In the case of `session_start()`, the solution is simple: make sure that you put it immediately after the opening PHP tag (or very soon thereafter), and check that there’s no whitespace before the opening tag.

Sometimes the problem occurs even if there is no whitespace ahead of the PHP tag. This is usually caused by editing software inserting the byte order mark (BOM) at the beginning of the script. If this happens, open your script editor’s preferences and disable the use of the BOM in PHP pages.

When using `setcookie()` to destroy the session cookie, however, it’s quite likely that you may need to send output to the browser before calling the function. In this case, PHP lets you save the output in a buffer using `ob_start()`. You then flush the buffer with `ob_end_flush()` after `setcookie()` has done its job. You’ll see how to do this in PHP Solution 9-2.

Using Sessions to Restrict Access

The first words that probably come to mind when thinking about restricting access to a website are “username” and “password.” Although these generally unlock entry to a site, neither is essential to a session. You can store any value as a session variable and use it to determine whether to grant access to a page. For instance, you could create a variable called `$_SESSION['status']` and give visitors access to different parts of the site depending on its value, or no access at all if it hasn’t been set.

A little demonstration should make everything clear and will show you how sessions work in practice.

PHP Solution 9-1: A Simple Session Example

This should take only a few minutes to build, but you can also find the complete code in `session_01.php`, `session_02.php`, and `session_03.php`, in the `ch09` folder.

1. Create a page called `session_01.php` in a new folder called `sessions` in the `phpsols` site root. Insert a form with a text field called `name` and a `Submit` button. Set the `method` to `post` and `action` to `session_02.php`. The form should look like this:

```
<form method="post"
action="session_02.php">
<p>
    <label for="name">Name:</label>
    <input type="text" name="name"
id="name">
</p>
<p>
    <input type="submit"
name="Submit" value="Submit">
</p>
</form>
```

2. In another page called `session_02.php`, insert this above the `DOCTYPE` declaration:

```
<?php
// initiate session
session_start();
// check that form has been submitted
and that name is not empty
if ($_POST && !empty($_POST['name'])) {
    // set session variable
    $_SESSION['name'] = $_POST['name'];
}
?>
```

The inline comments explain what's going on. The session is started, and as long as `$_POST['name']` isn't empty, its value is assigned to `$_SESSION['name']`.

3. Insert the following code between the `<body>` tags in `session_02.php`:

```
<?php
// check session variable is set
if (isset($_SESSION['name'])) {
    // if set, greet by name
    echo 'Hi, ' . $_SESSION['name']
    . '. <a
href="session_03.php">Next</a>';
} else {
    // if not set, send back to login
    echo 'Who are you? <a
href="session_01.php">Login</a>';
}
?>
```

If `$_SESSION['name']` has been set, a welcome message is displayed along with a link to `session_03.php`. Otherwise, the page tells the visitor that it doesn't recognize who's trying to gain access and provides a link back to the first page.

Caution Take care when typing the following line:

```
echo 'Hi, ' . $_SESSION['name'] .
'. <a
href="session03.php">Next</a>';
```

The first two periods (surrounding `$_SESSION['name']`) are the PHP concatenation operator. The third period (immediately after a single quote) is an ordinary period that will be displayed as part of the string.

-
4. Create `session_03.php`. Type the following above the DOCTYPE to initiate the session:

```
<?php session_start(); ?>
```

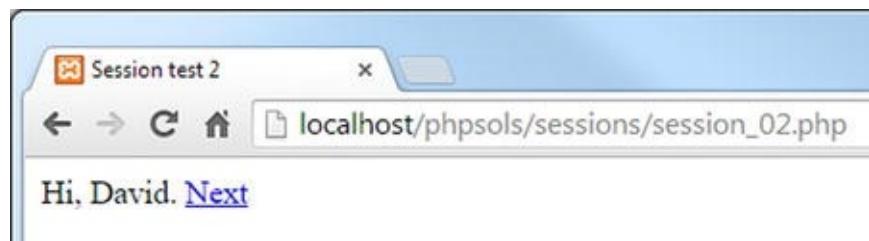
5. Insert the following code between the `<body>` tags of `session_03.php`:

```
<?php
// check whether session variable is
set
if (isset($_SESSION['name'])) {
    // if set, greet by name
    echo 'Hi, ' . $_SESSION['name']
. '. See, I remembered your name!<br>';
    // unset session variable
    unset($_SESSION['name']);
    // invalidate the session cookie
    if
(isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {
        setcookie(session_name(), '',
time()-86400, '/');
    }
    // end session
    session_destroy();
    echo '<a href="session_02.php">Page
2</a>';
} else {
    // display if not recognized
    echo "Sorry, I don't know you.
<br>";
    echo '<a
href="session_01.php">Login</a>';
}
?>
```

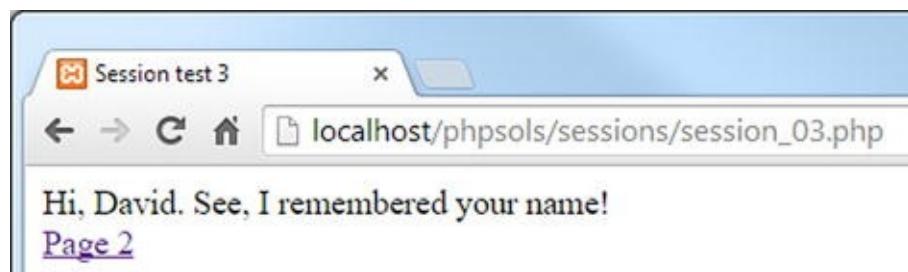
If `$_SESSION['name']` has been set, the page displays it, then unsets it and invalidates the current

session cookie. By placing `session_destroy()` at the end of the first code block, the session and its associated variables cease to be available.

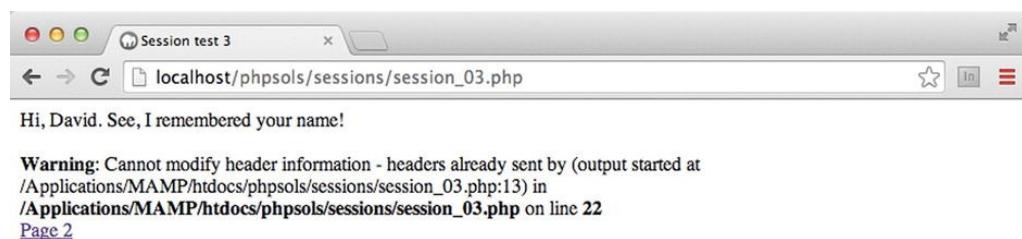
6. Load `session_01.php` into a browser, type your name in the text field, and click **Submit**.
7. You should see something like the following screenshot. At this stage, there is no apparent difference between what happens here and in an ordinary form.



8. When you click **Next**, the power of sessions begins to show. The page remembers your name, even though the `$_POST` array is no longer available to it. If you're using XAMPP as your testing setup, you'll probably see something similar to the following screenshot.

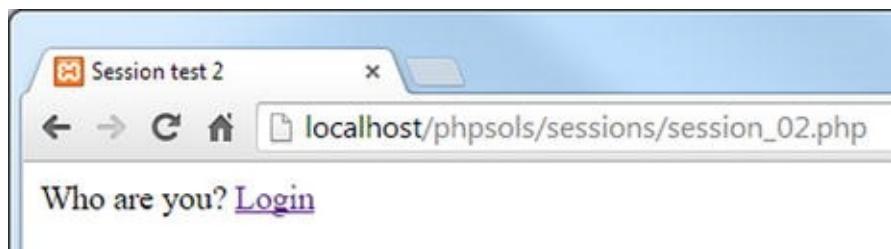


However, with other setups, such as MAMP, you're likely to get a “**headers already sent**” warning message like this:

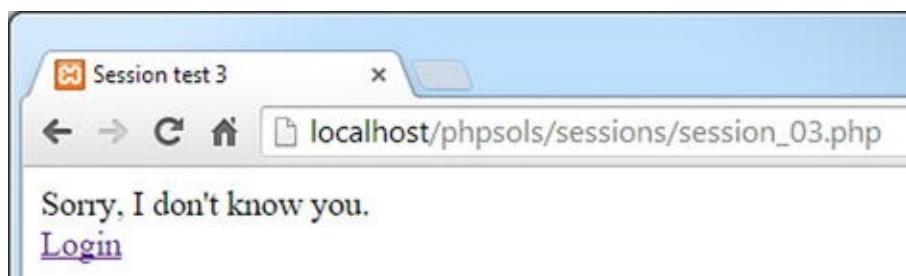


Note As explained in [Chapter 4](#), XAMPP doesn't produce the warning about headers because it's configured to buffer the first 4 KB of output. However, not all servers buffer output, so it's important to fix this problem.

-
9. Click the link to Page 2 (if you got an error message, it's just below the message). The session has been destroyed, so this time `session_02.php` has no idea who you are.



10. Type the address of `session_03.php` in the browser address bar and load it. It, too, has no recollection of the session and displays an appropriate message.



Even if you didn't get the warning message in step 8, you need to prevent it from happening when you deploy pages that rely on sessions to other servers. The error message not only looks bad, but it also means `setcookie()` can't invalidate the session cookie. Even though `session_start()` comes immediately after the opening PHP tag in `session_03.php`, the warning message is triggered by the DOCTYPE declaration, the `<head>`, and other HTML being output before `setcookie()`.

PHP Solution 9-2: Buffering the Output with

`ob_start()`

Although you could put `setcookie()` in the PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration, you would also need to assign the value of `$_SESSION['name']` to an ordinary variable, because it ceases to exist after the session is destroyed. Rather than pull the whole script apart, the answer is to buffer the output with `ob_start()`.

Continue working with `session_03.php` from the previous section.

1. Amend the PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration like this:

```
<?php  
session_start();  
ob_start();  
?>
```

This turns on output buffering and prevents output from being sent to the browser until the end of the script or until you specifically flush the output with `ob_end_flush()`.

2. Flush the output immediately after invalidating the session cookie, like this:

```
// invalidate the session cookie  
if (isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {  
    setcookie(session_name(), '',  
    time()-86400, '/');  
}  
ob_end_flush();
```

3. Save `session_03.php` and test the sequence again. This time there should be no warning. More important, the session cookie is no longer valid.

Using File-based Authentication

As you have just seen, the combination of session variables and conditional

statements lets you present completely different pages to a visitor depending on whether a session variable has been set. All you need to do is add a password-checking system and you have a basic user authentication system.

In PHP Solution 7-2 I showed you how to use the `fopen()` and `fgetcsv()` functions to generate a multidimensional associative array from a CSV file. You can now adapt that script to create a simple login system using sessions. Each person's username and password are stored as comma-separated values in `users.csv`. The first line of the file contains the field headers that are used as the keys for each subarray. The contents of the file look like this:

```
name,password
david,codeslave
ben,bigboss
```

 **Note** The following PHP solutions assume there's a copy of `users.csv` in the `private` folder that was set up in [Chapter 7](#). Refer to [Chapter 7](#) if you haven't set up a folder for PHP to read and write files. If you create your own version of `users.csv`, there should be no space after the comma separating the username and password.

PHP Solution 9-3: Building the Login Page

This PHP solution shows how to submit a username and password through the `post` method and then check the submitted values against those stored in an external text file. If a match is found, the script sets a session variable and then redirects the user to another page.

1. Create a file called `login.php` in the `sessions` folder, then insert a form with text input fields for username and password, plus a Submit button named `login`, like this (alternatively, use `login_01.php` in the `ch09` folder):

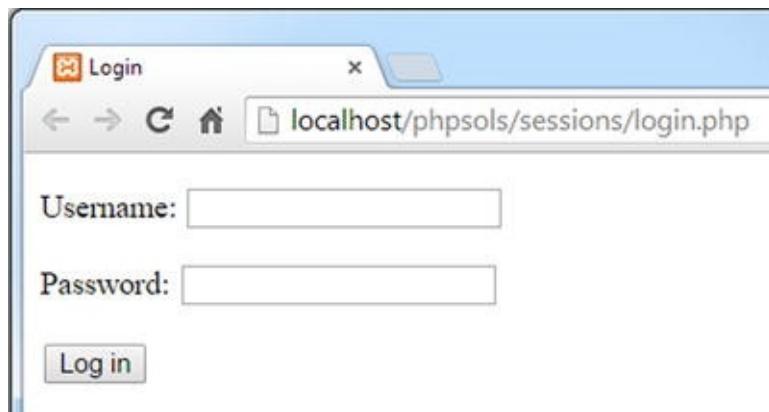
```
<form method="post" action="">
<p>
    <label for="username">Username:
```

```

</label>
    <input type="text"
name="username" id="username">
</p>
<p>
    <label for="pwd">Password:</label>
</p>
    <input type="password"
name="pwd" id="pwd">
</p>
<p>
    <input name="login"
type="submit" value="Log in">
</p>
</form>

```

It's a simple form, nothing fancy:



2. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```

$error = '';
if (isset($_POST['login'])) {
    session_start();
    $username = $_POST['username'];
    $password = $_POST['pwd'];
    // location of usernames and
    // passwords
    $userlist = 'C:/private/users.csv';

```

```
// location to redirect on success
$redirect
= 'http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/menu.php';
require_once
'../includes/authenticate.php';
}
```

This initializes a variable called `$error` as an empty string. If the login fails, this will be used to display an error message informing the user of the reason for failure.

The conditional statement then checks whether the `$_POST` array contains an element named `login`. If it does, the form has been submitted, and the code inside the curly braces initiates a PHP session and stores the values passed through the `$_POST` array in `$username` and `$password`. Then it creates `$userlist`, which defines the location of the file that contains the registered usernames and passwords, and `$redirect`, the URL of the page the user will be sent to after successfully logging in.

Finally, the code inside the conditional statement includes `authenticate.php`, which you'll create next.

Note Adjust the value of `$userlist` to match the location in your own setup.

3. Create a file called `authenticate.php` in the `includes` folder. It will contain only PHP code, so strip out any HTML inserted by your script editor and insert the following code:

```
<?php
if (!file_exists($userlist) ||
!is_readable($userlist)) {
    $error = 'Login facility
unavailable. Please try later.';
```

```

} else {
    $file = fopen($userlist, 'r');
    // ignore the titles in the first
    row of the CSV file
    $titles = fgetcsv($file);
    // loop through the remaining lines
    while (($data = fgetcsv($file)) !==
false) {
        // ignore if the first element
        is null
        if (is_null($data[0])) {
            continue;
        }
        // if username and password
        match, create session variable,
        // regenerate the session ID,
        and break out of the loop
        if ($data[0] == $username &&
        $data[1] == $password) {
            $_SESSION['authenticated']
= 'Jethro Tull';
            session_regenerate_id();
            break;
        }
    }
    fclose($file);
}

```

This adapts the code that you used in `getcsv.php` in PHP Solution 7-2. The conditional statement checks for a nonexistent file or one that can't be read. If there's a problem with `$userlist`, the error message is created immediately.

Otherwise, the main code in the `else` block extracts the content of the CSV file by opening the file in read mode and using the `fgetcsv()` function to return an array of the data in each line. In PHP Solution 7-2, the values were stored in a multidimensional array containing the name

and password of each registered user. This time, there's no need to store them. All we're interested in is finding a username/password pair that matches the values in `$username` and `$password`.

The first line in the CSV file contains the field titles. The script extracts them to a variable called `$titles`, but they're never used. The `while` loop then examines the remaining lines. Each time the loop runs, it extracts the current line into to an array called `$data`. The first element contains the username, and the second contains the related password. If `$data[0]` is `null`, it probably means the current line is blank, so it's skipped.

If both elements in the `$data` array match `$username` and `$password`, the script creates a variable called `$_SESSION['authenticated']` and assigns it the name of one of the great folk-rock bands of the 1970s. There's nothing magic about either of these (apart from Jethro Tull's music); I've chosen the name and value of the variable arbitrarily. All that matters is a session variable is created. As soon as a match is found, the session ID is regenerated, and `break` exits the loop.

4. If the login is successful, the `header()` function needs to redirect the user to the URL stored in `$redirect` and then exit the script. Otherwise, an error message needs to be created, informing the user that the login failed. The complete script looks like this:

```
<?php
if (!file_exists($userlist) ||
!is_readable($userlist)) {
    $error = 'Login facility
unavailable. Please try later.';
} else {
    $file = fopen($userlist, 'r');
    // ignore the titles in the first
    row of the CSV file
```

```

$titles = fgetcsv($file);
// loop through the remaining lines
while (($data = fgetcsv($file)) !==
false) {
    // ignore if the first element
    is null
    if (is_null($data[0])) {
        continue;
    }
    // if username and password
    match, create session variable,
    // regenerate the session ID,
    and break out of the loop
    if ($data[0] == $username &&
$data[1] == $password) {
        $_SESSION['authenticated']
= 'Jethro Tull';
        session_regenerate_id();
        break;
    }
}
fclose($file);
// if the session variable has been set,
redirect
if (isset($_SESSION['authenticated'])) {
    header("Location: $redirect");
    exit;
} else {
    $error = 'Invalid username or
password.';
}
}

```

5. In `login.php`, add the following short code block just after the opening `<body>` tag to display any error messages:

```

<body>
<?php
if ($error) {
    echo "<p>$error</p>";
}

```

```
}
```

```
?>
```

```
<form method="post" action="">
```

The completed code is in `login_02.php` in the `ch09` folder. Before you can test `login.php`, you need to create `menu.php` and restrict access with a session.

PHP Solution 9-4: Restricting Access to a Page with a Session

This PHP solution demonstrates how to restrict access to a page by checking for the existence of a session variable that indicates the user's credentials have been authenticated. If the variable hasn't been set, the `header()` function redirects the user to the login page.

1. Create two pages in the `sessions` folder called `menu.php` and `secretpage.php`. It doesn't matter what they contain, as long as they link to each other. Alternatively, use `menu_01.php` and `secretpage_01.php` in the `ch09` folder.
2. Protect access to each page by inserting the following above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
<?php
session_start();
// if session variable not set,
// redirect to login page
if (!isset($_SESSION['authenticated']))
{
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php'
    exit;
}
?>
```

After starting the session, the script checks if

`$_SESSION['authenticated']` has been set. If it hasn't been, it redirects the user to `login.php` and exits. That's all there is to it! The script doesn't need to know the value of `$_SESSION['authenticated']`, although you could make doubly sure by amending line 4 like this:

```
if (!isset($_SESSION['authenticated']))  
|| $_SESSION['authenticated']  
!= 'Jethro Tull') {
```

This now also rejects a visitor if `$_SESSION['authenticated']` has the wrong value.

3. Save `menu.php` and `secretpage.php`, then try to load either of them into a browser. You should always be redirected to `login.php`.
4. Enter a valid username and password from `users.csv` (the values are case-sensitive) in `login.php`, and then click `Log in`. You should be redirected immediately to `menu.php`, and the link to `secretpage.php` should also work.

You can check your code against `menu_02.php` and `secretpage_02.php` in the `ch09` folder.

Tip The login might fail if you create your own version of `users.csv` on Mac OS X. If that happens, add the following line at the top of `authenticate.php`, as described in “CSV files created on Mac OS” in [Chapter 7](#):

```
ini_set('auto_detect_line_endings',  
true);
```

All you need to do to protect any page on your site is to add the eight lines of

code in step 2 above the DOCTYPE declaration.

PHP Solution 9-5: Creating a Reusable Logout Button

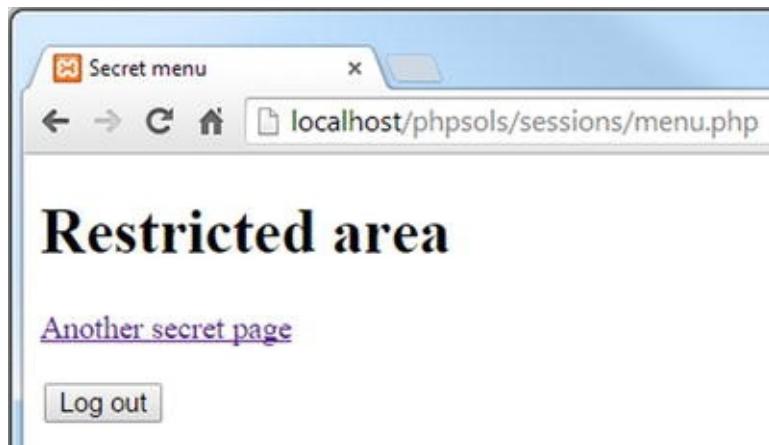
As well as logging in to a site, users should be able to log out. This PHP solution shows how to create a logout button that can be inserted in any page.

Continue working with the files from the preceding section.

1. Create a logout button in the <body> of menu.php by inserting the following form:

```
<form method="post" action="">
    <input name="logout" type="submit"
value="Log out">
</form>
```

The page should look similar to the following screenshot:



2. You now need to add the script that runs when the logout button is clicked. Amend the code above the DOCTYPE declaration like this (the code is in menu_02.php):

```
<?php
session_start();
// if session variable not set,
redirect to login page
```

```

if (!isset($_SESSION['authenticated'])) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php'
    exit;
}
// run this script only if the logout button has
been clicked
if (isset($_POST['logout'])) {
    // empty the $_SESSION array
    $_SESSION = [];
    // invalidate the session cookie
    if (isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {
        setcookie(session_name(), '',
time()-86400, '/');
    }
    // end session and redirect
    session_destroy();
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php');
    exit;
}
?>
```

This is the same code as in “Destroying a session” earlier in the chapter. The only differences are that it’s enclosed in a conditional statement so that it runs only when the logout button is clicked, and it uses `header()` to redirect the user to `login.php`.

3. Save `menu.php` and test it by clicking **Log out**. You should be redirected to `login.php`. Any attempt to return to `menu.php` or `secretpage.php` will bring you back to `login.php`.
4. You can put the same code in every restricted page, but PHP is all about saving work, not making it. It makes sense to turn this into an include file. Create a new file called `logout.php` in the `includes` folder. Cut and paste the new code from steps 1 and 2 into the new file, like this (it’s in `logout.php` in the `ch09` folder):

```
<?php
```

```

// run this script only if the logout
button has been clicked
if (isset($_POST['logout'])) {
    // empty the $_SESSION array
    $_SESSION = array();
    // invalidate the session cookie
    if
        (isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {
            setcookie(session_name(), '',
time()-86400, '/');
        }
    // end session and redirect
    session_destroy();

    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php'
exit;
}
?>
<form method="post" action="">
    <input name="logout" type="submit"
value="Log out">
</form>

```

- At the same point in `menu.php` from which you cut the code for the form, include the new file, as follows:

```

<?php include '../includes/logout.php';
?>

```

Including the code from an external file like this means that there will be output to the browser before the calls to `setcookie()` and `header()`. So you need to buffer the output, as shown in PHP Solution 9-2.

- Add `ob_start();` immediately after the call to `session_start()` at the top of `menu.php`. There's no need to use `ob_end_flush()` or `ob_end_clean()`. PHP automatically flushes the buffer at the end of the script if you haven't already

explicitly done so.

7. Save `menu.php` and test the page. It should look and work exactly the same as before.
8. Repeat steps 5 and 6 with `secretpage.php`. You now have a simple, reusable logout button that can be incorporated into any restricted page.

You can check your code against `menu_04.php`, `secretpage_03.php`, and `logout.php` in the `ch09` folder.

Making Passwords More Secure

Although this file-based user authentication setup is adequate for restricting access to webpages, all the passwords are stored in plain text. For greater security, it's advisable to encrypt passwords. For many years, it was recommended to use the MD5 or SHA-1 algorithms to encrypt passwords as a 32- or 40-digit hexadecimal number. One of their original strengths, speed, has turned out to be a major weakness. Automated scripts can process huge numbers of calculations per second in a brute force attack to determine the original value—not so much guessing as trying every possible combination.

PHP 5.5 introduced a much more robust system of encrypting and verifying passwords using two functions: `password_hash()` and `password_verify()`. To encrypt a password, just pass it to the `password_hash()` function, like this:

```
$encrypted = password_hash($password,  
PASSWORD_DEFAULT);
```

The second argument to `password_hash()` is a constant that leaves the choice of encryption method up to PHP, allowing you to keep up to date with what is considered the most secure method at the time.

■ **Note** The `password_hash()` function has other options for advanced users. For details, see

<http://php.net/manual/en/function.password-hash.php>.

There's also a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page about safe password hashing at <http://php.net/manual/en/faq.passwords.php>.

Using `password_hash()` performs one-way encryption. This means that even if your password file is exposed, no one will be able to work out what the passwords are. It also means that you have no way of converting an encrypted password back to its original value. In one respect, this is unimportant: when a user logs in, `password_verify()` checks the submitted value against the encrypted version. The disadvantage is that there is no way that you can send users password reminders if they forget them; you must generate a new password. Nevertheless, good security demands encryption.

ENABLING PASSWORD HASHING IN OLDER VERSIONS OF PHP

The password hashing functions are not available prior to PHP 5.5. However, if your server is running PHP 5.3.7 or later, or any version of PHP 5.4, you can enable the same functionality with the `password_compat` library.

To check whether `password_compat` will run on your version of PHP, download `version-test.php` from https://github.com/ircmaxell/password_compat. If it outputs `Pass`, include `password.php` to enable the password hashing functions in a script. This is a single file that can be downloaded from the `lib` folder at the same URL.

Once you have included `password.php`, the functions work exactly the same as in PHP 5.5 and later.

Encryption is no protection against the most common problem with passwords: ones that are easy to guess or that use common words. Many registration systems now enforce the use of stronger passwords by requiring a mixture of alphanumeric characters and symbols.

To improve the basic login system developed so far, you need to create a user registration form that checks the following:

- That the password and username contain a minimum number of characters
- That the password matches minimum strength criteria, such as containing a mixture of numbers, uppercase and lowercase characters, and symbols
- That the password matches a second entry in a confirmation field
- That the username isn't already in use

PHP Solution 9-6: Creating a Password-strength Checker

This PHP solution shows how to create a class that checks whether a password meets certain requirements, such as no spaces, a minimum number of characters, and a combination of different types of characters. By default, the class checks only that the password has no spaces and contains a minimum number of characters. Optional methods allow you to set tougher conditions, such as using a combination of uppercase and lowercase characters, numbers, and nonalphanumeric symbols.

This PHP solution starts by building the user registration form that will also be used in PHP Solution 9-7.

1. Create a page called `register.php` in the `sessions` folder and insert a form with three text input fields and a Submit button. Lay out the form and name the input elements as shown in the following screenshot. If you want to save time, use `register_01.php` in the `ch09` folder.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Register User". The URL in the address bar is "localhost/phpsols/sessions/register.php". The page content is titled "Register User". It contains four input fields: "Username", "Password", and "Retype Password", followed by a "Register" button. To the left of the first three fields, there are three arrows pointing right, each labeled with a variable name: "username", "pwd", and "conf_pwd". These labels correspond to the names of the input fields in the PHP code.

- As always, you want the processing script to run only if the form has been submitted, so everything needs to be enclosed in a conditional statement that checks whether the `name` attribute of the Submit button is in the `$_POST` array. Then you need to check that the input meets your minimum requirements. Insert the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
if (isset($_POST['register'])) {
    $username
= trim($_POST['username']);
    $password = trim($_POST['pwd']);
    $retyped
= trim($_POST['conf_pwd']);
    require_once
'./PhpSolutions/Authenticate/CheckPassword.|'
}
```

The code inside the conditional statement passes the input from the three text fields to `trim()` to remove whitespace from the beginning and end, and it assigns the results to simple variables. Next it includes the file that will contain the class that checks the password, which you'll define next.

- Create a new folder called `Authenticate` in the

PhpSolutions folder. Then create a file called CheckPassword.php inside the new folder. It will contain only PHP script, so strip out any HTML and add the following code:

```
<?php
namespace PhpSolutions\Authenticate;

class CheckPassword {

    protected $password;
    protected $minimumChars;
    protected $mixedCase = false;
    protected $minimumNumbers = 0;
    protected $minimumSymbols = 0;
    protected $errors = [];

    public function
    __construct($password, $minimumChars
    = 8) {
        $this->password = $password;
        $this->minimumChars
    = $minimumChars;
    }

    public function check() {
        if (preg_match('/\s/', $this-
>password)) {
            $this->errors[] = 'Password
cannot contain spaces.';
        }
        if (strlen($this->password) <
$this->minimumChars) {
            $this->errors[] = "Password
must be at least
    $this->minimumChars
characters.";
        }
        return $this->errors ? false
: true;
    }
}
```

```
}

public function getErrors() {
    return $this->errors;
}

}
```

This defines the basic `CheckPassword` class, which initially checks only whether the password contains any spaces and whether it has the required minimum number of characters. You'll add the other features shortly.

The file begins by declaring `PhpSolutions\Authenticate` as its namespace, and then defines the `CheckPassword` class with six protected properties. The first two are for the password and minimum number of characters. The `$mixedCase`, `$minimumNumbers`, and `$minimumSymbols` properties will be used to add strength to the password but are initially set to `false` or 0. The `$errors` property will be used to store an array of error messages if the password fails any of the checks.

The constructor method takes two arguments, the password and the minimum number of characters, and assigns them to the relevant properties. By default, the minimum number of characters is set to 8, making this an optional argument.

The `check()` method contains two conditional statements. The first uses `preg_match()` with a regular expression that searches for whitespace characters inside the password. The second conditional statement uses `strlen()`, which returns the length of a string and compares the result with `$minimumChars`.

If the password fails either test, or both, the `$errors` property contains at least one element, which PHP treats

as intrinsically true. The final line in the `check()` method uses the `$errors` property as the condition with the ternary operator. If any errors are found, the `check()` method returns `false`, indicating that the password has failed validation. Otherwise, it returns `true` (see “Using the ternary operator” in [Chapter 3](#) if you need a reminder of how this structure works).

The `getErrors()` public method simply returns the array of error messages.

4. Save `CheckPassword.php` and switch to `register.php`.
5. In `register.php`, add the following line immediately after the opening PHP tag to import the `CheckPassword` class:

```
use  
  PhpSolutions\Authenticate\CheckPassword;
```

Caution You must always import namespaced classes at the top level of a script. Attempting to import the class in a conditional statement generates a parse error.

6. Inside the conditional statement that executes the code after the form has been submitted, create a `CheckPassword` object, passing `$password` as the argument. Then call the `check()` method and handle the result like this:

```
require_once  
'..../PhpSolutions/Authenticate/CheckPassword.  
$checkPwd = new CheckPassword($password);  
$passwordOK = $checkPwd->check();  
if ($passwordOK) {  
    $result = ['Password OK'];  
} else {  
    $result = $checkPwd->getErrors();  
}
```

The second argument to the `CheckPassword` constructor is optional, so leaving it out sets the minimum number of characters to the default 8. The result of the `check()` method is assigned to `$passwordOK`. If it returns `true`, a single-element array reporting that the password is okay is assigned to `$result`. Otherwise, the `getErrors()` method is used to retrieve the array of errors from the `$checkPwd` object.

Note Once testing is complete, the single-element array will be replaced by the script that registers the user. You need to use an array because the next step uses a `foreach` loop to display the outcome.

7. Add the following PHP code block just above the form in the body of the page:

```
<h1>Register User</h1>
<?php
if (isset($result)) {
    echo '<ul>';
    foreach ($result as $item) {
        echo "<li>$item</li>";
    }
    echo '</ul>';
}
?>
<form action="" method="post">
```

This displays the results of the password test as an unordered list after the form has been submitted.

8. Save `register.php` and load it in a browser. Test the `CheckPassword` class by clicking the **Register** button without filling in any of the fields. You should see a message informing you that the password requires a minimum of 8 characters.
9. Try it with a password that contains 8 characters. You should see **Password OK**.

10. Try a password with at least 8 characters, but insert a space in the middle. You'll be warned that no spaces are permitted.
11. Try one with fewer than 8 characters but with a space in the middle. You'll see the following warnings:

Register User

- Password cannot contain spaces.
- Password must be at least 8 characters.

Username:

Password:

Retype Password:

12. Change the code in `register.php` to pass the optional second argument to the `CheckPassword` constructor, setting the minimum number of characters to 10:

```
$checkPwd = new  
CheckPassword($password, 10);
```

13. Save and test the page again. If you encounter any problems, compare your code with `register_02.php` in the `ch09` folder and `CheckPassword_01.php` in the `ch09/PhpSolutions/Authenticate` folder.
14. Assuming that your code is working, add to the class definition in `CheckPassword.php` the public methods to set the password strength. Where you put them inside the class makes no difference technically (as long as they're inside the curly braces), but my preference is to put public methods in the same order as they're used. You need to set the options before calling the `check()` method, so insert the following code between the constructor and `check()` method definitions:

```

public function requireMixedCase() {
    $this->mixedCase = true;
}

public function requireNumbers($num
= 1) {
    if (is_numeric($num) && $num > 0) {
        $this->minimumNumbers = (int)
$num;
    }
}

public function requireSymbols($num
= 1) {
    if (is_numeric($num) && $num > 0) {
        $this->minimumSymbols = (int)
$num;
    }
}

```

This code is pretty straightforward. The `requireMixedCase()` method takes no arguments and resets the `$mixedCase` property to `true`. The other two methods take one argument, check that it's a number greater than 0, and assign it to the relevant property. The `(int)` casting operator ensures that it's an integer. You first met the casting operator in PHP Solution 6-4 (see “Explicitly changing a data type” in [Chapter 6](#) for a detailed explanation). The value of `$num` sets the minimum amount of numbers or nonalphanumeric symbols the password must contain. By default, the value is set to 1, making the argument optional.

15. The `check()` method needs to be updated to perform the necessary checks for these strength criteria. Amend the code like this:

```

public function check() {
    if (preg_match('/\s/', $this-
>password)) {

```

```

        $this->errors[] = 'Password cannot
contain spaces.';
    }
    if (strlen($this->password) <
$this->minimumChars) {
        $this->errors[] = "Password must
be at least
        $this->minimumChars
characters.";
    }
    if ($this->mixedCase) {
        $pattern = '/(=?.*[a-z])(?=.*[A-Z])/';
        if (!preg_match($pattern, $this-
>password)) {
            $this->errors[] = 'Password should
include uppercase
                and lowercase characters.';
        }
    }
    if ($this->minimumNumbers) {
        $pattern = '/\d/';
        $found = preg_match_all($pattern, $this-
>password, $matches);
        if ($found < $this->minimumNumbers) {
            $this->errors[] = "Password should
include at least
                $this->minimumNumbers
number(s).";
        }
    }
    if ($this->minimumSymbols) {
        $pattern = "/[-!$%^&*(){}<>[\]]'"
. "'|#@:.,?+=_\/\~]/'";
        $found = preg_match_all($pattern, $this-
>password, $matches);
        if ($found < $this->minimumSymbols) {
            $this->errors[] = "Password should
include at least
                $this->minimumSymbols
nonalphanumeric character(s).";
        }
    }
    return $this->errors ? false
: true;

```

}

Each of the three new conditional statements is run only if the equivalent public method is called before the `check()` method. Each one stores a regular expression as `$pattern` and then uses `preg_match()` or `preg_match_all()` to test the password.

If the `$mixedCase` property is set to `true`, the regular expression and password are passed to `preg_match()` to look for at least one lowercase letter and one uppercase letter in any position in the password.

The `$minimumNumbers` and `$minimumSymbols` properties are set to 0 by default. If they're reset to a positive number, the regular expression and password are passed to the `preg_match_all()` function to find how many times the regex matches. The function requires three arguments: the regex, the string to be searched, and a variable to store the matches; it returns the number of matches found. In this case, all you're interested in is the number of matches. The variable that stores the matches is discarded.

The horrendous `$pattern` in the last conditional statement is actually a regex created by concatenating a single-quoted string to a double-quoted one. This is necessary to include single and double quotation marks in the permitted symbols. I have included most nonalphanumeric symbols on an English keyboard. If you want to add others, put them just before the final closing square bracket, like this:

```
$pattern = "/[-!$%^&*(){}<>[\]]'"  
. '"|#@:;,?+=_\/\~\€;]/';
```

16. Save `CheckPassword.php` and test the updated class by calling the new methods in `register.php`. For example, the following requires the password to have a

minimum of ten characters, at least one uppercase and one lowercase letter, two numbers, and one nonalphanumeric symbol:

```
$checkPwd = new  
CheckPassword($password, 10);  
$checkPwd->requireMixedCase();  
$checkPwd->requireNumbers(2);  
$checkPwd->requireSymbols();  
$passwordOK = $checkPwd->check();
```

It doesn't matter in which order you call the new methods, as long as they're after the constructor and before the call to the `check()` method. Use a variety of combinations to enforce different strengths of password.

If necessary, check your code against `register_03.php` in the `ch09` folder and `CheckPassword_02.php` in the `ch09/PhpSolutions/Authenticate` folder.

When developing the code for this chapter, I originally designed the password checker as a function. The basic code inside the function was the same, but I decided to convert it into a class to make it more flexible and easier to use. The problem with the function was that it needed a large number of arguments to set the different options, and it was difficult to remember which order they came in. There was also the difficulty of handling the result. If there were no errors, the function returned `true`; but if any errors were found, it returned the array of error messages. Since PHP treats an array with elements as implicitly `true`, this meant having to use the identical operator (three equal signs—see Table 3-5) to check whether the result was a Boolean `true`.

Converting the code to a class eliminated these problems. The public methods to set the options have intuitive names and can be set in any order—or not at all. And the result is always a Boolean `true` or `false`, because a separate method retrieves the array of error messages. It involved writing more code, but the improvements made it worthwhile.

PHP Solution 9-7: Creating a File-based User Registration System

Registration System

This PHP solution creates a simple user registration system that encrypts passwords with the `password_hash()` function. It uses the `CheckPassword` class from PHP Solution 9-6 to enforce minimum strength requirements. Further checks ensure that the username contains a minimum number of characters and that the user has retyped the password correctly in a second field.

The user credentials are stored in a plain text file, which must be outside the web server's document root. The instructions assume you have set up a `private` folder that PHP has write access to, as described in [Chapter 7](#). It's also assumed that you're familiar with the "Appending content with `fopen()`" section in that chapter.

Continue working with the files from the preceding PHP solution. Alternatively, use `register_03.php` in the `ch09` folder and `CheckPassword_02.php` in the `ch09/PhpSolutions/Authenticate` folder.

 **Note** The password hashing functions used in PHP Solutions 9-7 and 9-8 require a minimum of PHP 5.5. See "Enabling password hashing in older versions of PHP" earlier in this chapter for details of how to obtain the `password_compat` library.

1. Create a file called `register_user_csv.php` in the `includes` folder and strip out any HTML inserted by your script editor.
2. When using a namespaced class, the import statement must be in the same file as where the class is used, even if it's an include file. Cut the following line from the top of `register.php` and paste it into `register_user_csv.php`.

```
use  
    PhpSolutions\Authenticate\CheckPassword;
```

3. Cut the following code from `register.php` and paste it into `register_user_csv.php` after the import

statement (it doesn't matter if your password strength settings are different):

```
require_once  
'./PhpSolutions/Authenticate/CheckPassword.|  
$checkPwd = new  
CheckPassword($password, 10);  
$checkPwd->requireMixedCase();  
$checkPwd->requireNumbers(2);  
$checkPwd->requireSymbols();  
$passwordOK = $checkPwd->check();  
if ($passwordOK) {  
    $result = array('Password OK');  
} else {  
    $result = $checkPwd->getErrors();  
}
```

4. At the end of the remaining script above the DOCTYPE declaration in `register.php`, create a variable for the location of the text file that will be used to store the user credentials; include `register_user_csv.php`. The code in the PHP block at the top of `register.php` should now look like this:

```
if (isset($_POST['register'])) {  
    $username  
= trim($_POST['username']);  
    $password = trim($_POST['pwd']);  
    $retyped  
= trim($_POST['conf_pwd']);  
    $userfile = 'C:/private/encrypted.csv';  
    require_once  
'./includes/register_user_csv.php';  
}
```

The CSV file for the user credentials doesn't exist yet. It will be created automatically when the first user is registered. Amend the path to the `private` folder to match your own setup if necessary.

5. In `register_user_csv.php`, paste the code you cut

from `register.php` in step 3 and amend the command that includes the class definition, like this:

```
require_once __DIR__ .  
'./..../PhpSolutions/Authenticate/CheckPassword
```

You need to adapt the relative path because `register_user_csv.php` is also an include file (see “Nesting include files” in [Chapter 4](#)).

6. Insert the code highlighted in bold immediately after the include command:

```
require_once __DIR__  
. './..../PhpSolutions/Authenticate/CheckPasswo  
$usernameMinChars = 6;  
$errors = [];  
if (strlen($username) < $usernameMinChars) {  
    $errors[] = "Username must be at least  
$usernameMinChars characters.";  
}  
if (preg_match('/\s/', $username)) {  
    $errors[] = 'Username should not contain  
spaces.';  
}  
$checkPwd = new  
CheckPassword($password, 10);
```

The first two lines of new code specify the minimum number of characters in the username and initialize an empty array for error messages. The rest of the new code checks the length of the username and tests whether it contains any spaces. The conditional statements use the same code as in the `CheckPassword` class.

7. Amend the code at the bottom of `register_user_csv.php` like this:

```
$passwordOK = $checkPwd->check();  
if (!$passwordOK) {  
    $errors = array_merge($errors, $checkPwd-  
>getErrors());  
}
```

```

if ($password != $retyped) {
    $errors[] = "Your passwords don't match.";
}
if ($errors) {
    $result = $errors;
} else {
    $result = ['All OK'];
}

```

This adds the logical Not operator to the conditional statement that tests the value of `$passwordOK`. If the password fails to validate, `array_merge()` is used to merge the result of `$checkPwd->getErrors()` with the existing `$errors` array.

The next conditional statement compares `$password` with `$retyped` and adds an error message to the `$errors` array if they don't match.

If any errors are discovered, the final conditional statement assigns the `$errors` array to `$result`. Otherwise, a single-element array is assigned to `$result`, reporting that all is okay. Again, this is only for testing purposes. Once you have checked your code, the script that registers the user will replace the final conditional statement.

8. Save `register_user_csv.php` and `register.php`, then test the form again. Leave all the fields blank and click **Register**. You should see the following error messages:

Register User

- Username must be at least 6 characters.
- Password must be at least 10 characters.
- Password should include uppercase and lowercase characters.
- Password should include at least 2 number(s).
- Password should include at least 1 nonalphanumeric character(s).

Try a variety of tests to make sure your validation code is working.

If you have problems, compare your code with `register_user_csv_01.php` and `register_04.php` in the ch09 folder.

Assuming that your code is working, you’re ready to create the registration part of the script. Let’s pause to consider what the main script needs to do. First, you need to encrypt the password. Then, before writing the details to a CSV file, you must check whether the username is unique. This presents a problem regarding which mode to use with `fopen()`.

Note The various `fopen()` modes are described in [Chapter 7](#).

Ideally, you want the internal pointer at the beginning of the file so that you can loop through existing records. The `r+` mode does this, but the operation fails unless the file already exists. You can’t use `w+`, because it deletes existing content. You can’t use `x+` either, because it fails if a file of the same name already exists.

That leaves `a+` and `c+` as the only options with the flexibility you need: both create the file if necessary and let you read and write. They differ in where the internal pointer is placed when you open the file: `a+` puts it at the end, whereas `c+` puts it at the beginning. This makes `c+` more useful for checking existing records, but `a+` has the advantage of always appending new content at the end of the file. This avoids the danger of accidentally overwriting existing values. We’ll open the CSV file in `a+` mode.

The file is empty the first time you run the script (you can tell because the `filesize()` function returns `0`), so you can go ahead and write the details using `fputcsv()`. This is the counterpart of `fgetcsv()`,

which was described in [Chapter 7](#). Whereas `fgetcsv()` extracts the data from a CSV file one line at a time, `fputcsv()` creates a CSV record. It has two required arguments: the file reference and an array of values to be inserted as a CSV record. It also accepts optional arguments to set the delimiter and enclosure characters (see the online documentation at <http://php.net/manual/en/function.fputcsv.php>)

If `filesize()` doesn't return 0, you need to reset the internal pointer and loop through the records to see if the username is already registered. If there's a match, you break out of the loop and prepare an error message. If there isn't a match by the end of the loop, you know it's a new username that needs to be added to the file. Now that you understand the flow of the script, you can insert it into `register_user_csv.php`.

9. Delete the following code at the bottom of `register_user_text.inc.php`:

```
if ($errors) {  
    $result = $errors;  
} else {  
    $result = ['All OK'];  
}
```

10. Replace it with the following code:

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // encrypt password using default  
    // encryption  
    $password  
    = password_hash($password,  
    PASSWORD_DEFAULT);  
    // open the file in append mode  
    $file = fopen($userfile, 'a+');  
    // if filesize is zero, no names  
    // yet registered  
    // so just write the username and  
    // password to file as CSV
```

```

        if (filesize($userfile) === 0) {
            fputcsv($file, [$username,
$password]);
            $result = "$username
registered.";
        } else {
            // if filesize is greater than
zero, check username first
            // move internal pointer to
beginning of file
            rewind($file);
            // loop through file one line at
a time
            while (($data = fgetcsv($file))
!== false) {
                if ($data[0] == $username) {
                    $result = "$username taken
- choose a different username.";
                    break;
                }
            }
            // if $result not set, username
is OK
            if (!isset($result)) {
                // insert new CSV record
                fputcsv($file, [$username,
$password]);
                $result = "$username
registered.";
            }
            // close the file
            fclose($file);
        }
    }
}

```

The preceding explanation and inline comments should help you follow the script.

11. The registration script stores the outcome in \$result or

the `$errors` array. Amend the code in the body of `register.php` to display the result or the error messages, as follows:

```
<?php
if (isset($result) || isset($errors)) {
    echo '<ul>';
    if (!empty($errors)) {
        foreach ($errors as $item) {
            echo "<li>$item</li>";
        }
    } else {
        echo "<li>$result</li>";
    }
    echo '</ul>';
}
?>
```

This loops through the `$errors` array if it's not empty. Otherwise, it displays the value of `$result` (a string) as a single bulleted item.

12. Save both `register_user_csv.php` and `register.php` and test the registration system. Try registering the same username more than once. You should see a message informing you that the username is taken and asking you to choose another.
13. Open `encrypted.csv`. You should see the usernames in plain text, but the passwords should have been encrypted. Even if you choose the same password for two different users, the encrypted version is different because `password_hash()` adds a random value known as a **salt** to the password before encrypting it. [Figure 9-4](#) shows two users that were both registered with the password `Codeslave&Ch09`.

encrypted.csv (Generic Document)

davidp,\$2y\$10\$RLHWUpxt51yU4gwyNjPw1.GPIA06rY4CuCNis6K8nTqmpCY9aIiCa benrenowc,\$2y\$10\$gzo3ky1P.VRhrX6sOSSLMujbDzbRR/5Y1B5qxcIyLpP0YRxtbAT5y

Figure 9-4. Using a salt produces completely different encryptions of the same password

If necessary, check your code against `register_user_csv_02.php` and `register_05.php` in the `ch09` folder.

Tip Most of the code in `register_user_csv.php` is generic. All you need to do to use it with any registration form is to define `$username`, `$password`, `$retyped`, and `$userfile` before including it and capture the results using `$errors` and `$result`. The only changes you might need to make to the external file are in setting the minimum number of characters in the username and setting parameters for the password strength. Those settings are defined at the top of the file, so they're easy to access and adjust. Don't forget, though, that the code relies on `password_hash()`, which requires a minimum of PHP 5.5. If your server uses an older version of PHP, you must include the `password_compat` library, as described in "Enabling password hashing in older versions of PHP" earlier in this chapter.

Checking Encrypted Passwords with `password_verify()`

The `password_verify()` function does exactly what you expect: it verifies passwords that have been encrypted with `password_hash()`. It takes just two arguments, the submitted password and the encrypted version. If the submitted password is correct, the function returns `true`. Otherwise, it returns `false`.

PHP Solution 9-8: Using an Encrypted Login

Now that you have encrypted passwords, you need to change the login form to handle the new setup. All that's necessary is to select the CSV file that contains the encrypted passwords and to use `password_verify()` to check the validity of the submitted password. Again, this relies on using PHP 5.5 or including the `password_compat` library in your script.

1. Open `login.php` from PHP Solution 9-3 or use `login_02.php` from the `ch09` folder. Change the location of `$userlist` to use the encrypted passwords:

```
$userlist = 'C:/private/encrypted.csv';
```

2. Open `includes/authenticate.php` from PHP Solution 9-3 or use `authenticate_01.php` in the `ch09` folder. The file of encrypted passwords doesn't have titles in the first row, so delete the following comment and line of code:

```
// ignore the titles in the first row  
of the CSV file  
$titles = fgetcsv($file);
```

3. Locate the following line:

```
if ($data[0] == $username && $data[1]  
== $password) {
```

4. Change it like this:

```
if ($data[0] == $username &&  
password_verify($password, $data[1])) {
```

`$password` contains the submitted password, and `$data[1]` contains the encrypted version, so they're passed as arguments to `password_verify()`, which returns `true` only if the password is correct.

5. Save `login.php` and test it. It should work the same as before, while being more secure. Check your code, if necessary, with `login_03.php` and `authenticate_02.php` in the `ch09` folder.

PHP Solutions 9-3 to 9-8 build a simple yet effective user authentication system that doesn't require a database backend. However, it does have its limitations. Above all, it's essential that the CSV file containing the usernames and passwords be located outside the server root. Also, once you get more than a few records, querying a database is usually much faster than looping through a

CSV file line by line. [Chapter 17](#) covers user authentication with a database.

Keeping Encryption Up to Date

The major advantage of using the password hashing functions that were added in PHP 5.5 is that they're designed to keep abreast of improvements in encryption technology. Instead of specifying a particular encryption standard, using `PASSWORD_DEFAULT` as the second argument to `password_hash()` ensures that new registrations always use whatever is considered to be the most secure method at the time. Even if the default changes, existing passwords can still be verified by the `password_verify()` function because the encrypted password contains information that identifies how it was encrypted.

There's also a function called `password_needs_rehash()` that checks whether the encrypted password needs to be updated to the current standard. It's designed to be used when a user logs in to the site. The following code assumes that the submitted password is stored in `$password`, that the encrypted one is in `$encrypted`, and that you're using the PHP default method of encryption.

```
if (password_verify($password, $encrypted) {  
    if (password_needs_rehash($encrypted,  
PASSWORD_DEFAULT)) {  
        $encrypted = password_hash($password,  
PASSWORD_DEFAULT);  
        // store the updated version of $encrypted  
    }  
}
```

Performing this check every time a user logs in is almost certainly excessive. PHP's policy is to change the default encryption only upon a full release, such as 5.7.0 or 7.0.0. The only exception to this is in an emergency when a critical security flaw is found in the current default. If you keep abreast of PHP developments, you can create a script that updates all stored passwords in a single operation whenever the default changes. If you don't have the time to follow what's happening in the PHP world, using `password_needs_rehash()` every time someone logs in should keep your site secure, even though it might slow down the login process.



Setting a Time Limit on Sessions

By default, PHP sets the lifetime of the session cookie on the user's computer to 0, which keeps the session active until the user logs out or the browser is closed. You can make the session timeout earlier through a call to `ini_set()`, the function that allows you to change some PHP configuration directives on the fly. As soon as the session starts, pass the directive `session.cookie_lifetime` as the first argument and a string containing the number of seconds you want the cookie to remain active as the second argument. For example, you could limit the session cookie's lifetime to 10 minutes like this:

```
session_start();
ini_set('session.cookie_lifetime', '600');
```

Although this is effective, it has two drawbacks. First, the expiration is set relative to the time on the server, not the user's computer. If the user's computer clock is wrong, the cookie might be out of date immediately, or it might persist much longer than you anticipate. The other problem is that the user might be automatically logged out without explanation. The next PHP solution offers an approach that is more user friendly.

PHP Solution 9-9: Ending a Session after a Period of Inactivity

This PHP solution shows how to end a session if a user doesn't do anything within a specified period that triggers a page to load. When the session first starts, typically when the user logs in, the current time is stored in a session variable. Each time the user loads a page, the session variable is compared with the current time. If the difference is greater than a predetermined limit, the session and its variables are destroyed. Otherwise, the variable is updated to the current time.

These instructions assume you have set up the login system in PHP Solutions 9-3 to 9-8.

1. You need to store the current time after the user's credentials have been authenticated but before the script

redirects the user to the restricted part of the site. Locate the following section of code in `authenticate.php` (around lines 16–20) and insert the new code highlighted in bold as follows:

```
if ($data[0] == $username &&
password_verify($password, $data[1])) {
    $_SESSION['authenticated']
= 'Jethro Tull';
    $_SESSION['start'] = time();
    session_regenerate_id();
    break;
}
```

The `time()` function returns a current timestamp. By being stored in `$_SESSION['start']` it becomes available to every page that begins with `session_start()`.

2. When a session times out, just dumping a user unceremoniously back at the login screen isn't very friendly, so it's a good idea to explain what's happened. In `login.php`, add the code highlighted in bold to the PHP block immediately after the opening `<body>` tag (around lines 22–27):

```
<?php
if ($error) {
    echo "<p>$error</p>";
} elseif (isset($_GET['expired'])) { ?>
    <p>Your session has expired. Please log in again.</p>
<?php } ?>
```

The message is shown if the URL contains a variable called `expired` in a query string.

3. Open `menu.php`, cut the code in the PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration, and paste it into a new blank file.

4. Save the file as `session_timeout.php` in the `includes` folder, then edit the code like this:

```
<?php
session_start();
ob_start();
// set a time limit in seconds
$timelimit = 15;
// get the current time
$now = time();
// where to redirect if rejected
$redirect
= 'http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php';
// if session variable not set,
// redirect to login page
if (!isset($_SESSION['authenticated']))
{
    header("Location: $redirect");
    exit;
} elseif ($now > $_SESSION['start']
+ $timelimit) {
    // if timelimit has expired, destroy session
    // and redirect
    $_SESSION = [];
    // invalidate the session cookie
    if (isset($_COOKIE[session_name()])) {
        setcookie(session_name(), '',
time()-86400, '/');
    }
    // end session and redirect with query
    string
        session_destroy();
        header("Location: {$redirect}?expired=yes");
        exit;
} else {
    // if it's got this far, it's OK, so update
    start time
    $_SESSION['start'] = time();
}
```

The inline comments explain what is going on, and you should recognize most of the `elseif` clause from PHP Solution 9-5. PHP measures time in seconds, and I've set `$timelimit` (in line 5) to a ridiculously short 15

seconds purely to demonstrate the effect. To set a more reasonable limit of, say, 15 minutes, change this later, like this:

```
$timelimit = 15 * 60; // 15 minutes
```

You could, of course, set \$timelimit to 900, but why bother when PHP can do the hard work for you?

If the sum of `$_SESSION['start']` plus `$timelimit` is less than the current time (stored as `$now`), you end the session and redirect the user to the login page. The line that performs the redirect adds a query string to the end of the URL, as follows:

```
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php?  
expired=yes
```

The code in step 2 takes no notice of the value of `expired`; adding `yes` as the value just makes it look more user friendly in the browser address bar.

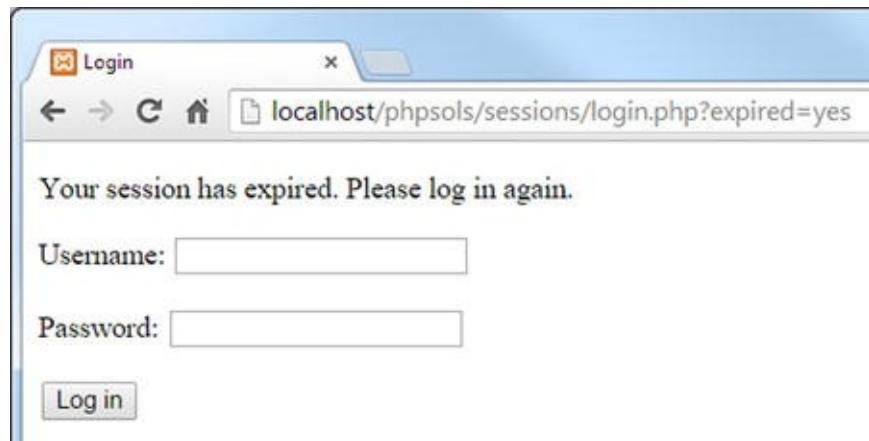
If the script gets as far as the final `else`, it means that `$_SESSION['authenticated']` has been set and that the time limit hasn't been reached, so `$_SESSION['start']` is updated to the current time, and the page displays as normal.

5. Include `session_timeout.php` above the DOCTYPE declaration in `menu.php`. The include command should be the only code in the PHP block:

```
<?php require_once  
'.../includes/session_timeout.php'; ?>  
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
```

6. Replace the code above the DOCTYPE declaration in `secretpage.php` in the same way.
7. Save all the pages you have edited and load either `menu.php` or `secretpage.php` into a browser. If the

page displays, click **Log out**. Then log back in and navigate back and forth between `menu.php` and `secretpage.php`. Once you have verified that the links work, wait 15 seconds or more and try to navigate back to the other page. You should be automatically logged out and presented with the following screen:



A screenshot of a web browser window titled "Login". The address bar shows "localhost/phpsols/sessions/login.php?expired=yes". The main content area displays the message "Your session has expired. Please log in again." Below this are two input fields labeled "Username:" and "Password:", each with a corresponding text input box. At the bottom is a "Log in" button.

If necessary, check your code against `authenticate_03.php`, `login_04.php`, `session_timeout.php`, `menu_05.php`, and `secretpage_04.php` in the ch09 folder.

Passing Information Through Multipage Forms

Variables passed through the `$_POST` and `$_GET` arrays have only a fleeting existence. Once they have been passed to a page, they're gone, unless you save their values in some way. The usual method of preserving information that's passed from one form to another is to extract its value from the `$_POST` array and store it in a hidden field in HTML, like this:

```
<input type="hidden" name="address" id="address"
value="<?= $_POST['address']; ?>">
```

As their name suggests, hidden fields are part of a form's code, but nothing

is displayed onscreen. Hidden fields are fine for one or two items, but say you have a survey that's spread over four pages. If you have 10 items on a page, you need a total of 60 hidden fields (10 on the second page, 20 on the third, and 30 on the fourth). Session variables can save you all that coding. They can also make sure that visitors always start on the right page of a multipage form.

PHP Solution 9-10: Using Sessions for a Multipage Form

In this PHP solution you'll build a script for use in multipage forms that gathers data from the `$_POST` array and assigns it to session variables. The script automatically redirects the user to the first page of the form if an attempt is made to access any other part of the form first.

1. Copy `multiple_01.php`, `multiple_02.php`, `multiple_03.php`, and `multiple_04.php` from the `ch09` folder to the `sessions` folder. The first three pages contain simple forms that ask for the user's name, age, and address. The `action` attribute of each `<form>` tag is empty, so the forms are self-processing, but they don't yet contain any processing script. The final page is where the data from the first three pages will eventually be displayed.
2. Add the following code in a PHP block above the `DOCTYPE` declaration in `multiple_01.php`:

```
if (isset($_POST['next'])) {  
    session_start();  
    // set a variable to control access  
    to other pages  
    $_SESSION['formStarted'] = true;  
    // set required fields  
    $required = 'first_name';  
    $firstPage = 'multiple_01.php';  
    $nextPage = 'multiple_02.php';  
    $submit = 'next';  
    require_once
```

```
' ../includes/multiform.php' ;  
}
```

The `name` attribute of the Submit button is `next`, so the code in this block runs only if the form has been submitted. It initiates a session and creates a session variable that will be used to control access to the other form pages.

Next come four variables that will be used by the script that processes the multipage form:

`$required`: This is an array of the `name` attributes of required fields in the current page. If only one field is required, a string can be used instead of an array. If no fields are required, it can be omitted.

`$firstPage`: The filename of the first page of the form

`$nextPage`: The filename of the next page in the form

`$submit`: The name of the Submit button in the current page

Finally, the code includes the script that processes the multipage form.

3. Create a file called `multiform.php` in the `includes` folder. Delete any HTML markup and insert the following code:

```
<?php  
if (!isset($_SESSION)) {  
    session_start();  
}  
$filename  
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME']);  
$current = 'http://'
```

```
. $_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']  
. $_SERVER['PHP_SELF'];
```

Each page of the multipage form needs to call `session_start()`, but calling it twice on the same page generates an error, so the conditional statement first checks whether the `$_SESSION` superglobal variable is accessible. If it isn't, it initiates the session for the page.

After the conditional statement, `$_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME']` is passed to the `basename()` function to extract the filename of the current page. This is the same technique that you used in PHP Solution 4-3.

`$_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME']` contains the path of the parent file, so when this script is included in `multiple_01.php`, the value of `$filename` will be `multiple_01.php`, *not* `multiform.php`.

The next line builds the URL for the current page from the string `http://` and the values of `$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']`, which contains the current domain name, and `$_SERVER['PHP_SELF']`, which contains the path of the current file minus the domain name. If you're testing locally, when you load the first page of the multipage form `$current` is `http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/multiple_01.php`.

- Now that you have both the name of the current file and its URL, you can use `str_replace()` to create the URLs for the first and next pages, like this:

```
$redirectFirst = str_replace($filename,  
$firstPage, $current);  
$redirectNext = str_replace($filename,  
$nextPage, $current);
```

The first argument to `str_replace()` is the string you want to replace, the second is the replacement string, and

the third is the target string. In step 2, you set \$firstPage to `multiple_01.php` and \$nextPage to `multiple_02.php`. As a result, \$redirectFirst becomes `http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/multiple_01.php` and \$redirectNext is `http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/multiple_02.php`.

5. To prevent users from accessing the multipage form without starting at the beginning, add a conditional statement that checks the value of \$filename. If it's not the same as the first page, and `$_SESSION['formStarted']` hasn't been created, the `header()` function redirects to the first page, like this:

```
if ($filename != $firstPage &&
!isset($_SESSION['formStarted'])) {
    header("Location: $redirectFirst");
    exit;
}
```

6. The rest of the script loops through the `$_POST` array, checking for required fields that are blank and adding them to a \$missing array. If nothing is missing, the `header()` function redirects the user to the next page of the multipage form. The complete script for `multiform.php` looks like this:

```
<?php
if (!isset($_SESSION)) {
    session_start();
}
$filename
= basename($_SERVER['SCRIPT_FILENAME']);
$current = 'http://'
. $_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']
. $_SERVER['PHP_SELF'];
$redirectFirst = str_replace($filename,
$firstPage, $current);
```

```
$redirectNext = str_replace($filename,
$nextPage, $current);
if ($filename != $firstPage &&
!isset($_SESSION['formStarted'])) {
    header("Location: $redirectFirst");
    exit;
}

if (isset($_POST[$submit])) {
    // create empty array for any
missing fields
    $missing = [];
    // create $required array if not
set
    if (!isset($required)) {
        $required = [];
    } else {
        // using casting operator to
turn single string to array
        $required = (array) $required;
    }
    // process the $_POST variables and
save them in the $_SESSION array
    foreach ($_POST as $key => $value)
{
    // skip submit button
    if ($key == $submit) continue;
    // assign to temporary variable
and strip whitespace if not an array
    $temp = is_array($value)
? $value : trim($value);
    // if empty and required, add to
$missing array
    if (empty($temp) &&
in_array($key, $required)) {
        $missing[] = $key;
    } else {
        // otherwise, assign to
a variable of the same name as $key
```

```

        $_SESSION[$key] = $temp;
    }
}
// if no required fields are
missing, redirect to next page
if (!$missing) {
    header("Location:
$redirectNext");
    exit;
}
}

```

The code is very similar to that used in [Chapter 5](#) to process the feedback form, so the inline comments should be sufficient to explain how it works. The conditional statement wrapped around the new code uses `$_POST[$submit]` to check if the form has been submitted. I have used a variable rather than hard-coding the name of the Submit button to make the code more flexible. Although this script is included in the first page only after the form has been submitted, it's included directly in the other pages, so it's necessary to add the conditional statement here.

The name and value of the Submit button are always included in the `$_POST` array, so the `foreach` loop uses the `continue` keyword to skip to the next item if the key is the same as the Submit button's name. This avoids adding the unwanted value to the `$_SESSION` array. See “Breaking out of a loop” in [Chapter 3](#) for a description of `continue`.

7. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration in `multiple_02.php`:

```

$firstPage = 'multiple_01.php';
$nextPage = 'multiple_03.php';
$submit = 'next';
require_once
'../includes/multiform.php';

```

This sets the values of `$firstPage`, `$nextPage`, and `$submit` and includes the processing script you have just created. The form on this page contains only one field, which is optional, so the `$required` variable isn't needed. The processing script automatically creates an empty array if it isn't set in the main page.

8. In `multiple_03.php`, add the following in a PHP code block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
// set required fields
$required = ['city', 'country'];
$firstPage = 'multiple_01.php';
$nextPage = 'multiple_04.php';
$submit = 'next';
require_once
'./includes/multiform.php';
```

Two fields are required, so their `name` attributes are listed as an array and assigned to `$required`. The other code is the same as in the previous page.

9. Add the following code above the `<form>` tag in `multiple_01.php`, `multiple_02.php`, and `multiple_03.php`:

```
<?php if (isset($missing)) { ?>
<p> Please fix the following required
fields:</p>
<ul>
<?php
foreach ($missing as $item) {
    echo "<li>$item</li>";
}
?>
</ul>
<?php } ?>
```

This displays a list of required items that haven't yet been filled in.

10. In `multiple_04.php`, add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration to redirect users to the first page if they didn't enter the form from there:

```
session_start();
if (!isset($_SESSION['formStarted'])) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/sessions/multiple_04.php');
    exit;
}
```

11. In the body of the page, add the following code to the unordered list to display the results:

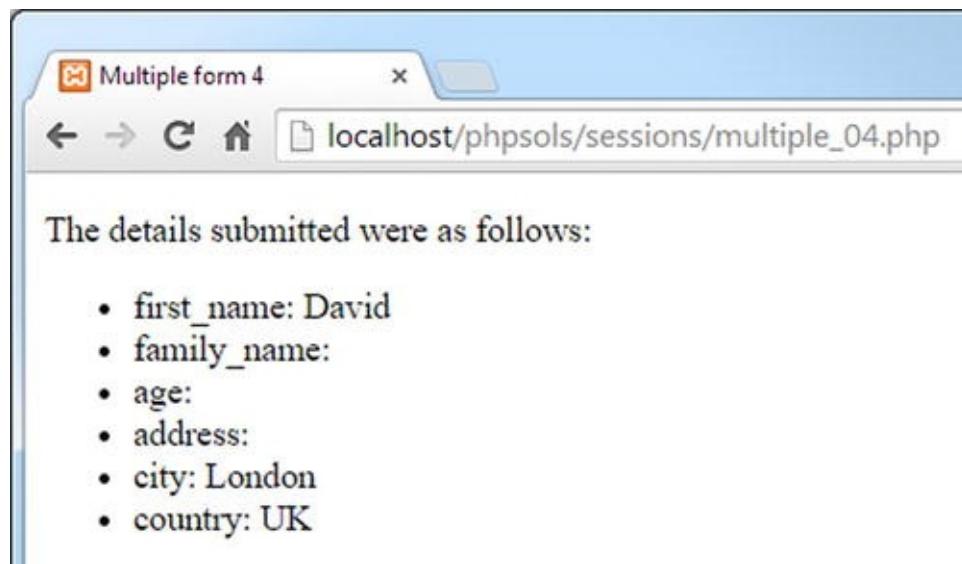
```
<ul>
<?php
$expected = ['first_name', 'family_name', 'age',
            'address', 'city', 'country'];
// unset the formStarted variable
unset($_SESSION['formStarted']);
foreach ($expected as $key) {
    echo "<li>$key: $_SESSION[$key]</li>";
    // unset the session variable
    unset($_SESSION[$key]);
}
?>
</ul>
```

This lists the `name` attributes of the form fields as an array and assigns the array to `$expected`. This is a security measure to ensure you don't process bogus values that might have been injected into the `$_POST` array by a malicious user.

The code then unsets `$_SESSION['formStarted']` and loops through the `$expected` array using each value to access the relevant element of the `$_SESSION` array and display it in the unordered list. The session variable is then deleted. Deleting the session variables individually leaves intact any other session-related

information.

12. Save all the pages, then try to load one of the middle pages of the form, or the last one, into a browser. You should be taken to the first page. Click **Next** without filling in either field. You'll be asked to fill in the `first_name` field. Fill in the required fields and click **Next** on each page. The results should be displayed on the final page, as shown in [Figure 9-5](#).



[Figure 9-5](#). The session variables preserved the input from multiple pages

You can check your code against `multiple_01_done.php`, `multiple_02_done.php`, `multiple_03_done.php`, `multiple_04_done.php`, and `multiform.php` in the `ch09` folder.

This is just a simple demonstration of a multipage form. In a real-world application, you would need to preserve the user input when required fields are left blank.

The script in `multiform.php` can be used with any multipage form by creating `$_SESSION['formStarted']` on the first page after the form has been submitted, and by using `$required`, `$firstPage`, `$nextPage`, and `$submit` on each page. Use the `$missing` array to handle required fields that

aren't filled in.

Chapter Review

If you started this book with little or no knowledge of PHP, you're no longer in the beginners' league, but rather are leveraging the power of PHP in a lot of useful ways. Hopefully, by now you'll have begun to appreciate that the same or similar techniques crop up again and again. Instead of just copying code, you should start to recognize techniques that you can adapt to your needs and then experiment on your own.

The rest of this book continues to build on your knowledge but brings a new factor into play: the MySQL relational database (and its drop-in replacement, MariaDB), which will take your PHP skills to a higher level. The next chapter offers an introduction to MySQL and shows you how to set it up for the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 10



Getting Started with a Database

Dynamic websites take on a whole new meaning in combination with a database. Drawing content from a database allows you to present material in ways that would be impractical—if not impossible—with a static website. Examples that spring to mind are online stores, such as Amazon.com; news sites, such as the BBC (www.bbcnews.com); and the big search engines, including Google and Yahoo! Database technology allows these websites to present thousands, sometimes millions, of unique pages. Even if your ambitions are nowhere near as grandiose, a database can increase your website's richness of content with relatively little effort.

PHP supports all major databases, including Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and PostgreSQL, but it's most frequently used in conjunction with the open source MySQL database. According to DB-Engines (<http://db-engines.com/en/ranking>), in late 2014 MySQL ranked as the second most widely used database. However, controversy surrounds the future of MySQL, which Google and Wikimedia have abandoned in favor of MariaDB (<https://mariadb.org/>). Several leading Linux distributions have also replaced MySQL with MariaDB. This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the implications of the rivalry between these two databases.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- How a database stores information
- Choosing a graphical interface to interact with a database
- Creating user accounts
- Defining a database table with the appropriate data types
- Backing up and transferring data to another server

Which Database Should You Choose?

In the first two editions of this book, there was no question about which database to use. MariaDB either didn't exist or had a tiny user base, and MySQL offered the following advantages:

- **Cost:** The MySQL Community Edition is free under the open source GPL license (www.gnu.org/licenses/old-licenses/gpl-2.0.html).
- **Powerful:** MySQL is used by leading organizations such as NASA, the White House, DaimlerChrysler, and BBC News. It's feature-rich and fast.
- **Widespread availability:** MySQL is the most popular open source database. Most hosting companies automatically offer MySQL in combination with PHP.
- **Cross-platform compatibility:** MySQL runs on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. A database requires no conversion when transferred from one system to another.
- **Open source:** The code and features in the Community Edition are identical to the commercial version.

MySQL was originally developed by MySQL AB in Sweden, but the company was sold to Sun Microsystems in 2008. Sun was acquired two years later by Oracle, a major commercial database supplier. Many regarded this as a threat to MySQL's continued survival as a free, open source database. However, Oracle is on record as saying "MySQL is integral to Oracle's complete, open and integrated strategy." This did little to impress one of MySQL's original creators, Michael "Monty" Widenius, who has accused Oracle of removing features from MySQL and of being slow to fix security issues.

Because the MySQL code is open source, Widenius has forked it to create MariaDB, which is described as "an enhanced, drop-in replacement for MySQL." Originally, MariaDB followed the same version numbering as MySQL, so MariaDB 5.1 was a replacement for MySQL 5.1. This continued until version 5.5. Thereafter, MariaDB jumped to version 10.0. This change was made to make it clear that not all features in MySQL 5.6 will be imported into MariaDB.

■ **Tip** The official pronunciation of MySQL is “my-ess-queue-ell.”

Compatibility of MariaDB and MySQL

In spite of the break between MariaDB 10.0 and MySQL 5.6, the two database systems are virtually interchangeable. The MariaDB executable uses the same name as MySQL (`mysqld` on Mac OS X and Linux, `mysqld.exe` on Windows). The main privileges table is also called `mysql`, and the default storage engine identifies itself as InnoDB, even though it’s actually a fork of InnoDB called Percona XtraDB.

As far as the code in this book is concerned, it should make no difference whether you use MariaDB or MySQL. MariaDB understands all the MySQL-specific PHP code. It’s also supported by the phpMyAdmin graphical interface for MySQL that I’ll be using in the remaining chapters.

I don’t have a crystal ball to predict how the rivalry between MariaDB and MySQL will play out in the coming years. At the time of this writing, MariaDB ranked 27th in the monthly survey conducted by DB-Engines, with only a fraction of the score achieved by MySQL. But with big names like Google and Wikimedia migrating to MariaDB, the situation could change rapidly. Nevertheless, to make this book readable, I have decided to stick with the current market leader, MySQL. Except where I make a specific reference to MariaDB, you should assume that all references to MySQL apply equally to MariaDB.

■ **Note** All of the code in this book has been tested on the current stable versions of MySQL (5.6) and MariaDB (10.0). The code should also work in versions 5.1 through 5.5 of both.

How a Database Stores Information

All the data in a relational database, such as MySQL, is stored in tables, very much in the same way as in a spreadsheet, with information organized into rows

and columns. [Figure 10-1](#) shows the database table that you will build later in this chapter, as displayed in phpMyAdmin.

The diagram illustrates a database table structure. At the top, three labels point to specific parts of the table: 'Primary key' points to the first column of the first row; 'Record' points to the third row; and 'Column' and 'Field' both point to the 'caption' column of the third row. The table itself has three columns: 'image_id', 'filename', and 'caption'. The data rows are as follows:

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of cou...
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

[Figure 10-1](#). A database table stores information in rows and columns like in a spreadsheet

Each **column** has a name (`image_id`, `filename`, and `caption`) indicating what it stores.

The rows aren't labeled, but the first column (`image_id`) contains a unique value known as a **primary key**, which identifies the data associated with the row. Each row contains an individual **record** of related data.

The intersection of a row and a column, where the data is stored, is called a **field**. For instance, the `caption` field for the third record in [Figure 10-1](#) contains the value "The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto," and the primary key for that record is 3.

Note The terms "field" and "column" are often used interchangeably, particularly in older versions of phpMyAdmin. A field holds one piece of information for a single record, whereas a column contains the same field for all records.

How primary keys work

Although [Figure 10-1](#) shows `image_id` as a consecutive sequence from 1 to 8, they're not row numbers. [Figure 10-2](#) shows the same table with the captions

sorted in alphabetical order. The field highlighted in [Figure 10-1](#) has moved to the seventh row, but it still has the same `image_id` and `filename`.

Now in the seventh row, but `image_id` → remains unchanged

image_id	filename	caption
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of cou...
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Figure 10-2. The primary key identifies the row even when the table is sorted in a different order

Although the primary key is rarely displayed, it identifies the record and all the data stored in it. Once you know the primary key of a record, you can update it, delete it, or use it to display data in a separate page. Don't worry about how you find the primary key. It's easily done using **Structured Query Language** (SQL), the standard means of communicating with all major databases. The important thing to remember is to assign a primary key to every record.

Tip Some people pronounce SQL like the word “sequel.” Others spell it out as “ess-queue-ell.”

- A primary key doesn't need to be a number, but *it must be unique*.
- Social Security, staff ID, or product numbers make good primary keys. They may consist of numbers, letters, and other characters, but are always unique.
- MySQL can generate a primary key for you automatically.
- Once a primary key has been assigned, it should never repeat, and never be changed.

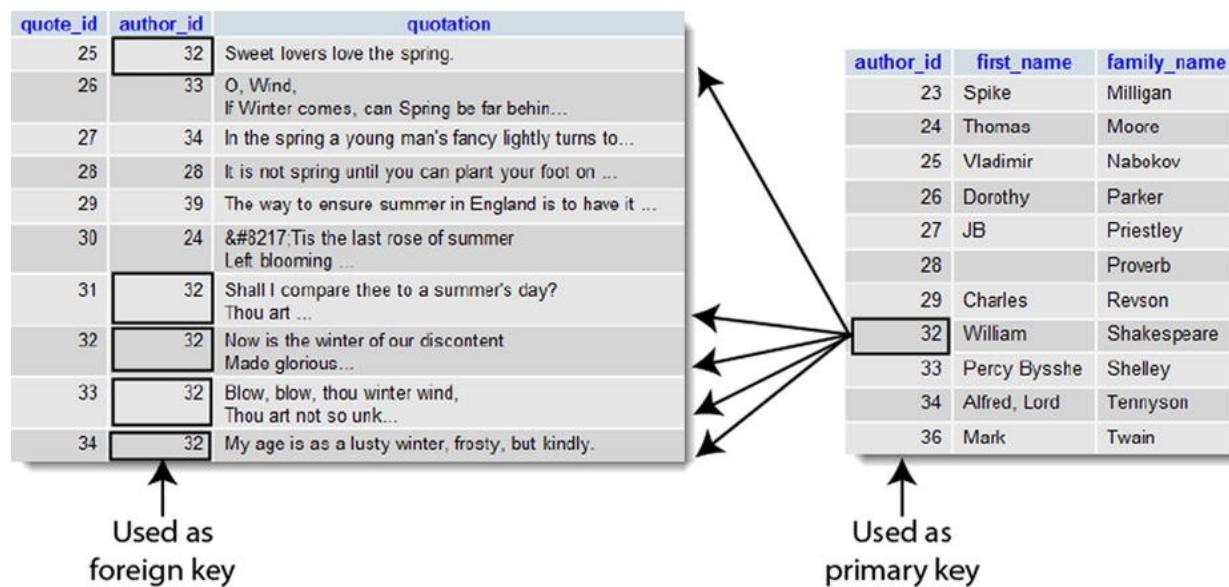
Because a primary key must be unique, MySQL doesn't normally reuse the number when a record is deleted. This leaves holes in the sequence. *Don't even think about renumbering.* Gaps in the sequence are of no importance

whatsoever. The purpose of the primary key is to identify the record, and by changing the numbers to close the gaps, you put the integrity of your database at serious risk.

■ **Tip** Some people want to remove gaps in the sequence to keep track of the number of records in a table. It's not necessary, as you'll discover in the next chapter.

Linking tables with primary and foreign keys

Unlike a spreadsheet, most databases store data in several smaller tables, rather than in one huge table. This prevents duplication and inconsistency. Let's say you're building a database of your favorite quotations. Instead of typing out the name of the author each time, it's more efficient to put the authors' names in a separate table, and store a reference to an author's primary key with each quotation. As you can see in [Figure 10-3](#), every record in the left-hand table identified by `author_id` 32 is a quotation from William Shakespeare.



[Figure 10-3](#). Foreign keys are used to link information stored in separate tables

Because the name is stored in only one place, it guarantees that it's always spelled correctly. And if you do make a spelling mistake, just a single correction is all that's needed to ensure that the change is reflected throughout the database.

Storing a primary key from one table within another table is known as creating a **foreign key**. Using foreign keys to link information in different tables is one of the most powerful aspects of a relational database. It can also be difficult to grasp in the early stages, so we'll work with single tables until [Chapters 15 and 16](#), which cover foreign keys in detail. In the meantime, bear the following points in mind:

- When used as the primary key of a table, the value must be unique within the column. So each `author_id` in the table on the right of [Figure 10-3](#) is used only once.
- When used as a foreign key, there can be multiple references to the same value. So 32 appears several times in the `author_id` column in the table on the left.

 **Tip** As long as `author_id` remains unique in the table where it's the primary key, you know that it always refers to the same person.

Breaking down information into small chunks

You may have noticed that the table on the right in [Figure 10-3](#) has separate columns for each author's first name and family name. This is an important principle of a relational database: *break down complex information into its component parts, and store each part separately*.

It's not always easy to decide how far to go with this process. In addition to first and last name, you might want separate columns for title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., and so on) and for middle names or initials. Addresses are best broken down into street, town, county, state, zip code, and so on. Although it may be a nuisance to break down information into small chunks, you can always use SQL and/or PHP to join them together again. However, once you have more than a handful of records, it's a major undertaking to try to separate complex information that is stored in a single field.

Checkpoints for good database design

There is no *right* way to design a database—each one is different. However, the

following guidelines should point you in the right direction:

- Give each record in a table a unique identifier (primary key).
- Put each group of associated data in a table of its own.
- Cross-reference related information by using the primary key from one table as the foreign key in other tables.
- Store only one item of information in each field.
- Stay DRY (don't repeat yourself).

In the early stages you are likely to make design mistakes that you later come to regret. Try to anticipate future needs, and make your table structure flexible. You can add new tables at any time to respond to new requirements.

That's enough theory for the moment. Let's move on to something more practical by building a database for the Japan Journey website from [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#).

Using a Graphical Interface

The traditional way to interact with MySQL databases is through a Command Prompt window or Terminal. But it's a lot easier to use a third-party graphic interface, such as phpMyAdmin, a browser-based front end to MySQL (see [Figure 10-4](#)).

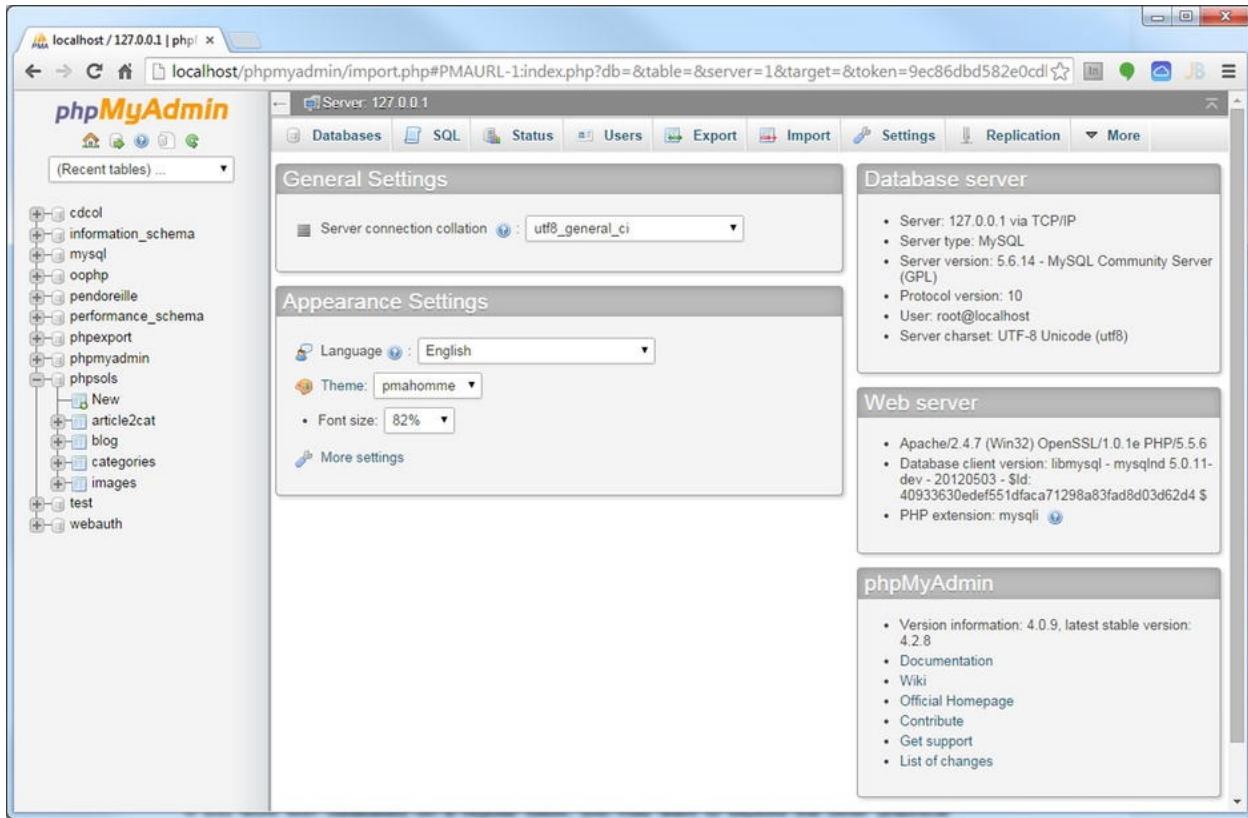


Figure 10-4. phpMyAdmin is a free graphical interface to MySQL that runs in your browser

Because phpMyAdmin (www.phpmyadmin.net) is installed automatically with XAMPP, MAMP, and most other free all-in-one packages, it's the UI chosen for this book. It's easy to use and has all the basic functionality required for setting up and administering MySQL databases. It works on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. Many hosting companies provide it as the standard interface to MySQL.

If you work with databases on a regular basis, you may want to eventually explore the other graphical interfaces. One that's worthy of note is Navicat (www.navicat.com), a paid-for product available for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. The Navicat Cloud service also lets you administer databases from an iPhone or iPad. Navicat is particularly popular among web developers because it's capable of performing scheduled backups of databases from a remote server to your local computer. It also helps you build SQL queries in a visual and intuitive manner (see [Figure 10-5](#)).

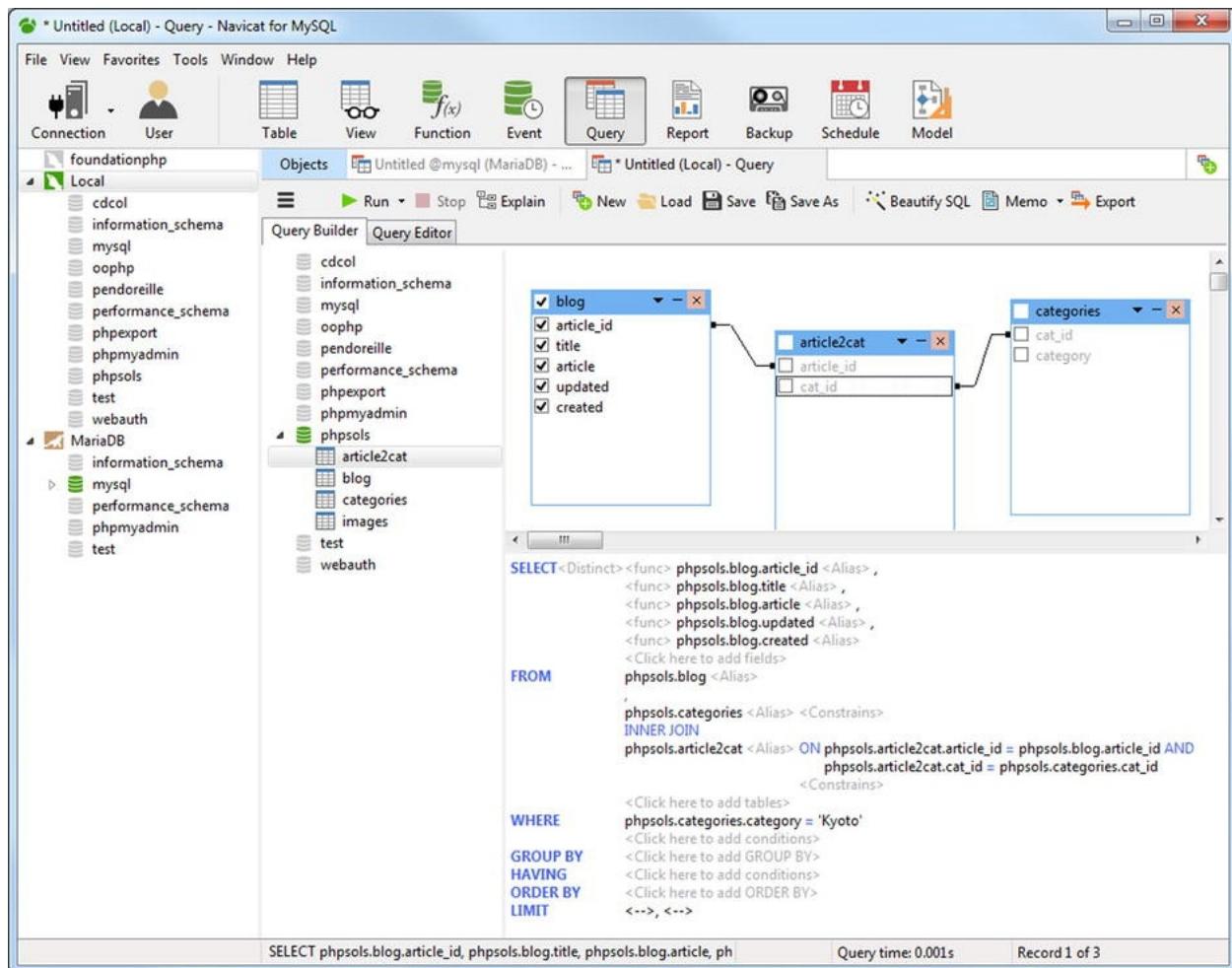


Figure 10-5. Navicat is one of the most popular graphical UIs for MySQL

Note There are separate versions of Navicat for MySQL and MariaDB, but the MySQL version also supports MariaDB.

Launching phpMyAdmin

If you're running XAMPP on Windows, there are three ways to launch phpMyAdmin:

- Enter `http://localhost/phpMyAdmin/` in the browser address bar.
- Click the MySQL Admin button in the XAMPP Control

Panel.

- Click the **phpMyAdmin** link under **Tools** in the XAMPP administration page (<http://localhost/xampp/>).

If you installed MAMP on Mac OS X, click the **phpMyAdmin** tab in the menu at the top of the MAMP start page (click **Open start page** in the MAMP control widget).

If you installed phpMyAdmin manually or are using a different all-in-one package, follow the package's instructions or enter the appropriate address in your browser address bar (normally <http://localhost/phpmyadmin/>).

Tip If you get a message saying that the server is not responding or that the socket is not correctly configured, make sure that the MySQL server is running.

If you installed XAMPP, you might be presented with a screen asking for a username and password. If so, log into phpMyAdmin as the root superuser. Enter **root** as the username and use the password you created for root when setting up XAMPP.

Setting Up the phpsols Database

In a local testing environment, there's no limit to the number of databases that you can create in MySQL, and you can call them whatever you like. I am going to assume that you are working in a local testing environment and so will show you how to set up a database called **phpsols**, together with two user accounts called **psread** and **pswrite**.

Note On shared hosting, you may be limited to just one database set up by the hosting company. If you're testing on a remote server and don't have the freedom to set up a new database and user accounts, substitute the name and username allocated by your hosting company for **phpsols** and **pswrite**, respectively.

MySQL naming rules

The basic MySQL naming rules for databases, tables, and columns are as follows:

- Names can be up to 64 characters long.
- Legal characters are numbers, letters, the underscore, and \$.
- Names can begin with a number but cannot consist exclusively of numbers.

Some hosting companies seem blissfully ignorant of these rules and assign clients databases that contain one or more hyphens (an illegal character) in their name. If a database, table, or column name contains spaces or illegal characters, you must always surround it by backticks (`) in SQL queries. Note that this is not a single quote ('), but rather is a separate character. On my Windows keyboard, it's directly above the Tab key. On my Mac keyboard, it's next to the left Shift key on the same key as the tilde (~).

When choosing names, you might accidentally choose one of MySQL's many reserved words

(<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/reserved-words.html>), such as date or time. One technique to avoid this is to use compound words, such as arrival_date, arrival_time, and so on. Alternatively, surround all names with backticks. phpMyAdmin does this automatically, but you need to do this manually when writing your own SQL in a PHP script.

 **Note** Because so many people have used date, text, time, and timestamp as column names, MySQL permits their use without backticks. However, you should avoid using them. It's bad practice and is unlikely to work if you migrate your data to a different database system.

Case sensitivity of names

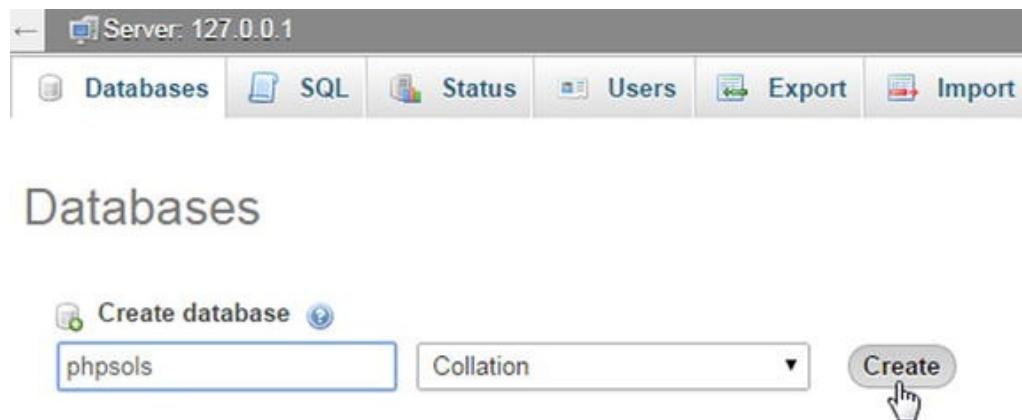
Windows and Mac OS X treat MySQL names as case-insensitive. However, Linux and Unix servers respect case sensitivity. To avoid problems when transferring databases and PHP code from your local computer to a remote

server, I strongly recommend that you use lowercase exclusively in database, table, and column names. When building names from more than one word, join them with an underscore.

Using phpMyAdmin to create a new database

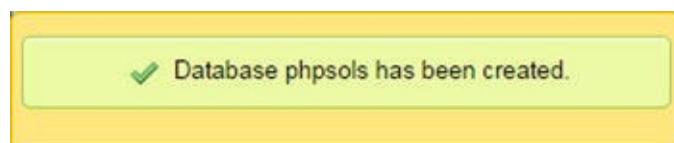
Creating a new database in phpMyAdmin is easy.

1. Launch phpMyAdmin and select the **Databases** tab at the top of the main window.
2. Type the name of the new database (**phpsols**) into the field labeled **Create new database**. Leave the **Collation** drop-down menu at its default setting and click **Create**, as shown in the following screenshot:



Note Collation determines the sort order of records according to the rules of the language being used. Unless you are using a language other than English, Swedish, or Finnish, you never need to change its value.

3. You should see confirmation that the database has been created.



4. Before creating tables in a new database, it's a good idea to create user accounts for it. Leave phpMyAdmin open, as you'll continue using it in the next section.

Creating database-specific user accounts

A new installation of MySQL normally has only one registered user—the superuser account called “root,” which has complete control over everything. (XAMPP also creates a user account called “pma,” which phpMyAdmin uses for advanced features not covered by this book.) The root user should *never* be used for anything other than top-level administration, such as the creation and removal of databases, creating user accounts, and exporting and importing data. Each individual database should have at least one—preferably two—dedicated user accounts with limited privileges.

When you put a database online, you should grant users the fewest privileges they need, and no more. There are four important privileges—all named after the equivalent SQL commands:

- **SELECT:** Retrieves records from database tables
- **INSERT:** Inserts records into a database
- **UPDATE:** Changes existing records
- **DELETE:** Deletes records but not tables or databases (the command for that is **DROP**)

Most of the time, visitors only need to retrieve information, so the `psread` user account will have just the **SELECT** privilege and will be read-only. However, for user registration or site administration, you need all four privileges. These will be made available to the `pswrite` account.

Granting user privileges

1. In phpMyAdmin, click the **Users** tab at the top of the screen.

Tip If you can't see the *Users* tab, return to the main

screen by clicking the little house icon at the top left of the screen. The **Users** tab should now be visible.

2. On the **Users overview** page, click the **Add a new User** link halfway down the page.
 3. On the page that opens, enter **pswrite** (or the name of the user account that you want to create) in the **User name** field. Select **Local** from the **Host** drop-down menu. This automatically enters **localhost** in the field alongside. Selecting this option allows the **pswrite** user to connect to MySQL only from the same computer. Then enter a password in the **Password** field, and type it again for confirmation in the **Re-type** field.
-

Note In the example files for this book, I've used **0Ch@Nom1\$u** as the password. MySQL passwords are case-sensitive.

4. Beneath the **Login Information** table are sections labeled **Database for user** and **Global privileges**. Ignore both of them. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the **Go** button. This returns you to the **Users overview** page with confirmation that the user has been created.
5. In the **Users overview** table, click the **Edit Privileges** link in the row that lists the new user, as shown in the following screenshot:

<input type="checkbox"/> pswrite	localhost	Yes	USAGE	No	 Edit Privileges 
<input type="checkbox"/> root	localhost	Yes	ALL PRIVILEGES	Yes	 Edit Privileges 

6. This opens a page with the **Global privileges** table again. If you see four buttons at the top of the page, click the **Database** button, as shown in the following screenshot.

The screenshot shows the phpMyAdmin interface for a MySQL server running on localhost. The top navigation bar includes links for Databases, SQL, Status, Users, Export, Import, Global, Database (which is highlighted with an orange circle), Change password, and Login Information. Below the navigation is a sub-menu for 'Edit Privileges: User 'psread'@'localhost''. It features tabs for 'Global privileges' and 'Check All'. A dropdown menu is open under 'Add privileges on the following database:' with several options listed.

This displays a section labeled **Database-specific privileges**. In older versions of phpMyAdmin that don't have the buttons at the top of the page, scroll down to the **Database-specific privileges** section below **Global privileges**.

7. Activate the drop-down menu labeled **Add privileges on the following database** and select **phpsols**.

The screenshot shows the 'Database-specific privileges' dropdown menu in phpMyAdmin. The menu is titled 'Add privileges on the following database:' and includes a dropdown menu with the following options: 'Use text field:', 'information_schema', 'cdcol', 'mysql', 'oophp', 'pendoreille', 'performance_schema', 'phpexport', 'phpmyadmin', 'phpsols' (which is highlighted with a blue selection bar), 'test', and 'webauth'. There is also a 'Change password' button and a 'No Password' radio button.

Note MySQL has three default databases: `information_schema`, a read-only, virtual database that contains details of all other databases on the same server; `mysql`, which contains details of all user accounts and privileges; and `test`, which is empty. You should never edit the `mysql` database directly unless you're sure

what you're doing.

8. The next screen allows you to set the privileges for this user on just the `phpsols` database. You want `pswrite` to have all four privileges listed earlier, so click the check boxes next to `SELECT`, `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, and `DELETE`.

If you hover your mouse pointer over each option, phpMyAdmin displays a tooltip describing what the option is for, as shown. After selecting the four privileges, click the top `Go` button.

Edit Privileges: User '`pswrite`'@'`localhost`' - Database `phpsols`

Database-specific privileges (Check All /Uncheck All)

Note: MySQL privilege names are expressed in English

Data	Structure	Administration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SELECT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INSERT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UPDATE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DELETE	<input type="checkbox"/> CREATE <input type="checkbox"/> ALTER Allows reading data. <input type="checkbox"/> DROP <input type="checkbox"/> CREATE TEMPORARY TABLES <input type="checkbox"/> SHOW VIEW <input type="checkbox"/> CREATE ROUTINE <input type="checkbox"/> ALTER ROUTINE <input type="checkbox"/> EXECUTE <input type="checkbox"/> CREATE VIEW <input type="checkbox"/> EVENT <input type="checkbox"/> TRIGGER	<input type="checkbox"/> GRANT <input type="checkbox"/> LOCK TABLES <input type="checkbox"/> REFERENCES

Go

Caution Many screens in phpMyAdmin have more than one `Go` button. Always click the button at the foot of or alongside the section with the options you want to set.

9. phpMyAdmin presents you with confirmation that the privileges have been updated for the `pswrite` user

account; the page displays the **Database-specific privileges** table again, in case you need to change anything. Click the **Users** tab at the top of the page to return to the **Users overview**.

10. Click **Add a new User** and repeat steps 3 through 8 to create a second user account called `psread`. This user will have much more restricted privileges, so when you get to step 7, check only the **SELECT** option. The password used for `psread` in the example files is `K1y0mi$u`.

Creating a database table

Now that you have a database and dedicated user accounts, you can begin creating tables. Let's begin by creating a table to hold the details of images, as shown in [Figure 10-1](#) at the beginning of this chapter. Before you can start entering data, you need to define the table structure. This involves deciding the following:

- The name of the table
- How many columns it will have
- The name of each column
- What type of data will be stored in each column
- Whether the column must always have data in each field
- Which column contains the table's primary key

If you look at [Figure 10-1](#), you can see that the table contains three columns: `image_id` (primary key), `filename`, and `caption`. Because it contains details of images, that's a good name to use for the table. There's not much point in storing a filename without a caption, so every column must contain data. Great! Apart from the data type, all the decisions have been made. I'll explain the data types as we go along.

Defining the images table

These instructions show how to define a table in phpMyAdmin. If you prefer to use Navicat or a different UI for MySQL, use the settings in [Table 10-1](#).

1. Launch phpMyAdmin, if it's not already open, and select **phpsols** from the list of databases on the left of the screen. This opens the **Structure** tab, which reports that no tables have been found in the database.
2. In the **Create table** section, type the name of the new table (**images**) in the **Name** field and enter **3** in the **Number of columns** field. Then click the **Go** button.
3. The next screen is where you define the table. There are a lot of options, but not all of them need to be filled in. [Table 10-1](#) lists the settings for the **images** table.

Table 10-1. *Settings for the images table*

Field	Type	Length/Values	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
image_id	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	Selected
filename	VARCHAR	25		Deselected		
caption	VARCHAR	120		Deselected		

The first column, **image_id**, is defined as type **INT**, which stands for integer. Its attribute is set to **UNSIGNED**, which means that only positive numbers are allowed. Its index is declared as **PRIMARY**, and the **A_I** (**AUTO_INCREMENT**) check box is selected, so MySQL automatically inserts in this column the next available number (starting at 1) whenever a new record is inserted.

The next column, **filename**, is defined as type **VARCHAR** with a length of **25**. This means it accepts up to 25 characters of text.

The final column, **caption**, is also **VARCHAR** with a length of **120**, so it accepts up to 120 characters of text.

The **Null** check box for all columns is deselected, so they must always contain something. However, that “something” can be as little as an empty string. I’ll

describe the column types in more detail in the “Choosing the right column type” section later in this chapter.

The following screenshot shows the options after they have been set in phpMyAdmin (the columns to the right of A_I have been left out because they don’t need to be filled in):

The screenshot shows the 'Structure' tab of the phpMyAdmin interface for a table named 'images'. The table has three columns defined:

Name	Type	Length/Values	Default	Collation	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
image_id	INT		None		UNSIGNED	✓	PRIMARY	✓
filename	VARCHAR	25	None			✓	...	✓
caption	VARCHAR	120	None			✓	...	✓

Below the table structure, there are fields for 'Table comments:', 'Storage Engine:' (set to InnoDB), and 'Collation:' (set to latin1_swedish_ci). At the bottom of the screen, there is a 'PARTITION definition:' field and a 'Save' button.

Toward the bottom of the screen is an option for **Storage Engine**. This determines the format used internally to store the database files. InnoDB became the default in MySQL 5.5. Prior to that MyISAM was the default. I’ll explain the differences between these storage engines in [Chapter 15](#). In the meantime, use InnoDB. Converting from one storage engine to another is very simple.

When you have finished, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the screen.

Tip If you click **Go** instead of **Save**, phpMyAdmin adds an extra column for you to define. If this happens, just click **Save**. As long as you don’t enter values into the fields, phpMyAdmin ignores the extra column.

4. The next screen lists the **images** table with a series of actions you can perform on the table. Under **Action**, click

Structure, or click the **Structure** tab at the top of the screen. This displays the details of the table you have just created.



The screenshot shows the phpMyAdmin interface with the 'Structure' tab selected. The table 'images' is displayed with three columns: 'image_id', 'filename', and 'caption'. The 'image_id' column is defined as an int(10) type with an AUTO_INCREMENT attribute, set as the primary key. The 'filename' and 'caption' columns are defined as varchar(255) and varchar(120) types respectively, both using the latin1_swedish_ci collation. Action buttons for each column include 'Change', 'Drop', 'Primary', 'Unique', 'Index', 'Spatial', and 'More'.

#	Name	Type	Collation	Attributes	Null	Default	Extra	Action
1	<u>image_id</u>	int(10)		UNSIGNED	No	None	AUTO_INCREMENT	
2	filename	varchar(255)	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None		
3	caption	varchar(120)	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None		

Don't be alarmed by the fact that **Collation** displays **latin1_swedish_ci**. MySQL was originally developed in Sweden, and Swedish uses the same sort order as English (and Finnish). The underlining of `image_id` indicates that it's the table's primary key. To edit any settings, click **Change** in the appropriate row. This opens the previous screen and allows you to change the values.

 **Tip** If you made a complete mess and want to start again, click the **Operations** tab at the top of the screen. Then, in the **Delete data or table** section, click **Delete the table (DROP)** and confirm that you want to drop the table. (In SQL, *delete* refers only to records. You *drop* a table or a database.)

Inserting records into a table

Now that you have a table, you need to put some data into it. Eventually, you'll need to build your own content management system using HTML forms, PHP, and SQL, but the quick and easy way to do it is with phpMyAdmin.

Using phpMyAdmin to insert records manually

These instructions show how to add records to the `images` table through the phpMyAdmin interface.

1. If phpMyAdmin is still displaying the structure of the `images` table as at the end of the previous section, skip to step 2. Otherwise, launch phpMyAdmin and select the

phpsol database from the list on the left. Then click **Structure** to the right of **images**, as shown in the following screenshot:



Tip The breadcrumb trail at the top of the main frame provides the context for the tabs across the head of the page. The **Structure** tab at the top left of the preceding screenshot refers to the structure of the **phpsol** database. To access the structure of an individual table, click the **Structure** link alongside the table's name.

2. Click the **Insert** tab in the center top of the page. This displays the following screen, ready for you to insert up to two records:

Server: 127.0.0.1 » Database: phpsols » Table: images

Column	Type	Function	Null	Value
image_id	int(10) unsigned			
filename	varchar(25)			
caption	varchar(120)			

Ignore

Column	Type	Function	Null	Value
image_id	int(10) unsigned			
filename	varchar(25)			
caption	varchar(120)			

Insert as new row and then [Go back to previous page](#) [Go](#) [Reset](#)

Continue insertion with [2](#) rows

- The forms display the names and details of each column. You can ignore the **Function** fields. MySQL has a large number of functions that you can apply to the values being stored in your table. You'll learn more about them in the following chapters. The **Value** field is where you enter the data you want to insert in the table.

Because you have defined `image_id` as `AUTO_INCREMENT`, MySQL inserts the next available number automatically. So you *must* leave the `image_id` **Value** field blank. Fill in the next two **Value** fields as follows:

- **filename:** **basin.jpg**
- **caption:** **Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto**

- In the second form, leave the Value field for `image_id`

blank and fill in the next two fields like this:

- **filename:** **fountains.jpg**
- **caption:** **Fountains in central Tokyo**

Normally, the **Ignore** check box is automatically deselected when you add values to the second form, but deselect it if necessary.

5. Click the **Go button at the bottom of the second form.** The SQL used to insert the records is displayed at the top of the page. I'll explain the basic SQL commands in the remaining chapters, but studying the SQL that phpMyAdmin displays is a good way to learn how to build your own queries. SQL is closely based on human language, so it isn't all that difficult to learn.
6. Click the **Browse** tab at the top left of the page. You should now see the first two entries in the **images** table, as shown here:

		image_id	filename	caption
<input type="checkbox"/>	  	1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
<input type="checkbox"/>	  	2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo

As you can see, MySQL has inserted **1** and **2** in the **image_id fields**.

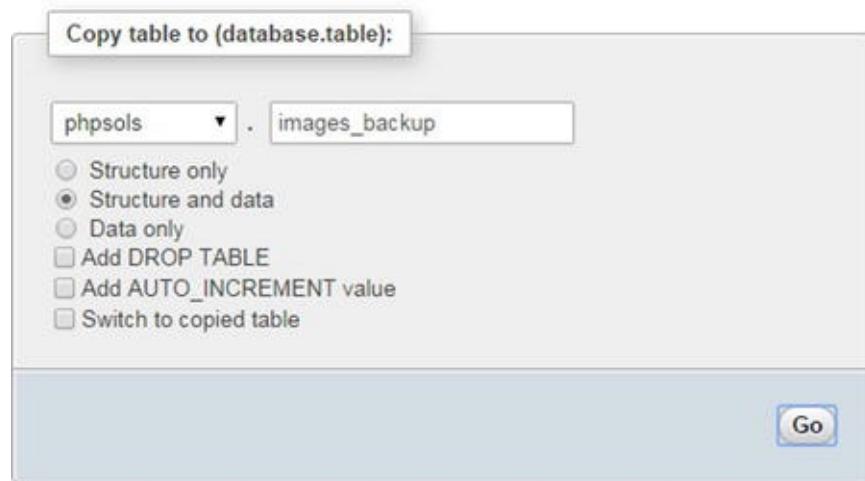
You could continue typing out the details of the remaining six images, but let's speed things up a bit by using an SQL file that contains all the necessary data.

Loading the images records from an SQL file

Because the primary key of the **images** table has been set to **AUTO_INCREMENT**, it's necessary to drop the table and all its data. The SQL file does this automatically and builds the table from scratch. These instructions assume that phpMyAdmin is open to the page in step 6 of the previous section.

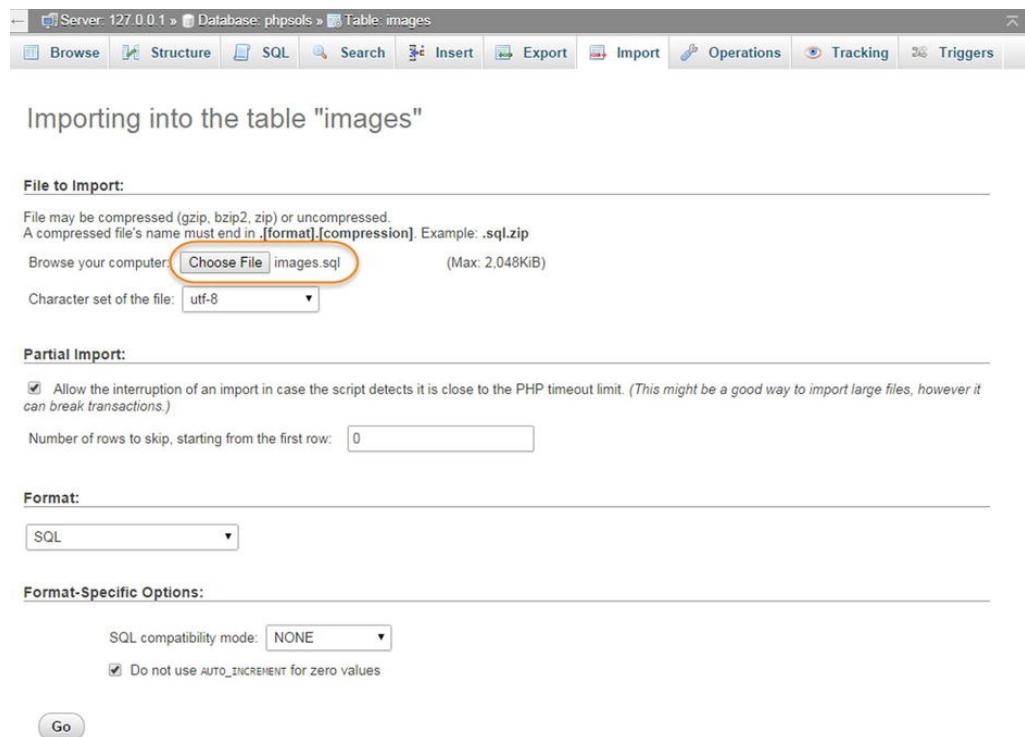
1. If you're happy to overwrite the data in the **images**

table, skip to step 2. However, if you have entered data that you don't want to lose, copy your data to a different table. Click the **Operations** tab at the top of the page, type the name of the new table in the blank field in the section titled **Copy table to (database.table)**, and click **Go**. The following screenshot shows the settings for copying the structure and data of the `images` table to `images_backup` within the `phpsols` database.



After clicking **Go** you should see confirmation that the table has been copied. The breadcrumb trail at the top of the page indicates that phpMyAdmin is still in the `images` table, so you can proceed to step 2, even though you have a different page onscreen.

2. Click the **Import** tab at the top of the page. In the next screen, click the **Browse** (or **Choose File**) button in **File to import**, then navigate to `images.sql` in the `ch10` folder. Leave all options at their default setting, and click **Go** at the foot of the page.



3. phpMyAdmin drops the original table, creates a new version, and inserts all the records. When you see confirmation that the file has been imported, click the **Browse** button at the top left of the page. You should now see the same data as shown in [Figure 10-1](#) at the beginning of the chapter.

If you open `images.sql` in a text editor, you'll see that it contains the SQL commands that create the `images` table and populate it with data. This is how the table is built:

```

DROP TABLE IF EXISTS `images`;
CREATE TABLE `images` (
  `image_id` int(10) unsigned NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT,
  `filename` varchar(25) NOT NULL,
  `caption` varchar(120) NOT NULL,
  PRIMARY KEY (`image_id`)
) ENGINE=InnoDB DEFAULT CHARSET=latin1
AUTO_INCREMENT=9 ;

```

Importing data from an SQL file like this is how you transfer data from your local testing environment to the remote server where your website is located.

Assuming that your hosting company provides phpMyAdmin for you to administer your remote database, all you need to do to transfer the data is to launch the version of phpMyAdmin on your remote server, click the **Import** tab, select the SQL file on your local computer, and click **Go**.

The next section describes how to create the SQL file.

Creating an SQL file for backup and data transfer

MySQL doesn't store your database in a single file that you can simply upload to your website. Even if you find the right files, you're likely to damage them unless the MySQL server is turned off. Anyway, most hosting companies won't permit you to upload the raw files because it would also involve shutting down their server, causing a great deal of inconvenience for everyone.

Nevertheless, moving a database from one server to another is easy. All it involves is creating a backup **dump** of the data and loading it into the other database using phpMyAdmin or any other database administration program. The dump is a text file that contains all the SQL commands needed to populate an individual table, or even an entire database. phpMyAdmin can create backups of your entire MySQL server, individual databases, selected tables, or individual tables.

Tip You don't need to read the details of how to create a dump file until you're ready to transfer data to another server or create a backup.

To keep things simple, these instructions show how to back up only a single database.

1. In phpMyAdmin, select the **phpsol**s database from the list on the left. If the database was already selected, click the **Database: phpsol**s breadcrumb at the top of the screen, as shown here:



2. Select **Export** from the tabs along the top of the screen.
3. There are two export methods: Quick and Custom. The Quick method has only one option for the format of the export file. The default is SQL, so all you have to do is click **Go**, and phpMyAdmin creates the SQL dump file and saves it to your browser's default Downloads folder. The file has the same name as the database, so for the `phpsols` database, it's called `phpsols.sql`.
4. The Quick method is okay for exporting a small amount of data, but you normally need more control over the export options; select the **Custom** radio button. There are a lot of options, so let's take a look at them section by section.
5. The **Table(s)** section lists all the tables in your database. By default all are selected, but you can choose which to export by clicking **Select All**, then holding down the Control key on Windows or the Command key on a Mac and selecting those that you want. In the following screenshot only the `images` table has been selected, so `images_backup` won't be exported.

Table(s):

Select All / Unselect All



Tip It's often a good idea to back up individual tables rather than an entire database because most PHP servers are configured to limit uploads to 2 MB. Compressing dump files, as described in the next step, also helps get

around size restrictions.

6. The **Output** section has radio buttons that give you the option of either saving the SQL dump to a file (this is the default) or viewing the output as text. Viewing as text can be useful if you want to check the SQL that's being generated before you create the file.

Output:

Save output to a file

File name template: use this for future exports

Character set of the file:

Compression:

View output as text

The File name template contains a value between @ marks. This automatically generates the filename from the server, database, or table, depending on what you're exporting. A really cool feature of the template is that you can enhance it with PHP `strftime()` formatting characters (see

<http://php.net/manual/en/function.strftime.php>

For example, you can add the current date automatically to the filename just before the filename extension, like this:

`@DATABASE@_%Y-%m-%d`

The default value of **Character set of the file** is utf-8. You need to change this only if your data is stored in a specific regional format.

Compression is a really useful option. By default dump files are not compressed, but the drop-down menu offers the option to use zip, gzip, or bzip compression. This can greatly reduce the size of the dump file, speeding up the transfer of data to another server. When importing a compressed file, phpMyAdmin automatically detects the

compression type and unzips it.

7. The **Format** section defaults to SQL but offers a range of other formats, including CSV, JSON, and XML.
8. In **Format-specific options**, you have the option to maximize output compatibility with different database systems or older versions of MySQL. Normally, the value should be set to the default: NONE.

Database system or older MySQL server to maximize output compatibility with: ▾
 structure
 data
 structure and data

The radio buttons give you the option to export only the structure, only the data, or both structure and data. Exporting both is the default.

If **you** select either the **structure** or **data** radio button, some of the remaining options are removed from the page.

9. The **Object creation options** section lets you fine-tune the SQL for creating databases and tables. The following screenshot shows the default settings.

Object creation options

Add statements:

Add CREATE DATABASE / USE statement
 Add DROP TABLE / VIEW / PROCEDURE / FUNCTION / EVENT statement
 Add CREATE PROCEDURE / FUNCTION / EVENT statement
 CREATE TABLE Options:
 IF NOT EXISTS
 AUTO_INCREMENT

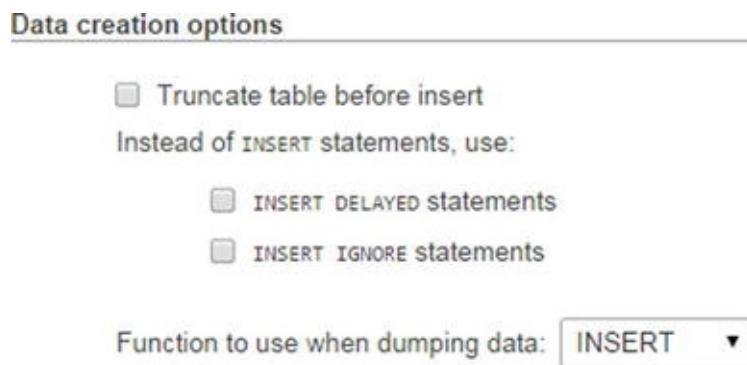
Enclose table and column names with backquotes (*Protects column and table names formed with special characters or keywords*)

When creating a backup, it's usually a good idea to select the **Add DROP TABLE / VIEW / PROCEDURE / FUNCTION / EVENT statement** check box, because a backup is normally used to replace existing data that has become corrupted.

The final check box, which is selected by default, wraps

table and column names in backquotes (backticks) to avoid problems with names that contain invalid characters or use reserved words. I suggest always leaving this selected.

10. The **Data creation options** section controls how data is inserted into tables. In most cases, the default settings are fine. However, you may be interested in changing the first four, which are shown in the following screenshot.



The first check box allows you to truncate the table before inserting the data. This is useful if you want to replace the existing data, perhaps if it has been corrupted.

The other two check boxes affect how `INSERT` commands are executed. `INSERT DELAYED` doesn't work with the default InnoDB tables. Moreover, it is deprecated as of MySQL 5.6.6, so it's probably best to avoid it.

`INSERT IGNORE` skips errors, such as duplicate primary keys. Personally, I think it's best to be alerted to errors, so I don't recommend using it.

The drop-down menu labeled `Function to use when dumping data` lets you choose `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, or `REPLACE`. The default is to insert new records with `INSERT`. If you select `UPDATE`, only existing records are updated. `REPLACE` updates where necessary, and inserts new records if they don't already

exist.

11. When you have made all your selections, click **GO** at the bottom of the page. You now have a backup that can be used to transfer the contents of your database to another server.
-

Tip By default, the file created by phpMyAdmin contains the SQL commands only to create and populate the database tables. It does not include the command to create the database unless you select the custom option to do so. This means you can import the tables into any database. It does not need to have the same name as the one in your local testing environment.

Choosing the Right Data Type in MySQL

You may have received a bit of a shock when selecting **Type** for the `image_id` column. phpMyAdmin lists all available data types—there are nearly 40 in MySQL 5.6. Rather than confuse you with unnecessary details, I'll explain just those most commonly used.

You can find full details of all data types in the MySQL documentation at <http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/data-types.html>.

Storing text

The difference between the main text data types boils down to the maximum number of characters that can be stored in an individual field, the treatment of trailing spaces, and whether you can set a default value.

- **CHAR:** A fixed-length string. You must specify the required length in the **Length/Values** field. The maximum permitted value is 255. Internally, strings are right-padded with spaces to the specified length, but the trailing spaces are stripped

when you retrieve the value. You can define a default.

- **VARCHAR:** A variable-length string. You must specify the maximum number of characters you plan to use (in phpMyAdmin, enter the number in the **Length/Values** field). Prior to MySQL 5.0, the limit was 255. This was increased to 65,535 in MySQL 5.0. If a string is stored with trailing spaces, they are preserved on retrieval. Accepts a default value.
- **TEXT:** Stores text up to a maximum of 65,535 characters (approximately 50% longer than this chapter). Cannot define a default value.

TEXT is convenient because you don't need to specify a maximum size (in fact, you can't). Although the maximum length of **VARCHAR** is the same as **TEXT** in MySQL 5.0 and later, other factors may limit the actual amount that can be stored.

 **Tip** Keep it simple: use **VARCHAR** for short text items and **TEXT** for longer ones.

Storing numbers

The most frequently used numeric column types are as follows:

- **INT:** Any whole number (integer) between -2,147,483,648 and 2,147,483,647. If the column is declared as **UNSIGNED**, the range is from 0 to 4,294,967,295.
- **FLOAT:** A floating-point number. You can optionally specify two comma-separated numbers to limit the range. The first number specifies the maximum number of digits, and the second specifies how many of those digits should come after the decimal point. Since PHP will format numbers after calculation, I recommend that you use **FLOAT** without the optional parameters.

- **DECIMAL**: A number with a fraction; contains a fixed number of digits after the decimal point. When defining the table, you need to specify the maximum number of digits and how many of those digits should come after the decimal point. In phpMyAdmin, enter the numbers separated by a comma in the **Length/Values** field. For example, 6,2 permits numbers in the range from -9999.99 to 9999.99. If you don't specify the size, the decimal fraction is truncated when values are stored in this type of column.

The difference between **FLOAT** and **DECIMAL** is accuracy. Floating-point numbers are treated as approximate values and are subject to rounding errors (for a detailed explanation, see

<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/problems-with-float.html>).

Use **DECIMAL** to store currencies. However, it's important to note that prior to MySQL 5.0.3, the **DECIMAL** data type was stored as a string, so it could not be used with SQL functions, such as **SUM()**, to perform calculations inside the database. If your remote server is running an older version of MySQL, store currencies in an **INT** column as cents; for pounds, use pence. Then use PHP to divide the result by 100 and format the currency as desired. Better still, move to a server that runs MySQL 5.0 or higher.

 **Caution** Don't use commas or spaces as the thousands separator. Apart from numerals, the only characters permitted in numbers are the negative operator (-) and the decimal point (.).

Storing dates and times

MySQL stores dates in one format only: YYYY-MM-DD. It's the standard approved by the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and avoids the ambiguity inherent in different national conventions. I'll return to the subject of dates in [Chapter 14](#). The most important column types for dates and times are as follows:

- DATE: A date stored as YYYY-MM-DD. The range is 1000-01-01 to 9999-12-31.
 - DATETIME: A combined date and time displayed in the format YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM:SS.
 - TIMESTAMP: A timestamp (normally generated automatically by the computer). Legal values range from the beginning of 1970 to partway through January 2038.
-

 **Caution** MySQL timestamps are based on a human-readable date and, since MySQL 4.1, use the same format as DATETIME. As a result, they are incompatible with Unix and PHP timestamps, which are based on the number of seconds elapsed since January 1, 1970. Don't mix them.

Storing predefined lists

MySQL lets you store two types of predefined lists that could be regarded as the database equivalents of radio-button and check-box states:

- ENUM: This column type stores a single choice from a predefined list, such as “yes, no, don’t know” or “male, female.” The maximum number of items that can be stored in the predefined list is a mind-boggling 65,535—some radio-button group!
- SET: This column type stores zero or more choices from a predefined list. The list can hold a maximum of 64 choices.

While ENUM is quite useful, SET tends to be less so, mainly because it violates the principle of storing only one piece of information in each field. The type of situation in which it can be useful is when recording optional extras on a car or multiple choices in a survey.

Storing binary data

Storing binary data, such as images, isn’t a good idea. It bloats your database,

and you can't display images directly from a database. However, the following column types are designed for binary data:

- **TINYBLOB**: Up to 255 bytes
- **BLOB**: Up to 64 KB
- **MEDIUMBLOB**: Up to 16 MB
- **LONGBLOB**: Up to 4 GB

With such whimsical names, it's a bit of a letdown to discover that **BLOB** stands for **binary large object**.

Chapter Review

Much of this chapter has been devoted to theory, explaining the basic principles of good database design. Instead of putting all the information you want to store in a single, large table like a spreadsheet, you need to plan the structure of your database carefully, moving repetitive information into separate tables. As long as you give each record in a table a unique identifier—its primary key—you can keep track of information and link it to related records in other tables through the use of foreign keys. The concept of using foreign keys can be difficult to understand at the outset, but it should become clearer by the end of this book.

You have also learned how to create MySQL user accounts with limited privileges, as well as how to define a table and import and export data using an SQL file. In the next chapter, you'll use PHP to connect to the `phpsol`s database in order to display the data stored in the `images` table.

CHAPTER 11



Connecting to a Database with PHP and SQL

PHP offers three different ways to connect to and interact with a MySQL database: the original MySQL extension, MySQL Improved (MySQLi), or PHP Data Objects (PDO). Which one you choose is an important decision, because they use incompatible code. You can't mix them in the same script. The original MySQL extension was deprecated in PHP 5.5 and will be removed at some unspecified date in the future. It's not covered in this book.

If you plan to use only MySQL (or its drop-in replacement, MariaDB), I recommend that you use MySQLi. It's designed specifically to work with MySQL and is fully compatible with MariaDB.

On the other hand, if database flexibility is important to you, choose PDO. The advantage of PDO is that it's software-neutral. In theory, at least, you can switch your website from MySQL to Microsoft SQL Server or a different database system by changing only a couple of lines of PHP code. In practice, you normally need to rewrite at least some of your SQL queries because each database vendor adds custom functions on top of the standard SQL.

The remaining chapters of this book cover both MySQLi and PDO. If you want to concentrate on only one of them, just ignore the sections that relate to the other.

Although PHP connects to the database and stores any results, the database queries need to be written in SQL. This chapter teaches you the basics of retrieving information stored in a table.

In this chapter, we'll cover the following:

- Connecting to MySQL and MariaDB with MySQLi and PDO

- Counting the number of records in a table
- Using `SELECT` queries to retrieve data and display it in a webpage
- Keeping data secure with prepared statements and other techniques

Checking Your Remote Server Setup

XAMPP and MAMP support both MySQLi and PDO, but you need to check the PHP configuration of your remote server to verify the degree of support it offers. Run `phpinfo()` on your remote server, scroll down the configuration page, and look for the following sections. They're listed alphabetically, so you'll need to scroll down a long way to find them.

mysql

MySQL Support	enabled	
Active Persistent Links	0	
Active Links	0	
Client API version	mysqlnd 5.0.11-dev - 20120503 - \$Id: 40933630edef551dfaca71298a83fad8d03d62d4 \$	

Directive	Local Value	Master Value
mysql.allow_local_infile	On	On
mysql.allow_persistent	On	On
mysql.connect_timeout	3	3

mysql.trace_mode	Off	Off
------------------	-----	-----

mysqli

Mysqli Support	enabled	
Client API library version	mysqlnd 5.0.11-dev - 20120503 - \$Id: 40933630edef551dfaca71298a83fad8d03d62d4 \$	
Active Persistent Links	0	
Inactive Persistent Links	0	
Active Links	0	

Directive	Local Value	Master Value
mysql.allow_local_infile	On	On

PDO

PDO support	enabled	
PDO drivers	mysql, sqlite	

pdo_mysql

PDO Driver for MySQL	enabled	
Client API version	mysqlnd 5.0.11-dev - 20120503 - \$Id: 40933630edef551dfaca71298a83fad8d03d62d4 \$	

All hosting companies should have the first two sections (**mysql** and **mysqli**). If only the first one is listed, you're on a server that's dangerously out of date. Your host should have at least **mysqli** listed. If you plan to use PDO, you not only need to check that PDO is enabled, but you must also make sure that **pdo_mysql** is listed. PDO requires a different driver for each type of database.

CUTTING THROUGH THE CONFUSION

PHP's decision to deprecate the original MySQL extension along with uncertainty about Oracle's plans for MySQL have led some people to declare that MySQL is dead. It's not. As mentioned in the previous chapter, MySQL ranked as the number two database in late 2014. The number one database was Oracle. A company that owns the top two databases is hardly likely to kill such a successful product. Even if it does, MariaDB is a seamless replacement for MySQL.

Most of the code that runs MariaDB is identical because MySQL is an open source project. Many of the engineers working on MariaDB came from the original MySQL team, so they're eminently qualified to maintain and develop it. MariaDB has started adding new features while maintaining all of MySQL's core functionality. Unless you need MariaDB's new features, MySQL and MariaDB are interchangeable.

PHP's decision to drop the original MySQL extension is completely unrelated. MySQL Improved (MySQLi) was introduced in PHP 5.0 in 2004 as a replacement for the original MySQL extension, but the slow adoption of PHP 5 made it impossible to phase out the old functions.

Although this book doesn't use the original MySQL extension, you need to be aware of its existence and know how to identify scripts that use it. All functions in the original MySQL extension begin with **mysql_**. Avoid all scripts, articles, and books that use them. They're now hopelessly out of date.

MySQLi can be written two ways: using ordinary functions (procedural code) or using objects. In this book, I use MySQLi objects because they involve less typing. However, if you come across other

sources that use MySQLi functions, you can recognize them because they begin with `mysqli_`. However, beware: most of them have `mysql_` equivalents. For example, `mysql_connect()` and `mysqli_connect()`, `mysql_query()` and `mysqli_query()`, and so on. At first glance, they're easy to mix up. The only difference in name is the letter “*i*” before the underscore. In spite of their similarity, conversion from the old function to the new one isn't simply a question of inserting that “*i*.” The arguments taken by the functions are usually slightly different.

Finally, if you're concerned about the future of MySQL, the simple answer is to learn how to use PDO. There are PDO drivers for more than 10 major databases. You might need to make some changes to the SQL so as to work with a different database, but all the PHP code taught in this book will be exactly the same.

How PHP Communicates with a Database

Regardless of whether you use MySQLi or PDO, the process always follows this sequence:

1. Connect to the database using the hostname, username, password, and database name.
2. Prepare an SQL query.
3. Execute the query and save the result.
4. Extract the data from the result (usually with a loop).

Username and password are the usernames and passwords of the accounts you have just created or of the account given to you by your hosting company. But what about hostname? In a local testing environment it's `localhost`. What comes as a surprise is that it's often `localhost` even on a remote server. This is because in many cases the database server is located on the same server as your website. In other words, the web server that displays your pages and the database server are local to each other. However, if the database server is on a

separate machine, your hosting company will tell you the address to use. The important thing to understand is that the hostname is not the same as your website's domain name.

Let's take a quick look at how you connect to a database with each of the methods.

Connecting with the MySQL Improved extension

MySQLi has two interfaces: procedural and object-oriented. The procedural interface is designed to ease the transition from the original MySQL functions. Since the object-oriented version is more compact, that's the version adopted here.

To connect to MySQL or MariaDB, you create a `mysqli` object by passing four arguments to the constructor method: the hostname, username, password, and name of the database. This is how you connect to the `phpsols` database:

```
$conn = new mysqli($hostname, $username, $password,  
'phpsols');
```

This stores the connection object as `$conn`.

If your database server uses a nonstandard port, you need to pass the port number as a fifth argument to the `mysqli` constructor.

 **Tip** MAMP uses a socket connection to MySQL, so there's no need to add the port number even if MySQL is listening on port 8889. This applies to both MySQLi and PDO.

Connecting with PDO

PDO requires a slightly different approach. The most important difference is that PDO throws an exception if the connection fails. If you don't catch the exception, the debugging information displays all the connection details, including your username and password. Consequently, you need to wrap the code in a `try` block and catch the exception to prevent sensitive information

from being displayed.

The first argument to the PDO constructor method is a **data source name** (DSN). This is a string that consists of the PDO driver name followed by a colon, followed by PDO driver-specific connection details.

To connect to MySQL or MariaDB, the DSN needs to be in the following format:

```
'mysql:host=hostname;dbname=databaseName'
```

If your database server is using a nonstandard port, the DSN should also contain the port number, like this:

```
'mysql:host=hostname;port=portNumber;dbname=databaseName'
```

After the DSN, you pass the username and password to the PDO() constructor method. So the code to connect to the phpsols database looks like this:

```
try {
    $conn = new
PDO("mysql:host=$hostname;dbname=phpsols", $username,
$password);
} catch (PDOException $e) {
    echo $e->getMessage();
}
```

Using echo to display the message generated by the exception is acceptable during testing, but when you deploy the script on a live website, you need to redirect the user to an error page, as described in PHP Solution 4-8.

 **Tip** The DSN is the only part of the PHP code that you need to change in order to connect to a different database system. All the remaining PDO code is completely database-neutral. Details of how to create the DSN for PostgreSQL, Microsoft SQL Server, SQLite, and other database systems can be found at <http://php.net/manual/en/pdo.drivers.php>.

PHP Solution 11-1: Making a reusable database

connector

Connecting to a database is a routine chore that needs to be performed in every page from now on. This PHP solution creates a simple function stored in an external file that connects to the database. It's designed mainly for testing the different MySQLi and PDO scripts in the remaining chapters without the need to retype the connection details each time or to switch between different connection files.

1. Create a file called `connection.php` in the `includes` folder and insert the following code (there's a copy of the completed script in the `ch11` folder):

```
<?php
function dbConnect($usertype,
$connectionType = 'mysqli') {
    $host = 'localhost';
    $db = 'phpsols';
    if ($usertype == 'read') {
        $user = 'psread';
        $pwd = 'K1y0mi$u';
    } elseif ($usertype == 'write') {
        $user = 'pswrite';
        $pwd = '0Ch@Nom1$u';
    } else {
        exit('Unrecognized user');
    }
    // Connection code goes here
}
```

The function takes two arguments: the user type and the connection type. The second argument defaults to `mysqli`. If you want to concentrate on using PDO, set the default value of the second argument to `pdo`.

The first two lines inside the function store the names of the host server and the database that you want to connect to.

The conditional statement checks the value of the first argument and switches between the `psread` and `pswrite` username and password as appropriate. If the user account is unrecognized, the `exit()` function halts the script and displays **Unrecognized user**.

2. Replace the Connection code goes here comment with the following:

```
if ($connectionType == 'mysqli') {  
    $conn = @ new mysqli($host, $user,  
    $pwd, $db);  
    if ($conn->connect_error) {  
        exit($conn->connect_error);  
    }  
    return $conn;  
} else {  
    try {  
        return new  
PDO("mysql:host=$host;dbname=$db",  
        $user, $pwd);  
    } catch (PDOException $e) {  
        echo $e->getMessage();  
    }  
}
```

If the second argument is set to `mysqli`, a MySQLi connection object called `$conn` is created. The error control operator (@) prevents the constructor method from displaying error messages. If the connection fails, the reason is stored in the object's `connect_error` property. If it's empty, it's treated as `false`, so the next line is skipped, and the `$conn` object is returned. But if there's a problem, `exit()` displays the value of `connect_error` and brings the script to a halt.

Otherwise, the function returns a PDO connection object. There's no need to use the error control operator with the PDO constructor because it throws a `PDOException` if

there's a problem. The `catch` block uses the exception's `getMessage()` method to display the cause of the problem.

Tip If your database server uses a nonstandard port, don't forget to add the port number as the fifth argument to the `mysqli()` constructor and to include it in the PDO DSN, as described in the preceding sections. This isn't necessary if the database uses a socket connection, which is common on Mac OS X and Linux.

3. Create a file called `connection_test.php` in the `phpsols` site root folder and insert the following code:

```
<?php
require_once
'./includes/connection.php';
if ($conn = dbConnect('read')) {
    echo 'Connection successful';
}
```

This includes the connection script, and tests it with the `psread` user account and MySQLi.

4. Save the page and load it in a browser. If you see **Connection successful**, all is well. If you get an error message, consult the troubleshooting hints in the next section.
5. Test the connection with the `pswrite` user and MySQLi:

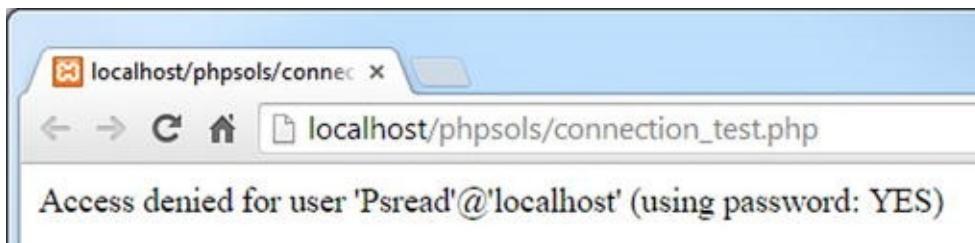
```
if ($conn = dbConnect('write')) {
    echo 'Connection successful';
}
```

6. Test both user accounts with PDO by adding '`pdo`' as the second argument to `dbConnect()`.
7. Assuming all went well, you're ready to start interacting with the `phpsols` database. If you ran into problems,

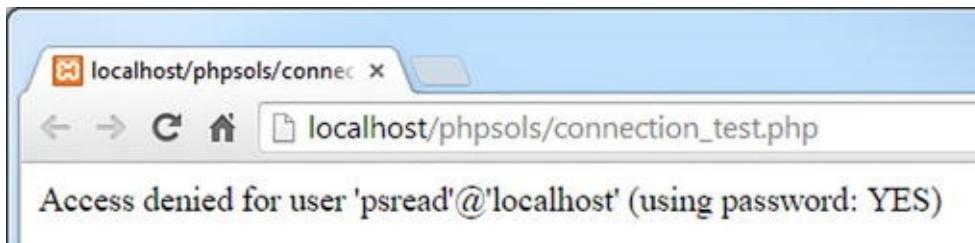
check out the next section.

Troubleshooting database connection problems

The most common cause of failure when connecting to a database is getting the username or password wrong. Passwords and usernames are case-sensitive. Check the spelling carefully. For example, the following screenshot shows what happens if you change `psread` to `Psread`.



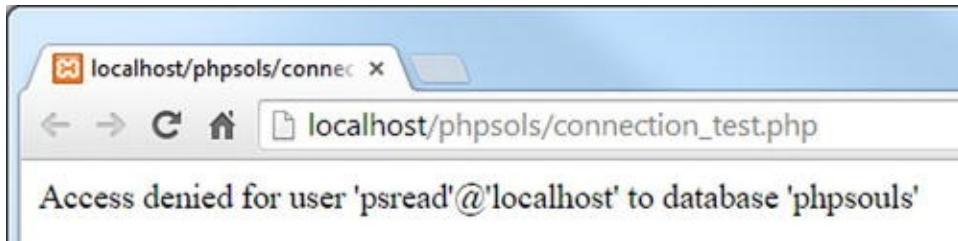
Access has been denied because there's no such user. The initial cap in the username makes all the difference. But even if the username is right, you may get the same error message, like this:



This totally confuses many people. The error message confirms that you're using a password. So why is access denied? It's the wrong password, that's why.

If the error message says **using password: NO**, it means you've forgotten to supply the password. The phrase **using password** is a clue that the problem is related to login credentials.

When the phrase is missing, it indicates a different problem, as shown in the next screenshot.



The problem here is that the name of the database is incorrect. If you misspell the host, you'll get a message that no such host is known.

The screenshots in this section were generated by MySQLi. PDO generates the same messages, but includes error numbers and codes as well.

Querying the database and displaying the results

Before you attempt to display the results of a database query, it's a good idea to find out how many results there are. If there aren't any results, you'll have nothing to display. It's also necessary for creating a navigation system for paging through a long set of results (you'll learn how to do that in the next chapter). In user authentication (covered in [Chapter 17](#)), no results when searching for a username and password mean that the login should fail.

MySQLi and PDO use different approaches to counting and displaying results. The next two PHP solutions show how to do it with MySQLi. For PDO, skip ahead to PHP Solution 11-4.

PHP Solution 11-2: Counting records in a result set (MySQLi)

This PHP solution shows how to submit an SQL query that selects all the records in the `images` table and stores the result in a `MySQLi_Result` object. The object's `num_rows` property contains the number of records retrieved by the query.

1. Create a new folder called `mysqli` in the `phpsols` site root, then create a new file called `mysqli.php` inside the folder. The page will eventually be used to display a table, so it should have a `DOCTYPE` declaration and an HTML skeleton.

2. Include the connection file in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration, and connect to the `phpsol`s database using the account with read-only privileges like this:

```
require_once  
'../includes/connection.php';  
$conn = dbConnect('read');
```

3. Next, prepare the SQL query. Add this code immediately after the previous step (but before the closing PHP tag):

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images';
```

This means “select everything from the `images` table.” The asterisk (*) is shorthand for “all columns.”

4. Now execute the query by calling the `query()` method on the connection object and passing the SQL query as an argument, like this:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
```

The result is stored in a variable, which I have imaginatively named `$result`.

5. If there’s a problem, `$result` will be `false`. To find out what the problem is, we need get the error message, which is stored as the `error` property of the `mysqli` connection object. Add the following conditional statement after the previous line:

```
if (!$result) {  
    $error = $conn->error;  
}
```

6. Assuming there’s no problem, `$result` now holds a `MySQLi_Result` object, which has a property called `num_rows`. To get the number of records found by the query, add an `else` block to the conditional statement and assign the value to a variable, like this:

```
if (!$result) {  
    $error = $conn->error;  
} else {  
    $numRows = $result->num_rows;  
}
```

7. You can now display the result in the body of the page like this:

```
<?php  
if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p>$error</p>";  
} else {  
    echo "<p>A total of $numRows  
records were found.</p>";  
}  
?>
```

If there's a problem, `$error` will have been set, so it's displayed. Otherwise, the `else` block shows the number of records found. Both strings embed variables, so they're enclosed in double quotes.

8. Save `mysqli.php` and load it into a browser. You should see the following result:



Check your code, if necessary, with `mysqli_01.php` in the `ch11` folder.

PHP Solution 11-3: Displaying the images table using MySQLi

The most common way to display the results of a `SELECT` query is to use a loop

to extract one row from the result set at a time. `MySQLi_Result` has a method called `fetch_assoc()` that retrieves the current row as an associative array ready for display in the webpage. Each element in the array is named after the corresponding column in the table.

This PHP solution shows how to loop through a `MySQLi_Result` object to display the results of a `SELECT` query. Continue using the file from PHP Solution 11-2.

1. Remove the closing curly brace at the end of the `else` block in the body of the page (it should be around line 25). Although most of the code to display the `images` table is HTML, it needs to be inside the `else` block.
2. Insert a blank line after the closing PHP tag and add the closing brace on the next line in a separate PHP block.
The revised code should look like this:

```
} else {
    echo "<p>A total of $ numRows
records were found.</p>";
?>

<?php } ?>
</body>
```

3. Add the following table between the two PHP blocks in the main body of `mysqli.php` so that it's controlled by the `else` block. The reason for doing this is to prevent errors if the SQL query fails. The PHP code that displays the result set is highlighted in bold.

```
<table>
    <tr>
        <th>image_id</th>
        <th>filename</th>
        <th>caption</th>
    </tr>
    <?php while ($row = $result->fetch_assoc())
{ ?>
    <tr>
```

```

<td><?= $row['image_id']; ?></td>
<td><?= $row['filename']; ?></td>
<td><?= $row['caption']; ?></td>
</tr>
<?php } ?>
</table>

```

The `while` loop iterates through the database result, using the `fetch_assoc()` method to extract each record into `$row`. Each element of `$row` is displayed in a table cell. The loop continues until `fetch_assoc()` comes to the end of the result set.

- Save `mysqli.php` and view it in a browser. You should see the contents of the `images` table displayed as shown in the following screenshot:

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

You can compare your code, if necessary, with `mysql_02.php` in the `ch11` folder.

MySQLi connection crib sheet

Table 11-1 summarizes the basic details of connection and database queries for

MySQLi.

Table 11-1. Connection to MySQL/MariaDB with the MySQL Improved object-oriented interface

Action	Usage	Comments
Connect	\$conn = new mysqli(\$h, \$u, \$p, \$d);	All arguments optional; first four always needed in practice: hostname, username, password, database name. Creates connection object.
Choose DB	\$conn->select_db('dbName');	Use to select a different database.
Submit query	\$result = \$conn->query(\$sql);	Returns result object.
Count results	\$numRows = \$result->num_rows;	Returns number of rows in result object.
Extract record	\$row = \$result->fetch_assoc();	Extracts current row from result object as associative array.
Extract record	\$row = \$result->fetch_row();	Extracts current row from result object as indexed (numbered) array.

PHP Solution 11-4: Counting records in a result set (PDO)

PDO doesn't have a direct equivalent to the MySQLi `num_rows` property. With most databases you need to execute an SQL query to count the number of items in the table and then fetch the result. However, the PDO `rowCount()` method fulfills a dual purpose with both MySQL and MariaDB. Normally, it reports only the number of rows affected by inserting, updating, or deleting records, but with MySQL and MariaDB, it also reports the number of records found by a `SELECT` query.

1. Create a new folder called `pdo` in the `phpsol1` site. Then create a file called `pdo.php` in the folder you have just created. The page will eventually be used to display a table, so it should have a `DOCTYPE` declaration and an HTML skeleton.
2. Include the connection file in a PHP block above the

DOCTYPE declaration, then create a PDO connection to the `phpsol`s database using the read-only account, like this:

```
require_once  
'./includes/connection.php';  
$conn = dbConnect('read', 'pdo');
```

3. Next, prepare the SQL query:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images';
```

This means “select every record in the `images` table.” The asterisk (*) is shorthand for “all columns.”

4. Now execute the query and store the result in a variable, like this:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
```

5. To check if there’s a problem with the query, you can get an array of error messages from the database using the connection object’s `errorInfo()` method. The third element of the array is created only if something goes wrong. Add the following code to the script:

```
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();  
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {  
    $error = $errorInfo[2];  
}
```

The array generated by `$conn->errorInfo()` is stored as `$errorInfo`, so you can tell if anything went wrong by using `isset()` to check whether `$errorInfo[2]` has been defined. If it has, the error message is assigned to `$error`.

6. To get the number of rows in the result set, create an `else` block and call the `rowCount()` method on the `$result` object, like this:

```
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
```

```
        $error = $errorInfo[2];
    } else {
        $numRows = $result->rowCount();
    }
}
```

7. You can now display the outcome of the query in the body of the page, as follows:

```
<?php
if (isset($error)) {
    echo "<p>$error</p>";
} else {
    echo "<p>A total of $numRows
records were found.</p>";
}
?>
```

8. Save the page and load it into a browser. You should see the same result as shown in step 8 of PHP Solution 11-2. Check your code, if necessary, with pdo_01.php.

Counting records with PDO in other databases

Using the PDO `rowCount()` to report the number of items found by a `SELECT` query works with both MySQL and MariaDB, but it cannot be guaranteed to work on all other databases. If `rowCount()` doesn't work, use the following code instead:

```
// prepare the SQL query
$sql = 'SELECT COUNT(*) FROM images';
// submit the query and capture the result
$result = $conn->query($sql);
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
    $error = $errorInfo[2];
} else {
    // find out how many records were retrieved
    $numRows = $result->fetchColumn();
    // free the database resource
    $result->closeCursor();
```

```
}
```

This uses the SQL COUNT() function with an asterisk to count all items in the table. There's only one result, so it can be retrieved with the `fetchColumn()` method, which gets the first column from a database result. After storing the result in `$ numRows`, you must call the `closeCursor()` method to free the database resource for any further queries.

PHP Solution 11-5: Displaying the images table using PDO

To display the results of a SELECT query with PDO, you can use the `query()` method in a `foreach` loop to extract the current row as an associative array. Each element in the array is named after the corresponding column in the table.

Continue working with the same file as in the previous PHP solution.

1. Remove the closing curly brace at the end of the `else` block in the body of the page (it should be around line 26). Although most of the code to display the `images` table is HTML, it needs to be inside the `else` block.
2. Insert a blank line after the closing PHP tag, then add the closing brace on the next line in a separate PHP block.
The revised code should look like this:

```
} else {
    echo "<p>A total of $numRows
records were found.</p>";
?>

<?php } ?>
</body>
```

3. Add the following table between the two PHP blocks in the main body of `pdo . php` so that it's controlled by the `else` block. This is to prevent errors if the SQL query fails. The PHP code that displays the result set is displayed in bold.

```

<table>
  <tr>
    <th>image_id</th>
    <th>filename</th>
    <th>caption</th>
  </tr>
  <?php foreach ($conn->query($sql) as $row)>
{ ?>
  <tr>
    <td><?php echo $row['image_id']; ?>
  </td>
    <td><?php echo $row['filename']; ?>
  </td>
    <td><?php echo $row['caption']; ?>
  </td>
  </tr>
  <?php } ?>
</table>

```

- Save the page and view it in a browser. It should look like the screenshot in PHP Solution 11-3. You can compare your code against pdo_02.php in the ch11 folder.

PDO connection crib sheet

[Table 11-2](#) summarizes the basic details of connection and database queries with PDO. Some commands will be used in later chapters, but are included here for ease of reference.

Table 11-2. Database connection with PDO

Action	Usage	Comments
Connect	\$conn = new PDO(\$DSN, \$u, \$p);	In practice, requires three arguments: data source name (DSN), username, password. Must be wrapped in try/catch block.
Submit SELECT query	\$result = \$conn->query(\$sql);	Returns results as a PDOStatement object.
Extract records	foreach(\$conn->query(\$sql) as	Submits SELECT query and gets current row as associative array in a single operation

records	<code>query(\$sql)</code>	associative array in a single operation.
	<code>\$row) {</code>	
Count results	<code>\$numRows = \$result->rowCount()</code>	In MySQL/MariaDB, returns number of results from SELECT. Not supported in most other databases.
Get single result	<code>\$item = \$result->fetchColumn();</code>	Gets first record in first column of result. To get result from other columns, use column number (counting from 0) as argument.
Get next record	<code>\$row = \$result->fetch();</code>	Gets next row from result set as associative array.
Release DB resources	<code>\$result->closeCursor();</code>	Frees up connection to allow new query.
Submit non-SELECT query	<code>\$affected = \$conn->exec(\$sql);</code>	Although <code>query()</code> can be used for non-SELECT queries, <code>exec()</code> returns the number of affected rows.

Using SQL to Interact with a Database

As you have just seen, PHP connects to the database, sends the query, and receives the results, but the query itself needs to be written in SQL. Although SQL is a common standard, there are many dialects of SQL. Each database vendor, including MySQL, has added extensions to the standard language. These improve efficiency and functionality, but are usually incompatible with other databases. The SQL in this book works with MySQL 5.1 or later, but it won't necessarily transfer to Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, or another database.

Writing SQL queries

SQL syntax doesn't have many rules, and all of them are quite simple.

SQL is case-insensitive

The query that retrieves all records from the `images` table looks like this:

```
SELECT * FROM images
```

The words in uppercase are SQL keywords. This is purely a convention. The following are all equally correct:

```
SELECT * FROM images
select * from images
SeLEcT * fRoM images
```

Although SQL keywords are case-insensitive, the same *doesn't* apply to database column names. The advantage of using uppercase for keywords is that it makes SQL queries easier to read. You're free to choose whichever style suits you best, but the ransom-note style of the last example is probably best avoided.

Whitespace is ignored

This allows you to spread SQL queries over several lines for increased readability. The one place where whitespace is *not* allowed is between a function name and the opening parenthesis. The following generates an error:

```
SELECT COUNT (*) FROM images /* BAD EXAMPLE */
```

The space needs to be closed up like this:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM images /* CORRECT */
```

As you probably gathered from these examples, you can add comments to SQL queries by putting them between `/*` and `*/`.

Strings must be quoted

All strings must be quoted in an SQL query. It doesn't matter whether you use single or double quotes, as long as they are in matching pairs. However, it's normally better to use MySQLi- or PDO prepared statements, as explained later in this chapter.

Handling numbers

As a general rule, numbers should not be quoted, as anything in quotes is a string. However, MySQL accepts numbers enclosed in quotes and treats them as their numeric equivalent. Be careful to distinguish between a real number and any other data type made up of numbers. For instance, a date is made up of numbers but should be enclosed in quotes and stored in a date-related column type. Similarly, telephone numbers should be enclosed in quotes and stored in a text-related column type.

 **Note** SQL queries normally end with a semicolon, which is an instruction to the database to execute the query. When using PHP, the semicolon must be omitted from the SQL. Consequently, standalone examples of SQL are presented throughout this book without a concluding semicolon.

Refining the data retrieved by a SELECT query

The only SQL query you have run so far retrieves all records from the `images` table. Much of the time, you want to be more selective.

Selecting specific columns

Using an asterisk to select all columns is a convenient shortcut, but you should normally specify only those columns you need. List the column names separated by commas after the `SELECT` keyword. For example, this query selects only the `filename` and `caption` fields for each record:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images
```

You can test this in `mysqli_03.php` and `pdo_03.php` in the `ch11` folder.

Changing the order of results

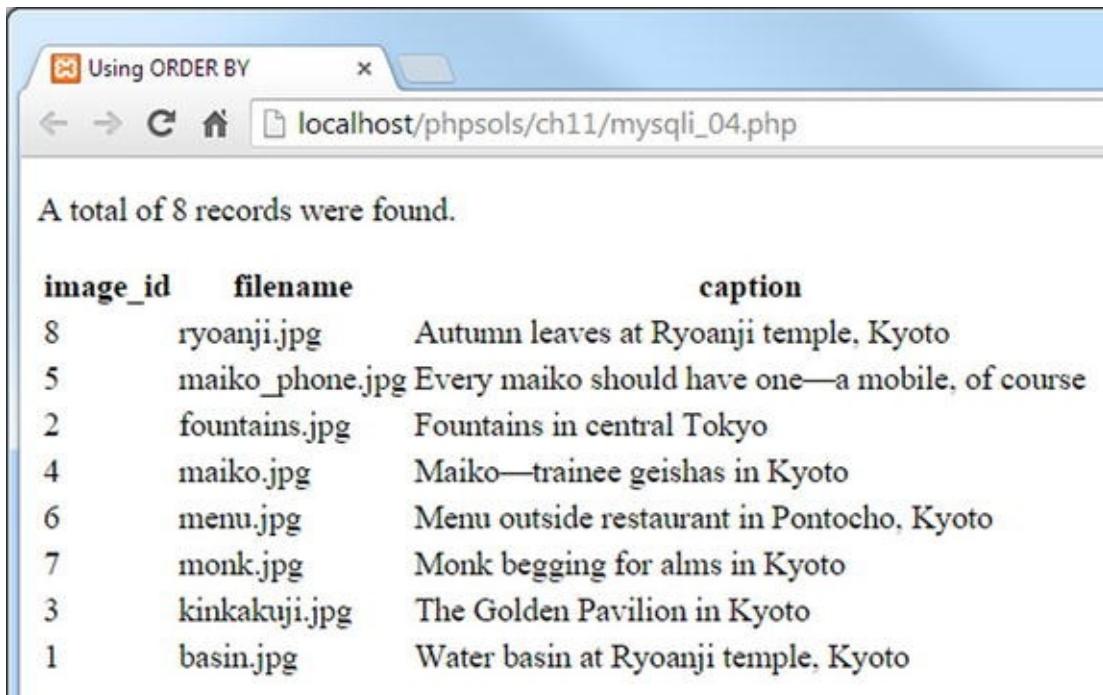
To control the sort order, add an `ORDER BY` clause with the name(s) of the column(s) in order of precedence. Separate multiple columns by commas. The following query sorts the captions from the `images` table in alphabetical order

(the code is in `mysqli_04.php` and `pdo_04.php`):

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images ORDER BY caption';
```

Note This semicolon is part of the PHP statement, not part of the SQL query.

The preceding query produces this output:



image_id	filename	caption
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

To reverse the sort order, add the `DESC` (for “descending”) keyword like this (there are examples in `mysqli_05.php` and `pdo_05.php`):

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images ORDER BY caption DESC';
```

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

There is also an `ASC` (for “ascending”) keyword. It’s the default sort order, so is normally omitted.

However, specifying `ASC` increases clarity when columns in the same table are sorted in a different order. For example, if you publish multiple articles every day, you could use the following query to display titles in alphabetical order, but ordered by the date of publication with the most recent ones first:

```
SELECT * FROM articles
ORDER BY published DESC, title ASC
```

Searching for specific values

To search for specific values, add a `WHERE` clause to the `SELECT` query. The `WHERE` clause follows the name of the table. For example, the query in `mysqli_06.php` and `pdo_06.php` looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images
        WHERE image_id = 6';
```

 **Note** SQL uses one equal sign to test for equality, unlike PHP, which uses two.

It produces the following result:



image_id	filename	caption
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto

In addition to testing for equality, a `WHERE` clause can use comparison operators, such as greater than (`>`) and less than (`<`). Rather than go through all the options now, I'll introduce others as needed. [Chapter 13](#) has a comprehensive roundup of the four main SQL commands: `SELECT`, `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, and `DELETE`, including a list of the main comparison operators used with `WHERE`.

If used in combination with `ORDER BY`, the `WHERE` clause must come first. For example (the code is in `mysqli_07.php` and `pdo_07.php`):

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images
        WHERE image_id > 5
        ORDER BY caption DESC';
```

This selects the three images that have an `image_id` greater than 5 and sorts them by their captions in reverse order.

Searching for text with wildcard characters

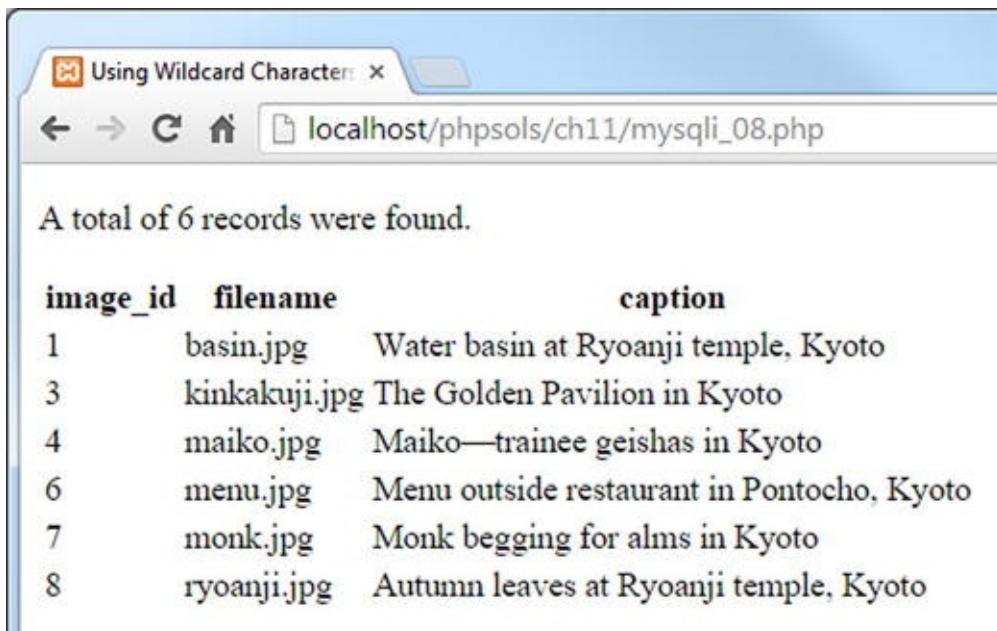
In SQL, the percentage sign (%) is a wildcard character that matches anything or nothing. It's used in a `WHERE` clause in conjunction with the `LIKE` keyword.

The query in `mysqli_08.php` and `pdo_08.php` looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images
        WHERE caption LIKE "%Kyoto%"';
```

It searches for all records in the `images` table where the `caption` column

contains “Kyoto,” and produces the following result:



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Using Wildcard Characters". The address bar displays "localhost/phpsols/ch11/mysql_08.php". The page content starts with the message "A total of 6 records were found." followed by a table with the following data:

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

As the preceding screenshot shows, it finds six records out of the eight in the `images` table. All the captions end with “Kyoto,” so the wildcard character at the end is matching nothing, whereas the wildcard at the beginning matches the rest of each caption.

If you omit the leading wildcard ("Kyoto%"), the query searches for captions that begin with “Kyoto.” None of them do, so you get no results from the search.

The query in `mysqli_09.php` and `pdo_09.php` looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images  
        WHERE caption LIKE "%maiko%"';
```

It produces the following result:

image_id	filename	caption
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course

The query spells “maiko” all in lowercase, but the query also finds it with an initial capital. Wildcard searches with `LIKE` are case-insensitive.

To perform a case-sensitive search, you need to add the `BINARY` keyword like this (the code is in `mysqli_10.php` and `pdo_10.php`):

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE BINARY "%maiko%"';
```

All the examples you have seen so far have been hard-coded, but most of the time, the values used in SQL queries need to come from user input. Unless you’re careful, this puts you at risk of a malicious exploit known as SQL injection. The rest of this chapter explains this danger and how to avoid it.

Understanding the Danger of SQL Injection

SQL injection is very similar to the email header injection I warned you about in [Chapter 5](#). An injection attack tries to insert spurious conditions into an SQL query in an attempt to expose or corrupt your data. The meaning of the following query should be easy to understand:

```
SELECT * FROM users WHERE username = 'xyz' AND pwd  
= 'abc'
```

It’s the basic pattern for a login application. If the query finds a record where `username` is `xyz` and `pwd` is `abc`, you know that a correct combination of `username` and `password` have been submitted, so the login succeeds. All an

attacker needs to do is inject an extra condition like this:

```
SELECT * FROM users WHERE username = 'xyz' AND pwd  
= 'abc' OR 1 = 1
```

The OR means that only one of the conditions needs to be true, so the login succeeds even without a correct username and password. SQL injection relies on quotes and other control characters not being properly escaped when part of the query is derived from a variable or user input.

There are several strategies you can adopt to prevent SQL injection, depending on the situation:

- If the variable is an integer (for example, the primary key of a record), use `is_numeric()` and the `(int)` casting operator to ensure it's safe to insert in the query.
- If you are using MySQLi, pass each variable to the `real_escape_string()` method before inserting it in the query.
- The PDO equivalent of `real_escape_string()` is the `quote()` method, but it doesn't work with all databases. The PDO documentation advises against using `quote()`, strongly recommending the use of prepared statements instead.
- Use a **prepared statement**. In a prepared statement, placeholders in the SQL query represent values that come from user input. The PHP code automatically wraps strings in quotes and escapes embedded quotes and other control characters. The syntax is different for MySQLi and PDO.
- None of the preceding strategies is suitable for column names, which must not be enclosed in quotes. To use a variable for column names, create an array of acceptable values and check that the submitted value is in the array before inserting it into the query.

With the exception of `quote()`, let's take a look at using each of these techniques.



PHP Solution 11-6: Inserting an integer from user input into a query

This PHP solution shows how to sanitize a variable from user input to make sure it contains only an integer before inserting the value into an SQL query. The technique is the same for both MySQLi and PDO.

1. Copy either `mysqli_integer_01.php` or `pdo_integer_01.php` from the `ch11` folder to the `mysqli` or `pdo` folder. Each file contains an SQL query that selects the `image_id` and `filename` columns from the `images` table. In the body of the page, there's a form with a drop-down menu that is populated by a loop that runs through the results of the SQL query. The MySQLi version looks like this:

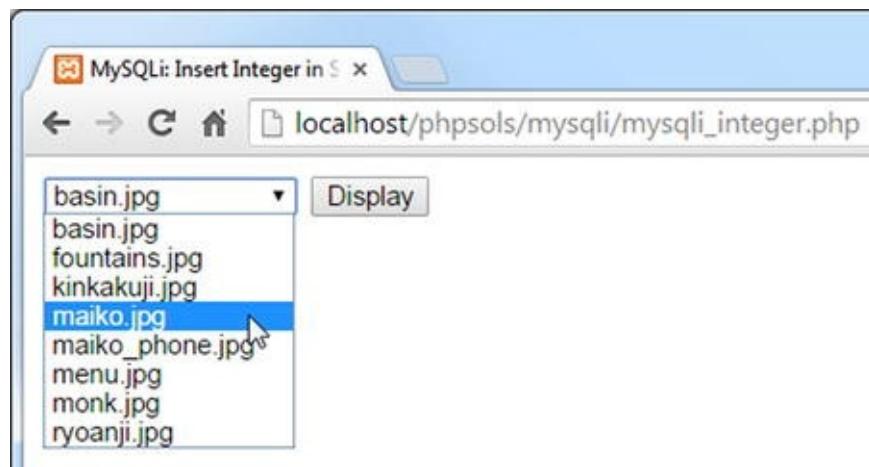
```
<form action="" method="get">
    <select name="image_id">
        <?php while ($row = $images->fetch_assoc())
{ ?>
            <option value="<?= $row['image_id']; ?>">
                <?php if (isset($_GET['image_id']))
&&
                    $_GET['image_id'] ==
$row['image_id']) {
                        echo 'selected';
                    } ?>
                ><?= $row['filename']; ?></option>
        <?php } ?>
    </select>
    <input type="submit" name="go"
value="Display">
</form>
```

The form uses the `get` method and assigns the `image_id` to the `value` attribute of the `<option>` tags. If `$_GET['image_id']` has the same value as `$row['image_id']`, the current `image_id` is the same as that passed through the page's query string, so the

selected attribute is added to the opening <option> tag. The value of \$row['filename'] is inserted between the opening and closing <option> tags.

The PDO version is identical apart from the fact that it runs the query directly in a **foreach** loop using the PDO **fetch()** method.

If you load the page into a browser, you'll see a drop-down menu that lists the files in the **images** folder like this:



2. Insert the following code immediately after the closing </form> tag. The code is the same for both MySQLi and PDO, apart from one line.

```
<?php
if (isset($_GET['image_id'])) {
    if (!is_numeric($_GET['image_id']))
{
    $image_id = 1;
} else {
    $image_id = (int)
$_GET['image_id'];
}
$sql = "SELECT filename, caption
FROM images
WHERE image_id = $image_id";
```

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
$row = $result->fetch_assoc();
?>
<figure>
    <figcaption><?= $row['caption'];
?></figcaption>
</figure>
<?php } ?>
```

The conditional statement checks whether `image_id` has been sent through the `$_GET` array. If it has been, the next conditional statement uses the logical Not operator with `is_numeric()` to check if it's not numeric. The `is_numeric()` function applies a strict test, accepting only numbers or numeric strings. It doesn't attempt to convert the value to a number if it begins with a digit.

If the value submitted through the query string isn't numeric, a default value is assigned to a new variable called `$image_id`. However, if `$_GET['image_id']` is numeric, it's assigned to `$image_id` using the `(int)` casting operator. Using the casting operator is an extra precaution in case someone tries to probe your script for error messages by submitting a floating point number.

Since you know `$image_id` is an integer, it's safe to insert directly in the SQL query. Because it's a number, it doesn't need to be wrapped in quotes, but the string assigned to `$sql` needs to use double quotes to ensure the value of `$image_id` is inserted into the query.

The new query is submitted to MySQL by the `query()` method, and the result is stored in `$row`. Finally, `$row['filename']` and `$row['caption']` are used to display the image and its caption in the page.

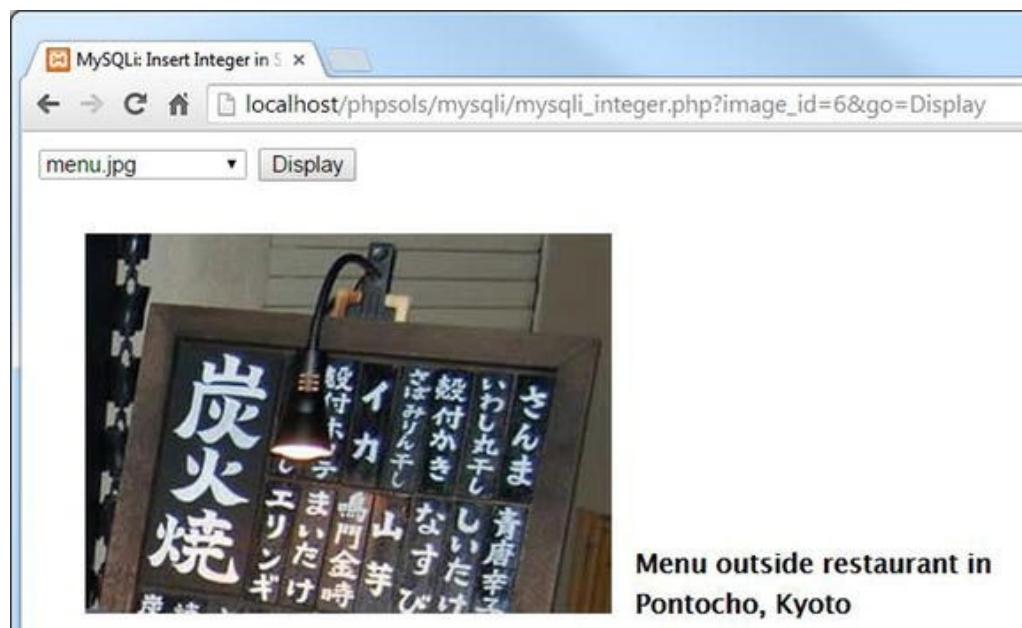
3. If you are using the PDO version, locate this line:

```
$row = $result->fetch_assoc();
```

Change it to this:

```
$row = $result->fetch();
```

4. Save the page and load it into a browser. When the page first loads, only the drop-down menu is displayed.
5. Select a filename from the drop-down menu and click **Display**. The image of your choice should be displayed, as shown in the following screenshot:



If you encounter problems, check your code against `mysqli_integer_02.php` or `pdo_integer_02.php` in the `ch11` folder.

6. Edit the query string in the browser, changing the value of `image_id` to a string or to a string that begins with a number. You should see `basin.jpg`, which has `image_id 1`.
7. Try a floating point number between 1.0 and 8.9. The relevant image is displayed normally.
8. Try a number outside the range of 1 to 8. No error messages are displayed because there's nothing wrong

with the query. It's simply looking for a value that doesn't exist. In this example, it doesn't matter, but you should normally check the number of rows returned by the query, using the `num_rows` property with MySQLi or the `rowCount()` method with PDO.

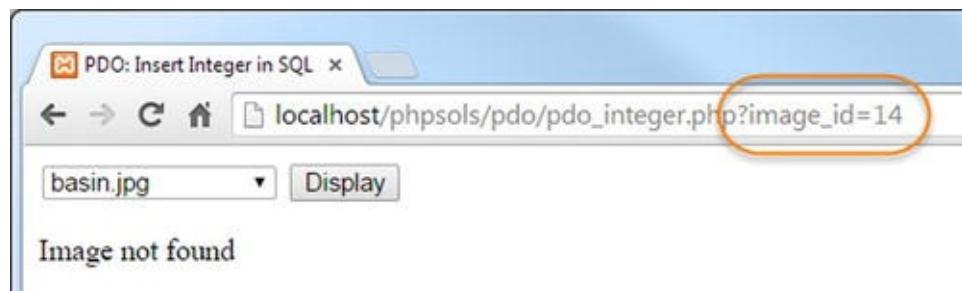
Change the code like this for MySQLi:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
if ($result->num_rows) {
    $row = $result->fetch_assoc();
?>
<figure>
    <figcaption><?= $row['caption']; ?>
</figcaption>
</figure>
<?php } else { ?>
    <p>Image not found</p>
<?php }
?>
```

For PDO, use `$result->rowCount()` in place of `$result->num_rows`.

If no rows are returned by the query, 0 is treated by PHP as implicitly `false`, so the condition fails, and the `else` clause is executed instead.

9. Test the page again. When you select an image from the drop-down menu, it displays normally as before. But if you try entering an out-of-range value in the query string, you see the following message instead:



The amended code is in `mysqli_integer_03.php` and `pdo_integer_03.php` in the `ch11` folder.

PHP Solution 11-7: Inserting a string in MySQLi with `real_escape_string()`

This PHP solution shows how to insert a value from a search form into an SQL query using the MySQLi `real_escape_string()` method. In addition to handling single and double quotes, it also escapes other control characters, such as newlines and carriage returns.

Tip This MySQLi-only technique is useful when only one or two string values from external sources need to be inserted into a query, or if the query will be used only once. For more complex queries, use a prepared statement, as described in the next section. To embed strings in PDO, it's always recommended to use a prepared statement.

1. Copy `mysqli_real_escape_01.php` from the `ch11` folder and save it in the `mysqli` folder as `mysql_real_escape.php`. The file contains a search form and a table for displaying the results.
2. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
if (isset($_GET['go'])) {  
    require_once  
    '../includes/connection.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('read');  
    $searchterm = '%' . $conn->  
    real_escape_string($_GET['search'])  
    . '%';  
}
```

This includes the connection file and establishes a connection for the read-only user account if the form has been submitted. Then, `$_GET['search']` is passed to

the connection object's `real_escape_string()` method to make it safe to incorporate into an SQL query, and the % wildcard character is concatenated to both ends before the result is assigned to `$searchterm`. So, if the value submitted through the search form is “hello,” `$searchterm` becomes `%hello%`.

3. Add the `SELECT` query on the next line (before the closing curly brace):

```
$sql = "SELECT * FROM images WHERE  
caption LIKE '$searchterm'";
```

The whole query is wrapped in double quotes so that the value of `$searchterm` is incorporated. However, `$searchterm` contains a string, so it also needs to be wrapped in quotes. To avoid a clash, use single quotes around `$searchterm`.

4. Execute the query and get the number of rows returned by adding the following code after the previous line:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);  
if (!$result) {  
    $error = $conn->error;  
} else {  
    $numRows = $result->num_rows;  
}
```

5. Insert a PHP block above the form to display the error message if there's a problem with the query:

```
<body>  
<?php  
if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p>$error</p>";  
}  
?>  
<form method="get" action="">
```

6. After the form, add the PHP code to display the results:

```

</form>
<?php if (isset($numRows)) { ?>
    <p>Number of results for <b><?= htmlentities($_GET['search']); ?></b>:<br/>
        <?= $numRows; ?></p>
    <?php if ($numRows) { ?>
        <table>
            <tr>
                <th>image_id</th>
                <th>filename</th>
                <th>caption</th>
            </tr>
            <?php while ($row = $result->fetch_assoc()) { ?>
                <tr>
                    <td><?= $row['image_id']; ?>
                </td>
                    <td><?= $row['filename']; ?>
                </td>
                    <td><?= $row['caption']; ?>
                </td>
                </tr>
            <?php } ?>
        </table>
    <?php } ?>
}</body>

```

The first conditional statement is wrapped around the paragraph and table, preventing them from being displayed if \$numRows doesn't exist, which happens when the page is first loaded. If the form has been submitted, \$numRows will have been set, so the search term is redisplayed using `htmlentities()` (see [Chapter 5](#)), and the value of \$numRows reports the number of matches.

If the query returns no results, \$numRows is 0, which is treated as `false`, so the table is not displayed. If \$numRows contains anything other than 0, the table is

displayed, and the `while` loop displays the results of the query.

7. Save the page and load it into a browser. Enter some text in the search field and click **Search**. The number of results is displayed, together with any captions that contain the search term, as shown in the following screenshot:



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "MySQLi: Insert String". The address bar contains "localhost/phpsols/mysql/mysqli_real_escape.php?search=temple&go=Search". Below the address bar is a search input field with the placeholder "Search" and a "Search" button. The main content area displays the results of a database query. It starts with "Number of results for temple: 2". Below this, there is a table with three columns: "image_id", "filename", and "caption". The data is as follows:

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

You can check your code against `mysqli_real_escape_02.php` in the `ch11` folder.

Note If you click the **Search** button without entering anything into the search field, all the records are displayed. This is because the search term becomes `%%`, which matches anything. If you don't want that to happen, you can use the `empty()` function to test whether `$_GET['search']` has a value.

Although `real_escape_string()` escapes quotes and other control characters in the submitted value, you still need to wrap strings in quotes in the SQL query. The `LIKE` keyword must always be followed by a string, even if the search term is limited to numbers.

Using Prepared Statements for User Input

Both MySQLi and PDO support prepared statements, which offer important

security features. A prepared statement is a template for an SQL query that contains a placeholder for each value that is changeable. This not only makes it easier to embed variables in your PHP code, but also prevents SQL injection attacks as quotes and other characters are automatically escaped before the query is executed.

Other advantages of using prepared statements are that they're more efficient when the same query is used more than once. Also, you can bind the results from each column of a `SELECT` query to named variables, making it easier to display the output.

Both MySQLi and PDO use question marks as anonymous placeholders, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename, caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE ?';
```

PDO also supports the use of named placeholders. A named placeholder begins with a colon followed by an identifier, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename, caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE :search';
```

Note Placeholders are not wrapped in quotes, even when the value they represent is a string. This makes it a lot easier to build an SQL query because there's no need to worry about getting the correct combination of single and double quotes.

Placeholders can be used only for column values. They can't be used for other parts of an SQL query, such as column names or operators. This is because values that contain non-numeric characters are automatically escaped and wrapped in quotes when the SQL is executed. Column names and operators cannot be in quotes.

Prepared statements involve slightly more code than just submitting the query directly, but placeholders make the SQL easier to read and write, and the process is more secure.

The syntax for MySQLi and PDO is different, so the following sections deal with them separately.

Embedding variables in MySQLi prepared

Embedding variables in MySQLi prepared statements

Using a MySQLi prepared statement involves several stages.

Initialize the statement

To initialize the prepared statement, call the `stmt_init()` method on the database connection and store it in a variable, as follows:

```
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
```

Prepare the statement

You then pass the SQL query to the statement's `prepare()` method. This checks that you haven't used question mark placeholders in the wrong place, and that when everything is put together, the query is valid SQL.

If there are any mistakes, the `prepare()` method returns `false`, so it's common to enclose the next steps in a conditional statement to ensure they run only if everything is still okay.

Error messages can be accessed through the statement's `error` property.

Bind values to the placeholders

Replacing the question marks with the actual values held in the variables is technically known as **binding the parameters**. It's this step that protects your database from SQL injection.

Pass the variables to the statement's `bind_param()` method in the same order as you want them inserted into the SQL query, together with a first argument specifying the data type of each variable, again in the same order as the variables. The data type must be specified by one of the following four characters:

- b: Binary (such as an image, Word document, or PDF file)
- d: Double (floating point number)

- `i`: Integer (whole number)
- `s`: String (text)

The number of variables passed to `bind_param()` must be exactly the same as the number of question mark placeholders. For example, to pass a single value as a string, use this:

```
$stmt->bind_param('s', $_GET['words']);
```

To pass two values, the `SELECT` query needs two question marks as placeholders, and both variables need to be bound with `bind_param()`, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM products WHERE price < ? AND
type = ?';
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('ds', $_GET['price'],
$_GET['type']);
```

The first argument to `bind_param()`, '`ds`', specifies `$_GET['price']` as a floating point number and `$_GET['type']` as a string.

Execute the statement

Once the statement has been prepared and the values have been bound to the placeholders, call the statement's `execute()` method. The result of a `SELECT` query can then be fetched from the statement object. With other types of queries, this is the end of the process.

Binding the results (optional)

Optionally, you can bind the results of a `SELECT` query to variables with the `bind_result()` method. This avoids the need to extract each row and then access the results as `$row['column_name']`.

To bind the results, you must name each column specifically in the `SELECT`

query. List the variables you want to use in the same order and pass them as arguments to `bind_result()`. For example, let's say your SQL looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename, caption FROM images WHERE caption LIKE ?';
```

To bind the results of the query, use this code:

```
$stmt->bind_result($image_id, $filename, $caption);
```

This allows you to access the results directly as `$image_id`, `$filename`, and `$caption`.

Store the result (optional)

When you use a prepared statement for a `SELECT` query, the results are unbuffered. This means that they remain on the database server until you fetch them. This has the advantage of requiring less memory, particularly if the result set contains a large number of rows. However, unbuffered results impose the following restrictions:

- Once the results are fetched, they're no longer stored in memory. Consequently, you can't use the same result set more than once.
- You can't run another query on the same database connection until all of the results have been fetched or cleared.
- You can't use the `num_rows` property to find out how many rows are in the result set.
- You can't use `data_seek()` to move to a specific row in the result set.

To avoid these restrictions, you can optionally store the result set using the statement's `store_result()` method. However, if you simply want to display the result immediately without reusing later, there's no need to store it first.

Note To clear an unbuffered result, call the statement's `free_result()` method.

Fetch the result

To loop through the results of a `SELECT` query that has been executed with a prepared statement, use the `fetch()` method. If you have bound the results to variables, do it like this:

```
while ($stmt->fetch()) {  
    // display the bound variables for each row  
}
```

If you haven't bound the results to variables, use `$row = $stmt->fetch()` and access each variable as `$row['column_name']`.

Close the statement

When you have finished with a prepared statement, the `close()` method frees the memory used.

PHP Solution 11-8: Using a MySQLi prepared statement in a search

This PHP solution shows how to use a MySQLi prepared statement with a `SELECT` query; it also demonstrates binding the result to named variables.

1. Copy `mysqli_prepared_01.php` from the `ch11` folder and save it in the `mysqli` folder as `mysqli_prepared.php`. It contains the same search form and results table as that used in PHP Solution 11-7.
2. In a PHP code block above the `DOCTYPE` declaration, create a conditional statement to include `connection.php` and create a read-only connection when the search form is submitted. The code looks like

this:

```
if (isset($_GET['go'])) {  
    require_once  
    '../includes/connection.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('read');  
}
```

3. Next, add the SQL query inside the conditional statement. The query needs to name the three columns you want to retrieve from the `images` table. Use a question mark as the placeholder for the search term, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename,  
caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE ?';
```

4. Before passing the user-submitted search term to the `bind_param()` method, you need to add the wildcard characters to it and assign it to a new variable, like this:

```
$searchterm = '%' . $_GET['search']  
. '%';
```

5. You can now create the prepared statement. The finished code in the PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration looks like this:

```
if (isset($_GET['go'])) {  
    require_once  
    '../includes/connection.inc.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('read');  
    $sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename,  
caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE ?';  
    $searchterm = '%' . $_GET['search']  
    . '%';  
    $stmt = $conn->stmt_init();  
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {  
        $stmt->bind_param('s', $searchterm);  
        $stmt->execute();  
        $stmt->bind_result($image_id, $filename,
```

```
    $caption);
    $stmt->store_result();
    $numRows = $stmt->num_rows;
} else {
    $error = $stmt->error;
}
}
```

This initializes the prepared statement and assigns it to `$stmt`. The SQL query is then passed to the `prepare()` method, which checks the validity of the query's syntax. If there's a problem with the syntax, the `else` block assigns the error message to `$error`. If there are no mistakes in the syntax, the rest of the script inside the conditional statement is executed.

The first line inside the conditional statement binds `$searchterm` to the `SELECT` query, replacing the question mark placeholder. The first argument tells the prepared statement to treat it as a string.

After the prepared statement is executed, the next line binds the results of the `SELECT` query to `$image_id`, `$filename`, and `$caption`. These need to be in the same order as in the query. I have named the variables after the columns they represent, but you can use any variables you want.

Then the result is stored. Note that you store the result simply by calling the statement object's `store_result()` method. Unlike using `query()`, you don't assign the return value of `store_result()` to a variable. If you do, it's simply `true` or `false`, depending on whether the result was stored successfully.

Finally, the number of rows retrieved by the query is obtained from the statement object's `num_rows` property and stored in `$numRows`.

6. Add a conditional statement after the opening <body>

tag to display the error message if a problem has occurred:

```
<?php  
if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p>$error</p>";  
}  
?>
```

7. Add the following code after the search form to display the result:

```
<?php if (isset($numRows)) { ?>  
    <p>Number of results for <b><?=  
htmlentities($_GET['search']); ?></b>:  
    <?= $numRows; ?></p>  
    <?php if ($numRows) { ?>  
        <table>  
            <tr>  
                <th>image_id</th>  
                <th>filename</th>  
                <th>caption</th>  
            </tr>  
            <?php while ($stmt->fetch()) { ?>  
                <tr>  
                    <td><?= $image_id; ?></td>  
                    <td><?= $filename; ?></td>  
                    <td><?= $caption; ?></td>  
                </tr>  
                <?php } ?>  
        </table>  
    <?php }  
} ?>
```

Most of this code is the same as was used in PHP Solution 11-7. The difference lies in the `while` loop that displays the results. Instead of using the `fetch_assoc()` method on a result object and storing the result in `$row`, it simply calls the `fetch()` method on the prepared statement. There's no need to store the current record as `$row`, because the values from each column have been

bound to \$image_id, \$filename, and \$caption.

You can compare your code with
mysqli_prepared_02.php in the ch11 folder.

Embedding variables in PDO prepared statements

PDO prepared statements offer the choice of anonymous and named placeholders.

Using anonymous placeholders

Anonymous placeholders use question marks in exactly the same way as MySQLi:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename, caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE ?';
```

Using named placeholders

Named placeholders begin with a colon, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename, caption FROM images  
WHERE caption LIKE :search';
```

Using named placeholders makes the code a lot easier to understand, particularly if you choose names that are based on the variables that contain the values to be embedded in the SQL.

Preparing the statement

Preparing and initializing a statement is done in a single step (unlike with MySQLi, which requires two). You pass the SQL with placeholders directly to the connection object's `prepare()` method, which returns the prepared

statement, like this:

```
$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
```

Binding values to the placeholders

There are several different ways to bind values to placeholders. When using anonymous placeholders, the simplest way is to create an array of values in the same order as the placeholders, then to pass the array to the statement's `execute()` method. Even if there's only one placeholder, you must use an array. For example, to bind `$searchterm` to a single anonymous placeholder, you must enclose it in a pair of square brackets, like this:

```
$stmt->execute([$searchterm]);
```

You can also bind values to named placeholders in a similar way, but the argument passed to the `execute()` method must be an associative array, using the named placeholder as the key of each value. So, the following binds `$searchterm` to the `:search` named placeholder:

```
$stmt->execute([':search' => $searchterm]);
```

Alternatively, you can use the statement's `bindParam()` and `bindValue()` methods to bind the values before calling the `execute()` method. When used with anonymous placeholders, the first argument to both methods is a number, counting from 1, representing the placeholder's position in the SQL. With named placeholders, the first argument is the named placeholder as a string. The second argument is the value you want to insert in the query.

However, there's a subtle difference between the two methods.

- With `bindParam()`, the second argument *must* be a variable. It cannot be a string, number, or any other type of expression.
- With `bindValue()`, the second argument should be a string, number, or expression. But it can also be a variable.

Because `bindValue()` accepts any type of value, `bindParam()` might seem redundant. The difference is that the value of the argument passed to `bindValue()` must already be known because it binds the actual value,

whereas `bindParam()` binds only the variable. Consequently, the value can be assigned to the variable later.

To illustrate the difference, let's use the `SELECT` query in “Using named placeholders.” The `:search` placeholder follows the `LIKE` keyword, so the value needs to be combined with wildcard characters. Trying to do the following generates an error:

```
// This will NOT work
$stmt->bindParam(':search', '%' . $_GET['search']
. '%');
```

You cannot concatenate the wildcard characters to the variable with `bindParam()`. The wildcard characters need to be added before the variable is passed as an argument, like this:

```
$searchterm = '%' . $_GET['search'] . '%';
$stmt->bindParam(':search', $searchterm);
```

Alternatively, you can build the expression as an argument to `bindValue()`.

```
// This WILL work
$stmt->bindValue(':search', '%' . $_GET['search']
. '%');
```

The `bindParam()` and `bindValue()` methods accept an optional third argument: a constant specifying the data type. The main constants are as follows:

- `PDO::PARAM_INT`: Integer (whole number)
- `PDO::PARAM_LOB`: Binary (such as an image, Word document, or PDF file)
- `PDO::PARAM_STR`: String (text)
- `PDO::PARAM_BOOL`: Boolean (true or false)
- `PDO::PARAM_NULL`: Null

`PDO::PARAM_NULL` is useful if you want to set the value of a database column to `null`. For example, if a primary key is auto-incremented, you need to pass `null` as the value when inserting new records. This is how you set a named

parameter called `:id` to null with `bindValue()`:

```
$stmt->bindValue(':id', NULL, PDO::PARAM_NULL);
```

 **Note** There isn't a PDO constant for floating point numbers.

Executing the statement

If you bind the values to placeholders using `bindParam()` or `bindValue()`, you simply call the `execute()` method without arguments:

```
$stmt->execute();
```

Otherwise, pass an array of values as described in the previous section. In both cases, the result of the query is stored in `$stmt`.

Error messages can be accessed in the same way as with a PDO connection. However, instead of calling the `errorInfo()` method on the connection object, use it on the PDO statement, like this:

```
$errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
    $error = $errorInfo[2];
}
```

Binding the results (optional)

To bind the results of a SELECT query to variables, each column needs to be bound separately using the `bindColumn()` method, which takes two arguments. The first argument can be either the name of the column or its number counting from 1. The number comes from its position in the SELECT query, not the order in which it appears in the database table. So, to bind the result from the `filename` column to `$filename` in the SQL example we've been using, either of the following is acceptable:

```
$stmt->bindColumn('filename', $filename);
$stmt->bindColumn(2, $filename);
```

Because each column is bound separately, you don't need to bind all of them. However, it's more convenient to do so because it avoids the need to assign the result of the `fetch()` method to an array.

Fetching the result

To fetch the results of a `SELECT` query, call the statement's `fetch()` method. If you have used `bindColumn()` to bind the output to variables, you can use the variables directly. Otherwise, it returns an array of the current row indexed both by column name and a zero-indexed column number.

Note You can control the PDO `fetch()` method's type of output by passing it a constant as an argument. See <http://php.net/manual/en/pdostatement.fetch.php>.

PHP Solution 11-9: Using a PDO prepared statement in a search

This PHP solution shows how to embed the user-submitted value from a search form into a `SELECT` query with a PDO prepared statement. It uses the same search form as that in the MySQLi versions in PHP Solutions 11-7 and 11-8.

1. Copy `pdo_prepared_01.php` from the `ch11` folder and save it in the `pdo` folder as `pdo_prepared.php`.
2. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
if (isset($_GET['go'])) {  
    require_once  
    './includes/connection.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('read', 'pdo');  
    $sql = 'SELECT image_id, filename,  
    caption FROM images  
        WHERE caption LIKE :search';  
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
```

```

        $stmt->bindValue(':search', '%' . $_GET['search'] . '%');
        $stmt->execute();
        $errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
        if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
            $error = $errorInfo[2];
        } else {
            $stmt->bindColumn('image_id',
$image_id);
            $stmt->bindColumn('filename',
$filename);
            $stmt->bindColumn(3, $caption);
            $numRows = $stmt->rowCount();
        }
    }
}

```

When the form is submitted, this includes the connection file and creates a PDO read-only connection. The prepared statement uses `:search` as a named parameter in place of the user-submitted value.

The % wildcard characters are concatenated with the search term at the same time as binding it to the prepared statement. So, `bindValue()` is used instead of `bindParam()`.

After the statement is executed, the statement's `errorInfo()` method is called to see if an error message has been generated and stored in `$errorInfo[2]`.

If there are no problems, the `else` block binds the results to `$image_id`, `$filename`, and `$caption` using the `bindColumn()` method. The first two use the column names, but the `caption` column is referred to by its position (counting from 1) in the `SELECT` query.

3. The code that displays the results is identical to that in steps 6 and 7 in PHP Solution 11-8. You can check the

finished code in `pdo_prepared_02.php` in the `ch11` folder.

PHP Solution 11-10: Changing column options through user input

This PHP solution shows how to change the name of SQL keywords in a `SELECT` query through user input. SQL keywords cannot be wrapped in quotes, so using prepared statements or the MySQLi `real_escape_string()` method won't work. Instead, you need to ensure that the user input matches an array of expected values. If no match is found, use a default value instead. The technique is identical for MySQLi and PDO.

1. Copy either `mysqli_order_01.php` or `pdo_order_01.php` from the `ch11` folder and save it in the `mysqli` or `pdo` folder. Both versions select all records from the `images` table and display the results in table. The pages also contain a form that allows the user to select the name of a column by which to sort the results in either ascending or descending order. In its initial state, the form is inactive. The pages display the details sorted by `image_id` in ascending order, like this:

image_id	filename	caption
1	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto
2	fountains.jpg	Fountains in central Tokyo
3	kinkakuji.jpg	The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
4	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
5	maiko_phone.jpg	Every maiko should have one—a mobile, of course
6	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
7	monk.jpg	Monk begging for alms in Kyoto
8	ryoanji.jpg	Autumn leaves at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

2. Amend the code in the PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration like this (the following listing shows the PDO version, but the changes highlighted in bold type are the same for MySQLi):

```
require_once  
'./includes/connection.php';  
// connect to database  
$conn = dbConnect('read', 'pdo');  
// set default values  
$col = 'image_id';  
$dir = 'ASC';  
// create arrays of permitted values  
$columns = ['image_id', 'filename', 'caption'];  
$direction = ['ASC', 'DESC'];  
// if the form has been submitted, use only  
expected values  
if (isset($_GET['column']) &&  
in_array($_GET['column'], $columns)) {  
    $col = $_GET['column'];  
}  
if (isset($_GET['direction']) &&  
in_array($_GET['direction'], $direction)) {  
    $dir = $_GET['direction'];  
}  
// prepare the SQL query using sanitized  
variables  
$sql = "SELECT * FROM images  
        ORDER BY $col $dir";  
// submit the query and capture the  
result  
$result = $conn->query($sql);  
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();  
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {  
    $error = $errorInfo[2];  
}
```

The new code defines two variables, `$col` and `$dir`, that are embedded directly in the SELECT query. Because they have been assigned default values, the query displays the results sorted by the `image_id` column in ascending order when the page first loads.

Two arrays, `$columns` and `$direction`, then define permitted values: the column names and the ASC and DESC keywords. These arrays are used by the conditional statements that check the `$_GET` array for `column` and `direction`. The submitted values are reassigned to `$col` and `$dir` only if they match a value in the `$columns` and `$direction` arrays, respectively. This prevents any attempt to inject illegal values into the SQL query.

3. Edit the `<option>` tags in the drop-down menus so they display the selected values for `$col` and `$dir`, like this:

```
<select name="column" id="column">
    <option <?php if ($col == 'image_id') echo
'selected'; ?>
        >image_id</option>
    <option <?php if ($col == 'filename') echo
'selected'; ?>
        >filename</option>
    <option <?php if ($col == 'caption') echo
'selected'; ?>
        >caption</option>
</select>
<select name="direction"
id="direction">
    <option value="ASC" <?php if ($dir ==
'ASC') echo 'selected'; ?>
        >Ascending</option>
    <option value="DESC" <?php if ($dir ==
'DESC') echo 'selected'; ?>
        >Descending</option>
</select>
```

4. Save the page and test it in a browser. You can change the sort order of the display by selecting the values in the drop-down menus and clicking **Change**. However, if you try to inject an illegal value through the query string, the page uses the default values of `$col` and `$dir` to display

the results sorted by `image_id` in ascending order.

You can check your code against `mysqli_order_02.php` and `pdo_order_02.php` in the `ch11` folder.

Chapter Review

PHP provides three methods of communicating with MySQL:

- **The original MySQL extension, which is deprecated:** It should not be used for new projects. If you maintain an existing site, you can easily recognize whether it uses the original MySQL extension, because all functions begin with `mysql_`. You need to plan immediately to convert the site to using one of the other methods. The original MySQL functions will stop working in a future version of PHP.
- **The MySQL Improved (MySQLi) extension:** This is recommended for all new MySQL projects. It requires PHP 5.0 and MySQL 4.1 or higher. It's more efficient and has the added safety of prepared statements. It's also fully compatible with MariaDB.
- **The PHP Data Objects (PDO) abstraction layer, which is database-neutral:** You should choose this option if your projects are likely to need to be adapted for use with other databases. Although the code is database-neutral, PDO requires the correct driver to be installed for your chosen database. The driver for MySQL is fully compatible with MariaDB, and is commonly installed. Other drivers are less common. However, if the correct driver is installed, only the data source name (DSN) in the connection string needs to be changed to switch from one database to another.

Although PHP communicates with the database and stores the results, queries need to be written in SQL, the standard language used to query a relational database. This chapter showed how to retrieve information stored in a

database table using a `SELECT` statement, refining the search with a `WHERE` clause, and changing the sort order with `ORDER BY`. You also learned several techniques to protect queries from SQL injection, including prepared statements, which use placeholders instead of embedding variables directly in a query.

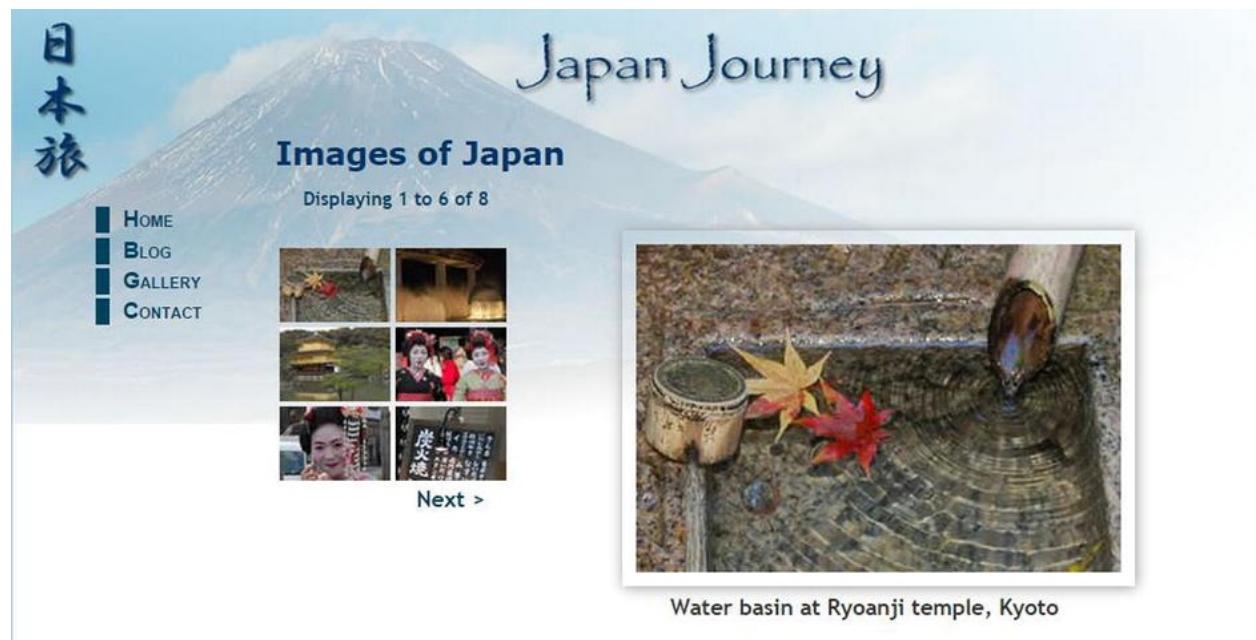
In the next chapter, you'll put this knowledge to practical use by creating an online photo gallery.

CHAPTER 12



Creating a Dynamic Photo Gallery

The previous chapter concentrated mainly on extracting the contents of the images table as text. This chapter builds on those techniques to develop the mini photo gallery shown in [Figure 12-1](#).



[Figure 12-1.](#) This mini photo gallery is driven by pulling information from a database

The gallery also demonstrates some cool features that you'll want to incorporate into text-driven pages, too. For instance, the grid of thumbnail images on the left displays two images per row. Just by changing two numbers, you can make the grid as many columns wide and as many rows deep as you like. Clicking one of the thumbnails replaces the main image and caption. It's the same page that reloads, but exactly the same technique is used to create online catalogs that take you to another page with more details about a product.

The **Next** link at the foot of the thumbnails grid shows you the next set of photographs, using exactly the same technique as you use to page through a long set of search results. This gallery isn't just a pretty face or two . . .

What this chapter covers:

- Why storing images in a database is a bad idea, and what you should do instead
- Planning the layout of a dynamic gallery
- Displaying a fixed number of results in a table row
- Limiting the number of records retrieved at a time
- Paging through a long set of results

Why Not Store Images in a Database?

The `images` table contains filenames and captions, but not the images themselves. Even though you can store binary objects, such as images, in a database, I don't intend to do so for the simple reason that it's usually more trouble than it's worth. The main problems are as follows:

- Images can't be indexed or searched without storing textual information separately.
- Images are usually large, bloating the size of tables. If there's a limit on the amount of storage in your database, you risk running out of space.
- Table fragmentation affects performance if images are deleted frequently.
- Retrieving images from a database involves passing the image to a separate script, slowing down display on a webpage.

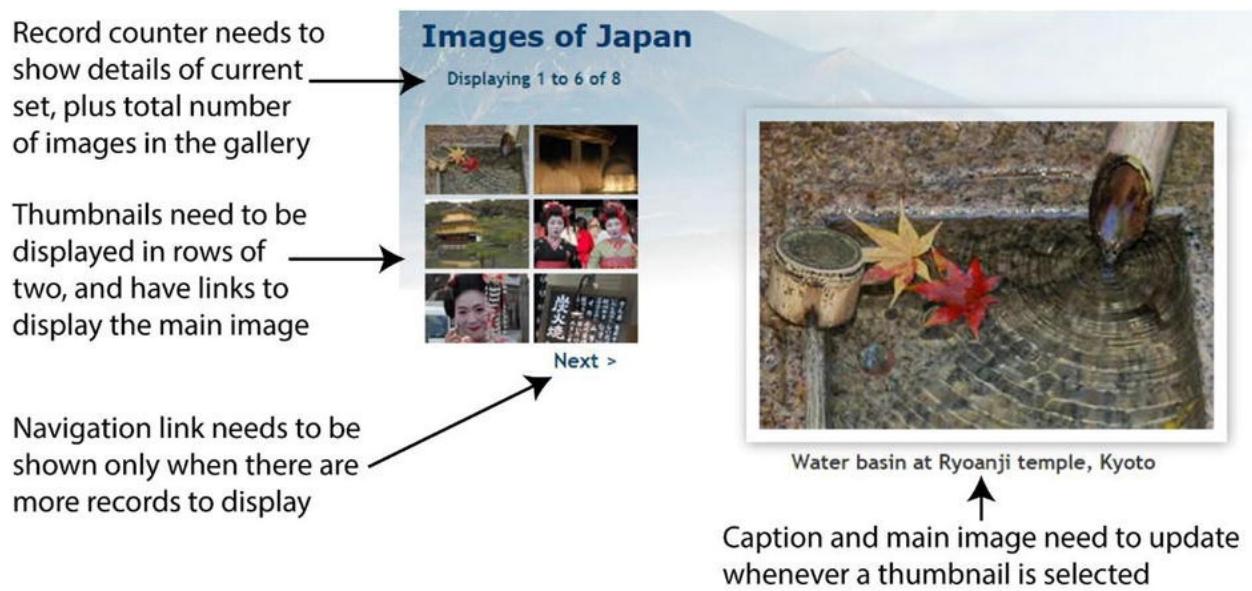
It's more efficient to store images in an ordinary folder on your website and use the database for information about the images. You need just two pieces of information—the filename and a caption that can also be used as `alt` text. Some developers store the full path to the image in the database, but I think storing

only the filename gives you greater flexibility. The path to the `images` folder will be embedded in the HTML. There's no need to store the image's height and width. As you saw in [Chapters 4 and 8](#), you can generate that information dynamically using PHP's `getimagesize()` function.

Planning the Gallery

I find that the best way to design a database-driven site is to start with a static page and fill it with placeholder text and images. I then create my CSS style rules to get the page looking the way I want, and finally I replace each placeholder element with PHP code. Each time I replace something, I check the page in a browser to make sure everything is still holding together.

[Figure 12-2](#) shows the static mockup I made of the gallery and points out the elements that need to be converted to dynamic code. The images are the same as those used for the random image generator in [Chapter 4](#) and are all different sizes. I experimented by scaling the images to create the thumbnails, but decided that the result looked too untidy, so I made the thumbnails a standard size (80 × 54 pixels). Also, to make life easy, I gave each thumbnail the same name as the larger version and stored them in a separate subfolder of the `images` folder called `thumbs`.



[Figure 12-2](#). Working out what needs to be done to convert a static gallery to a dynamic one

In the previous chapter, displaying the contents of the `images` table was easy. You created a single table row, with the contents of each field in a separate table cell. By looping through the result set, each record was displayed on a row of its own, simulating the column structure of the database table. This time, the two-column structure of the thumbnail grid no longer matches the database structure. You need to count how many thumbnails have been inserted in a row before creating the next row.

Once I had worked out what needed to be done, I stripped out the code for thumbnails 2 to 6, and for the navigation link. The following listing shows what was left in the `<main>` element of `gallery.php`, with the elements that need to be converted to PHP code highlighted in bold (you can find the code in `gallery_01.php` in the `ch12` folder):

```
<main>
    <h2>Images of Japan</h2>
    <p id="picCount">Displaying 1 to 6 of 8</p>
    <div id="gallery">
        <table id="thumbs">
            <tr>
                <!-- This row needs to be repeated -->
                <td><a href="gallery.php"></a></td>
            </tr>
            <!-- Navigation link needs to go here -->
        </table>
        <figure id="main_image">
            
                <figcaption>Water basin at Ryoanji temple,
Kyoto</figcaption>
        </figure>
    </div>
</main>
```

Converting the Gallery Elements to PHP

— ■ ■ ■

Before you can display the contents of the gallery, you need to connect to the `phpsols` database and retrieve all the records stored in the `images` table. The procedure for doing so is the same as that in the previous chapter, using the following simple SQL query:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images
```

You can then use the first record to display the first image and its associated caption and thumbnail. You don't need `image_id`.

PHP Solution 12-1: Displaying the First Image

If you set up the Japan Journey website in [Chapter 4](#), you can work directly with the original `gallery.php`. Alternatively, copy `gallery_01.php` from the `ch12` folder and save it in the `phpsols` site root as `gallery.php`. You also need to copy `title.php`, `menu.php`, and `footer.php` to the `includes` folder of the `phpsols` site. If your editing program asks if you want to update the links in the files, choose the option not to update.

1. Load `gallery.php` into a browser to make sure that it displays correctly. The main part of the page should look like [Figure 12-3](#), with one thumbnail image and a larger version of the same image.



Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Figure 12-3. The stripped-down version of the static gallery ready for conversion

2. The gallery depends on a connection to the database, so include `connection.php`, create a read-only connection to the `phpsols` database, and define the SQL query. Add the following code just before the closing PHP tag above the `DOCTYPE` declaration in `gallery.php` (new code is highlighted in bold):

```
include './includes/title.php';
require_once './includes/connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('read');
$sql = 'SELECT filename, caption FROM images';
```

If you are using PDO, add '`pdo`' as the second argument to `dbConnect()`.

3. The code for submitting the query and extracting the first record from the results depends on which method of connection you are using. For MySQLi, use this:

```
// submit the query
$result = $conn->query($sql);
if (!$result) {
    $error = $conn->error;
} else {
```

```
    // extract the first record as an
    array
    $row = $result->fetch_assoc();
}
```

For PDO, use this:

```
// submit the query
$result = $conn->query($sql);
// get any error messages
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
    $error = $errorInfo[2];
} else {
    // extract the first record as an
    array
    $row = $result->fetch();
}
```

To display the first image when the page loads, you need to retrieve the first result before creating a loop that will eventually display the grid of thumbnails. The code for both MySQLi and PDO submits the query, extracts the first record, and stores it in `$row`.

4. You now have the details of the first record image stored as `$row['filename']` and `$row['caption']`. In addition to the filename and caption, you need the dimensions of the large version so that you can display it in the main body of the page. Add the following code inside the `else` block immediately after the code that fetches the first result:

```
// get the name and caption for the
main image
$mainImage = $row['filename'];
$caption = $row['caption'];
// get the dimensions of the main image
$imageSize
= getimagesize('images/' . $mainImage)
```

[3] ;

As explained in [Chapter 8](#), `getimagesize()` returns an array, the fourth element of which contains a string with the width and height of an image ready for insertion into an `` tag. We're interested only in the fourth element, so we can use the array-dereferencing technique introduced in [Chapter 7](#). Adding [3] after the closing parenthesis of `getimagesize()` returns only the fourth element of the array, which is assigned to `$imageSize`.

Note Array dereferencing requires PHP 5.4 or later. If your server is running an earlier version of PHP, you need to omit the [3] after the call to `getimagesize()` and assign the complete array to `$imageSize`. You can then access the fourth element in the normal way as `$imageSize[3]`.

5. You can now use this information to dynamically display the thumbnail, main image, and caption. The main image and thumbnail have the same name, but you eventually want to display all thumbnails by looping through the full result set. Consequently, the dynamic code that goes in the table cell needs to refer to the current record—in other words, to `$row['filename']` and `$row['caption']`, rather than to `$mainImage` and `$caption`. You'll see later why I've assigned the values from the first record to separate variables. Amend the code in the table like this:

```
<td><a href="gallery.php">
    " width="80"
        height="54"></a></td>
```

6. In case there's a problem with the query, you need to

check if `$error` has been set, and prevent the gallery from being displayed. Add a PHP block containing the following conditional statement immediately after the **<h2> Images of Japan** heading:

```
<?php if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p>$error</p>";  
} else {  
?>
```

7. Insert a new line immediately before the closing `</main>` tag (around line 54) and add a PHP block with the `else` block's closing curly brace:

```
<?php } ?>
```

8. Save `gallery.php` and view it in a browser. It should look the same as [Figure 12-3](#). The only difference is that the thumbnail and its `alt` text are dynamically generated. You can verify this by looking at the source code. The original static version had an empty `alt` attribute, but as the following screenshot shows, it now contains the caption from the first record:

```
23 |         <table id="thumbs">  
24 |             <tr>  
25 |                 <!-- This row needs to be repeated-->  
26 |                 <td><a href="gallery.php"></a></td>  
28 |             </tr>  
29 |             <!-- Navigation link needs to go here -->  
|         </table>
```

If things go wrong, make sure there's no gap between the static and dynamically generated text in the image's `src` attribute. Also check that you're using the right code for the type of connection you have created with the database. You can check your code against `gallery mysqli_02.php` or `gallery pdo_02.php` in the `ch12` folder.

9. Once you have confirmed that you're picking up the details from the database, you can convert the code for the main image. Amend it like this (new code is in bold):

```
<figure id="main_image">
    
        <?= $imageSize; ?>></p>
        <figcaption><?= $caption; ?>
    </figcaption>
</figure>
```

`$imageSize` inserts a string containing the correct `width` and `height` attributes for the main image.

10. Test the page again. It should look the same as in [Figure 12-3](#), but the images and caption are being drawn dynamically from the database, and `getimagesize()` is calculating the correct dimensions for the main image. You can check your code against `gallery_mysql_03.php` or `gallery_pdo_03.php` in the `ch12` folder.

Building the Dynamic Elements

The first task after converting the static page is to display all the thumbnails and then build dynamic links that will enable you to display the large version of any thumbnail that has been clicked. Displaying all the thumbnails is easy—just loop through them (we'll work out how to display them in rows of two later). Activating the link for each thumbnail requires a little more thought. You need a way of telling the page which large image to display.

Passing Information Through a Query String

In the last section you used `$mainImage` to identify the large image, so you need a way of changing its value whenever a thumbnail is clicked. The solution is to add the image's filename to a query string at the end of the URL in the link, like this:

```
<a href="gallery.php?image=filename">
```

You can then check whether the `$_GET` array contains an element called `image`. If it does, change the value of `$mainImage`. If it doesn't, leave `$mainImage` as the filename from the first record in the result set.

PHP Solution 12-2: Activating the Thumbnails

Continue working with the same file as in the previous section. Alternatively, copy `gallery mysqli_03.php` or `gallery pdo_03.php` to the `phpsols` site root, and save it as `gallery.php`.

1. Locate the opening `<a>` tag of the link surrounding the thumbnail. It looks like this:

```
<a href="gallery.php">
```

Change it to this:

```
<a href="<?= $_SERVER['PHP_SELF']; ?>?image=<?  
=$row['filename']; ?>">
```

Be careful when typing the code. It's easy to mix up the question marks in the PHP tags with the question mark at the beginning of the query string. It's also important that there are no spaces surrounding `?image=`.

`$_SERVER['PHP_SELF']` is a handy predefined variable that refers to the name of the current page. You could just leave `gallery.php` hard-coded in the URL, but using `$_SERVER['PHP_SELF']` ensures that the URL is pointing to the correct page. The rest of the code builds the query string with the current filename.

2. Save the page and load it into a browser. Hover your mouse pointer over the thumbnail and check the URL displayed in the status bar. It should look like this:

```
http://localhost/phpsols/gallery.php?  
image=basin.jpg
```

If nothing is shown in the status bar, click the thumbnail.

The page shouldn't change, but the URL in the address bar should now include the query string. Check that there are no gaps in the URL or query string.

3. To show all the thumbnails, you need to wrap the table cell in a loop. Insert a new line after the HTML comment about repeating the row and create the first half of a `do... while` loop like this (see [Chapter 3](#) for details of the different types of loops):

```
<!-- This row needs to be repeated -->
<?php do { ?>
```

4. You already have the details of the first record in the result set, so the code to get subsequent records needs to go after the closing `</td>` tag. Create some space between the closing `</td>` and `</tr>` tags, and insert the following code. It's slightly different for each method of database connection.

For MySQLi, use this:

```
</td>
<?php } while ($row = $result-
>fetch_assoc()); ?>
</tr>
```

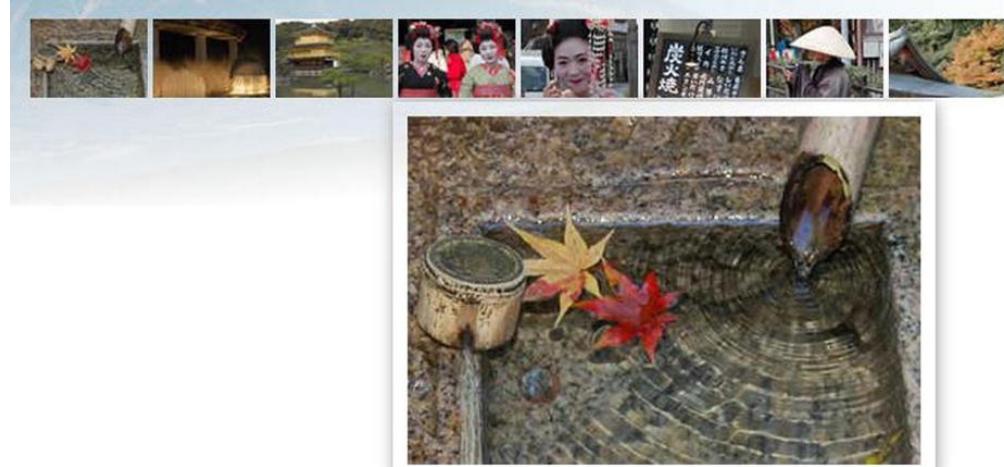
For PDO, use this:

```
</td>
<?php } while ($row = $result->fetch()); ?>
</tr>
```

This fetches the next row in the result set and sends the loop back to the top. Because `$row['filename']` and `$row['caption']` have different values, the next thumbnail and its associated `alt` text are inserted into a new table cell. The query string is also updated with the new filename.

5. Save the page and test it in a browser. You should now see all eight thumbnails in a single row across the top of

the gallery, as shown in the following screenshot.



Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Hover your mouse pointer over each thumbnail, and you should see the query string displaying the name of the file. You can check your code against `gallery_mysql_04.php` or `gallery_pdo_04.php`.

6. Clicking the thumbnails still doesn't do anything, so you need to create the logic that changes the main image and its associated caption. Locate this section of code in the block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
// get the name and caption for the
main image
$mainImage = $row['filename'];
$caption = $row['caption'];
```

Highlight the line that defines `$caption` and cut it to your clipboard. Wrap the other line in a conditional statement like this:

```
// get the name for the main image
if (isset($_GET['image'])) {
    $mainImage = $_GET['image'];
} else {
    $mainImage = $row['filename'];
}
```

The `$_GET` array contains values passed through a query string, so if `$_GET['image']` has been set (defined), it takes the filename from the query string and stores it as `$mainImage`. If `$_GET['image']` doesn't exist, the value is taken from the first record in the result set, as before.

7. Finally, you need to get the caption for the main image. It's no longer going to be the same every time, so you need to move it to the loop that displays the thumbnails in the `thumbs` table. It goes right after the opening curly brace of the loop (around line 48). Position your cursor after the brace and insert a couple of lines, then paste the caption definition that you cut in the previous step. You want the caption to match the main image, so if the current record's filename is the same as `$mainImage`, that's the one you're after. Wrap the code that you have just pasted in a conditional statement, like this:

```
<?php
do {
    // set caption if thumbnail is same as main
    image
    if ($row['filename'] == $mainImage) {
        $caption = $row['caption']; // this is the line you pasted
    }
?>
```

8. Save the page and reload it in your browser. This time, when you click a thumbnail the main image and caption will change. Don't worry about some images and captions being hidden by the footer. That will correct itself when the thumbnails move to the left of the main image.

Note Passing information through a query string like this is an important aspect of working with PHP and database results. Although form information is normally passed through the `$_POST` array, the `$_GET` array is frequently used to pass details of a record that you want to

display, update, or delete. It's also commonly used for searches because the query string can easily be bookmarked.

9. There's no danger of SQL injection in this case. But if someone changes the value of the filename passed through the query string, you'll get ugly error messages if the image can't be found and `display_errors` is on. Before calling `getimagesize()`, let's find out if the image exists. Wrap it in a conditional statement like this:

```
if (file_exists('images/'.$mainImage)) {  
    // get the dimensions of the main  
    image  
    $imageSize  
    = getimagesize('images/'.$mainImage)  
    [3];  
} else {  
    $error = 'Image not found.';  
}
```

10. Try changing the value of `image` in the query string to any value except that of an existent file. When you load the page, you should see **Image not found**.

Check your code, if necessary, against `gallery_mysqli_05.php` or `gallery pdo_05.php`.

Creating a Multicolumn table

With only eight images, the single row of thumbnails across the top of the gallery doesn't look too bad. However, it's useful to be able to build a table dynamically by using a loop that inserts a specific number of table cells in a row before moving to the next row. This is achieved by keeping count of how many cells have been inserted. When the limit is reached for the row, the code needs to insert a closing tag for the current row and, if more thumbnails remain, also insert an opening tag for the next row. What makes it easy to implement is the modulus operator, `%`, which returns the remainder of a division.

This is how it works. Let's say you want two cells in each row. After the first cell is inserted, the counter is set to 1. If you divide 1 by 2 with the modulus operator (`1 % 2`), the result is 1. When the next cell is inserted, the counter is increased to 2. The result of `2 % 2` is 0. The next cell produces this calculation: `3 % 2`, which results in 1; but the fourth cell produces `4 % 2`, which is again 0. So, every time that the calculation results in 0, you know—or to be more exact, PHP knows—you're at the end of a row.

So how do you know if there are any more rows left? By putting the code that inserts the closing and opening `<tr>` tags at the top of the loop, there must always be at least one image left. However, the first time the loop runs, the remainder is also 0, so the issue is that you need to prevent the tags from being inserted until at least one image has been displayed. Phew . . . let's try it.

PHP Solution 12-3: Looping Horizontally and Vertically

This PHP solution shows how to control a loop so as to display a specific number of columns in a table. The number of columns is controlled by setting a constant. Continue working with the files from the preceding section.

Alternatively, use `gallery mysqli_05.php` or `gallery pdo_05.php`.

1. You may decide at a later stage that you want to change the number of columns in the table, so it's a good idea to create a constant at the top of the script where it's easy to find, rather than burying the figures deep in your code. Insert the following code just before creating the database connection:

```
// define number of columns in table  
define('COLS', 2);
```

A **constant** is similar to a variable, except that its value cannot be changed by another part of the script. You create a constant with the `define()` function, which takes two arguments: the name of the constant and its value. By convention, constants are always in uppercase. Unlike variables, they do not begin with a dollar sign.

2. You need to initialize the cell counter outside the loop. Also create a variable that indicates whether it's the first row. Add the following code immediately after the constant you have just defined:

```
define('COLS', 2);
// initialize variables for the horizontal
looper
$pos = 0;
$firstRow = true;
```

3. The code that keeps count of the columns goes inside the PHP block at the start of the loop that displays the thumbnails. Amend the code like this:

```
<?php do {
    // set caption if thumbnail is same
    as main image
    if ($row['filename'] == $mainImage) {
        $caption = $row['caption'];
    }
    // if remainder is 0 and not first row, close
    row and start new one
    if ($pos++ % COLS === 0 && !$firstRow) {
        echo '</tr><tr>';
    }
    // once loop begins, this is no longer true
    $firstRow = false;
?>
```

Because the increment operator (++) is placed after \$pos, its value is divided by the number of columns before being incremented by 1. The first time the loop runs, the remainder is 0, but \$firstRow is true, so the conditional statement fails. However, \$firstRow is reset to false after the conditional statement. On future iterations of the loop, the conditional statement closes the current table row and starts a new one each time the remainder is 0.

4. If there are no more records, you need to check if you have an incomplete row at the bottom of the table. Add a

`while` loop after the existing `do . . . while` loop. In the MySQLi version, it looks like this:

```
<?php } while ($row = $result->fetch_assoc());  
while ($pos++ % COLS) {  
    echo '<td>&nbsp;</td>';  
}  
?>
```

The new code is identical in the PDO version. The only difference is that the preceding line uses `$result->fetch()` instead of `$result->fetch_assoc()`.

The second loop continues incrementing `$pos` while `$pos++ % COLS` produces a remainder (which is interpreted as `true`) and inserts an empty cell.

Caution This second loop is not nested inside the first. It runs only after the first loop has ended.

5. Save the page and reload it in a browser. The single row of thumbnails across the top of the gallery should now be neatly lined up two by two, as shown in [Figure 12-4](#).



Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Figure 12-4. The thumbnails are now in neat columns

Try changing the value of `COLS` and reloading the page. The main image will be displaced because the page has been designed for only two columns, but you can see how easy it is to control the number of cells in each row by changing just one number. You can check your code against `gallery_mysqli_06.php` or `gallery_pdo_06.php`.

Paging Through a Long set of Records

The grid of eight thumbnails fits quite comfortably in the gallery, but what if you have 28 or 48? The answer is to limit the number of results displayed on each page and then build a navigation system that lets you page back and forth through the results. You've seen this technique countless times when using a search engine; now you're going to learn how to build it yourself. The task can be broken down into the following two stages:

1. Selecting a subset of records to display
2. Creating the navigation links to page through the subsets

Both stages are relatively easy to implement, although they involve applying a little conditional logic. Keep a cool head, and you'll breeze through it.

Selecting a Subset of Records

Limiting the number of results on a page is simple—just add the `LIMIT` keyword to the SQL query like this:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images LIMIT  
startPosition, maximum
```

The `LIMIT` keyword can be followed by one or two numbers. If you use just one number, it sets the maximum number of records to be retrieved. That's useful, but it's not suitable for a paging system. For that, you need to use two numbers: the first indicates which record to start from, and the second stipulates

the maximum number of records to be retrieved. MySQL counts records from 0, so to display the first six images, you need the following SQL:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images LIMIT 0, 6
```

To show the next set, the SQL needs to change to this:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images LIMIT 6, 6
```

There are only eight records in the `images` table, but the second number is only a maximum, so this retrieves records 7 and 8.

To build the navigation system, you need a way of generating these numbers. The second number never changes, so let's define a constant called `SHOWMAX`. Generating the first number (call it `$startRecord`) is pretty easy, too. Start numbering the pages from 0, and multiply the second number by the current page number. So, if you call the current page `$curPage`, the formula looks like this:

```
$startRecord = $curPage * SHOWMAX;
```

And for the SQL, it becomes this:

```
SELECT filename, caption FROM images LIMIT  
$startRecord, SHOWMAX
```

If `$curPage` is 0, `$startRecord` is also 0 (0×6), but when `$curPage` increases to 1, `$startRecord` changes to 6 (1×6), and so on.

Since there are only eight records in the `images` table, you need a way of finding out the total number of records so as to prevent the navigation system from retrieving empty result sets. In the last chapter, you used the MySQLi `num_rows` property, and `rowCount()` in PDO. However, that won't work this time, because you want to know the total number of records, not how many there are in the *current* result set. The answer is to use the SQL `COUNT()` function like this:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM images
```

When used like this in combination with an asterisk, `COUNT()` gets the total number of records in the table. So, to build a navigation system, you need to run both SQL queries: one to find the total number of records, and the other to retrieve the required subset. These are simple queries, so the result is almost

instantaneous.

I'll deal with the navigation links later. Let's begin by limiting the number of thumbnails on the first page.

PHP Solution 12-4: Displaying a Subset of Records

This PHP solution shows how to select a subset of records in preparation for creating a navigation system that pages through a longer set. It also demonstrates how to display the numbers of the current selection, as well as the total number of records.

Continue working with the same file as before. Alternatively, use `gallery_mysqli_06.php` or `gallery pdo_06.php`.

1. Define `SHOWMAX` and the SQL query to find the total number of records in the table. Amend the code toward the top of the page like this (new code is shown in bold):

```
// initialize variables for the
horizontal looper
$pos = 0;
$firstRow = true;
// set maximum number of records
define('SHOWMAX', 6);
$conn = dbConnect('read');
// prepare SQL to get total records
$getTotal = 'SELECT COUNT(*) FROM images';
```

2. You now need to run the new SQL query. The code goes immediately after the code in the preceding step but differs according to the type of MySQL connection. For MySQLi, use this:

```
// submit query and store result as
$totalPix
$total = $conn->query($getTotal);
$row = $total->fetch_row();
$totalPix = $row[0];
```

This submits the query and then uses the `fetch_row()`

method, which gets a single row from a `MySQLi_Result` object as an indexed array. There's only one column in the result, so `$row[0]` contains the total count of records in the `images` table.

For PDO, use this:

```
// submit query and store result as  
$totalPix  
$total = $conn->query($getTotal);  
$totalPix = $total->fetchColumn();
```

This submits the query and then uses `fetchColumn()` to get a single result, which is stored in `$totalPix`.

3. Next, set the value of `$curPage`. The navigation links that you'll create later will pass the value of the required page through a query string, so you need to check whether `curPage` is in the `$_GET` array. If it is, use that value. Otherwise, set the current page to 0. Insert the following code immediately after the code in the previous step:

```
// set the current page  
if (isset($_GET['curPage'])) {  
    $curPage = $_GET['curPage'];  
} else {  
    $curPage = 0;  
}
```

4. You now have all the information that you need to calculate the start row and to build the SQL query to retrieve a subset of records. Add the following code immediately after the code in the preceding step:

```
// calculate the start row of the  
subset  
$startRow = $curPage * SHOWMAX;
```

5. But there's a problem. The value of `$curPage` comes from the query string. If someone changes the number manually in the browser address bar, `$startRow` might

be greater than the number of records in the database. If the value of `$startRow` exceeds `$totalPix`, you need to reset both `$startRow` and `$curPage` to 0. Add this conditional statement after the code in the preceding step:

```
if ($startRow > $totalPix) {  
    $startRow = 0;  
    $curPage = 0;  
}
```

Note If `curPage` is manually changed to anything other than a number, PHP automatically converts it to 0 when it's multiplied by `SHOWMAX`.

6. The original SQL query should now be on the next line. Amend it like this:

```
// prepare SQL to retrieve subset of  
image details  
$sql = "SELECT filename, caption FROM  
images LIMIT $startRow, " . SHOWMAX;
```

I've used double quotes this time, because I want PHP to process `$startRow`. Unlike variables, constants aren't processed inside double-quoted strings. So `SHOWMAX` is added to the end of the SQL query with the concatenation operator (a period). The comma inside the closing quotes is part of the SQL, separating the two arguments of the `LIMIT` clause.

7. Save the page and reload it into a browser. Instead of eight thumbnails, you should see just six, as shown in [Figure 12-5](#).



Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Figure 12-5. The number of thumbnails is limited by the SHOWMAX constant

Change the value of SHOWMAX to see a different number of thumbnails.

8. The text above the thumbnail grid doesn't update because it's still hard-coded, so let's fix that. Locate the following line of code in the main body of the page:

```
<p id="picCount">Displaying 1 to 6 of  
8</p>
```

Replace it with this:

```
<p id="picCount">Displaying <?php echo  
$startRow+1;  
if ($startRow+1 < $totalPix) {  
    echo ' to ';  
    if ($startRow+SHOWMAX < $totalPix) {  
        echo $startRow+SHOWMAX;  
    } else {  
        echo $totalPix;  
    }  
}  
echo " of $totalPix";  
?></p>
```

Let's take this line by line. The value of \$startRow is zero-based, so you need to add 1 to get a more user-friendly number. So, \$startRow+1 displays 1 on the first page and 7 on the second page.

In the second line, `$startRow+1` is compared with the total number of records. If it's less, that means the current page is displaying a range of records, so the third line displays the text “to” with a space on either side.

You then need to work out the top number of the range, so a nested `if ... else` conditional statement adds the value of the start row to the maximum number of records to be shown on a page. If the result is less than the total number of records, `$startRow+SHOWMAX` gives you the number of the last record on the page. However, if it's equal to or greater than the total, you display `$totalPix` instead.

Finally, you exit both conditional statements and display “of” followed by the total number of records.

9. Save the page and reload it in a browser. You still get only the first subset of thumbnails, but you should see the second number change dynamically whenever you alter the value of `SHOWMAX`. Check your code, if necessary, against `gallery_mysqli_07.php` or `gallery_pdo_07.php`.

Navigating Through Subsets of Records

As I mentioned in step 3 of the preceding section, the value of the required page is passed to the PHP script through a query string. When the page first loads, there is no query string, so the value of `$curPage` is set to 0. Although a query string is generated when you click a thumbnail to display a different image, it includes only the filename of the main image, so the original subset of thumbnails remains unchanged. To display the next subset, you need to create a link that increases the value of `$curPage` by 1. It follows, therefore, that to return to the previous subset, you need another link that reduces the value of `$curPage` by 1.

That's simple enough, but you also need to make sure that these links are displayed only when there is a valid subset to navigate to. For instance, there's no point in displaying a back link on the first page, because there isn't a previous subset. Similarly, you shouldn't display a forward link on the page that displays

subset summary, you shouldn't display a forward link on the page that displays the last subset, because there's nothing to navigate to.

Both issues are easily solved by using conditional statements. There's one final thing that you need to take care of. You must also include the value of the current page in the query string generated when you click a thumbnail. If you fail to do so, \$curPage is automatically set back to 0, and the first set of thumbnails is displayed instead of the current subset.

PHP Solution 12-5: Creating the Navigation Links

This PHP solution shows how to create the navigation links to page back and forth through each subset of records. Continue working with the same file as before. Alternatively, use `gallery_mysql_07.php` or `gallery_pdo_07.php`.

1. I have placed the navigation links in an extra row at the bottom of the thumbnail table. Insert this code between the placeholder comment and the closing `</table>` tag:

```
<!-- Navigation link needs to go here --
->
<tr><td>
<?php
// create a back link if current page greater
than 0
if ($curPage > 0) {
    echo '<a href="' . $_SERVER['PHP_SELF'] . '?'
curPage=' . ($curPage-1) .
'"> &lt; Prev</a>';
} else {
    // otherwise leave the cell empty
    echo '&nbsp;';
}
?>
</td>
<?php
// pad the final row with empty cells if more
than 2 columns
if (COLS-2 > 0) {
    for ($i = 0; $i < COLS-2; $i++) {
        echo '<td>&nbsp;</td>';
    }
}
```

```

}
?>
<td>
<?php
// create a forward link if more records exist
if ($startRow+SHOWMAX < $totalPix) {
    echo '<a href="' . $_SERVER['PHP_SELF'] . '?'
curPage=' . ($curPage+1) .
    '"> Next &gt;</a>';
} else {
    // otherwise leave the cell empty
    echo '&nbsp;';
}
?>
</td></tr>
</table>

```

It looks like a lot, but the code breaks down into three sections: the first creates a back link if `$curPage` is greater than 0; the second pads the final table row with empty cells if there are more than two columns; and the third uses the same formula as before (`($startRow+SHOWMAX < $totalPix)`) to determine whether to display a forward link.

Make sure you get the combination of quotes right in the links. The other point to note is that the `$curPage-1` and `$curPage+1` calculations are enclosed in parentheses to avoid the period after the number being misinterpreted as a decimal point. It's used here as the concatenation operator to join the various parts of the query string.

2. You now need to add the value of the current page to the query string in the link surrounding the thumbnail. Locate this section of code (around line 95):

```
<a href="<?= $_SERVER['PHP_SELF']; ?>?
image=<?= $row['filename']; ?>">
```

Change it like this:

```
<a href="<?= $_SERVER['PHP_SELF']; ?>?
```

```
image=<?= $row['filename'];?>
&curPage=<?= $curPage; ?>">
```

You want the same subset to be displayed when clicking a thumbnail, so you just pass the current value of `$curPage` through the query string.

Caution Because of the limitations of the printed page, I've had to break the code over two lines. In your PHP script, all the code *must* be on the same line with no space between the closing PHP tag and `&`. This code creates the URL and query string, which must have no spaces in it.

3. Save the page and test it. Click the **Next** link, and you should see the remaining subset of thumbnails, as shown in [Figure 12-6](#). There are no more images to be displayed, so the **Next** link disappears, but there's a **Prev** link at the bottom left of the thumbnail grid. The record counter at the top of the gallery now reflects the range of thumbnails being displayed, and if you click the right thumbnail, the same subset remains onscreen while displaying the appropriate large image. You're done!



Monk begging for alms in Kyoto

Figure 12-6. The page navigation system is now complete

You can check your code against `gallery_mysqli_08.php` or `gallery_pdo_08.php`.

Chapter Review

In just a few pages, you have turned a boring list of filenames into a dynamic online gallery, complete with a page navigation system. All that's necessary is to create a thumbnail for each major image, upload both images to the appropriate folders, and add the filename and a caption to the `images` table in the database. As long as the database is kept up to date with the contents of the `images` and `thumbs` folders, you have a dynamic gallery. Not only that, you've learned how to select subsets of records, link to related information through a query string, and build a page navigation system.

The more you use PHP, the more you realize that the skill doesn't lie so much in remembering how to use lots of obscure functions but in working out the logic needed to get PHP to do what you want. It's a question of if this `do`

~~the logic needed to get this to do what you want. It's a question of if and, do that; if something else, do something different.~~ Once you can anticipate the likely eventualities of a situation, you can normally build the code to handle it.

So far, you've concentrated on extracting records from a simple database table. In the next chapter, I'll show you how to insert, update, and delete material.

CHAPTER 13



Managing Content

Although you can use phpMyAdmin for a lot of database administration, you might want to set up areas where clients can log in to update some data without giving them full rein of your database. To do so, you need to build your own forms and create customized content management systems.

At the heart of every content management system lies what is sometimes called the CRUD cycle—Create, Read, Update, and Delete—which utilizes just four SQL commands: `INSERT`, `SELECT`, `UPDATE`, and `DELETE`. To demonstrate the basic SQL commands, this chapter shows you how to build a simple content management system for a table called `blog`.

Even if you don't want to build your own content management system, the four commands covered in this chapter are essential for just about any database-driven page, such as user login, user registration, search form, search results, and so on.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

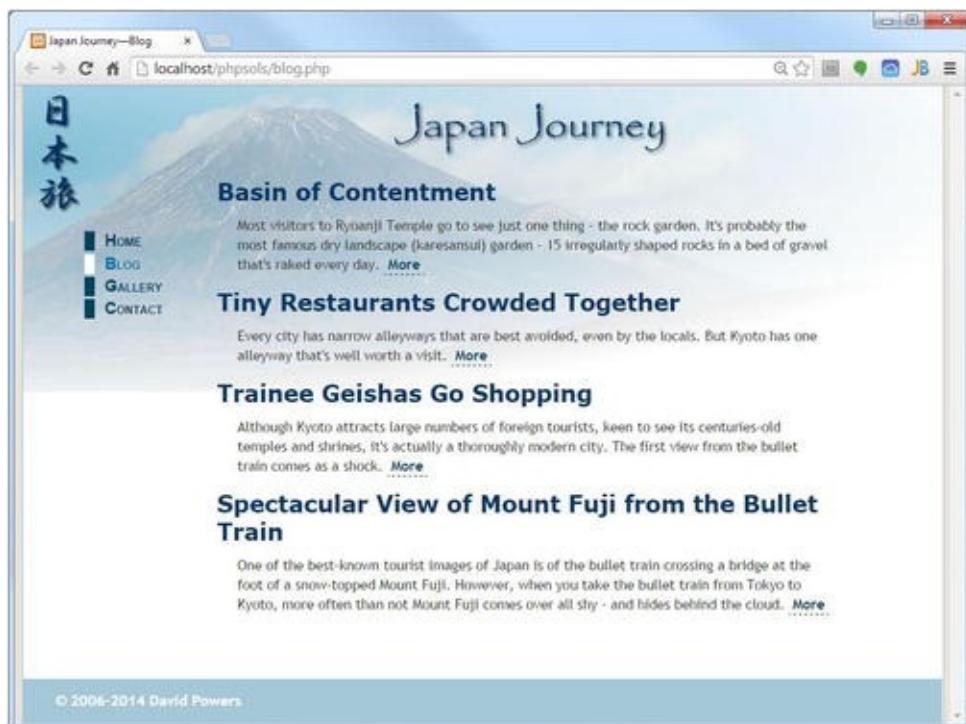
- Inserting new records in a database table
- Displaying a list of existing records
- Updating existing records
- Asking for confirmation before a record is deleted

Setting Up a Content Management System

Managing the content in a database table involves four stages, which I normally

assign to four separate but interlinked pages: one each for inserting, updating, and deleting records, plus a list of existing records. The list of records serves two purposes: first, to identify what's stored in the database and, more important, to link to the update and delete scripts by passing the record's primary key through a query string.

The `blog` table contains a series of titles and text articles to be displayed in the Japan Journey site, as shown in [Figure 13-1](#). In the interests of keeping things simple, the table contains just five columns: `article_id` (primary key), `title`, `article`, `created`, and `updated`.



[Figure 13-1](#). The contents of the `blog` table displayed in the Japan Journey website

Creating the Blog Database Table

If you just want to get on with studying the content management pages, import the table structure and data from `blog.sql` from the `ch13` folder. Open phpMyAdmin, select the `phpsols` database, and import the table in the same way as in [Chapter 10](#). The SQL file creates the table and populates it with four short articles.

If you would prefer to create everything yourself from scratch, open

phpMyAdmin, select the `phpsols` database, and click the **Structure** tab if it's not already selected. In the **Create table** section, type **blog** in the **Name** field and **5** in the **Number of columns** field. Then click **Go**. Use the settings shown in the following screenshot and [Table 13-1](#).

The screenshot shows the 'Structure' tab of the phpMyAdmin interface for a table named 'blog'. The table has five columns:

- article_id**: Type INT, Length/Values 10, Default None, Attributes UNSIGNED, Null Deselected, Index PRIMARY, A_I Selected.
- title**: Type VARCHAR, Length/Values 255, Default None, Attributes, Null Deselected, Index.
- article**: Type TEXT, Length/Values 65535, Default None, Attributes, Null Deselected, Index.
- created**: Type TIMESTAMP, Length/Values 19, Default CURRENT_TIME, Attributes, Null Deselected, Index.
- updated**: Type TIMESTAMP, Length/Values 19, Default CURRENT_TIMESTAMP, Attributes on update CURRENT_TIMESTAMP, Null Deselected, Index.

Below the table definition, there are fields for **Table comments**, **Storage Engine** (set to InnoDB), and **Collation**. There is also a **PARTITION definition** section and a **Save** button at the bottom right.

Table 13-1. Column definitions for the *blog* table

Field	Type	Length/Values	Default	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
article_id	INT			UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	Selected
title	VARCHAR	255			Deselected		
article	TEXT				Deselected		
created	TIMESTAMP		CURRENT_TIMESTAMP		Deselected		
updated	TIMESTAMP		CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	on update CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	Deselected		

The default value of the `created` and `updated` columns is set to `CURRENT_TIMESTAMP`. So, both columns get the same value when a record is first entered. The `Attributes` column for `updated` is set to `on update CURRENT_TIMESTAMP`. This means it will be updated whenever a change is made to a record. To keep track of when a record was originally created, the value in the `created` column is never updated.

Creating the Basic Insert and Update Form

SQL makes an important distinction between inserting and updating records by providing separate commands. `INSERT` is used only for creating a brand-new record. Once a record has been inserted, any changes must be made with `UPDATE`. Since this involves working with identical fields, it is possible to use the same page for both operations. However, this makes the PHP more complex, so I prefer to create the HTML for the insert page first, save a copy as the update page, and then code them separately.

The form in the insert page needs just two input fields: for the title and the article. The contents of the remaining three columns (the primary key and the two timestamps) are handled automatically. The code for the insert form looks like this:

```
<form method="post" action="">
    <p>
        <label for="title">Title:</label>
        <input name="title" type="text" id="title">
    </p>
    <p>
        <label for="article">Article:</label>
        <textarea name="article" id="article">
    </textarea>
    </p>
    <p>
        <input type="submit" name="insert"
value="Insert New Entry" id="insert">
    </p>
</form>
```

The form uses the `post` method. You can find the full code in `blog_insert_01.php` in the `ch13` folder. The content management forms have been given some basic styling with `admin.css`, which is in the `styles` folder. When viewed in a browser, the form looks like this:

Insert New Blog Entry

Title:

Article:

The update form is identical except for the heading and Submit button. The button code looks like this (the full code is in `blog_update_mysqli_01.php` and `blog_update_pdo_01.php`):

```
<input type="submit" name="update" value="Update Entry"  
id="update">
```

I've given the title and article input fields the same names as the columns in the `blog` table. This makes it easier to keep track of variables when coding the PHP and SQL later.

Tip As a security measure, some developers recommend using different names from the database columns because anyone can see the names of input fields just by looking at the form's source code. Using different names makes it more difficult to break into the database. This shouldn't be a concern in a password-protected part of a site. However, you may want to consider the idea for publicly accessible forms, such as those used for user registration or login.

Inserting New Records

The basic SQL for inserting new records into a table looks like this:

```
INSERT [INTO] table_name (column_names)  
VALUES (values)
```

The `INTO` is in square brackets, which means that it's optional. It's purely there to make the SQL read a little more like human language. The column names can be in any order you like, but the values in the second set of parentheses must be in the same order as the columns they refer to.

Although the code is very similar for MySQLi and PDO, I'll deal with each one separately to avoid confusion.

Note Many of the scripts in this chapter use a technique known as “setting a flag.” A `flag` is a Boolean variable that is initialized to either `true` or `false` and used to check whether something has happened. For instance, if `$OK` is initially set to `false` and reset to `true` only when a database query executes successfully, it can be used as the condition controlling another code block.

PHP Solution 13-1: Inserting a New Record with MySQLi

This PHP solution shows how to insert a new record into the `blog` table using a MySQLi prepared statement. Using a prepared statement avoids problems with escaping quotes and control characters. It also protects your database against SQL injection (see [Chapter 11](#)).

1. Create a folder called `admin` in the `phpsol1s` site root. Copy `blog_insert_01.php` from the `ch13` folder, and save it as `blog_insert_mysql.php` in the new folder.
2. The code that inserts a new record should be run only if the form has been submitted, so it's enclosed in a conditional statement that checks for the `name` attribute of the submit button (`insert`) in the `$_POST` array. Put the following above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
<?php  
if (isset($_POST['insert'])) {  
    require_once  
    '../includes/connection.php';
```

```

    // initialize flag
    $OK = false;
    // create database connection
    // initialize prepared statement
    // create SQL
    // bind parameters and execute
    statement
        // redirect if successful or
        display error
    }
?>

```

After including the connection function, the code sets `$OK` to `false`. This is reset to `true` only if there are no errors. The five comments at the end map out the remaining steps that we'll fill in below.

3. Create a connection to the database as the user with read and write privileges, initialize a prepared statement, and create the SQL with placeholders for data that will be derived from the user input like this:

```

// create database connection
$conn = dbConnect('write');
// initialize prepared statement
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
// create SQL
$sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (title, article)
VALUES(?, ?)';

```

The values that will be derived from `$_POST['title']` and `$_POST['article']` are represented by question mark placeholders. The other columns will be populated automatically. The `article_id` column is the primary key, which uses `AUTO_INCREMENT`, and the default for the `created` and `updated` columns is `CURRENT_TIMESTAMP`.

Note The code is in a slightly different order from [Chapter 11](#). The script will be developed further in

[Chapter 15](#) to run a series of SQL queries, so the prepared statement is initialized first.

4. The next stage is to replace the question marks with the values held in the variables—a process called **binding the parameters**. Insert the following code:

```
if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {  
    // bind parameters and execute  
    statement  
    $stmt->bind_param('ss', $_POST['title'],  
    $_POST['article']);  
    $stmt->execute();  
    if ($stmt->affected_rows > 0) {  
        $OK = true;  
    }  
}
```

This is the section that protects your database from SQL injection. Pass the variables to the `bind_param()` method in the same order as you want them inserted into the SQL query, together with a first argument that specifies the data type of each variable, once again in the same order as the variables. Both are strings, so this argument is '`ss`'.

Once the values have been bound to the placeholders, call the `execute()` method.

The `affected_rows` property records how many rows were affected by an `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, or `DELETE` query.

 **Caution** If the query triggers a MySQL error, `affected_rows` returns `-1`. Unlike some computing languages, PHP treats `-1` as `true`. So, you need to check that `affected_rows` is greater than zero to be sure that the query succeeded. If it is greater than zero, `$OK` is reset to `true`.

-
- Finally, redirect the page to a list of existing records or display any error message. Add this code after the previous step:

```
// redirect if successful or display  
error  
if ($OK) {  
    header('Location:  
        http://localhost/phpsolns/admin/blog_list_mysqli');  
    exit;  
} else {  
    $error = $stmt->error;  
}  
}  
?  
?>
```

- Add the following code block in the body of the page to display the error message if the insert operation fails:

```
<h1>Insert New Blog Entry</h1>  
<?php if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p>Error: $error</p>";  
} ?>  
<form method="post" action="">
```

The completed code is in `blog_insert_mysqli.php` in the `ch13` folder.

That completes the insert page, but before testing it, create `blog_list_mysqli.php`, which is described in the PHP Solution 13-3.

Note To focus on the code that interacts with the database, the scripts in this chapter don't validate the user input. In a real-world application, you should use the techniques described in [Chapter 5](#) to check the data submitted from the form and redisplay it if errors are detected.

PHP Solution 13-2: Inserting a New Record with PDO

This PHP solution shows how to insert a new record in the `blog` table using a PDO prepared statement. If you haven't already done so, create a folder called `admin` in the `phpsols` site root.

1. Copy `blog_insert_01.php` to the `admin` folder and save it as `blog_insert pdo.php`.
2. The code that inserts a new record should be run only if the form has been submitted, so it's enclosed in a conditional statement that checks for the `name` attribute of the submit button (`insert`) in the `$_POST` array. Put the following in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
if (isset($_POST['insert'])) {  
    require_once  
    './includes/connection.php';  
    // initialize flag  
    $OK = false;  
    // create database connection  
    // create SQL  
    // prepare the statement  
    // bind the parameters and execute  
    the statement  
    // redirect if successful or  
    display error  
}
```

After including the connection function, the code sets `$OK` to `false`. This is reset to `true` only if there are no errors. The five comments at the end map out the remaining steps.

3. Create a PDO connection to the database as the user with read and write privileges, and build the SQL like this:

```
// create database connection  
$conn = dbConnect('write', 'pdo');  
// create SQL  
$sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (title, article)  
VALUES(:title, :article');
```

The values that will be derived from variables are represented by named placeholders consisting of the column name preceded by a colon (`:title` and `:article`). The value for the other columns will be generated by the database. The `article_id` primary key is incremented automatically, and the `created` and `updated` columns have their default values set to `CURRENT_TIMESTAMP`.

4. The next stage is to initialize the prepared statement and bind the values from the variables to the placeholders—a process known as **binding the parameters**. Add the following code:

```
// prepare the statement
$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
// bind the parameters and execute the
statement
$stmt->bindParam(':title', $_POST['title'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
$stmt->bindParam(':article', $_POST['article'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
// execute and get number of affected
rows
$stmt->execute();
$OK = $stmt->rowCount();
```

This begins by passing the SQL query to the `prepare()` method of the database connection (`$conn`) and storing a reference to the statement as a variable (`$stmt`).

Next, the values in the variables are bound to the placeholders in the prepared statement, and the `execute()` method runs the query.

When used with an `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, or `DELETE` query, the PDO `rowCount()` method reports the number of rows affected by the query. If the record is inserted successfully, `$OK` is `1`, which PHP treats as `true`. Otherwise, it's `0`, which is treated as `false`.

- Finally, redirect the page to a list of existing records or display any error message. Add this code after the previous step:

```
// redirect if successful or display
error
if ($OK) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsol/admin/blog_list_pdo.php');
    exit;
} else {
    $errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
    if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
        $error = $errorInfo[2];
    }
}
?
?>
```

Since the prepared statement has been stored as `$stmt`, you can access an array of error messages using `$stmt->errorInfo()`. The third element of the array will be set only if there's a problem.

- Add a PHP code block in the body of the page to display any error message:

```
<h1>Insert New Blog Entry</h1>
<?php if (isset($error)) {
    echo "<p>Error: $error</p>";
} ?>
<form method="post" action="">
```

The completed code is in `blog_insert pdo.php` in the `ch13` folder.

That completes the insert page, but before testing it, create `blog_list pdo.php`, which is described next.

Linking to the Update and Delete Pages

Before you can update or delete a record, you need to find its primary key. A practical way of doing this is to query the database and display a list of all records. You can use the results of this query to display a list of all records, complete with links to the update and delete pages. By adding the value of `article_id` to a query string in each link, you automatically identify the record to be updated or deleted. As [Figure 13-2](#) shows, the URL displayed in the browser status bar (bottom left) identifies the `article_id` of the article `Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together` as 3.

Created	Title		
2014-09-10 13:00:20	Basin of Contentment	EDIT	DELETE
2014-09-10 12:59:12	Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together	EDIT	DELETE
2014-09-10 12:58:02	Trainee Geishas Go Shopping	EDIT	DELETE
2014-09-10 12:56:56	Spectacular View of Mount Fuji from the Bullet Train	EDIT	DELETE

[Figure 13-2](#). The `EDIT` and `DELETE` links contain the record's primary key in a query string

The update page uses this to display the correct record ready for updating. The same information is conveyed in the `DELETE` link to the delete page.

To create a list like this, you need to start with an HTML table that contains two rows and as many columns as you want to display, plus two extra columns for the `EDIT` and `DELETE` links. The first row is used for column headings. The second row is wrapped in a PHP loop to display all the results. The table in `blog_list_mysqli_01.php` in the `ch13` folder looks like this (the version in `blog_list_pdo_01.php` is the same, except that the links in the last two table cells point to the PDO versions of the update and delete pages):

```
<table>
<tr>
    <th>Created</th>
```

```

<th>Title</th>
<th>&nbsp;</th>
<th>&nbsp;</th>
</tr>
<tr>
    <td></td>
    <td></td>
    <td><a href="blog_update_mysql.php">EDIT</a>
</td>
    <td><a href="blog_delete_mysql.php">DELETE</a>
</td>
</tr>
</table>

```

PHP Solution 13-3: Creating the Links to the Update and Delete Pages

This PHP solution shows how to create a page to manage the records in the `blog` table by displaying a list of all records and linking to the update and delete pages. There are only minor differences between the MySQLi and PDO versions, so these instructions describe both.

Copy `blog_list_mysql_01.php` or `blog_list_pdo_01.php` to the `admin` folder and save it as `blog_list_mysql.php` or `blog_list_pdo.php`, depending on which method of connection you plan to use. The different versions link to the appropriate insert, update, and delete files.

1. You need to connect to the database and create the SQL query. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```

require_once
'../includes/connection.php';
// create database connection
$conn = dbConnect('read');
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM blog ORDER BY
created DESC';

```

If you're using PDO, add 'pdo' as the second argument to `dbConnect()`.

2. Submit the query by adding the following code before the closing PHP tag.

For MySQLi, use this:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
if (!$result) {
    $error = $conn->error;
}
```

For PDO, use this:

```
$result = $conn->query($sql);
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
    $error = $errorInfo[2];
}
```

3. Add a conditional statement just before the table to display any error message, and wrap the table in the `else` block. The code before the table looks like this:

```
<?php if (isset($error)) {
    echo "<p>$error</p>";
} else { ?>
```

The closing curly brace goes in a separate PHP block after the closing `</table>` tag.

4. You now need to enclose the second table row in a loop and retrieve each record from the result set. The following code goes between the closing `</tr>` tag of the first row and the opening `<tr>` tag of the second row.

For MySQLi, use this:

```
</tr>
<?php while($row = $result->fetch_assoc()) { ?>
    <tr>
```

For PDO, use this:

```
</tr>
<?php while ($row = $result->fetch()) { ?>
    <tr>
```

This is the same as in the previous chapter, so it should need no explanation.

5. Display the `created` and `title` fields for the current record in the first two cells of the second row, like this:

```
<td><?= $row['created']; ?></td>
<td><?= $row['title']; ?></td>
```

6. In the next two cells, add the query string and value of the `article_id` field for the current record to both URLs, as follows (although the links are different, the highlighted code is the same for the PDO version):

```
<td><a href="blog_update_mysql.php?
article_id=<?= $row['article_id']; ?>">EDIT</a></td>
<td><a href="blog_delete_mysql.php?
article_id=<?= $row['article_id']; ?>">DELETE</a></td>
```

What you're doing here is adding `?article_id=` to the URL and then using PHP to display the value of `$row['article_id']`. It's important that you don't leave any spaces that might break the URL or the query string. After the PHP has been processed, the opening `<a>` tag should look like this when viewing the page's source code in a browser (although the number will vary according to the record):

```
<a href="blog_update_mysql.php?
article_id=2">
```

7. Finally, close the loop surrounding the second table row with a curly brace, like this:

```
</tr>
<?php } ?>
</table>
```

8. Save `blog_list_mysql.php` or `blog_list_pdo.php` and load the page into a browser. Assuming that you loaded the contents of `blog.sql` into the `phpsols` database earlier, you should see a list of four items, as shown in [Figure 13-2](#). You can now test `blog_insert_mysql.php` or `blog_insert_pdo.php`. After inserting an item, you should be returned to the appropriate version of `blog_list.php`, and the date and time of creation, together with the title of the new item, should be displayed at the top of the list. Check your code against the versions in the `ch13` folder if you encounter any problems.

Tip This code assumes that there will always be some records in the table. As an exercise, use the technique in PHP Solution 11-2 (MySQLi) or 11-4 (PDO) to count the number of results, and use a conditional statement to display a message if no records are found. The solution is in `blog_list_norec_mysql.php` and `blog_list_norec_pdo.php`.

Updating Records

An update page needs to perform two separate processes, as follows:

1. Retrieve the selected record, and display it ready for editing
2. Update the edited record in the database

The first stage uses the `$_GET` superglobal array to retrieve the primary key from the URL, and then uses it to select and display the record in the update form, as shown in [Figure 13-3](#).

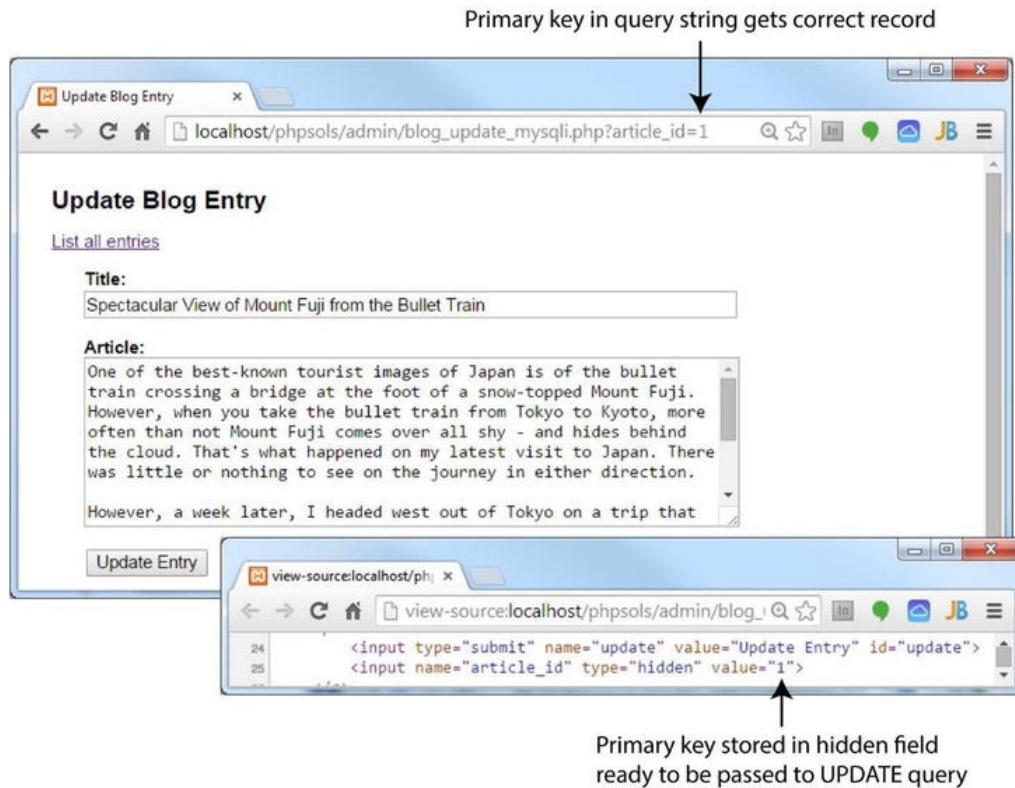


Figure 13-3. The primary key keeps track of a record during the update process

The primary key is stored in a hidden field in the update form. After you have edited the record in the update page, you submit the form using the post method to pass all the details, including the primary key, to an UPDATE command.

The basic syntax of the SQL UPDATE command looks like this:

```
UPDATE table_name SET column_name = value, column_name = value
WHERE condition
```

The condition when updating a specific record is the primary key. So, when updating article_id 3 in the blog table, the basic UPDATE query looks like this:

```
UPDATE blog SET title = value, article = value
WHERE article_id = 3
```

Although the basic principle is the same for both MySQLi and PDO, the code differs sufficiently to warrant separate instructions.

PHP Solution 13-4: Updating a Record with MySQLi

This PHP solution shows how to load an existing record into the update form and then send the edited details to the database for updating using MySQLi. To load the record, you need to have created the management page that lists all records, as described in PHP Solution 13-3.

1. Copy `blog_update_mysql_i_01.php` from the `ch13` folder and save it in the `admin` folder as `blog_update_mysql_i.php`.
2. The first stage involves retrieving the details of the record that you want to update. Put the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
require_once  
'./includes/connection.php';  
// initialize flags  
$OK = false;  
$done = false;  
// create database connection  
$conn = dbConnect('write');  
// initialize statement  
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();  
// get details of selected record  
if (isset($_GET['article_id']) &&  
!$_POST) {  
    // prepare SQL query  
    $sql = 'SELECT article_id, title,  
article  
        FROM blog WHERE article_id  
= ?';  
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {  
        // bind the query parameter  
        $stmt->bind_param('i',  
$_GET['article_id']);  
        // execute the query, and fetch  
        the result  
        $OK = $stmt->execute();
```

```

        // bind the results to variables
        $stmt->bind_result($article_id,
$title, $article);
        $stmt->fetch();
    }
}

// redirect if $_GET['article_id'] not
defined
if (!isset($_GET['article_id'])) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/admin/blog_list_my
    exit;
}

// get error message if query fails
if (isset($stmt) && !$OK && !$done) {
    $error = $stmt->error;
}

```

Although this is very similar to the code used for the insert page, the first few lines are *outside* the conditional statements. Both stages of the update process require the database connection and a prepared statement, so this avoids the need to duplicate the same code later. Two flags are initialized: `$OK` to check the success of retrieving the record, and `$done` to check whether the update succeeds.

The first conditional statement makes sure that `$_GET['article_id']` exists and that the `$_POST` array is empty. So the code inside the braces is executed only when the query string is set, but the form hasn't been submitted.

You prepare the `SELECT` query in the same way as for an `INSERT` command, using a question mark as a placeholder for the variable. However, note that instead of using an asterisk to retrieve all columns, the query specifies three columns by name like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT article_id, title, article
        FROM blog WHERE article_id = ?';
```

This is because a MySQLi prepared statement lets you bind the result of a SELECT query to variables, and to be able to do this, you must specify the column names and the order you want them to be in.

First, you need to initialize the prepared statement and bind `$_GET['article_id']` to the query with `$stmt->bind_param()`. Because the value of `article_id` must be an integer, you pass '`i`' as the first argument.

The code executes the query, and then binds the result to variables in the same order as the columns specified in the SELECT query before fetching the result.

The next conditional statement redirects the page to `blog_list_mysql.php` if `$_GET['article_id']` hasn't been defined. This prevents anyone from trying to load the update page directly in a browser.

The final conditional statement stores an error message if the prepared statement has been created but both `$OK` and `$done` remain `false`. You haven't added the update script yet, but if the record is retrieved or updated successfully, one of them will be switched to `true`. So if both remain `false`, you know there was something wrong with one of the SQL queries.

3. Now that you have retrieved the contents of the record, you need to display them in the update form. If the prepared statement succeeded, `$article_id` should contain the primary key of the record to be updated, because it's one of the variables you bound to the result set with the `bind_result()` method.

However, if there's an error you need to display the message onscreen. But if someone alters the query string to an invalid number, `$article_id` will be set to 0, so there is no point in displaying the update form. Add the following conditional statements immediately before the opening `<form>` tag:

```
<p><a href="blog_list_mysql.php">List all entries </a></p>
<?php if (isset($error)) {
    echo "<p class='warning'>Error: $error</p>";
}
if($article_id == 0) { ?>
    <p class="warning">Invalid request: record does not exist.</p>
<?php } else { ?>
    <form name="form1" method="post" action="">
```

The first conditional statement displays any error message reported by the MySQLi prepared statement. The second wraps the update form in an `else` block, so the form will be hidden if `$article_id` is 0.

4. Add the closing curly brace of the `else` block immediately after the closing `</form>` tag, like this:

```
</form>
<?php } ?>
</body>
```

5. If `$article_id` is not 0, you know that `$title` and `$article` also contain valid values and can be displayed in the update form without further testing. However, you need to pass text values to `htmlentities()` to avoid problems with displaying quotes. Display `$title` in the `value` attribute of the `title` input field like this:

```
<input name="title" type="text"
```

```
id="title" value="<?=
    htmlentities($title); ?>">
```

6. Do the same for the `article` text area. Because text areas don't have a `value` attribute, the code goes between the opening and closing `<textarea>` tags like this:

```
<textarea name="article" id="article">
<?= htmlentities($article); ?></textarea>
```

Make sure there is no space between the opening and closing PHP and `<textarea>` tags. Otherwise, you'll get unwanted spaces in your updated record.

7. The `UPDATE` command needs to know the primary key of the record you want to change. You need to store the primary key in a hidden field so that it is submitted in the `$_POST` array with the other details. Because hidden fields are not displayed onscreen, the following code can go anywhere inside the form:

```
<input name="article_id" type="hidden"
value="<?= $article_id; ?>">
```

8. Save the update page and test it by loading `blog_list_mysqli.php` into a browser and selecting the `EDIT` link for one of the records. The contents of the record should be displayed in the form fields, as shown in [Figure 13-3](#).

The `Update Entry` button doesn't do anything yet. Just make sure that everything is displayed correctly, and confirm that the primary key is registered in the hidden field. You can check your code, if necessary, against `blog_update mysqli_02.php`.

9. The `name` attribute of the submit button is `update`, so all the update processing code needs to go in a conditional statement that checks for the presence of `update` in the `$_POST` array. Place the following code, highlighted in bold, immediately above the code in step 1 that redirects

the page:

```
    $stmt->fetch();
}
}
// if form has been submitted, update record
if (isset($_POST ['update'])) {
    // prepare update query
    $sql = 'UPDATE blog SET title = ?, article
= ?
        WHERE article_id = ?';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        $stmt->bind_param('ssi',
$_POST['title'], $_POST['article'],
$_POST['article_id']);
        $done = $stmt->execute();
    }
}
// redirect page on success or if
$_GET['article_id']) not defined
if ($done ||
!isset($_GET['article_id'])) {
```

The UPDATE query is prepared with question mark placeholders where values are to be supplied from variables. The prepared statement has already been initialized in the code outside the conditional statement, so you can pass the SQL to the `prepare()` method and bind the variables with `$stmt->bind_param()`. The first two variables are strings, and the third is an integer, so the first argument is '`ssi`'.

If the UPDATE query succeeds, the `execute()` method returns `true`, resetting the value of `$done`. Unlike an `INSERT` query, using the `affected_rows` property has little meaning because it returns `0` if the user decides to click the `Update Entry` button without making any changes, so we won't use it here. You need to add `$done ||` to the condition in the redirect script. This ensures that the page is redirected if either the update succeeds or someone tries to access the page directly.

10. Save `blog_update_mysqli.php` and test it by loading `blog_list_mysqli.php`, selecting one of the EDIT links, and making changes to the record that is displayed. When you click Update Entry, you should be taken back to `blog_list_mysqli.php`. You can verify that your changes were made by clicking the same EDIT link again. Check your code, if necessary, with `blog_update_mysqli_03.php`.

PHP Solution 13-5: Updating a Record with PDO

This PHP solution shows how to load an existing record into the update form and then send the edited details to the database for updating using PDO. To load the record, you need to have created the management page that lists all records, as described in PHP Solution 13-3.

1. Copy `blog_update_pdo_01.php` from the `ch13` folder and save it in the `admin` folder as `blog_update_pdo.php`.
2. The first stage involves retrieving the details of the record that you want to update. Put the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
require_once  
'../includes/connection.php';  
// initialize flags  
$OK = false;  
$done = false;  
// create database connection  
$conn = dbConnect('write', 'pdo');  
// get details of selected record  
if (isset($_GET['article_id']) &&  
!$_POST) {  
    // prepare SQL query  
    $sql = 'SELECT article_id, title,  
    article FROM blog  
        WHERE article_id = ?';
```

```

$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
// pass the placeholder value to
execute() as a single-element array
$OK = $stmt-
>execute([$_GET['article_id']]);
// bind the results
$stmt->bindColumn(1, $article_id);
$stmt->bindColumn(2, $title);
$stmt->bindColumn(3, $article);
$stmt->fetch();
}
// redirect if $_GET['article_id'] not
defined
if (!isset($_GET['article_id'])) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/admin/blog_list_pdo
    exit;
}
// store error message if query fails
if (isset($stmt) && !$OK && !$done) {
    $errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
    if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
        $error = $errorInfo[2];
    }
}

```

Although this is very similar to the code used for the insert page, the first few lines are *outside* the first conditional statement. Both stages of the update process require the database connection, so this avoids the need to duplicate the same code later. Two flags are initialized: **\$OK** to check the success of retrieving the record and **\$done** to check whether the update succeeds.

The first conditional statement checks that **\$_GET ['article_id']** exists and that the **\$_POST** array is empty. This makes sure that the code inside is executed only when the query string is set, but the form hasn't yet been submitted.

When preparing the SQL query for the insert form, you used named placeholders for the variables. This time, let's use a question mark, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT article_id, title,  
article FROM blog  
WHERE article_id = ?';
```

There's only one variable that needs to be bound to the anonymous placeholder, so pass it directly to the `execute()` method as a single-element array, like this:

```
$OK = $stmt -  
>execute([$_GET['article_id']]);
```

Caution This code uses the array shorthand syntax, so `$_GET['article_id']` is wrapped in a pair of square brackets. Don't forget the array's closing square bracket.

The results are then bound to `$article_id`, `$title`, and `$article` with the `bindColumn()` method. This time, I have used numbers (counting from 1) to indicate which column to bind each variable to.

There's only one record to fetch in the result, so the `fetch()` method is called immediately.

The next conditional statement redirects the page to `blog_list_pdo.php` if `$_GET['article_id']` hasn't been defined. This prevents anyone from trying to load the update page directly in a browser.

The final conditional statement stores an error message if the prepared statement has been created, but both `$OK` and `$done` remain `false`. You haven't added the update script yet, but if the record is retrieved or updated successfully, one of them will be switched to `true`. So if both remain `false`, you know there was something

wrong with one of the SQL queries.

3. Now that you have retrieved the contents of the record, you need to display them in the update form. If the prepared statement succeeded, `$article_id` should contain the primary key of the record to be updated, because it's one of the variables you bound to the result set with the `bindColumn()` method.

However, if there's an error you need to display that message onscreen. But if someone alters the query string to an invalid number, `$article_id` will be set to 0, so there is no point in displaying the update form. Add the following conditional statements immediately before the opening `<form>` tag:

```
<p><a href="blog_list_pdo.php">List  
all entries </a></p>  
<?php if (isset($error)) {  
    echo "<p class='warning'>Error: $error</p>";  
}  
if($article_id == 0) { ?>  
    <p class="warning">Invalid request: record  
does not exist.</p>  
<?php } else { ?>  
    <form name="form1" method="post"  
action="">
```

The first conditional statement displays any error message reported by the PDO prepared statement. The second wraps the update form in an `else` block, so the form will be hidden if `$article_id` is 0.

4. Add the closing curly brace of the `else` block immediately after the closing `</form>` tag, like this:

```
</form>  
<?php } ?>  
</body>
```

5. If `$article_id` is not 0, you know that `$title` and `$article` also exist and can be displayed in the update

form without further testing. However, you need to pass text values to `htmlentities()` to avoid problems with displaying quotes. Display `$title` in the `value` attribute of the `title` input field like this:

```
<input name="title" type="text"  
id="title" value="<?=  
    htmlentities($title); ?>">
```

6. Do the same for the `article` text area. Because text areas don't have a `value` attribute, the code goes between the opening and closing `<textarea>` tags like this:

```
<textarea name="article" id="article">  
<?= htmlentities($article); ?></textarea>
```

Make sure there is no space between the opening and closing PHP and `<textarea>` tags. Otherwise, you will get unwanted spaces in your updated record.

7. The `UPDATE` command needs to know the primary key of the record you want to change. You need to store the primary key in a hidden field so that it is submitted in the `$_POST` array with the other details. Because hidden fields are not displayed onscreen, the following code can go anywhere inside the form:

```
<input name="article_id" type="hidden"  
value="<?= $article_id; ?>">
```

8. Save the update page and test it by loading `blog_list_pdo.php` into a browser and selecting the `EDIT` link for one of the records. The contents of the record should be displayed in the form fields, as shown in [Figure 13-3](#).

The `Update Entry` button doesn't do anything yet. Just make sure that everything is displayed correctly, and confirm that the primary key is registered in the hidden field. You can check your code, if necessary, against

`blog_update pdo_02.php`.

9. The `name` attribute of the submit button is `update`, so all the update processing code needs to go in a conditional statement that checks for the presence of `update` in the `$_POST` array. Place the following code, highlighted in bold, immediately above the code in step 1 that redirects the page:

```
    $stmt->fetch();
}
// if form has been submitted, update record
if (isset($_POST['update'])) {
    // prepare update query
    $sql = 'UPDATE blog SET title = ?, article
= ?
        WHERE article_id = ?';
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    // execute query by passing array of
variables
    $done = $stmt->execute([$_POST['title'],
$_POST['article'],
$_POST['article_id']]);
}
    // redirect page on success or
$_GET['article_id'] not defined
    if ($done ||
!isset($_GET['article_id'])) {
```

Again, the SQL query is prepared using question marks as placeholders for values to be derived from variables. This time, there are three placeholders, so the corresponding variables need to be passed as an array to the `execute()` method. Needless to say, the array must be in the same order as the placeholders.

If the `UPDATE` query succeeds, the `execute()` method returns `true`, resetting the value of `$done`. You can't use the `rowCount()` method here to get the number of affected rows because it returns `0` if the `Update Entry` button is clicked without making any changes. You'll notice we have added `$done ||` to the condition in the

redirect script. This ensures the page is redirected if either the update succeeds or someone tries to access the page directly.

10. Save `blog_update pdo.php` and test it by loading `blog_list pdo.php`, selecting one of the EDIT links, and making changes to the record that is displayed. When you click Update Entry you should be taken back to `blog_list pdo.php`. You can verify that your changes were made by clicking the same EDIT link again. Check your code, if necessary, against `blog_update pdo_03.php`.

Deleting Records

Deleting a record in a database is similar to updating one. The basic DELETE command looks like this:

`DELETE FROM table_name WHERE condition`

What makes the DELETE command potentially dangerous is that it is final. Once you have deleted a record, there's no going back—it's gone forever. There's no Recycle Bin or Trash to fish it out from. Even worse, the WHERE clause is optional. If you omit it, every single record in the table is irrevocably sent into cyber-oblivion. Consequently, it's a good idea to display details of the record to be deleted and ask the user to confirm or cancel the process (see [Figure 13-4](#)).

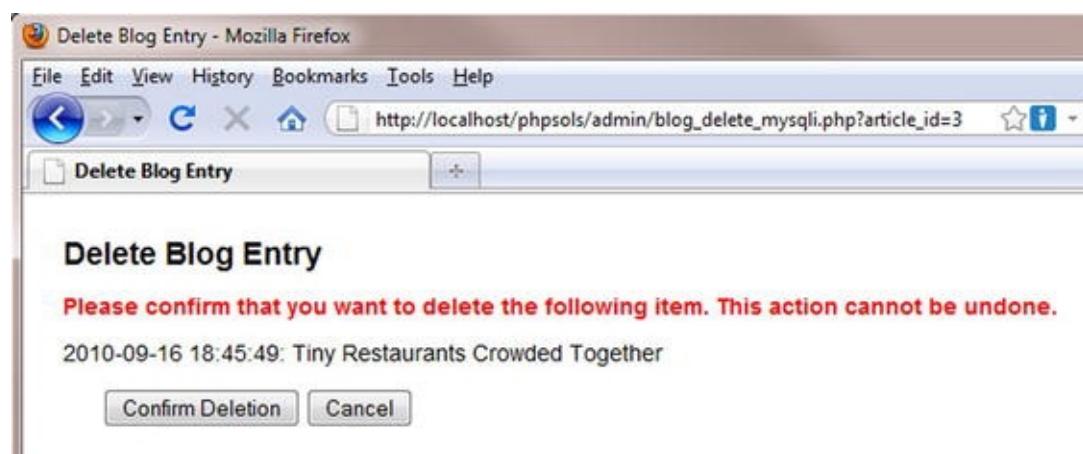


Figure 13-4. Deleting a record is irreversible, so get confirmation before going ahead

Building and scripting the delete page is almost identical to the update page, so I won't give step-by-step instructions. However, here are the main points:

- Retrieve the details of the selected record.
- Display sufficient details, such as the title, for the user to confirm that the correct record has been selected.
- Give the `Confirm Deletion` and `Cancel` buttons different name attributes, and use each name attribute with `isset()` to control the action taken.
- Instead of wrapping the entire form in the `else` block, use conditional statements to hide the `Confirm Deletion` button and the hidden field.

The code that performs the deletion for each method follows.

For MySQLi:

```
if (isset($_POST['delete'])) {
    $sql = 'DELETE FROM blog WHERE article_id = ?';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        $stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['article_id']);
        $stmt->execute();
        if ($stmt->affected_rows > 0) {
            $deleted = true;
        } else {
            $error = 'There was a problem deleting the
record.';
        }
    }
}
```

For PDO:

```
if (isset($_POST['delete'])) {
    $sql = 'DELETE FROM blog WHERE article_id = ?';
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    $stmt->execute([$_.POST['article_id']]);
}
```

```
// get number of affected rows
$deleted = $stmt->rowCount();
if (!$deleted) {
    $error = 'There was a problem deleting the
record.';
}
}
```

You can find the finished code in `blog_delete_mysql.php` and `blog_delete_pdo.php` in the `ch13` folder. To test the delete script, copy the appropriate file to the `admin` folder.

Reviewing the Four Essential SQL Commands

Now that you have seen `SELECT`, `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, and `DELETE` in action, let's review the basic syntax for MySQL and MariaDB. This is not an exhaustive listing, but it concentrates on the most important options, including some that have not yet been covered.

I have used the same typographic conventions as the MySQL online manual at <http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en> (which you may also want to consult).

- Anything in uppercase is an SQL command.
- Expressions in square brackets are optional.
- Lowercase italics represent variable input.
- A vertical pipe (|) separates alternatives.

Although some expressions are optional, they must appear in the order listed. For example, in a `SELECT` query, `WHERE`, `ORDER BY`, and `LIMIT` are all optional, but `LIMIT` can never come before `WHERE` or `ORDER BY`.

SELECT

SELECT is used for retrieving records from one or more tables. Its basic syntax is as follows:

```
SELECT [DISTINCT] select_list
FROM table_list
[WHERE where_expression]
[ORDER BY col_name | formula] [ASC | DESC]
[LIMIT skip_count, ] show_count
```

The DISTINCT option tells the database you want to eliminate duplicate rows from the results.

The *select_list* is a comma-separated list of columns that you want included in the result. To retrieve all columns, use an asterisk (*). If the same column name is used in more than one table, the references must be unambiguous, using the syntax *table_name.column_name*. [Chapters 15](#) and [16](#) explain in detail about working with multiple tables.

The *table_list* is a comma-separated list of tables from which the results are to be drawn. All tables that you want to be included in the results *must* be listed.

The WHERE clause specifies search criteria, for example:

```
WHERE quotations.family_name = authors.family_name
WHERE article_id = 2
```

WHERE expressions can use comparison, arithmetic, logical, and pattern-matching operators. The most important ones are listed in [Table 13-2](#).

Table 13-2. The main operators used in MySQL WHERE expressions

Comparison		Arithmetic	
<	Less than	+	Addition
<=	Less than or equal to	-	Subtraction
=	Equal to	*	Multiplication
!=	Not equal to	/	Division
<>	Not equal to	DIV	Integer division
>	Greater than	%	Modulus
>=	Greater than or equal to		
IN()	Included in list		
BETWEEN min AND max	Between (and including two values)		
Logical		Pattern matching	
AND	Logical and	LIKE	Case-insensitive match
&&	Logical and	NOT LIKE	Case-insensitive nonmatch
OR	Logical or	LIKE BINARY	Case-sensitive match
	Logical or (best avoided)	NOT LIKE BINARY	Case-sensitive nonmatch

Of the two operators that mean “not equal to,” `<>` is standard SQL. Not all databases support `!=`.

`DIV` is the counterpart of the modulus operator. It produces the result of division as an integer with no fractional part, whereas modulus produces only the remainder.

```
5 / 2      /* result 2.5 */
5 DIV 2    /* result 2  */
5 % 2      /* result 1  */
```

I suggest you avoid using `||` because it’s actually used as the string concatenation operator in standard SQL. By not using it with MySQL, you avoid confusion if you ever work with a different relational database. To join strings, MySQL uses the `CONCAT()` function (see http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/string-functions.html#function_concat).

`IN()` evaluates a comma-separated list of values inside the parentheses and returns `true` if one or more of the values is found. Although `BETWEEN` is normally used with numbers, it also applies to strings. For instance, `BETWEEN 'a' AND 'd'` returns `true` for *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* (but not their uppercase equivalents). Both `IN()` and `BETWEEN` can be preceded by `NOT` to perform the opposite comparison.

`LIKE`, `NOT LIKE`, and the related `BINARY` operators are used for text searches in combination with the following two wildcard characters:

- `%`: matches any sequence of characters, or none.
- `_` (an underscore): matches exactly one character.

So, the following `WHERE` clause matches Dennis, Denise, and so on, but not Aiden:

```
WHERE first_name LIKE 'den%'
```

To match Aiden, put `%` at the front of the search pattern. Because `%` matches any sequence of characters, or none, `'%den%`' still matches Dennis and Denise. To search for a literal percentage sign or underscore, precede it with a backslash (`\%` or `_`).

Conditions are evaluated from left to right but can be grouped in parentheses if you want a particular set of conditions to be considered together.

`ORDER BY` specifies the sort order of the results. This can be specified as a single column, a comma-separated list of columns, or an expression such as `RAND()`, which randomizes the order. The default sort order is ascending (a–z, 0–9), but you can specify `DESC` (descending) to reverse the order.

`LIMIT` followed by one number stipulates the maximum number of records to return. If two numbers are given separated by a comma, the first tells the database how many rows to skip (see “Selecting a subset of records” in [Chapter 12](#)).

See

<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/select.html> for more details on `SELECT`.

INSERT

The `INSERT` command is used to add new records to a database. The general syntax is as follows:

```
INSERT [INTO] table_name (column_names)
VALUES (values)
```

The word `INTO` is optional; it simply makes the command read a little more

like human language. The column names and values are comma-delimited lists, and both must be in the same order. So, to insert the forecast for New York (blizzard), Detroit (smog), and Honolulu (sunny) into a weather database, this is how you would do it:

```
INSERT INTO forecast (new_york, detroit, honolulu)
VALUES ('blizzard', 'smog', 'sunny')
```

The reason for this syntax is to allow you to insert more than one record at a time. Each subsequent record is in a separate set of parentheses, with each set separated by a comma:

```
INSERT numbers (x,y)
VALUES (10,20),(20,30),(30,40),(40,50)
```

You'll use this multiple insert syntax in [Chapter 16](#). Any columns omitted from an `INSERT` query are set to their default value. *Never set an explicit value for the primary key where the column is set to AUTO_INCREMENT*; leave the column name out of the `INSERT` statement.

For more details, see
<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/insert.html>.

UPDATE

This command is used to change existing records. The basic syntax looks like this:

```
UPDATE table_name
SET col_name = value [, col_name = value]
[WHERE where_expression]
```

The `WHERE` expression tells MySQL which record or records you want to update (or perhaps in the case of the following example, dream about):

```
UPDATE sales SET q1_2015 = 25000
WHERE title = 'PHP Solutions, Third Edition'
```

See
<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/update.html> for more details on `UPDATE`.

DELETE

DELETE can be used to delete single records, multiple records, or the entire contents of a table. The general syntax for deleting from a single table is as follows:

```
DELETE FROM table_name [WHERE where_expression]
```

Although phpMyAdmin prompts you for confirmation before deleting a record, databases take you at your word and perform the deletion immediately. DELETE is totally unforgiving—once the data is deleted, it is gone *forever*. The following query will delete all records from a table called `subscribers` where the date in `expiry_date` has already passed:

```
DELETE FROM subscribers
WHERE expiry_date < NOW()
```

For more details, see
<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/delete.html>.

 **Caution** Although the WHERE clause is optional in both UPDATE and DELETE, you should be aware that if you leave WHERE out, the entire table is affected. This means that a careless slip with either of these commands could result in every single record being identical—or wiped out.

Security and Error Messages

When developing a website with PHP and a database, it's essential to display error messages so that you can debug your code if anything goes wrong. However, raw error messages look unprofessional in a live website. They can also reveal clues about your database structure to potential attackers. Therefore, before deploying your scripts live on the Internet, you should replace the error messages generated by the database with a neutral message of your own, such as "Sorry, the database is unavailable."

Chapter Review

Content management with a database involves inserting, selecting, updating, and deleting records. Each record's primary key plays a vital role in the update and delete processes. Most of the time, generating the primary key is handled automatically by the database when a record is first created. Thereafter, finding a record's primary key is simply a matter of using a `SELECT` query, either by displaying a list of all records or by searching for something you know about the record, such as a title or words in an article.

MySQLi and PDO prepared statements make database queries more secure by removing the need to ensure that quotes and control characters are properly escaped. They also speed up your application if the same query needs to be repeated during a script using different variables. Instead of validating the SQL every time, the script needs do it only once with the placeholders.

Although this chapter has concentrated on content management, the same basic techniques apply to most interaction with a database. Of course, there's a lot more to SQL—and to PHP. In the next chapter, I'll address some of the most common problems, such as displaying only the first sentence or so of a long text field and handling dates. Then in [Chapter 15](#) we'll explore working with more than one table in a database.

CHAPTER 14



Formatting Text and Dates

We have some unfinished business left over from the previous chapter. [Figure 13-1 in Chapter 13](#) shows content from the `blog` table with just the first two sentences of each article displayed and a link to the rest of the article. However, I didn't show you how it was done. There are several ways to extract a shorter piece of text from the beginning of a longer one. Some are rather crude and usually leave you with a broken word at the end. In this chapter, you'll learn how to extract complete sentences.

The other unfinished business is that the full list of articles in `blog_list_mysql .php` and `blog_list_pdo .php` displays the MySQL timestamp in its raw state, which isn't very elegant. You need to reformat the date to look more user friendly. Handling dates can be a major headache because MySQL and MariaDB store them in a completely different way from PHP. This chapter guides you through the minefield of storing and displaying dates in a PHP/MySQL context. You'll also learn about PHP date and time features that make complex date calculations, such as finding the second Tuesday of each month, child's play.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the following:

- Extracting the first section of a longer text item
- Using an alias in an SQL query
- Displaying text retrieved from a database as paragraphs
- Formatting dates with MySQL
- Selecting records based on temporal criteria
- Using the PHP `DateTime`, `DateTimeZone`, `DateInterval`, and `DatePeriod` classes

Displaying a Text Extract

There are many ways to extract the first few lines or characters from a longer piece of text. Sometimes you need just the first 20 or 30 characters to identify an item. At other times, it's preferable to show complete sentences or paragraphs.

Extracting a Fixed Number of Characters

You can extract a fixed number of characters from the beginning of a text item either with the PHP `substr()` function or with the `LEFT()` function in an SQL query.

Using the PHP `substr()` Function

The `substr()` function extracts a substring from a longer string. It takes three arguments: the string you want to extract the substring from, the starting point (counted from 0), and the number of characters to extract. The following code displays the first 100 characters of `$row['article']`:

```
echo substr($row['article'], 0, 100);
```

The original string remains intact. If you omit the third argument, `substr()` extracts everything to the end of the string. This makes sense only if you choose a starting point other than 0.

Using the `LEFT()` Function in an SQL Query

The `LEFT()` function extracts characters from the beginning of a column. It takes two arguments: the column name and the number of characters to extract. The following retrieves `article_id`, `title`, and the first 100 characters from the `article` column of the `blog` table:

```
SELECT article_id, title, LEFT(article, 100)
FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC
```

Whenever you use a function in an SQL query like this, the column name no

longer appears in the result set as `article`, but as `LEFT(article, 100)` instead. So it's a good idea to assign an **alias** to the affected column using the `AS` keyword. You can either reassign the column's original name as the alias or use a descriptive name as in the following example (the code is in `blog_left_mysql.php` and `blog_left_pdo.php` in the `ch14` folder):

```
SELECT article_id, title, LEFT(article, 100) AS first100
FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC
```

If you process each record as `$row`, the extract is in `$row['first100']`. To retrieve both the first 100 characters and the full article, simply include both in the query like this:

```
SELECT article_id, title, LEFT(article, 100) AS
first100, article
FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC
```

Taking a fixed number of characters produces a crude result, as [Figure 14-1](#) shows.



[Figure 14-1.](#) Selecting the first 100 characters from an article chops many words in half

Ending an Extract on a Complete Word

To end an extract on a complete word, you need to find the final space and use that to determine the length of the substring. So, if you want the extract to be a maximum of 100 characters, use either of the preceding methods to start with, and store the result in `$extract`. Then you can use the PHP string functions `strrpos()` and `substr()` to find the last space and end the extract like this

(the code is in `blog_word_mysql.php` and `blog_word_pdo.php`):

```
$extract = $row['first100'];
// find position of last space in extract
$lastSpace = strrpos($extract, ' ');
// use $lastSpace to set length of new extract and add ...
echo substr($extract, 0, $lastSpace) . '... ';
```

This produces the more elegant result shown in [Figure 14-2](#). It uses `strrpos()`, which finds the last position of a character or substring within another string. Since you’re looking for a space, the second argument is a pair of quotes with a single space between them. The result is stored in `$lastSpace`, which is passed as the third argument to `substr()`, finishing the extract on a complete word. Finally, add a string containing three dots and a space, and join the two with the concatenation operator (a period or dot).



[Figure 14-2.](#) Ending the extract on a complete word produces a more elegant result

■ **Caution** Don’t mix up `strrpos()`, which gets the last position of a character or substring, with `strpos()`, which gets the first position. The extra “r” stands for “reverse”—`strrpos()` searches from the end of the string.

Extracting the First Paragraph

Assuming that you have entered your text in the database using the Enter or Return key to indicate new paragraphs, this is very easy. Simply retrieve the full text, use `strpos()` to find the first new line character, and use `substr()` to extract the first section of text up to that point.

The following SQL query is used in `blog_para_mysql.php`, and `blog_para_pdo.php`:

```
SELECT article_id, title, article
FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC
```

The following code is used to display the first paragraph of `article`:

```
<?= substr($row['article'], 0, strpos($row['article'],
PHP_EOL)); ?>
```

If that makes your head spin, then let's break it up and take a look at the third argument on its own:

```
strpos($row['article'], PHP_EOL)
```

This locates the first end of line character in `$row['article']` in a cross-platform way using the `PHP_EOL` constant (see “Appending content with `fopen()`” in [Chapter 7](#)). You could rewrite the code like this:

```
$newLine = strpos($row['article'], PHP_EOL);
echo substr($row['article'], 0, $newLine);
```

Both sets of code do exactly the same thing, but PHP lets you nest a function as an argument passed to another function. As long as the nested function returns a valid result, you can frequently use shortcuts like this.

Using the `PHP_EOL` constant eliminates the problem of dealing with the different characters used by Linux, Mac OS X, and Windows to insert a new line.

Displaying Paragraphs

Since we're on the subject of paragraphs, many beginners are confused by the fact that all the text retrieved from a database is displayed as a continuous block, with no separation between paragraphs. HTML ignores whitespace, including new lines. To get text stored in a database displayed as paragraphs, you have the following options:

- Store your text as HTML.
- Convert new lines to `
` tags.

- Create a custom function to replace new lines with paragraph tags.

Storing Database Records as HTML

The first option involves installing an HTML editor, such as CK Editor (<http://ckeditor.com/>) or TinyMCE (www.tinymce.com) in your content management forms. Mark up your text as you insert or update it. The HTML is stored in the database, and the text displays as intended. Installing one of these editors is beyond the scope of this book.

Converting Newlines to
 Tags

The simplest option is to pass your text to the `nl2br()` function before displaying it, like this:

```
echo nl2br($row['article']);
```

Voilà!—paragraphs. Well, not really. The `nl2br()` function converts new line characters to `
` tags (the closing slash is for compatibility with XHTML, and is valid in HTML5). As a result, you get fake paragraphs. It's a quick and dirty solution, but not ideal.

Creating a Function to Insert <p> Tags

To display text retrieved from a database as genuine paragraphs, wrap the database result in a pair of paragraph tags, and then use the `preg_replace()` function to convert consecutive newline characters to a closing `</p>` tag, immediately followed by an opening `<p>` tag, like this:

```
<p><?= preg_replace('/[\r\n]+/', "</p>\n<p>",  
$row['article']); ?></p>
```

The regular expression used as the first argument matches one or more carriage returns and/or newline characters. You can't use the `PHP_EOL` constant here because you need to match all consecutive newline characters and replace them with a single pair of paragraph tags. The pair of `<p>` tags is in double

quotes, with \n between them to add a newline character, in order to make the HTML code easier to read. Remembering the pattern for a regex can be difficult, so you can easily convert this into a custom function, like this:

```
function convertToParas($text) {  
    $text = trim($text);  
    return '<p>' . preg_replace('/[\r\n]+/', "  
</p>\n<p>", $text) . "</p>\n";  
}
```

This trims whitespace, including newline characters, from the beginning and end of the text, adds a `<p>` tag at the beginning, replaces internal sequences of newline characters with closing and opening tags, and appends a closing `</p>` tag and newline character at the end.

You can then use the function like this:

```
<?= convertToParas($row['article']); ?>
```

The code for the function definition is in `utility_funcs.php` in the `ch14` folder. You can see it being used in `blog_ptags_mysqli.php` and `blog_ptags_pdo.php`.

Extracting Complete Sentences

PHP has no concept of what constitutes a sentence. Counting periods means you ignore all sentences that end with an exclamation point or a question mark. You also run the risk of breaking a sentence on a decimal point or cutting off a closing quote after a period. To overcome these problems, I have devised a PHP function called `getFirst()` that identifies the punctuation at the end of a normal sentence:

- A period, question mark, or exclamation point
- Optionally followed by a single or double quote
- Followed by one or more spaces

The `getFirst()` function takes two arguments: the text from which you want to extract the first section and the number of sentences you want to extract. The second argument is optional; if it's not supplied, the function extracts the

first two sentences. The code looks like this (it's in `utility_funcs.php`):

```
function getFirst($text, $number=2) {  
    // use regex to split into sentences  
    $sentences = preg_split('/([.?!]"')?\s)/', $text, $number+1,  
    PREG_SPLIT_DELIM_CAPTURE);  
    if (count($sentences) > $number * 2) {  
        $remainder = array_pop($sentences);  
    } else {  
        $remainder = '';  
    }  
    $result = [];  
    $result[0] = implode('', $sentences);  
    $result[1] = $remainder;  
    return $result;  
}
```

All you really need to know about this function is that it returns an array containing two elements: the extracted sentences and any text that's left over. You can use the second element to create a link to a page containing the full text.

If you're interested in how the function works, read on. The line highlighted in bold uses a regex to identify the end of each sentence—a period, question mark, or exclamation point, optionally followed by a double or single quotation mark and a space. This is passed as the first argument to `preg_split()`, which uses the regex to split the text into an array. The second argument is the target text. The third argument determines the maximum number of chunks to split the text into. You want one more than the number of sentences to be extracted. Normally, `preg_split()` discards the characters matched by the regex, but using `PREG_SPLIT_DELIM_CAPTURE` as the fourth argument together with a pair of capturing parentheses in the regex preserves them as separate array elements. In other words, the elements of the `$sentences` array consist alternately of the text of a sentence followed by the punctuation and space, like this:

```
$sentences[0] = '"Hello, world';  
$sentences[1] = '!"' ';
```

It's impossible to know in advance how many sentences there are in the target text, so you need to find out if there's anything remaining after extracting the desired number of sentences. The conditional statement uses `count()` to

ascertain the number of elements in the `$sentences` array and compares the result with `$number` multiplied by 2 (because the array contains two elements for each sentence). If there's more text, `array_pop()` removes the last element of the `$sentences` array and assigns it to `$remainder`. If there's no further text, `$remainder` is an empty string.

The final stage of the function uses `implode()` with an empty string as its first argument to stitch the extracted sentences back together and then returns a two-element array containing the extracted text and anything that's left over.

Don't worry if you found that explanation hard to follow. The code is quite advanced. It took a lot of experimentation to build the function, and I have improved it gradually over the years.

PHP Solution 14-1: Displaying the First Two Sentences of an Article

This PHP solution shows how to display an extract from each article in the `blog` table using the `getFirst()` function described in the preceding section. If you created the Japan Journey site earlier in the book, use `blog.php`. Alternatively, use `blog_01.php` from the `ch14` folder and save it as `blog.php` in the `phpsols` site root. You also need `footer.php`, `menu.php`, `title.php`, and `connection.php` in the `includes` folder. There are copies of these files in the `ch14` folder if you don't already have them in the `includes` folder.

1. Copy `utility_funcs.php` from the `ch14` folder to the `includes` folder, and include it in `blog.php` in the PHP code block above the DOCTYPE declaration. Also include `connection.php` and create a connection to the database. This page needs read-only privileges, so use `read` as the argument passed to `dbConnect()`, like this:

```
require_once  
'./includes/connection.php';  
require_once  
'./includes/utility_funcs.php';  
// create database connection
```

```
$conn = dbConnect('read');
```

Add ‘pdo’ as the second argument to dbConnect() if you’re using PDO.

2. Prepare an SQL query to retrieve all records from the blog table and then submit it, like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC';
$result = $conn->query($sql);
```

3. Add the code to check for a database error.

For MySQLi, use this:

```
if (!$result) {
    $error = $conn->error;
}
```

For PDO, call the `errorInfo()` method and check for the existence of the third array element, like this:

```
$errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();
if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
    $error = $errorInfo[2];
}
```

4. Delete all the static HTML inside the `<main>` element in the body of the page, and add the code to display the error message if a problem arises with the query:

```
<main>
<?php if (isset($error)) {
    echo "<p>$error</p>";
} else {
}
?>
</main>
```

5. Create a loop inside the `else` block to display the results:

```

while ($row = $result->fetch_assoc()) {
    echo "<h2>{$row['title']}</h2>";
    $extract = getFirst($row['article']);
    echo "<p>$extract[0]</p>";
    if ($extract[1]) {
        echo '<a href="details.php?article_id='
        . $row['article_id'] . '"'
        . "More</a>";
    }
    echo '</p>';
}

```

The code is the same for PDO, except for this line:

```
while ($row = $result->fetch_assoc()) {
```

Replace it with this:

```
while ($row = $result->fetch()) {
```

The `getFirst()` function processes `$row['article']` and stores the result in `$extract`. The first two sentences of `article` in `$extract[0]` are immediately displayed. If `$extract[1]` contains anything, it means there is more to display. So the code inside the `if` block displays a link to `details.php`, with the article's primary key in a query string.

6. Save the page and test it in a browser. You should see the first two sentences of each article displayed as shown in Figure 14-3.



Figure 14-3. The first two sentences have been extracted cleanly from the

longer text

7. Test the function by adding a number as a second argument to `getFirst()`, like this:

```
$extract = getFirst($row['article'],  
3);
```

This displays the first three sentences. If you increase the number so that it equals or exceeds the number of sentences in an article, the **More** link won't be displayed.

You can compare your code with `blog_mysqli.php` and `blog_pdo.php` in the `ch14` folder.

We'll look at `details.php` in [Chapter 15](#). Before that, let's tackle the minefield presented by using dates in a dynamic website.

Let's Make a Date

Dates and time are so fundamental to modern life that we rarely pause to think how complex they are. There are 60 seconds to a minute and 60 minutes to an hour, but 24 hours to a day. Months range between 28 and 31 days, and a year can be either 365 or 366 days. The confusion doesn't stop there, because 7/4 means July 4 to an American or Japanese person, but 7 April to a European. To add to the confusion, PHP handles dates differently from MySQL. Time to bring order to chaos . . .

 **Note** Maria DB handles dates the same way. To avoid unnecessary repetition, I'll refer only to MySQL.

How MySQL Handles Dates

In MySQL, dates and time are always expressed in descending order from the largest unit to the smallest: year, month, date, hour, minutes, seconds. Hours are always measured using the 24-hour clock, with midnight expressed as 00:00:00.

Even if this seems unfamiliar to you, it's the recommendation laid down by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

MySQL allows considerable flexibility about the separator between the units (any punctuation symbol is acceptable), but there is no argument about the order—it's fixed. If you attempt to store a date in any other format than year, month, date, MySQL inserts 0000-00-00 in the database.

I'll come back later to the way you insert dates into MySQL, because it's best to validate them and format them using PHP. First, let's look at some of the things you can do with dates once they're stored in MySQL. MySQL has many date and time functions, which are listed with examples at <http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/date-and-time-functions.html>.

One of the most useful functions is DATE_FORMAT(), which does exactly what its name suggests.

Formatting Dates in a SELECT Query with DATE_FORMAT()

The syntax for DATE_FORMAT() is as follows:

`DATE_FORMAT(date, format)`

Normally, *date* is the table column to be formatted, and *format* is a string composed of formatting specifiers and any other text you want to include. [Table 14-1](#) lists the most common specifiers, all of which are case-sensitive.

Table 14-1. Frequently used MySQL date format specifiers

Period	Specifier	Description	Example
Year	%Y	Four-digit format	2014
	%y	Two-digit format	14
Month	%M	Full name	January, September
	%b	Abbreviated name, three letters	Jan, Sep
	%m	Number with leading zero	01, 09
	%c	Number without leading zero	1, 9
Day of month	%d	With leading zero	01, 25
	%e	Without leading zero	1, 25
	%D	With English text suffix	1st, 25th
Weekday name	%W	Full text	Monday, Thursday
	%a	Abbreviated name, three letters	Mon, Thu
Hour	%H	24-hour clock with leading zero	01, 23
	%k	24-hour clock without leading zero	1, 23
	%h	12-hour clock with leading zero	01, 11
	%l (lowercase "L")	12-hour clock without leading zero	1, 11
Minutes	%i	With leading zero	05, 25
Seconds	%S	With leading zero	08, 45
AM/PM	%p		

As explained earlier, when using a function in an SQL query, assign the result to an alias using the AS keyword. Referring to [Table 14-1](#), you can format the date in the created column of the blog table in a common U.S. style and assign it to an alias, like this:

```
DATE_FORMAT(created, '%c/%e/%Y') AS date_created
```

To format the same date in the European style, reverse the first two specifiers, like this:

```
DATE_FORMAT(created, '%e/%c/%Y') AS date_created
```

 **Tip** When using DATE_FORMAT(), don't use the original column name as the alias, because the values are converted to strings, which plays havoc with the sort order. Choose a different alias, and use the original column name to sort the results.

PHP Solution 14-2: Formatting a MySQL Date or Timestamp

This PHP solution formats the dates in the blog entry management page from [Chapter 13](#).

1. Open `blog_list_mysql.php` or `blog_list_pdo.php` in the `admin` folder and locate the SQL query. It looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC';
```

2. Change it like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT article_id, title,
        DATE_FORMAT(created, "%a, %b %D, %Y") AS date_created
        FROM blog ORDER BY created
        DESC';
```

I used single quotes around the whole SQL query, so the format string inside `DATE_FORMAT()` needs to be in double quotes.

Make sure there is no gap before the opening parenthesis of `DATE_FORMAT()`.

The format string begins with `%a`, which displays the first three letters of the weekday name. If you use the original column name as the alias, the `ORDER BY` clause sorts the dates in reverse alphabetical order: Wed, Thu, Sun, and so on. Using a different alias ensures that the dates are still ordered chronologically.

3. In the first table cell in the body of the page, change `$row['created']` to `$row['date_created']` to match the alias in the SQL query.
4. Save the page and load it into a browser. The dates should now be formatted as shown in [Figure 14-4](#). Experiment

with other specifiers to suit your preferences.

Manage Blog Entries

[Insert new entry](#)

Created	Title	EDIT	DELETE
Wed, Sep 10th, 2014	Basin of Contentment	EDIT	DELETE
Wed, Sep 10th, 2014	Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together	EDIT	DELETE
Wed, Sep 10th, 2014	Trainee Geishas Go Shopping	EDIT	DELETE
Wed, Sep 10th, 2014	Spectacular View of Mount Fuji from the Bullet Train	EDIT	DELETE

Figure 14-4. The MySQL timestamps are now nicely formatted

Updated versions of `blog_list_mysql.php` and `blog_list_pdo.php` are in the `ch14` folder.

Adding to and Subtracting from Dates

When working with dates, it's often useful to add or subtract a specific time period. For instance, you may want to display items that have been added to the database within the past seven days or stop displaying articles that haven't been updated for three months. MySQL makes this easy with `DATE_ADD()` and `DATE_SUB()`. Both functions have synonyms called `ADDDATE()` and `SUBDATE()`, respectively.

The basic syntax is the same for all of them and looks like this:

`DATE_ADD(date, INTERVAL value interval_type)`

When using these functions, `date` can be the column containing the date you want to alter, a string containing a particular date (in YYYY-MM-DD format), or a MySQL function, such as `NOW()`. `INTERVAL` is a keyword followed by a value and an interval type, the most common of which are listed in [Table 14-2](#).

Table 14-2. Most frequently used interval types with `DATE_ADD()` and `DATE_SUB()`

Interval type	Meaning	Value format
DAY	Days	Number
DAY_HOUR	Days and hours	String presented as 'DD hh'
WEEK	Weeks	Number

MONTH	Months	Number
QUARTER	Quarters	Number
YEAR	Years	Number
YEAR_MONTH	Years and months	String presented as 'YY-MM'

The interval types are constants, so do *not* add “S” to the end of DAY, WEEK, and so on to make them plural.

One of the most useful applications of these functions is to display only the most recent items in a table.

PHP Solution 14-3: Displaying Items Updated within the Past Week

This PHP solution shows how to limit the display of database results according to a specific time interval. Use `blog.php` from PHP Solution 14-1.

1. Locate the SQL query in `blog.php`. It looks like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM blog ORDER BY created DESC';
```

2. Change it like this:

```
$sql = 'SELECT * FROM blog
        WHERE updated > DATE_SUB(NOW(), INTERVAL
        1 WEEK)
        ORDER BY created DESC';
```

This tells MySQL that you want only items that have been updated in the past week.

3. Save and reload the page in your browser. Depending on when you last updated an item in the `blog` table, you should see either nothing or a limited range of items. If necessary, change the interval type to DAY or HOUR to test that the time limit is working.
4. Open `blog_list_mysqli.php` or `blog_list_pdo.php`, select an item that isn’t

displayed in `blog.php`, and edit it. Reload `blog.php`. The item that you have just updated should now be displayed.

You can compare your code with `blog_limit_mysql.php` and `blog_limit_pdo.php` in the `ch14` folder.

Inserting Dates into MySQL

MySQL's requirement for dates to be formatted as YYYY-MM-DD presents a headache for online forms that allow users to input dates. As you saw in [Chapter 13](#), the current date and time can be inserted automatically by using a `TIMESTAMP` column. You can also use the MySQL `NOW()` function to insert the current date in a `DATE` or `DATETIME` column. It's when you need any other date that problems arise.

Using a text input field in a form relies on users being trusted to follow a set pattern for inputting dates, such as MM/DD/YYYY. If everybody complies, you can use the `explode()` function to rearrange the date parts, like this:

```
if (isset($_POST['theDate'])) {  
    $date = explode('/', $_POST['theDate']);  
    $mysqlFormat = "$date[2]-$date[0]-$date[1]";  
}
```

If someone deviates from the format, you end up with invalid dates in your database.

The situation will eventually be a lot simpler when all browsers support the HTML5 date input field. There's an example in `date_test.php` in the `ch14` folder. The code in the body of the page looks like this:

```
<form method="post" action="">  
    <p>  
        <label for="date">Date:</label>  
        <input type="date" name="date" id="date">  
    </p>  
    <p>  
        <input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit">  
    </p>
```

```
value="Submit">
    </p>
</form>
<?php
if (isset($_POST['submit'])) {
    echo 'The date you selected is: '
. htmlentities($_POST['date']);
}
?>
```

The real advantage of using date as the input type is that browsers often display a date picker as soon as the field gains focus, and the selected value is displayed according to the device's user settings. So, Americans and Europeans see the date displayed in their preferred format. But when the form is submitted, the value is always in the ISO YYYY-MM-DD format. [Figure 14-5](#) shows the output of `date_test.php` in Safari 7.1 on my iPhone 5. The date picker and date field use the UK date format, but the value submitted through the `$_POST` array is in the ISO format.

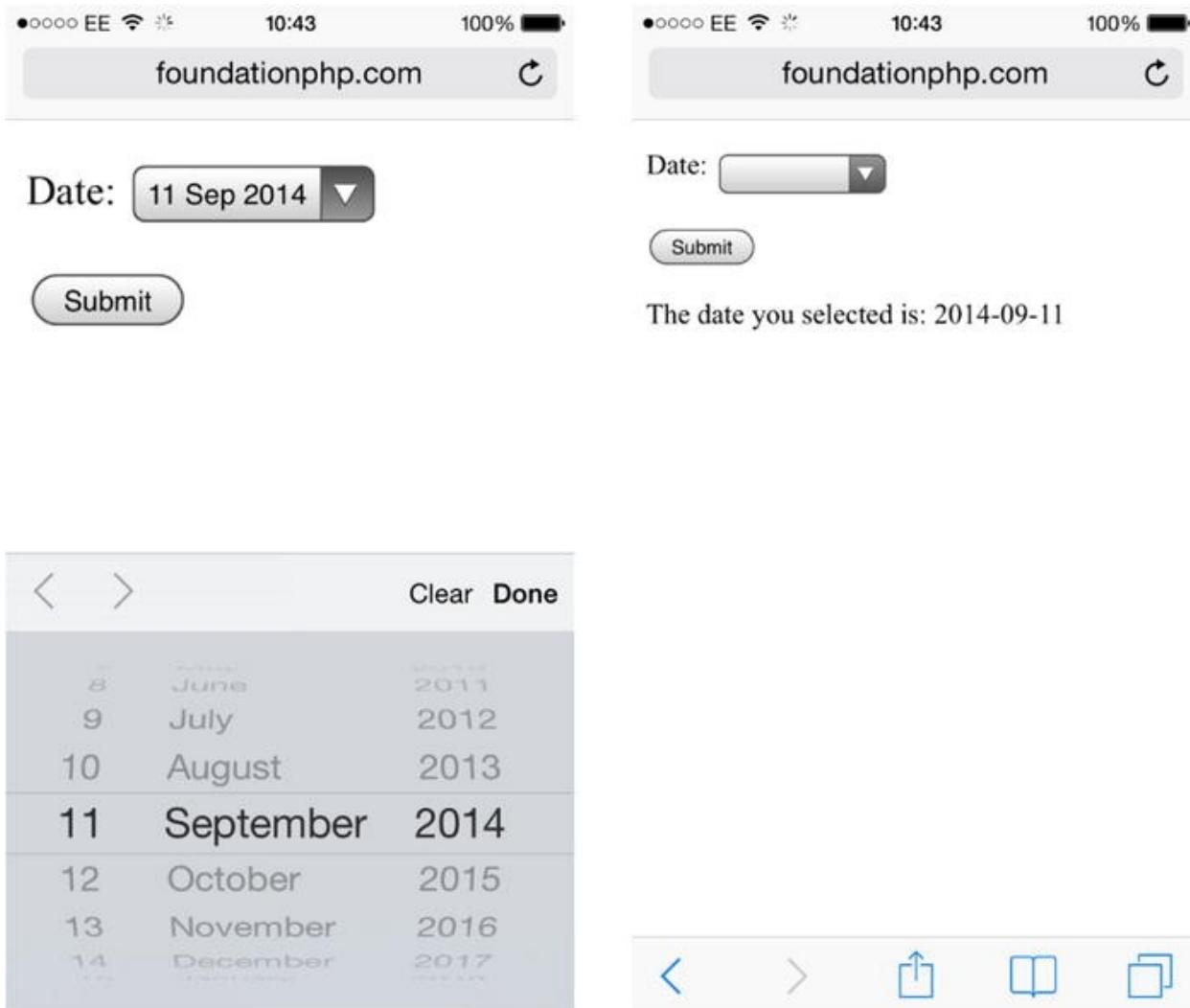


Figure 14-5. HTML5 date input fields display dates in local format, but submit them in the ISO format

Unfortunately, only 50 percent of browsers in use in September 2014 supported the date input type. At the time of this writing, there was no indication of when popular browsers, such as Internet Explorer and Firefox, planned to implement support.

Consequently, the most reliable method of gathering dates from an online form remains the use of separate input fields for month, day, and year.

PHP Solution 14-4: Validating and Formatting Dates for MySQL Input

This PHP solution concentrates on checking the validity of a date and converting it to MySQL format. It's designed to be incorporated in an insert or update form.

It is MySQLi tutorial. It is designed to be incorporated in an insert or update form of your own.

1. Create a page called `date_converter.php` and insert a form containing the following code (or use `date_converter_01.php` in the ch14 folder):

```
<form method="post" action="">
    <p>
        <label for="month">Month:</label>
        <select name="month" id="month">
            <option value=""></option>
        </select>
        <label for="day">Date:</label>
        <input name="day" type="number"
required id="day" max="31" min="1"
maxlength="2">
        <label for="year">Year:</label>
        <input name="year" type="number"
required id="year" maxlength="4">
    </p>
    <p>
        <input type="submit"
name="convert" id="convert"
value="Convert">
    </p>
</form>
```

2. This code creates a drop-down menu called `month` and two input fields called `day` and `year`. The drop-down menu doesn't have any values at the moment, but it will be populated by a PHP loop. The `day` and `year` fields use the HTML5 `number` type and `required` attribute. The `day` field also has the `max` and `min` attributes so as to restrict the range to between 1 and 31. Browsers that support the new HTML5 form elements display number steppers alongside the fields and restrict the type and range of input. Other browsers render them as ordinary text input fields. For the benefit of older browsers, both

have `maxlength` attributes that limit the number of characters accepted.

3. Amend the section that builds the drop-down menu, like this:

```
<select name="month" id="month">
    <?php
        $months
    = [ 'Jan', 'Feb', 'Mar', 'Apr', 'May', 'Jun',
        'Jul', 'Aug', 'Sep', 'Oct', 'Nov', 'Dec'];
        $thisMonth = date('n');
        for ($i = 1; $i <= 12; $i++) { ?>
            <option value="<?= $i; ?>">
                <?php
                    if ((!$_POST && $i == $thisMonth) ||
                        (isset($_POST['month']) && $i ==
                        $_POST['month'])) {
                        echo ' selected';
                    } ?>>
                <?= $months[$i - 1]; ?>
            </option>
        <?php } ?>
    </select>
```

This creates an array of month names and uses the `date()` function to find the number of the current month (the meaning of the argument passed to `date()` is explained later in this chapter).

A `for` loop then populates the menu's `<option>` tags. I have set the initial value of `$i` to `1`, because I want to use it for the value of the month. Inside the loop, the conditional statement checks two sets of conditions, both of which are enclosed in parentheses to ensure they're evaluated in the correct sequence. The first set checks that the `$_POST` array is empty and the values of `$i` and `$thisMonth` are the same. But if the form has been submitted, `$_POST['month']` will have been set, so the alternative set of conditions checks whether `$i` is the same as `$_POST['month']`. As a result, when the form

is first loaded, `selected` is inserted into the `<option>` tag for the current month. But if the form has already been submitted, the month selected by the user is displayed again.

The name of the month is displayed between the `<option>` tags by drawing it from the `$months` array. Because indexed arrays begin at 0, you need to subtract 1 from the value of `$i` to get the right month.

4. Also populate the fields for the day and year with the current date or the value selected after the form has been submitted.

```
<label for="day">Date:</label>
<input name="day" type="number"
required id="day" max="31" min="1"
maxlength="2" value=<?php if
(!$_POST) {
    echo date('j');
} elseif (isset($_POST['day'])) {
    echo $_POST['day'];
} ?>">
<label for="year">Year:</label>
<input name="year" type="number"
required id="year" maxlength="4"
value=<?php if (!$_POST) {
    echo date('Y');
} elseif (isset($_POST['year'])) {
    echo $_POST['year'];
} ?>">
```

5. Save the page and test it in a browser. It should display the current date, and look similar to [Figure 14-6](#).

Figure 14-6. Using separate input fields for date parts helps eliminate errors

If you test the input fields, in most browsers the **Date** field should accept no more than two characters, and the **Year** field a maximum of four. Even though this reduces the possibility of mistakes, you still need to validate the input and format the date correctly.

6. The code that performs all the checks is a custom function in `utility_funcs.php`. It looks like this:

```
function convertDateToISO($month, $day,
$year) {
    $month = trim($month);
    $day = trim($day);
    $year = trim($year);
    $result[0] = false;
    if (empty($month) || empty($day) ||
empty($year)) {
        $result[1] = 'Please fill in all
fields';
    } elseif (!is_numeric($month) ||
!is_numeric($day) ||
!is_numeric($year)) {
        $result[1] = 'Please use numbers
only';
    } elseif (($month < 1 || $month >
12) || ($day < 1 || $day > 31) ||
($year < 1000 || $year > 9999))
{
    $result[1] = 'Please use numbers
within the correct range';
}
```

```
    } elseif
( !checkdate($month,$day,$year) ) {
    $result[1] = 'You have used an
invalid date';
} else {
    $result[0] = true;
    $result[1] = sprintf( '%d-%02d-
%02d', $year, $month, $day);
}
return $result;
}
```

The function takes three arguments: month, day, and year, all of which should be numbers. The first three lines of code trim any whitespace from either end of the input, and the next line initializes the first element of an array called `$result`. If the input fails validation, the first element of the array is `false`, and the second element contains an error message. If it passes validation, the first element of `$result` is `true`, and the second element contains the formatted date ready for insertion into MySQL.

The series of conditional statements checks the input values to see if they are empty or not numeric. The third test looks for numbers within acceptable ranges. The range for years is dictated by the legal range for MySQL. In the unlikely event that you need a year out of that range, you must choose a different column type to store the data.

By using a series of `elseif` clauses, this code stops testing as soon as it meets the first mistake. Even though the form is prepopulated with values, there's no guarantee that the input will come from your form. It could come from an automated script, which is why these checks are necessary.

If the input has survived the first three tests, it's then subjected to the PHP function `checkdate()`, which is

smart enough to know when it's a leap year and prevents mistakes such as September 31.

Finally, if the input has passed all these tests, it's rebuilt in the correct format for insertion into MySQL using the `sprintf()` function. This takes as its first argument a formatting string, in which `%d` represents an integer and `%02d` represents a two-digit integer padded with a leading zero if necessary. The hyphens are treated literally. The following three arguments are the values to be slotted into the formatting string. This produces the date in ISO format, with leading zeros on the month and day.

Note See

<http://php.net/manual/en/function.strftime.php> for `sprintf()` details.

7. For testing purposes, add this code just below the form in the main body of the page:

```
if (isset($_POST['convert'])) {
    require_once 'utility_funcs.php';
    $converted
= convertDateToISO($_POST['month'],
$_POST['day'],
$_POST['year']);
    if ($converted[0]) {
        echo 'Valid date: '
. $converted[1];
    } else {
        echo 'Error: ' . $converted[1]
. '<br>';
        echo 'Input was: '
. $months[$_POST['month']-1] . ' '
. $_POST['day'] . ', '
. $_POST['year'];
    }
}
```

This checks whether the form has been submitted. If it has been, it includes `utility_funcs.php` (there's a copy in the `ch14` folder) and passes the form values to the `convertDateToISO()` function, saving the result in `$converted`.

If the date is valid, `$converted[0]` is `true`, and the formatted date is found in `$converted[1]`. If the date cannot be converted to ISO format, the `else` block displays the error message stored in `$converted[1]`, together with the original input. To display the correct value for the month, 1 is subtracted from the value of `$_POST['month']`, and the result is used as the key for the `$months` array.

8. Save the page and test it by entering a date and clicking Convert. If the date is valid, you should see it converted to ISO format, as shown in [Figure 14-7](#).

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title "Convert Date to ISO Form". The address bar displays "localhost/phpsols/ch14/date_converter.php". The main content area contains a form with three input fields: "Month: Jul", "Date: 4", and "Year: 2015". Below the form is a "Convert" button. At the bottom of the page, the text "Valid date: 2015-07-04" is displayed.

[Figure 14-7](#). The date has been validated and converted to ISO format

If you enter an invalid date, you should see an appropriate message instead (see [Figure 14-8](#)).

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Convert Date to ISO Form". The address bar displays "localhost/phpsols/ch14/date_converter.php". The main content area contains a form with three input fields: "Month" set to "Feb", "Date" set to "31", and "Year" set to "2015". Below the form is a "Convert" button. Underneath the button, an error message is displayed: "Error: You have used an invalid date" and "Input was: Feb 31, 2015".

Figure 14-8. The `convertDateToISO()` function rejects invalid dates

You can compare your code with `date_converter_02.php` in the `ch14` folder.

When creating a form for a table that requires a date from user input, add three fields for month, day, and year in the same way as in `date_converter.php`. Before inserting the form input into the database, include `utility_funcs.php` (or wherever you decide to store the function), and use the `convertDateToISO()` function to validate the date and format it for insertion into the database.

```
require_once 'utility_funcs.php';
$converted = convertDateToMySQL($_POST['month'],
$_POST['day'], $_POST['year']);
if ($converted[0]) {
    $date = $converted[1];
} else {
    $errors[] = $converted[1];
}
```

If your `$errors` array has any elements, abandon the insert or update process and display the errors. Otherwise, `$date` is safe to insert in the SQL query.

Note The rest of this chapter is devoted to handling dates in PHP. It's an important but complex subject. I suggest that you skim through each section to familiarize yourself with PHP's date-handling functionality and return to this

section when you need to implement a particular feature.

Working with Dates in PHP

The way PHP handles dates and time underwent major changes in PHP 5.2 with the introduction of the `DateTime` and `DateTimeZone` classes. Further changes were introduced in PHP 5.3 through the addition of new `DateTime` methods and the `DateInterval` and `DatePeriod` classes. Yet another enhancement came in PHP 5.5 with the addition of the `DateTimeImmutable` class. Prior to these changes, dates and time were handled exclusively as Unix timestamps—the number of seconds since midnight UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) on January 1, 1970.

The new classes don't entirely replace the original ways of handling date and time information, but they are more flexible. If PHP is compiled on a 32-bit processor, timestamps are stored as 32-bit integers, restricting the upper range limit of dates to January 2038. The new classes store date and time information internally as a 64-bit number, increasing the range from about 292 billion years in the past to the same number of years in the future.

 **Note** If PHP is compiled on a 64-bit processor, all dates and times are stored as 64-bit numbers, removing the January 2038 limit on timestamps and the date-and time-related functions inherited from PHP 4.

[Table 14-3](#) summarizes the main date- and time-related classes and functions in PHP.

Table 14-3. PHP date- and time-related classes and functions

Name	Arguments	Description
Class		
DateTime	Date string, DateTimeZone object	Creates a time zone-sensitive object containing date and/or time information that can be used for date and time calculations.
DateTimeImmutable	Same as DateTime	Basically the same as DateTime, but changing any value returns a new object, leaving the original unmodified. Requires PHP 5.5 or later.
DateTimeZone	Time zone string	Stores time zone information for use with DateTime objects.
DateInterval	Interval specification	Represents a fixed amount of time in years, months, hours, etc.
DatePeriod	Start, interval, end/ recurrence, options	Calculates recurring dates over a set period or number of recurrences.
Function		
time()	None	Generates a Unix timestamp for the current date and time.
mktime()	Hour, minute, second, month, date, year	Generates a Unix timestamp for the specified date/time.
strtotime()	Date string, timestamp	Attempts to generate a Unix timestamp from an English textual description, such as "next Tuesday." The returned value is relative to the second argument, if supplied.
date()	Format string, timestamp	Formats a date in English using the specifiers listed in Table 14-4. If the second argument is omitted, the current date and time are used.
strftime()	Format string, timestamp	Same as date(), but uses the language specified by the system locale.

Setting the Default Time Zone

All date and time information in PHP is stored according to the server's default time zone setting. It's common for web servers to be located in a different time zone from your target audience, so it's useful to know how to change the default.

The server's default time zone should normally be set in the `date.timezone` directive in `php.ini`, but if your hosting company forgets to do so, or you want to use a different time zone, you need to set it yourself.

If your hosting company gives you control over your own version of `php.ini`, change the value of `date.timezone` there. That way, it's automatically set for all your scripts.

If your server supports `.htaccess` or `.user.ini` files, you can change the time zone by adding the appropriate command in the site root. For

.htaccess, use this:

```
php_value date.timezone 'timezone'
```

For .user.ini, the command looks like this:

```
date.timezone=timezone
```

Replace *timezone* with the correct setting for your location. You can find a full list of valid time zones at

<http://docs.php.net/manual/en/timezones.php>.

If none of those options is available to you, add the following at the beginning of any script that uses date or time functions (replacing *timezone* with the appropriate value):

```
ini_set('date.timezone', 'timezone');
```

Creating a DateTime Object

To create a **DateTime** object, just use the **new** keyword followed by **DateTime()**, like this:

```
$now = new DateTime();
```

This creates an object that represents the current date and time according to the web server's clock and default time zone setting.

The **DateTime()** constructor also takes two optional arguments: a string containing a date and/or time, and a **DateTimeZone** object. The date/time string for the first argument can be in any of the formats listed at <http://php.net/manual/en/datetime.formats.php>. Unlike MySQL, which accepts only one format, PHP goes to the opposite extreme. For example, to create a **DateTime** object for Christmas Day 2014, all the following formats are valid:

```
'12/25/2014'  
'25-12-2014'  
'25 Dec 2014'  
'Dec 25 2014'  
'25-XII-2014'  
'25.12.2014'
```

```
'2014/12/25'  
'2014-12-25'  
'December 25th, 2014'
```

This is not an exhaustive list. It's just a selection of valid formats. Where the potential confusion arises is in the use of separators. For example, the forward slash is permitted in American-style (12/25/2010) and ISO (2010/12/25) dates, but not when the date is presented in European order or when the month is represented by Roman numerals. To present the date in European order, the separator must be a dot, tab, or dash.

Dates can also be specified using relative expressions, such as “next Wednesday,” “tomorrow,” or “last Monday.” However, there’s potential for confusion here, too. Some people use “next Wednesday” to mean “Wednesday next week.” PHP interprets the expression literally. If today is Tuesday, “next Wednesday” means the following day.

 **Note** PHP 5.3 expanded this flexibility even further by introducing a method to create a `DateTime` object from a custom format. It’s described after the next section because the same technique is used for specifying both output and input formats.

You can’t use `echo` on its own to display the value stored in a `DateTime` object. In addition to `echo`, you need to tell PHP how to format the output using the `format()` method.

Formatting Dates in PHP

The `DateTime` class’s `format()` method uses the same format characters as the original `date()` function. Although this makes for continuity, the format characters are often difficult to remember and seem to have no obvious reasoning behind them. [Table 14-4](#) lists the most useful date and time format characters.

Table 14-4. *The main date and time format characters*

Unit	<code>DateTime/date()</code>	<code>strftime()</code>	Description	Example
Day	d	%d	Day of the month with leading zero	01 through 31
	j	%e*	Day of the month without leading zero	1 through 31
	S		English ordinal suffix for day of the month	st, nd, rd, or th
	D	%a	First three letters of day name	Sun, Tue
	l (lowercase "L")	%A	Full name of day	Sunday, Tuesday
Month	m	%m	Number of month with leading zero	01 through 12
	n		Number of month without leading zero	1 through 12
	M	%b	First three letters of month name	Jan, Jul
	F	%B	Full name of month	January, July
Year	Y	%Y	Year displayed as four digits	2014
	y	%y	Year displayed as two digits	14
Hour	g		Hour in 12-hour format without leading zero	1 through 12
	h	%I	Hour in 12-hour format with leading zero	01 through 12
	G		Hour in 24-hour format without leading zero	0 through 23
	H	%H	Hour in 24-hour format with leading zero	01 through 23
Minutes	i	%M	Minutes with leading zero if necessary	00 through 59
Seconds	s	%S	Seconds with leading zero if necessary	00 through 59
AM/PM	a	%p	Lowercase	am
AM/PM	A		Uppercase	PM

* Note: `%e` is not supported on Windows.

The `DateTime` class and `date()` function display the names of weekdays and months in English only, but the `strftime()` function uses the language specified by the server's locale. So, if the server's locale is set to Spanish, a `DateTime` object and `date()` display Saturday, but `strftime()` displays sábado. In addition to the format characters used by both the `DateTime` class and the `date()` function, [Table 14-4](#) lists the equivalent characters used by `strftime()`. Not all formats have an equivalent in `strftime()`.

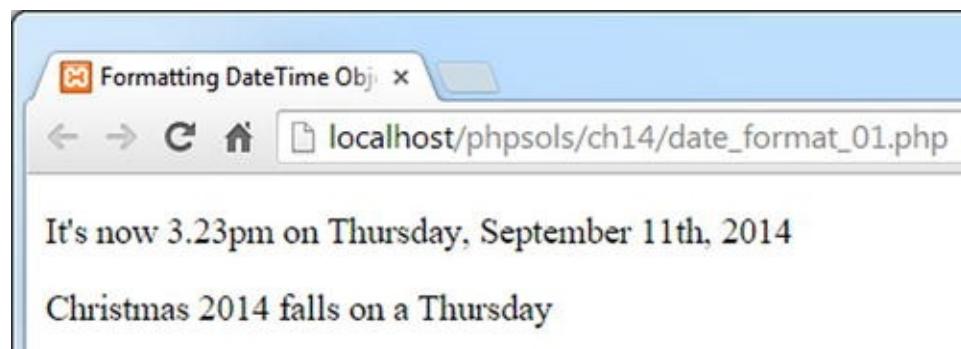
You can combine these format characters with punctuation to display the current date in your webpages according to your own preferences.

To format a `DateTime` object, pass the format string as an argument to the `format()` method like this (the code is in `date_format_01.php` in the `ch14` folder):

```
<?php
$now = new DateTime();
```

```
$xmas2014 = new DateTime('12/25/2014');
?>
<p>It's now <?= $now->format('g.ia'); ?> on <?= $now-
>format('l, F jS, Y'); ?></p>
<p>Christmas 2014 falls on a <?= $xmas2014-
>format('l'); ?></p>
```

In this example, two `DateTime` objects are created: one for the current date and time, and the other for December 25, 2014. Using the format characters from Table 14-4, various date parts are extracted from the two objects, producing the output shown in the following screenshot:



The code in `date_format_02.php` produces the same output by using the `date()` and `strtotime()` functions, like this:

```
<?php $xmas2014 = strtotime('12/25/2014'); ?>
<p>It's now <?= date('g.ia'); ?> on <?= date('l, F jS,
Y'); ?></p>
<p>Christmas 2014 falls on a <?= date('l', $xmas2014);
?></p>
```

The first line uses `strtotime()` to create a timestamp for December 25, 2014. There's no need to create a timestamp for the current date and time, because `date()` defaults to them when used without a second argument.

If the timestamp for Christmas Day isn't used elsewhere in the script, the first line can be omitted, and the last call to `date()` can be rewritten like this (see `date_format_03.php`):

```
date('l', strtotime('12/25/2014'));
```

Creating a `DateTime` Object From a Custom Format

Creating a DateTime object from a custom format

You can specify a custom input format for a `DateTime` object using the format characters in Table 14-4. Instead of creating the object with the `new` keyword, you use the `createFromFormat()` static method, like this:

```
$date = DateTime::createFromFormat(format_string,  
input_date, timezone);
```

The third argument, `timezone`, is optional. If included, it should be a `DateTimeZone` object.

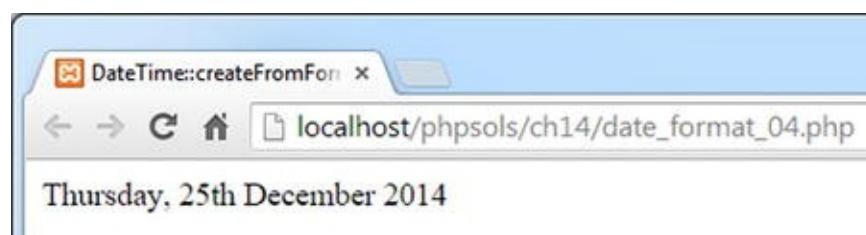
A **static method** belongs to the whole class, rather than to a particular object. You call a static method using the class name followed by the scope resolution operator (a double colon) and the method name.

Tip Internally, the scope resolution operator is called `PAAMAYIM_NEKUDOTAYIM`, which is Hebrew for “double colon.” Why Hebrew? The Zend Engine that powers PHP was originally developed by Zeev Suraski and Andi Gutmans when they were students at the Technion–Israel Institute of Technology. Apart from earning points in a geek trivia quiz, knowing the meaning of `PAAMAYIM_NEKUDOTAYIM` could save you a lot of head scratching when you see it in a PHP error message.

For example, you can use the `createFromFormat()` method to accept a date in the European format of day, month, year, separated by slashes, like this (the code is in `date_format_04.php`):

```
$xmas2014 = DateTime::createFromFormat('d/m/Y',  
'25/12/2014');  
echo $xmas2014->format('l, jS F Y');
```

This produces the following output:



Caution Attempting to use 25/12/2014 as the input to the `DateTime` constructor triggers a fatal error because the DD/MM/YYYY is not supported. If you want to use a format not supported by the `DateTime` constructor, you must use the `createFromFormat()` static method.

Although the `createFromFormat()` method is useful, it can be used only in circumstances where you know the date will always be in a specific format.

Choosing Between Date() and the DateTime Class

When it comes to displaying a date, it's always a two-step process with the `DateTime` class. You need to instantiate the object before you can call the `format()` method. With the `date()` function, you can do it in a single pass. Since they both use the same format characters, `date()` wins hands down when dealing with the current date and/or time.

For simple tasks like displaying the current date, time, or year, use `date()`. Where the `DateTime` class comes into its own is when working with date-related calculations and time zones using the methods listed in [Table 14-5](#).

Table 14-5. The main `DateTime` methods

Method	Arguments	Description
<code>format()</code>	Format string	Formats the date/time using the format characters in Table 14-4.
<code> setDate()</code>	Year, month, day	Changes the date. The arguments should be separated by commas. Months or days in excess of the permitted range are added to the resulting date, as described in the main text.
<code> setTime()</code>	Hours, minutes, seconds	Resets the time. Arguments are comma-separated values. Seconds are optional. Values in excess of the permitted range are added to the resulting date/time.
<code> modify()</code>	Relative date string	Changes the date/time using a relative expression, such as '+2 weeks'.
<code> getTimestamp()</code>	None	Returns the Unix timestamp for the date/time.
<code> setTimestamp()</code>	Unix timestamp	Sets the date/time according to the Unix timestamp.

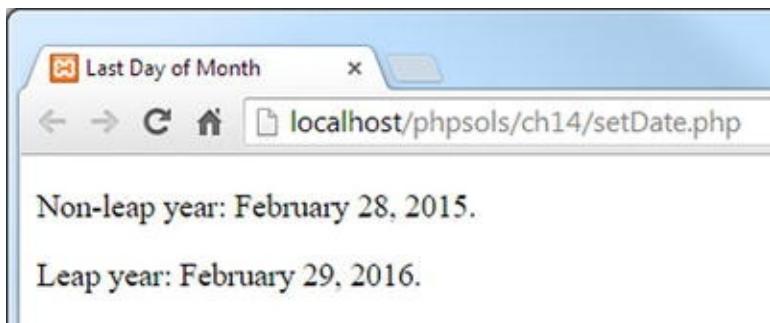
<code>setTimezone()</code>	<code>DateTimeZone</code> object	Changes the time zone.
<code>getTimezone()</code>	None	Returns a <code>DateTimeZone</code> object representing the <code>DateTime</code> object's time zone.
<code>getOffset()</code>	None	Returns the time zone offset from UTC, expressed in seconds.
<code>add()</code>	<code>DateInterval</code> object	Increments the date/time by the set period.
<code>sub()</code>	<code>DateInterval</code> object	Deducts the set period from the date/time.
<code>diff()</code>	<code>DateTime</code> object, Boolean	Returns a <code>DateInterval</code> object representing the difference between the current <code>DateTime</code> object and the one passed as an argument. Using <code>true</code> as the optional second argument converts negative values to their positive equivalent.

Adding out-of-range values with `setDate()` and `setTime()` results in the excess being added to the resulting date or time. For example, using 14 as the month sets the date to February of the following year. Setting the hour to 26 results in 2am on the following day.

A useful trick with `setDate()` allows you to set the date to the last day of any month by setting the month value to the following month, and the day to 0. The code in `setDate.php` demonstrates this with the last day of February 2015 and 2016 (a leap year).

```
<?php
=format = 'F j, Y';
$date = new DateTime();
$date->setDate(2015, 3, 0);
?>
<p>Non-leap year: <?= $date->format($format); ?>.</p>
<p>Leap year: <?php $date->setDate(2016, 3, 0);
echo $date->format($format); ?>.</p>
```

The preceding example produces the following output:



Handling Overflows with Relative Dates

The `modify()` method accepts a relative date string, which can produce unexpected results. For example, if you add one month to a `DateTime` object that represents January 31, 2011, the resulting value is not the last day of February, but March 3.

This happens because adding one month to the original date results in February 31, but February has only 28 days in a non-leap year. So, the out-of-range value is added to the month, resulting in March 3. If you subsequently subtract one month from the same `DateTime` object, it brings you back to February 3, not to the original starting date. The code in `date_modify_01.php` illustrates this point, as [Figure 14-9](#) shows.

```
<?php
/format = 'F j, Y';
$date = new DateTime('January 31, 2015');
?>
<p>Original date: <?= $date->format($format); ?>.</p>
<p>Add one month: <?php
$date->modify('+1 month');
echo $date->format($format);
$date->modify('-1 month');
?>
<p>Subtract one month: <?= $date->format($format); ?>
```

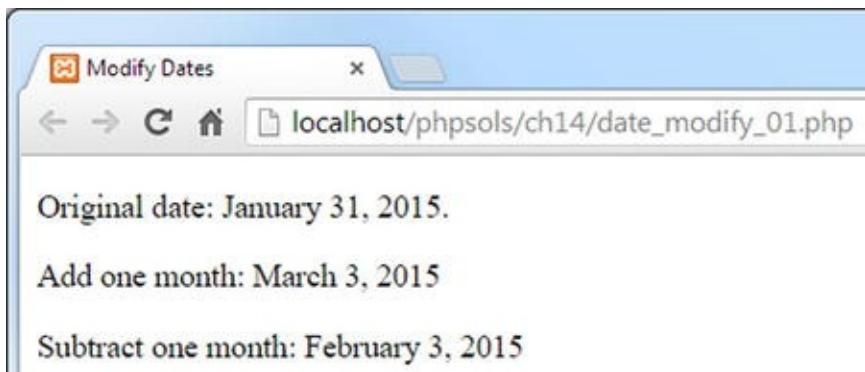


Figure 14-9. Adding and subtracting months can lead to unexpected results

The way to avoid this problem is to use 'last day of' in the relative expression, like this (the code is in date_modify_02.php):

```
<?php
=format = 'F j, Y';
$date = new DateTime('January 31, 2015');
?>
<p>Original date: <?= $date->format($format); ?>.</p>
<p>Add one month: <?php
    $date->modify('last day of +1 month');
    echo $date->format($format);
    $date->modify('last day of -1 month');
?
<p>Subtract one month: <?= $date->format($format); ?>
```

As Figure 14-10 shows, this now produces the desired result.

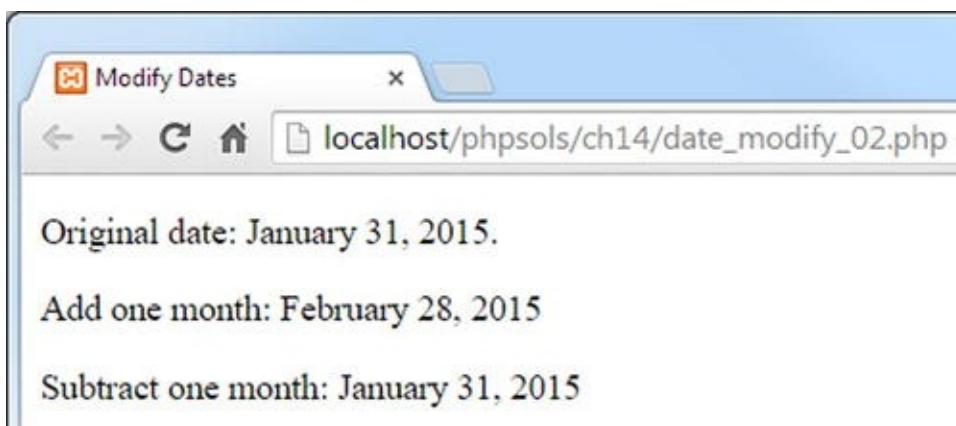


Figure 14-10. Using 'last day of' in the relative expression eliminates the problem

Using the DateTimeZone Class

A `DateTime` object automatically uses the web server's default time zone unless you have reset the time zone using one of the methods described earlier. However, you can set the time zone of individual `DateTime` objects either through the optional second argument of the constructor or by using the `setTimezone()` method. In both cases, the argument must be a `DateTimeZone` object.

To create a `DateTimeZone` object, pass one of the supported time zones listed at <http://php.net/manual/en/timezones.php> as an argument to the constructor like this:

```
$UK = new DateTimeZone('Europe/London');  
$USEast = new DateTimeZone('America/New_York');  
$Hawaii = new DateTimeZone('Pacific/Honolulu');
```

When checking the list of supported time zones, it's important to realize that they're based on geographic regions and cities rather than on official time zones. This is because PHP automatically takes daylight saving time into account. Arizona, which doesn't use daylight saving time, is covered by `America/Phoenix`.

The organization of time zones into geographic regions produces some surprises. America doesn't mean the United States of America, but the continents of North and South America and the Caribbean. As a result, Honolulu is not listed in America, but as a Pacific time zone. Europe also means the European continent, including the British Isles but excluding other islands. So, Reykjavik and Madeira are listed as Atlantic time zones, and the Norwegian island of Longyearbyen has the exclusive privilege of being the only Arctic time zone.

The code in `timezones.php` creates `DateTimeZone` objects for London, New York, and Honolulu, and then initializes a `DateTime` object using the first one, like this:

```
$now = new DateTime('now', $UK);
```

After displaying the date and time using `echo` and the `format()` method, the time zone is changed using the `setTimezone()` method, like this:

```
$now->setTimezone($USEast);
```

The next time `$now` is displayed, it shows the date and time in New York. Finally, `setTimezone()` is used again to change the time zone to Honolulu, producing the following output:

```
In London, it's now Thursday, September 11th, 2014 5.50pm.  
In New York, it's Thursday, September 11th, 2014 12.50pm.  
In Hawaii, it's Thursday, September 11th, 2014 6.50am.
```

To find the time zone of your server, you can either check `php.ini` or use the `getTimezone()` method with a `DateTime` object. The `getTimezone()` method returns a `DateTimeZone` object, not a string containing the time zone. To get the value of the time zone, you need to use the `DateTimeZone` object's `getName()` method, like this (the code is in `timezone_display.php`):

```
$now = new DateTime();  
$timezone = $now->getTimezone();  
echo $timezone->getName();
```

The `DateTimeZone` class has several other methods that expose information about a time zone. For the sake of completeness, they're listed in [Table 14-6](#), but the main use of the `DateTimeZone` class is to set the time zone for `DateTime` objects.

Table 14-6. *DateTimeZone* methods

Method	Arguments	Description
<code>getLocation()</code>	None	Returns an associative array containing the country code, longitude, and comments about the time zone.
<code>getName()</code>	None	Returns a string containing the geographic area and city zone.
<code>getOffset()</code>	<code>DateTime</code> object	Calculates the offset from UTC (in seconds) of the <code>DateTime</code> object passed as an argument.

<code>getTransitions()</code>	Start, end	Returns a multidimensional array containing historical times and times of switching to and from daylight saving time. Use optional arguments to limit the range of timestamps.
<code>listAbbreviations()</code>	None	Generates a large multidimensional array containing time zone abbreviations and names of time zones supported by PHP.
<code>listIdentifiers()</code>	<code>DateTimeZone</code> constant, country code	Returns an array of all PHP time zone identifiers, such as Europe/London, America/New_York, and so on. Accept optional arguments to limit the range of results. Use as the first argument of the <code>DateTimeZone</code> constants listed at http://php.net/manual/en/class.datetimezone.php . If the first argument is <code>DateTimeZone::PER_COUNTRY</code> , the letter country code can be used as the second argument.

The last two methods in [Table 14-6](#) are static methods. Call them directly on the class by using the scope resolution operator, like this:

```
$abbreviations = DateTimeZone::listAbbreviations();
```

Adding and Subtracting Set Periods with the DateInterval Class

The `DateInterval` class is used to specify the period to be added or subtracted from a `DateTime` object using the `add()` and `sub()` methods. It's also used by the `diff()` method, which returns a `DateInterval` object. Using the `DateInterval` class feels rather odd to begin with, but it's relatively simple to understand.

To create a `DateInterval` object, you need to pass to the constructor a string that specifies the length of the interval; this string must be formatted according to the ISO 8601 standard. The string always begins with the letter P (for period), followed by one or more pairs of integers and letters known as **period designators**. If the interval includes hours, minutes, or seconds, the time element is preceded by the letter T. [Table 14-7](#) lists the valid period designators.

Table 14-7. ISO 8601 period designators used by the `DateInterval` class

Period designator	Meaning
Y	Years
M	Months
W	Weeks—cannot be combined with days

D	Days—cannot be combined with weeks
H	Hours
M	Minutes
S	Seconds

The following examples should clarify how to specify an interval:

```
$interval1 = new DateInterval('P2Y'); //  
2 years  
$interval2 = new DateInterval('P5W'); //  
5 weeks  
$interval3 = new DateInterval('P37D'); //  
5 weeks 2 days  
$interval4 = new DateInterval('PT6H20M'); //  
6 hours 20 minutes  
$interval5 = new DateInterval('P1Y2DT3H5M50S'); //  
1 year 2 days 3 hours 5 min 50 sec
```

Note that `$interval3` needs to specify the total number of days because weeks are automatically converted to days, so W and D cannot be combined in the same interval definition.

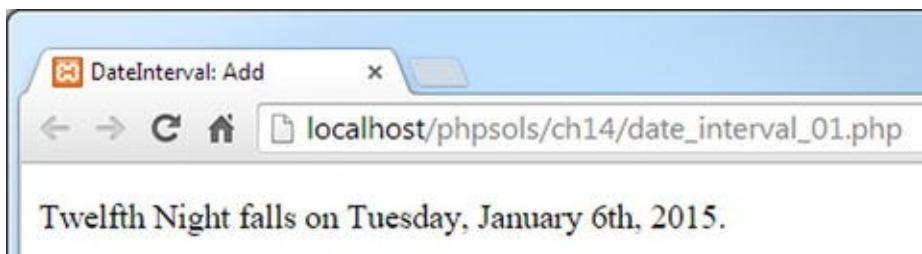
To use a `DateInterval` object with the `add()` or `sub()` method of the `DateTime` class, pass the object as an argument. For example, this adds 12 days to the date for Christmas Day 2014:

```
$xmas2014 = new DateTime('12/25/2014');  
$interval = new DateInterval('P12D');  
$xmas2014->add($interval);
```

If you don't need to reuse the interval, you can pass the `DateInterval` constructor directly as the argument to `add()` like this:

```
$xmas2014 = new DateTime('12/25/2014');  
$xmas2014->add(new DateInterval('P12D'));
```

The result of this calculation is demonstrated in `date_interval_01.php`, which produces the following output:



An alternative to using the period designators listed in [Table 14-7](#) is to use the static `createFromDateString()` method, which takes as an argument an English relative date string in the same way as `strtotime()` does. Using `createFromDateString()`, the preceding example can be rewritten like this (the code is in `date_interval_02.php`):

```
$xmas2014 = new DateTime('12/25/2014');
$xmas2014->add(DateInterval::createFromDateString('+12 days'));
```

This produces exactly the same result.

Caution Adding and subtracting months with `DateInterval` has the same effect as described earlier. If the resulting date is out of range, the extra days are added. For example, adding one month to January 31 results in March 3 or 2, depending on whether it's a leap year. To get the last day of the month, use the technique described earlier in "Handling overflows with relative dates."

Finding the Difference Between Two Dates with the `diff()` Method

To find the difference between two dates, create a `DateTime` object for both dates, and pass the second object as the argument to the first object's `diff()` method. The result is returned as a `DateInterval` object. To extract the result from the `DateInterval` object, you need to use the object's `format()` method, which uses the format characters listed in [Table 14-8](#). These are different from the format characters used by the `DateTime` class. Fortunately, most of them are easy to remember.

Table 14-8. Format characters used by the `DateInterval format()` method

Format character	Description	Examples
%Y	Years. At least two digits, with leading zero if necessary	12, 01
%y	Years, no leading zero	12, 1
%M	Months with leading zero	02, 11
%m	Months, no leading zero	2, 11
%D	Days with leading zero	03, 24
%d	Days, no leading zero	3, 24
%a *	Total number of days	15, 231
%H	Hours with leading zero	03, 23
%h	Hours, no leading zero	3, 23
%I	Minutes with leading zero	05, 59
%i	Minutes, no leading zero	5, 59
%S	Seconds with leading zero	05, 59
%s	Seconds, no leading zero	5, 59
%R	Display minus when negative, plus when positive	-, +
%r	Display minus when negative, no sign when positive	-
%%	Percentage sign	%

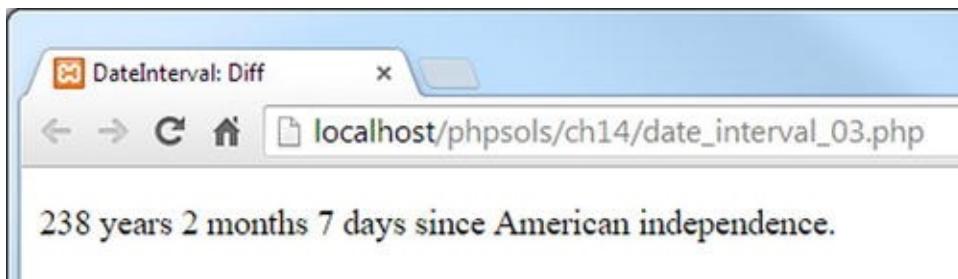
* A bug in PHP 5.3 on some Windows builds always returned 6015 as the total number of days.

The following example in `date_interval_03.php` shows how to get the difference between the current date and the American Declaration of Independence using `diff()` and displaying the result with the `format()` method:

```
<p><?php
$independence = new DateTime('7/4/1776');
$now = new DateTime();
$interval = $now->diff($independence);
echo $interval->format('%Y years %m months %d days');
?>
since American independence.</p>
```

If you load `date_interval_03.php` into a browser, you should see

something similar to the following screenshot (of course, the actual period will be different).



The format characters follow a logical pattern. Uppercase characters always produce at least two digits with a leading zero if necessary. Lowercase characters have no leading zero.

Caution With the exception of %a, which represents the total number of days, the format characters represent only specific parts of the overall interval. For example, if you change the format string to `$interval->format('%m months')`, it shows only the number of whole months that have elapsed since last July 4. It does not show the total number of months since July 4, 1776.

Calculating Recurring Dates with the DatePeriod Class

Working out recurring dates, such as the second Tuesday of each month, is now remarkably easy thanks to the `DatePeriod` class. It works in conjunction with a `DateInterval`.

The `DatePeriod` constructor is unusual in that it accepts arguments in three different ways. The first way of creating a `DatePeriod` object is to supply the following arguments:

- A `DateTime` object representing the start date
- A `DateInterval` object representing the recurring interval
- An integer representing the number of recurrences

- The `DatePeriod::EXCLUDE_START_DATE` constant (optional)

Once you have created a `DatePeriod` object, you can display the recurring dates in a `foreach` loop using the `DateTime format()` method.

The code in `date_interval_04.php` displays the second Tuesday of each month in 2015:

```
$start = new DateTime('12/31/2014');
$interval = DateInterval::createFromString('second
Tuesday of next month');
$period = new DatePeriod($start, $interval, 12,
DatePeriod::EXCLUDE_START_DATE);
foreach ($period as $date) {
    echo $date->format('l, F jS, Y') . '<br>';
}
```

It produces the output shown in [Figure 14-11](#).

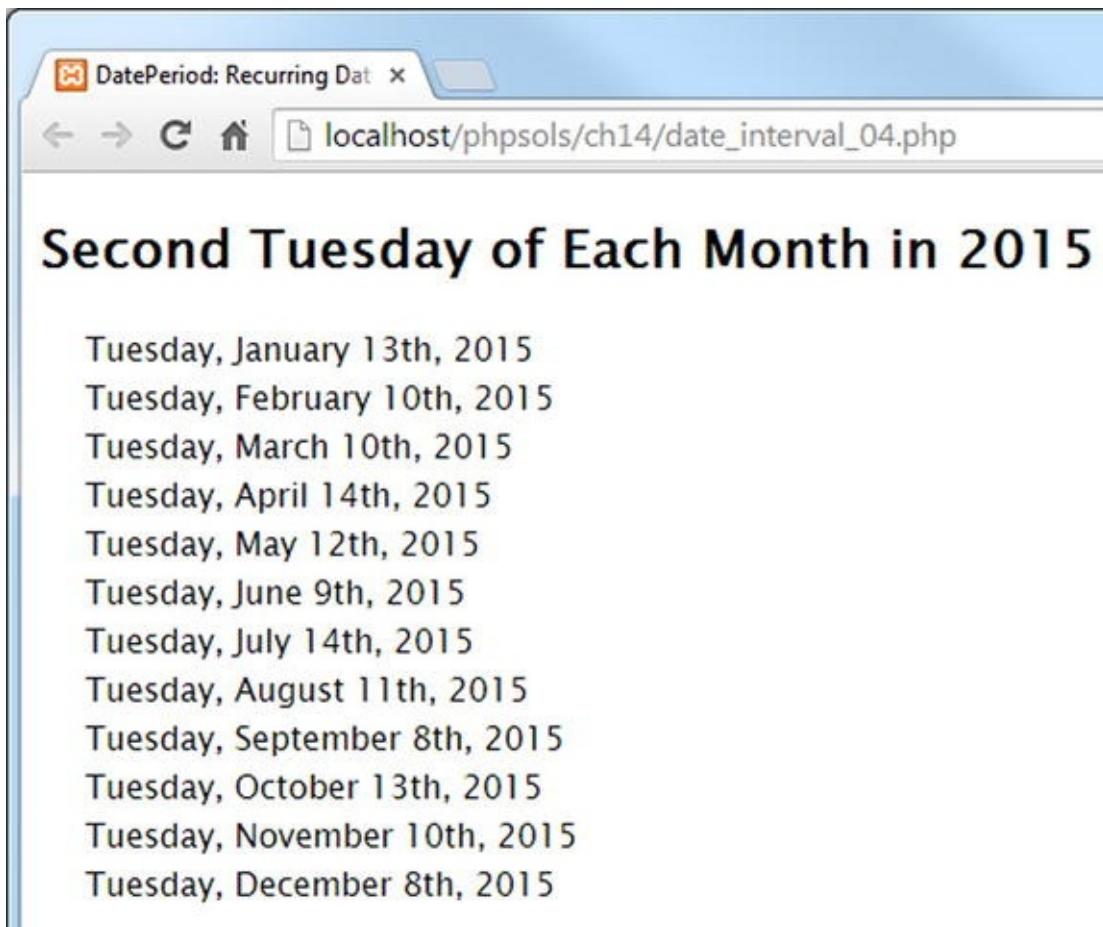


Figure 14-11. Calculating a recurring date is remarkably easy with the `DatePeriod` class

The first line of PHP code sets the start date as December 31, 2014. The next line uses the `DateInterval` static method `createFromDateString()` to set the interval at the second Tuesday of next month. Both values are passed to the `DatePeriod` constructor, together with 12 as the number of recurrences and the `DatePeriod::EXCLUDE_START_DATE` constant. The constant's name is self-explanatory. Finally, a `foreach` loop displays the resulting dates using the `DateTime` `format()` method.

The second way of creating a `DatePeriod` object is to replace the number of recurrences in the third argument with a `DateTime` object representing the end date. The code in `date_interval_05.php` has been amended like this:

```
$start = new DateTime('12/31/2014');
$interval = DateInterval::createFromDateString('second
Tuesday of next month');
$end = new DateTime('12/31/2015');
```

```
$period = new DatePeriod($start, $interval, $end,  
DatePeriod::EXCLUDE_START_DATE);  
foreach ($period as $date) {  
    echo $date->format('l, F jS, Y') . '<br>';  
}
```

This produces exactly the same output as shown in [Figure 14-11](#).

You can also create a `DatePeriod` object using the ISO 8601 recurring time-interval standard

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_8601#Repeating_intervals)

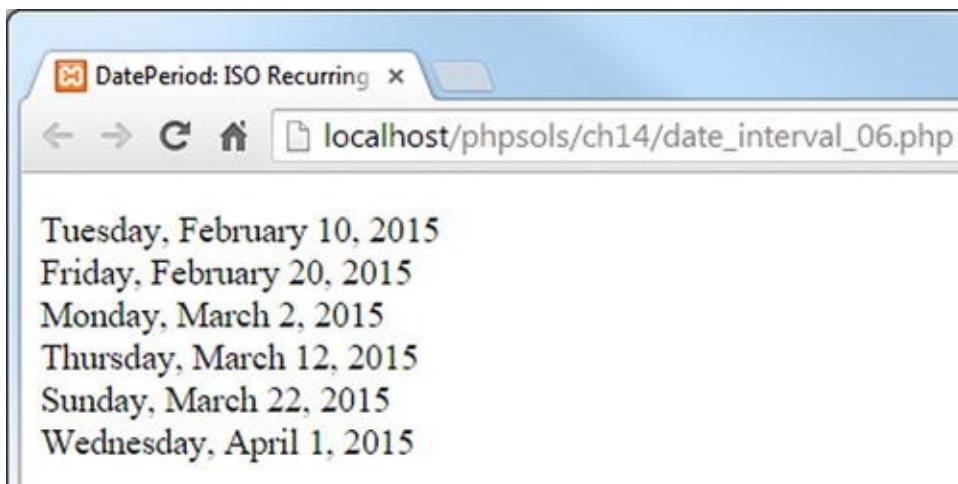
This is not as user-friendly, mainly because of the need to construct a string in the correct format, which looks like this:

`Rn/YYYY-MM-DDTHH:MM:SStz/Pinterval`

`Rn` is the letter R followed by the number of recurrences; `tz` is the time zone offset from UTC (or Z for UTC, as shown in the following example); and `Pinterval` uses the same format as the `DateInterval` class. The code in `date_interval_06.php` shows an example of how to use `DatePeriod` with an ISO 8601 recurring interval. It looks like this:

```
$period = new DatePeriod('R5/2015-02-  
10T00:00Z/P10D');  
foreach ($period as $date) {  
    echo $date->format('l, F j, Y') . '<br>';  
}
```

The ISO recurring interval sets five recurrences from midnight UTC on February 10, 2015 at an interval of 10 days. The recurrences are subsequent to the original date, so the preceding example produces six dates, as shown in the following output.



Chapter Review

A large part of this chapter has been devoted to the powerful date and time features introduced in PHP 5.2 and 5.3. I haven't covered the `DateTimeImmutable` class that was introduced in PHP 5.5 because it's identical to `DateTime` in every respect except one. A `DateTimeImmutable` object never modifies itself. Instead, it always returns a new object with the modified values. This can be useful if you have a date, such as a person's date of birth, which never changes. Using the `setDate()` or `add()` methods with this type of object returns a new object, preserving the original details and providing a new object for the updated ones, such as start of employment, marriage, pensionable age, and so on.

You probably don't need the date- and time-related classes every day, but they're extremely useful and are a major improvement on the original PHP date and time functions. MySQL's date and time functions also make it easy to format dates and execute queries based on temporal criteria.

Perhaps the biggest problem with dates is deciding whether to use SQL or PHP to handle the formatting and/or calculations. A useful feature of the PHP `DateTime` class is that the constructor accepts a date stored in the ISO format, so you can use an unformatted date or timestamp from your database to create `DateTime` objects. However, unless you need to perform further calculations, it's more efficient to use the `DATE_FORMAT()` function as part of a `SELECT` query.

This chapter has also provided you with three functions for formatting text and dates. In the next chapter, you'll learn how to store and retrieve related

information in multiple database tables.

CHAPTER 15



Pulling Data from Multiple Tables

As I explained in [Chapter 11](#), one of the major strengths of a relational database is the ability to link data in different tables by using the primary key from one table as a foreign key in another table. The `phpsols` database has two tables: `images` and `blog`. It's time to add some more and join them, so that you can assign categories to blog entries and associate images with individual articles.

You don't physically join multiple tables, but rather do so through SQL. Often, you can join tables by identifying a direct relationship between primary and foreign keys. In some cases, though, the relationship is more complex and needs to go through a third table that acts as a cross-reference between the other two.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to establish the relationship between tables and how to insert the primary key from one table as a foreign key in another table. Although it sounds difficult conceptually, it's actually quite easy—you use a database query to look up the primary key in the first table, save the result, and use that result in another query to insert it in the second table.

In particular, you'll learn about the following:

- Understanding the different types of table relationships
- Using a cross-reference table for many-to-many relationships
- Altering a table's structure to add new columns or an index
- Storing a primary key as a foreign key in another table
- Linking tables with `INNER JOIN` and `LEFT JOIN`

Understanding Table Relationships

Understanding basic relationships

The simplest type of relationship is **one-to-one** (often represented as **1:1**). This type of relationship is often found in databases that contain information only certain people should see. For example, companies often store details of employees' salaries and other confidential information in a table separate from the more widely accessible staff list. Storing the primary key of each staff member's record as a foreign key in the salaries table establishes a direct relationship between the tables, allowing the accounts department to see the full range of information, while restricting others to only the public information.

There's no confidential information in the `phpsols` database, but you might create a one-to-one relationship between a single photo in the `images` table with an article in the `blog` table, as illustrated by [Figure 15-1](#).



[Figure 15-1.](#) A one-to-one relationship links one record directly with another

This is the simplest way of creating a relationship between the two tables, but it's not ideal. As more articles are added, the nature of the relationship is likely to change. The photo associated with the first article in [Figure 15-1](#) shows maple leaves floating on the water, so it might be suitable for illustrating an article about the changing seasons or autumn hues. The crystal-clear water, bamboo water scoop, and bamboo pipe also suggest other themes that the photo could be used to illustrate. So you could easily end up with the same photo being used for several articles, or a **one-to-many** (or **1:n**) relationship, as represented by [Figure 15-2](#).

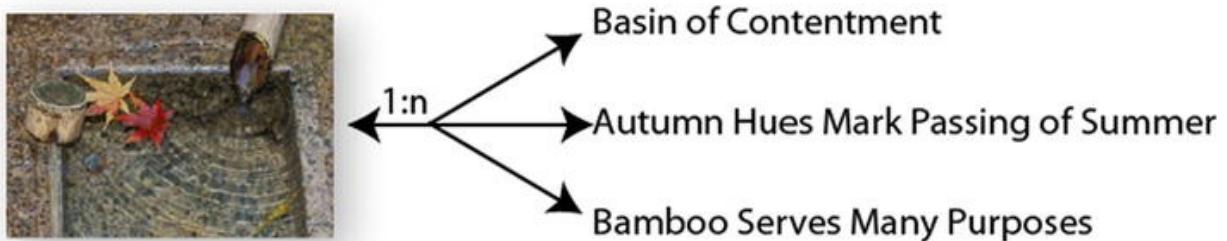


Figure 15-2. A one-to-many relationship links one record with several others

As you have already learned, a primary key must be unique. So, in a $1:n$ relationship, you store the primary key from the table on the 1 side of the relationship (the **primary or parent table**) as a foreign key in the table on the n side (the **secondary or child table**). In this case, the `image_id` from the `images` table needs to be stored as a foreign key in the `blog` table. What's important to understand about a $1:n$ relationship is that it's also a collection of $1:1$ relationships. Reading [Figure 15-2](#) from right to left, each article has a relationship with a single image. Without this one-on-one relationship, you wouldn't be able to identify which image is associated with a particular article.

What happens if you want to associate more than one image to each article? You could create several columns in the `blog` table to hold the foreign keys, but this rapidly becomes unwieldy. You might start off with `image1`, `image2`, and `image3`, but if most articles have only one image, two columns are redundant much of the time. And are you going add an extra column for that extra-special article that requires four images?

When faced with the need to accommodate **many-to-many** (or $n:m$) relationships, you need a different approach. The `images` and `blog` tables don't contain sufficient records to demonstrate $n:m$ relationships, but you could add a `categories` table to tag individual articles. Most articles are likely to belong to multiple categories, and each category will be related with several articles.

The way to resolve complex relationships is through a **cross-reference table** (sometimes called a **linking table**), which establishes a series of one-to-one relationships between related records. This is a special table containing just two columns, both of which are declared a joint primary key. [Figure 15-3](#) shows how this works. Each record in the cross-reference table stores details of the relationship between individual articles in the `blog` and `categories` tables. To find all articles that belong to the `Kyoto` category, you match `cat_id` 1 in

the `categories` table with `cat_id` 1 in the cross-reference table. This identifies the records in the `blog` table with the `article_id` 2, 3, and 4 as being associated with Kyoto.

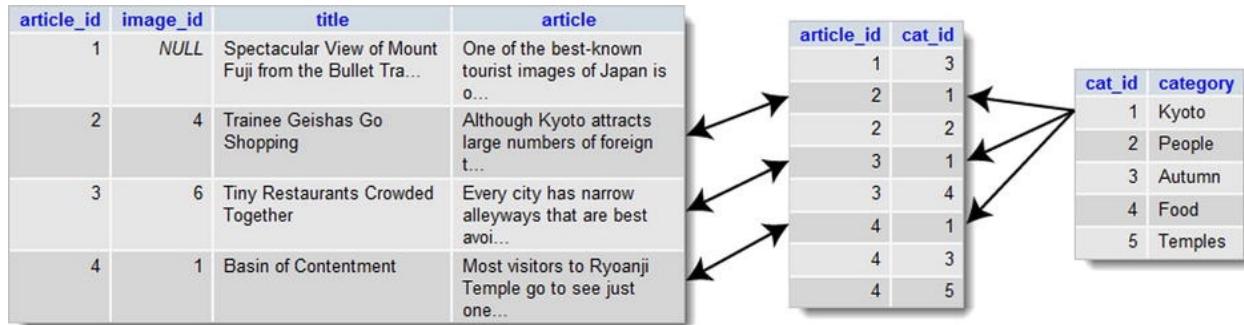


Figure 15-3. A cross-reference table resolves many-to-many relationships as 1:1

Establishing relationships between tables through foreign keys has important implications for how you update and delete records. If you’re not careful, you end up with broken links. Ensuring that dependencies aren’t broken is known as maintaining **referential integrity**. We’ll tackle this important subject in the next chapter. First, let’s concentrate on retrieving information stored in separate tables linked through a foreign-key relationship.

Linking an Image to an Article

To demonstrate how to work with multiple tables, let’s begin with the straightforward scenarios outlined in [Figures 15-1](#) and [15-2](#): relations that can be resolved as **1 : 1** through the storage of the primary key from one table (the parent table) as a foreign key in a second table (the child or dependent table). This involves adding an extra column in the child table to store the foreign key.

Altering the Structure of an Existing Table

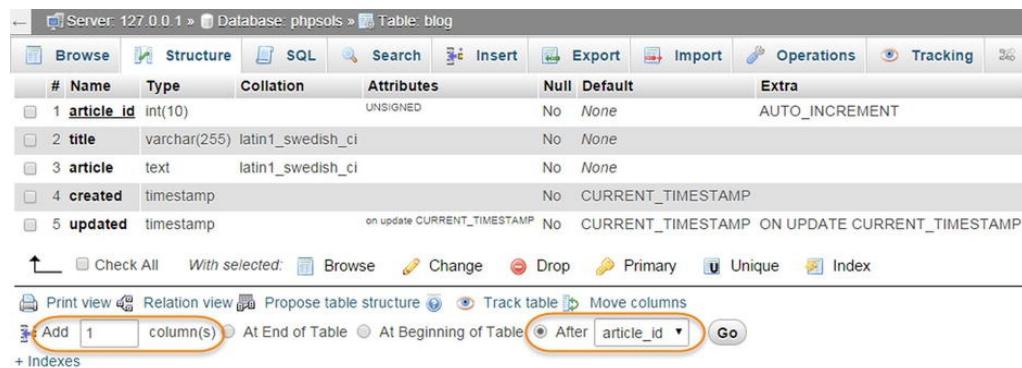
Ideally, you should design your database structure before populating it with data. However, relational databases, such as MySQL, are flexible enough to let you add, remove, or change columns in tables even when they already contain records. To associate an image with individual articles in the `phpsols` database, you need to add an extra column to the `blog` table to store

`image_id` as a foreign key.

PHP Solution 15-1: Adding an Extra Column to a Table

This PHP solution shows how to add an extra column to an existing table using phpMyAdmin. It assumes that you created the `blog` table in the `phpsols` database in [Chapter 13](#).

1. In phpMyAdmin, select the `phpsols` database and click the **Structure** link for the `blog` table.
2. Below the `blog` table structure is a form that allows you to add extra columns. You want to add only one column, so the default value in the `Add field(s)` text box is fine. It's normal practice to put foreign keys immediately after the table's primary key, so select the `After` radio button and check that the drop-down menu is set to `article_id`, as shown in the following screenshot. Then click `Go`.



The screenshot shows the phpMyAdmin interface for the `blog` table. The `Structure` tab is selected. The table structure is as follows:

#	Name	Type	Collation	Attributes	Null	Default	Extra
1	<code>article_id</code>	int(10)		UNSIGNED	No	None	AUTO_INCREMENT
2	<code>title</code>	varchar(255)	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None	
3	<code>article</code>	text	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None	
4	<code>created</code>	timestamp			No	CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	
5	<code>updated</code>	timestamp		on update CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	No	CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	ON UPDATE CURRENT_TIMESTAMP

Below the table structure, there is a form for adding a new column:

`Add` `column(s)` At End of Table After `article_id` `Go`

3. This opens the screen for you to define column attributes. Use the following settings:
 - Name: `image_id`
 - Type: `INT`
 - Attributes: `UNSIGNED`
 - Null: Selected

- Index: INDEX

Do *not* select the A_I (AUTO_INCREMENT) check box. You don't want `image_id` to be incremented automatically. Its value will be inserted from the `images` table.

The Null check box has been selected because not all articles will be associated with an image. Click Save.

4. Select the Structure tab and check that the blog table structure now looks like this:

#	Name	Type	Collation	Attributes	Null	Default	Extra
1	<u>article_id</u>	int(10)		UNSIGNED	No	None	AUTO_INCREMENT
2	<u>image_id</u>	int(10)		UNSIGNED	Yes	NULL	
3	<u>title</u>	varchar(255)	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None	
4	<u>article</u>	text	latin1_swedish_ci		No	None	
5	<u>created</u>	timestamp			No	CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	
6	<u>updated</u>	timestamp		on update CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	No	CURRENT_TIMESTAMP	ON UPDATE CURRENT_TIMESTAMP

5. If you click the Browse tab at the top left of the screen, you will see that the value of `image_id` is NULL in each record. The challenge now is to insert the correct foreign keys without the need to look up the numbers manually. We'll tackle that next.

Inserting a Foreign Key in a Table

The basic principle behind inserting a foreign key in another table is quite simple: you query the database to find the primary key of the record that you want to link to the other table. You can then use an `INSERT` or `UPDATE` query to add the foreign key to the target record.

To demonstrate the basic principle, you'll adapt the update form from [Chapter 13](#) to add a drop-down menu that lists images already registered in the `images` table (see [Figure 15-4](#)).

Update Blog Entry

[List all entries](#)

Title:
Basin of Contentment

Article:
Most visitors to Ryoanji Temple go to see just one thing - the rock garden. It's probably the most famous dry landscape (karesansui) garden - 15 irregularly shaped rocks in a bed of gravel that's raked every day. It's been there since the 15th century, and is certainly remarkable. But Ryoanji has much more to offer. For me, the water basin just behind the main building is exquisite.

Uploaded image:

Select image ▾

- Select image
- basin.jpg
- fountains.jpg
- kinkakuji.jpg
- maiko.jpg
- maiko_phone.jpg
- menu.jpg
- monk.jpg
- ryoanji.jpg

Figure 15-4. A dynamically generated drop-down menu inserts the appropriate foreign key

The menu is dynamically generated by a loop that displays the results of a SELECT query. Each image's primary key is stored in the `value` attribute of the `<option>` tag. When the form is submitted, the selected value is incorporated into the UPDATE query as the foreign key.

PHP Solution 15-2: Adding the Image Foreign Key (MySQLi)

This PHP solution shows how to update records in the blog table by adding the primary key of a selected image as a foreign key. It adapts admin/blog_update_mysql.php from [Chapter 13](#). Use the version that you created in [Chapter 13](#). Alternatively, copy blog_update_mysql_03.php from the ch13 folder to the admin folder and remove _03 from the filename.

1. The existing SELECT query that retrieves details of the article to be updated needs to be amended so that it includes the foreign key, `image_id`, and the result needs to be bound to a new result variable, `$image_id`. You then need to run a second SELECT query to get the details of the `images` table. Before you can do so, you need to free the database resources by calling the prepared statement's `free_result()` method. Add the following code highlighted in bold to the existing script:

```
if (isset($_GET['article_id']) &&
!$_POST) {
    // prepare SQL query
    $sql = 'SELECT article_id, image_id,
title, article FROM blog
    WHERE article_id = ?';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        // bind the query parameter
        $stmt->bind_param('i',
$_GET['article_id']);
        // execute the query
        $OK = $stmt->execute();
        // bind the results to variables
        and fetch
        $stmt->bind_result($article_id,
$image_id, $title, $article);
        $stmt->fetch();
        // free the database resources for the
        second query
        $stmt->free_result();
    }
}
```

You can free the result immediately after calling the `fetch()` method because there's only one record in the result set, and the value in each column has been bound to a variable.

2. Inside the form, you need to display the filenames stored in the `images` table. Since the second SELECT statement doesn't rely on external data, it's simpler to use the `query()` method instead of a prepared statement. Add the following code after the `article` text area (it's all new code, but the PHP sections are highlighted in bold for ease of reference):

```
<p>
    <label for="image_id">Uploaded
image:</label>
    <select name="image_id"
id="image_id">
        <option value="">Select
image</option>
        <?php
            // get the list images
            $getImages = 'SELECT image_id, filename
                FROM images ORDER BY
filename';
            $images = $conn->query($getImages);
            while ($row = $images->fetch_assoc()) {
                ?>
                <option value="<?=
$row['image_id']; ?">
                    <?php
                        if ($row['image_id'] ==
$image_id) {
                            echo 'selected';
                        }
                    ?>><?= $row['filename']; ?>
            </option>
        <?php } ?>
    </select>
</p>
```

The first `<option>` tag is hard-coded with the label

Select `image`, and its `value` is set to an empty string. The remaining `<option>` tags are populated by a `while` loop that extracts each record to an array called `$row`.

A conditional statement checks whether the current `image_id` is the same as the one already stored in the `articles` table. If it is, `selected` is inserted into the `<option>` tag so that it displays the correct value in the drop-down menu.

Make sure you don't omit the third character in the following line:

```
?>><?= $row['filename']; ?></option>
```

It's the closing angle bracket of the `<option>` tag, sandwiched between two PHP tags.

3. Save the page and load it into a browser. You should be automatically redirected to `blog_list_mysqli.php`. Select one of the EDIT links and make sure that your page looks like [Figure 15-4](#). Check the browser source-code view to verify that the `value` attributes of the `<option>` tags contain the primary key of each image.

Tip If the `<select>` menu doesn't list the images, there's almost certainly an error with the `SELECT` query in step 2. Add `echo $conn->error;` immediately after the call to the `query()` method, and reload the page. You'll need to view the browser source code to see the error message. If the message is "Commands out of sync; you can't run this command now," the problem lies with failing to free the database resources with `free_result()` in step 1.

4. The final stage is to add the `image_id` to the `UPDATE` query. Because some blog entries might not be associated

with an image, you need to create alternative prepared statements, like this:

```
// if form has been submitted, update record
if (isset($_POST ['update'])) {
    // prepare update query
    if (!empty($_POST['image_id'])) {
        $sql = 'UPDATE blog SET image_id
= ?, title = ?, article = ?
                WHERE article_id = ?';
        if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
            $stmt->bind_param('issi',
$_POST['image_id'], $_POST['title'],
$_POST['article'],
$_POST['article_id']);
            $done = $stmt->execute();
        }
    } else {
        $sql = 'UPDATE blog SET image_id = NULL,
title = ?, article = ?
                WHERE article_id = ?';
        if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
            $stmt->bind_param('ssi',
$_POST['title'], $_POST['article'],
$_POST['article_id']);
            $done = $stmt->execute();
        }
    }
}
```

If `$_POST['image_id']` has a value, you add it to the SQL as the first parameter with a placeholder question mark. Since it must be an integer, you add `i` to the beginning of the first argument of `bind_param()`.

However, if `$_POST['image_id']` doesn't contain a value, you need to create a different prepared statement to set the value of `image_id` to `NULL` in the SQL query. Because it has an explicit value, you don't add it to `bind_param()`.

5. Test the page again, select a filename from the drop-down menu, and click **Update Entry**. You can verify whether the foreign key has been inserted into the **articles** table by refreshing **Browse** in phpMyAdmin or by selecting the same article for updating. This time, the correct filename should be displayed in the drop-down menu.

Check your code against `blog_update_mysql_04.php` in the `ch15` folder, if necessary.

PHP Solution 15-3: Adding the Image Foreign Key (PDO)

This PHP solution uses PDO to update records in the `blog` table by adding the primary key of a selected image as a foreign key. The main difference from MySQLi is that PDO can bind a `null` value to a placeholder using the `bindValue()` method. These instructions adapt `admin/blog_update_pdo.php` from [Chapter 13](#). Use the version that you created in [Chapter 13](#). Alternatively, copy `blog_update pdo_03.php` from the `ch13` folder to the `admin` folder and remove `_03` from the filename.

1. Add `image_id` to the `SELECT` query that retrieves details of the article to be updated, and bind the result to `$image_id`. This involves renumbering the columns passed as the first argument to `bindColumn()` for `$title` and `$article`. The revised code looks like this:

```
if (isset($_GET['article_id']) &&
!$_POST) {
    // prepare SQL query
    $sql = 'SELECT article_id, image_id,
title, article FROM blog
        WHERE article_id = ?';
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    // pass the placeholder value to
```

```

execute() as a single-element array
    $OK = $stmt-
>execute([$_GET['article_id']]);
    // bind the results
    $stmt->bindColumn(1, $article_id);
    $stmt->bindColumn(2, $image_id);
    $stmt->bindColumn(3, $title);
    $stmt->bindColumn(4, $article);
    $stmt->fetch();
}

```

- Inside the form, you need to display the filenames stored in the `images` table. Since the second SELECT statement doesn't rely on external data, it's simpler to use the `query()` method instead of a prepared statement. Add the following code after the `article` text area (it's all new code, but the PHP sections are highlighted in bold for ease of reference):

```

<p>
    <label for="image_id">Uploaded
image:</label>
    <select name="image_id"
id="image_id">
        <option value="">Select
image</option>
        <?php
            // get the list images
            $getImages = 'SELECT image_id, filename
                FROM images ORDER BY
filename';
            foreach ($conn->query($getImages) as
$row) {
                ?>
                <option value="<?=
$row['image_id']; ?>">
                <?php
                    if ($row['image_id'] ==
$image_id) {
                        echo 'selected';
                    }
                ?>><?= $row['filename']; ?>

```

```
</option>
    <?php } ?>
</select>
</p>
```

The first `<option>` tag is hard-coded with the label `Select image`, and its `value` is set to an empty string. The remaining `<option>` tags are populated by a `foreach` loop that executes the `$getImages` `SELECT` query and extracts each record to an array called `$row`.

A conditional statement checks whether the current `image_id` is the same as the one already stored in the `articles` table. If it is, `selected` is inserted into the `<option>` tag so that it displays the correct value in the drop-down menu.

Make sure you don't omit the third character in the following line:

```
?><?= $row['filename']; ?></option>
```

It's the closing angle bracket of the `<option>` tag, sandwiched between two PHP tags.

3. Save the page and load it into a browser. You should be automatically redirected to `blog_list_pdo.php`. Select one of the `EDIT` links, and make sure that your page looks like [Figure 15-4](#). Check the browser source-code view to verify that the `value` attributes of the `<option>` tags contain the primary key of each image.
4. The final stage is to add the `image_id` to the `UPDATE` query. When a blog entry isn't associated with an image, you need to enter `null` in the `image_id` column. This involves changing the way the values are bound to the anonymous placeholders in the prepared statement. Instead of passing them as an array to the `execute()` method, you need to use `bindValue()` and

`bindParam()`. The revised code looks like this:

```
// if form has been submitted, update
record
if (isset($_POST['update'])) {
    // prepare update query
    $sql = 'UPDATE blog SET image_id = ?, title = ?, article = ?
            WHERE article_id = ?';
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    if (empty($_POST['image_id'])) {
        $stmt->bindValue(1, NULL,
PDO::PARAM_NULL);
    } else {
        $stmt->bindParam(1, $_POST['image_id'],
PDO::PARAM_INT);
    }
    $stmt->bindParam(2, $_POST['title'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    $stmt->bindParam(3, $_POST['article'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    $stmt->bindParam(4, $_POST['article_id'],
PDO::PARAM_INT);
    // execute query
    $done = $stmt->execute();
}
```

The values are bound to the anonymous placeholders using numbers, counting from 1, to identify which placeholder they should be applied to. A conditional statement checks whether `$_POST['image_id']` is empty. If it is, `bindValue()` sets the value to `null`, using the keyword `NULL` as the second argument and a PDO constant as the third argument. As explained in “Embedding variables in PDO prepared statements” in [Chapter 11](#), you need to use `bindValue()` when the value being bound is anything other than a variable.

The remaining values are all variables, so they’re bound using `bindParam()`. I’ve used the PDO constants for integer and string for the remaining values. This isn’t

strictly necessary, but it makes the code clearer.

Finally, the array of values has been removed from between the parentheses of the `execute()` method.

5. Test the page again, select a filename from the drop-down menu, and click **Update Entry**. You can verify whether the foreign key has been inserted into the `articles` table by refreshing **Browse** in phpMyAdmin or by selecting the same article for updating. This time, the correct filename should be displayed in the drop-down menu.

Check your code against `blog_update pdo_04.php` in the ch15 folder, if necessary.

Selecting Records from Multiple Tables

There are several ways to link tables in a `SELECT` query, but the most common is to list the table names, separated by `INNER JOIN`. On its own, `INNER JOIN` produces all possible combinations of rows (a Cartesian join). To select only related values, you need to specify the primary-key/foreign-key relationship. For example, to select articles and their related images from the `blog` and `images` tables, you can use a `WHERE` clause, like this:

```
SELECT title, article, filename, caption
FROM blog INNER JOIN images
WHERE blog.image_id = images.image_id
```

The `title` and `article` columns exist only in the `blog` table. Likewise, `filename` and `caption` exist only in the `images` table. They're unambiguous and don't need to be qualified. However, `image_id` exists in both tables, so you need to prefix each reference with the table name and a period.

For many years, it was common practice to use a comma in place of `INNER JOIN`, like this:

```
SELECT title, article, filename, caption
FROM blog, images
```

```
WHERE blog.image_id = images.image_id
```

■ **Caution** Using a comma to join tables can result in SQL syntax errors because of changes made to the way joins are handled since MySQL 5.0.12. Use INNER JOIN instead.

Instead of a WHERE clause, you can use ON, like this:

```
SELECT title, article, filename, caption  
FROM blog INNER JOIN images ON blog.image_id  
= images.image_id
```

When both columns have the same name, you can use the following syntax, which is my personal preference:

```
SELECT title, article, filename, caption  
FROM blog INNER JOIN images USING (image_id)
```

■ **Note** The column name after USING must be in parentheses.

PHP Solution 15-4: Building the Details Page

This PHP solution shows how to join the blog and images tables to display a selected article with its associated photo. The code for MySQLi and PDO is almost identical, so this solution covers both.

1. Copy details_01.php from the ch15 folder to the phpsols site root and rename it details.php. Do not update the links if your editing environment prompts you to do so. Make sure that footer.php and menu.php are in the includes folder, and load the page in a browser. It should look like [Figure 15-5](#).



Figure 15-5. The details page contains a placeholder image and text

2. Load `blog_list_mysqli.php` or `blog_list_pdo.php` into a browser and update the following three articles by assigning the image filename as indicated:
 - Basin of Contentment: `basin.jpg`
 - Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together: `menu.jpg`
 - Trainee Geishas Go Shopping: `maiko.jpg`
3. Navigate to the `blog` table in phpMyAdmin and click the `Browse` tab to check that the foreign keys have been registered. At least one article should have `NULL` as the value for `image_id`, as shown in [Figure 15-6](#).

article_id	image_id	title	article
1	NULL	Spectacular View of Mount Fuji from the Bullet Tra...	One c of Japan .
2	4	Trainee Geishas Go Shopping	Althou of foreig...
3	6	Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together	Every are be...
4	1	Basin of Contentment	Most visit see ju

Figure 15-6. The foreign key of the article not associated with an image is set to `NULL`

4. In `details.php`, include `utility_funcs.php` from the previous chapter (if necessary, copy it from the `ch14` folder to the `includes` folder). Then include the database connection file, create a read-only connection, and prepare the SQL query inside a PHP code block above the `DOCTYPE` declaration, like this:

```
require_once
'./includes/utility_funcs.php';
require_once
'./includes/connection.php';
// connect to the database
$conn = dbConnect('read'); // add
'pdo' if necessary
// check for article_id in query string
if (isset($_GET['article_id']) &&
is_numeric($_GET['article_id'])) {
    $article_id = (int)
$_GET['article_id'];
} else {
    $article_id = 0;
}
$sql = "SELECT title,
article,DATE_FORMAT(updated, '%W, %M
%D, %Y') AS updated,
filename, caption
FROM blog INNER JOIN images
USING (image_id)
WHERE blog.article_id
= $article_id";
$result = $conn->query($sql);
$row = $result->fetch_assoc(); // for
PDO use $result->fetch();
```

The code checks for `article_id` in the URL query string. If it exists and is numeric, it's assigned to `$article_id` using the `(int)` casting operator to make sure it's an integer. Otherwise, `$article_id` is set to 0. You could choose a default article instead, but

leave it at `0` for the moment because I want to illustrate an important point.

The `SELECT` query retrieves the `title`, `article`, and `updated` columns from the `blog` table, and the `filename` and `caption` columns from the `images` table. The value of `updated` is formatted using the `DATE_FORMAT()` function and an alias, as described in [Chapter 14](#). Because only one record is being retrieved, using the original column name as the alias doesn't cause a problem with the sort order.

The tables are joined using `INNER JOIN` and a `USING` clause that matches the values in the `image_id` columns in both tables. The `WHERE` clause selects the article identified by `$article_id`. Since the data type of `$article_id` has been checked, it's safe to use in the query. There's no need to use a prepared statement.

Note that the query is wrapped in double quotes so that the value of `$article_id` is interpreted. To avoid conflicts with the outer pair of quotes, single quotes are used around the format string passed as an argument to `DATE_FORMAT()`.

5. The rest of the code displays the results of the SQL query in the main body of the page. Replace the placeholder text in the `<h2>` tags like this:

```
<h2><?php if ($row) {  
    echo $row['title'];  
} else {  
    echo 'No record found';  
}  
?>  
</h2>
```

If the `SELECT` query finds no results, `$row` will be empty, which PHP interprets as `false`. So this displays the title, or “No record found” if the result set is empty.

6. Replace the placeholder date like this:

```
<p><?php if ($row) { echo $row['updated']; } ?>
</p>
```

7. Immediately following the date paragraph is a `<figure>` element containing a placeholder image. Not all articles are associated with an image, so the `<figure>` needs to be wrapped in a conditional statement that also checks that `$row['filename']` contains a value. Amend the `<figure>` like this:

```
<?php
if ($row && !empty($row['filename'])) {
    $filename
= "images/{$row['filename']}";
    $imageSize
= getimagesize($filename)[3];
?>
    <figure>
        " <?= $imageSize;?>">
    </figure>
<?php } ?>
```

This uses code that was described in [Chapter 12](#), so I won't go into it again.

8. Finally, you need to display the article. Delete the paragraph of placeholder text, and add the following code between the closing curly brace and closing PHP tag at the end of the final code block in the previous step:

```
<?php } if ($row) { echo
convertToParas($row['article']); } ?>
```

This uses the `convertToParas()` function in `utility_funcs.php` to wrap the blog entry in `<p>` tags and replace sequences of newline characters with

closing and opening tags (see “Displaying paragraphs” in [Chapter 14](#)).

9. Save the page and load `blog.php` into a browser. Click the `More` link for an article that has an image assigned through a foreign key. You should see `details.php` with the full article and image laid out as shown in [Figure 15-7](#).



[Figure 15-7.](#) The details page pulls the article from one table and the image from another

Check your code, if necessary, with `details mysqli_01.php` or `details pdo_01.php` in the `ch15` folder.

10. Click the link back to `blog.php` and test the other items. Each article that has an image associated with it should display correctly. Click the `More` link for the article that doesn't have an image. This time you should see the result shown in [Figure 15-8](#).



Figure 15-8. The lack of an associated image causes the SELECT query to fail

You know that the article is in the database because the first two sentences wouldn't be displayed in `blog.php` otherwise. To understand this sudden "disappearance," refer to [Figure 15-6](#). The value of `image_id` is `NULL` for the record that doesn't have an image associated with it. Because all the records in the `images` table have a primary key, the `USING` clause can't find a match. The next section explains how to deal with this type of situation.

Finding Records that don't have a Matching Foreign Key

Take the `SELECT` query from PHP Solution 15-4 and remove the condition that searches for a specific article, which leaves this:

```
SELECT title, article, DATE_FORMAT(updated, '%W, %M
%D, %Y') AS updated, filename, caption
FROM blog INNER JOIN images USING (image_id)
```

If you run this query in the SQL tab of phpMyAdmin, it produces the result shown in [Figure 15-9](#).

title	article	updated	filename	caption
Trainee Geishas Go Shopping	Although Kyoto attracts large numbers of foreign t...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together	Every city has narrow alleyways that are best avoi...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
Basin of Contentment	Most visitors to Ryoanji Temple go to see just one...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Figure 15-9. INNER JOIN finds only records that have a match in both tables

With `INNER JOIN`, the `SELECT` query succeeds in finding only those

records where there's a complete match. One of the articles doesn't have an image associated with it, so value of `image_id` in the `articles` table is `NULL`, which doesn't match anything in the `images` table.

In this type of situation, you need to use `LEFT JOIN` instead of `INNER JOIN`. With `LEFT JOIN`, the result includes records that have a match in the left table, but not in the right one. Left and right refer to the order in which you perform the join. Rewrite the `SELECT` query like this:

```
SELECT title, article, DATE_FORMAT(updated, '%W, %M %D, %Y') AS updated, filename, caption
FROM blog LEFT JOIN images USING (image_id)
```

When you run it in phpMyAdmin, you get all four articles, as shown in [Figure 15-10](#).

title	article	updated	filename	caption
Spectacular View of Mount Fuji from the Bullet Tra...	One of the best-known tourist images of Japan is o...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	NULL	NULL
Trainee Geishas Go Shopping	Although Kyoto attracts large numbers of foreign t...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	maiko.jpg	Maiko—trainee geishas in Kyoto
Tiny Restaurants Crowded Together	Every city has narrow alleyways that are best avoi...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	menu.jpg	Menu outside restaurant in Pontocho, Kyoto
Basin of Contentment	Most visitors to Ryoanji Temple go to see just one...	Friday, September 12th, 2014	basin.jpg	Water basin at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

[Figure 15-10](#). `LEFT JOIN` includes records that don't have a match in the right table

As you can see, the empty fields from the right table (`images`) are displayed as `NULL`.

If the column names are not the same in both tables, use `ON` like this:

```
FROM table_1 LEFT JOIN table_2 ON table_1.col_name =
table_2.col_name
```

So, now you can rewrite the SQL query in `details.php` like this:

```
$sql = "SELECT title, article, DATE_FORMAT(updated,
'%W, %M %D, %Y') AS updated,
filename, caption
FROM blog LEFT JOIN images USING (image_id)
WHERE blog.article_id = $article_id";
```

If you click the `More` link to view the article that doesn't have an associated image, you should now see the article correctly displayed as shown in [Figure 15-](#)

11. The other articles should still display correctly, too. The finished code can be found in `details_mysql_02.php` and `details_pdo_02.php`.

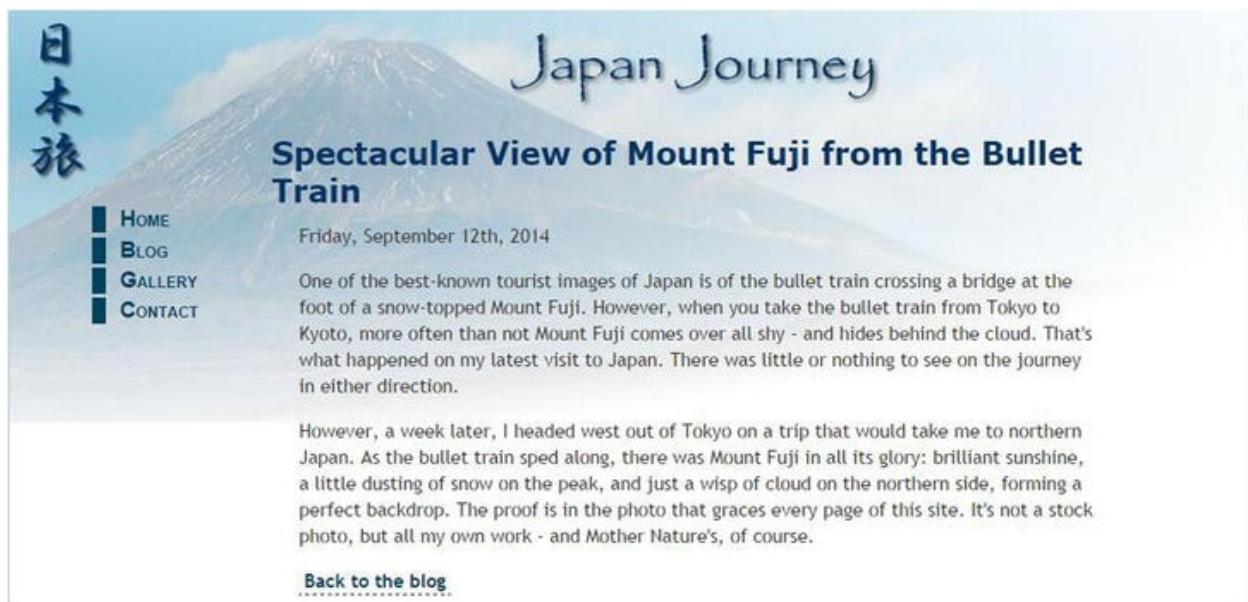


Figure 15-11. LEFT JOIN also retrieves articles that don't have a matching foreign key

Creating an Intelligent Link

The link at the bottom of `details.php` goes straight back to `blog.php`. That's fine with only four items in the `blog` table, but once you start getting more records in a database, you need to build a navigation system, as I showed you in [Chapter 12](#). The problem with a navigation system is that you need a way to return visitors to the same point in the result set that they came from.

PHP Solution 15-5: Returning to the Same Point in a Navigation System

This PHP solution checks whether the visitor arrived from an internal or an external link. If the referring page was within the same site, the link returns the visitor to the same place. If the referring page was an external site, or if the server doesn't support the necessary superglobal variables, the script substitutes a standard link. It is shown here in the context of `details.php`, but it can be used on any page.

The code is not database-dependent so it's identical for both MySQL and

The code is not database dependent, so it's identical for both MySQL and PDO.

1. Locate the back link in the main body of `details.php`.

It looks like this:

```
<p><a href="blog.php">Back to the  
blog</a></p>
```

2. Place your cursor immediately to the right of the first quotation mark, and insert the following code highlighted in bold:

```
<p><a href="  
<?php  
// check that browser supports $_SERVER  
variables  
if (isset($_SERVER['HTTP_REFERER']) &&  
isset($_SERVER['HTTP_HOST'])) {  
    $url = parse_url($_SERVER['HTTP_REFERER']);  
    // find if visitor was referred from  
a different domain  
    if ($url['host'] == $_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']) {  
        // if same domain, use referring URL  
        echo $_SERVER['HTTP_REFERER'];  
    }  
} else {  
    // otherwise, send to main page  
    echo 'blog.php';  
} ?>">Back to the blog</a></p>
```

`$_SERVER['HTTP_REFERER']` and `$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']` are superglobal variables that contain the URL of the referring page and the current hostname. You need to check their existence with `isset()` because not all servers support them. Also, the browser might block the URL of the referring page.

The `parse_url()` function creates an array containing each part of a URL, so `$url['host']` contains the hostname. If it matches `$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST']`, you know that the visitor was referred by an internal link, so the full URL of the internal link is inserted in the `href`

attribute. This includes any query string, so the link sends the visitor back to the same position in a navigation system. Otherwise, an ordinary link is created to the target page.

The finished code is in `details_mysqli_03.php` and `details_pdo_3.php` in the `ch15` folder.

Chapter Review

Retrieving information stored in multiple tables is relatively simple with `INNER JOIN` and `LEFT JOIN`. The key to working successfully with multiple tables lies in structuring the relationship between them so that complex relationships can always be resolved as `1:1`, if necessary through a cross-reference (or linking) table. The next chapter continues the exploration of working with multiple tables, showing you how to deal with foreign-key relationships when inserting, updating, and deleting records.

CHAPTER 16



Managing Multiple Database Tables

The previous chapter showed you how to use `INNER JOIN` and `LEFT JOIN` to retrieve information stored in multiple tables. You also learned how to link existing tables by adding an extra column to the child table and updating each record individually to insert a foreign key. However, most of the time you'll want to insert data simultaneously in both tables. That presents a challenge, because `INSERT` commands can operate on only one table at a time. You need to handle the insert operations in the correct sequence, starting with the parent table, so that you can get the new record's primary key and insert it in the child table at the same time as other details. Similar considerations also need to be taken into account when updating and deleting records. The code involved isn't difficult, but you need to keep the sequence of events clearly in mind as you build the scripts.

This chapter guides you through the process of inserting new articles in the `blog` table, optionally selecting a related image or uploading a new one, and assigning the article to one or more categories, all in a single operation. Then you'll build the scripts to update and delete articles without destroying the referential integrity of related tables.

You'll also learn about foreign-key constraints, which control what happens if you try to delete records that still have a foreign-key relationship in another table. Not all databases support foreign-key constraints, so it's important to check whether your remote server does. This chapter also explains what measures you can take to preserve the integrity of your data if your server doesn't support foreign-key constraints.

In particular, you'll learn about the following:

- Inserting, updating, and deleting records in related tables
- Finding the primary key of a record immediately after it has

been created

- Converting a table's storage engine
- Establishing foreign-key constraints between InnoDB tables

Maintaining Referential Integrity

With single tables, it doesn't matter how often you update a record or how many records you delete, the impact on other records is zero. Once you store the primary key of a record as a foreign key in a different table, you create a dependency that needs to be managed. For example, [Figure 16-1](#) shows the second article from the `blog` table ("Trainee Geishas Go Shopping") linked to the Kyoto and People categories through the `article2cat` cross-reference table.



[Figure 16-1](#). You need to manage foreign-key relations to avoid orphaned records

If you delete the article, but fail to delete the entries for `article_id` 2 in the cross-reference table, a query that looks for all articles in the Kyoto or People categories tries to match a nonexistent record in the `blog` table. Similarly, if you decide to delete one of the categories without also deleting matching records in the cross-reference table, a query that looks for the categories associated with an article tries to match a nonexistent category.

Before long, your database is littered with orphaned records. Fortunately, maintaining referential integrity is not difficult. SQL does it through the establishment of rules known as foreign-key constraints that tell the database what to do when you update or delete a record that has dependent records in another table.

Support for foreign-key constraints

Foreign-key constraints are supported by InnoDB, the default storage engine in MySQL 5.5 and later. The equivalent storage engine in MariaDB is Percona XtraDB, but it identifies itself as InnoDB and has the same features. Even if your remote server is running the latest version of MySQL or MariaDB, there's no guarantee that InnoDB is supported, because your hosting company may have disabled it.

If your server is running an older version of MySQL, the default storage engine is MyISAM, which doesn't support foreign-key constraints. However, you might still have access to InnoDB, because it has been an integral part of MySQL since version 4.0. Converting MyISAM tables to InnoDB is very simple and takes only a few seconds.

If you don't have access to InnoDB, you need to maintain referential integrity by building the necessary rules into your PHP scripts. This chapter shows both approaches.

Note MyISAM tables have the advantage of being very fast. They require less disk space and are ideal for storing large amounts of data that isn't changed very often. They also support full text indexing and searching, a feature that wasn't available in InnoDB until MySQL 5.6 and MariaDB 10.0.5.

PHP Solution 16-1: Checking whether InnoDB is supported

This PHP solution explains how to check whether your remote server supports the InnoDB storage engine.

1. If your hosting company provides phpMyAdmin to administer your database(s), launch phpMyAdmin on your remote server and click the **Engines** tab at the top of the screen, if it's available. This displays a list of storage engines similar to [Figure 16-2](#).

Storage Engines

Storage Engine	Description
FEDERATED	Federated MySQL storage engine
MRG_MYISAM	Collection of identical MyISAM tables
MyISAM	MyISAM storage engine
BLACKHOLE	/dev/null storage engine (anything you write to it disappears)
CSV	CSV storage engine
MEMORY	Hash based, stored in memory, useful for temporary tables
ARCHIVE	Archive storage engine
InnoDB	Supports transactions, row-level locking, and foreign keys
PERFORMANCE_SCHEMA	Performance Schema

Figure 16-2. Checking storage engine support through phpMyAdmin

2. The list displays all storage engines, including those that are not supported. Unsupported or disabled storage engines are grayed out. If you’re not sure of the status of InnoDB, click its name in the list.
3. If InnoDB is not supported, you’ll see a message telling you so. If, on the other hand, you see a list of variables similar to [Figure 16-3](#), you’re in luck—InnoDB is supported.

InnoDB

Supports transactions, row-level locking, and foreign keys

[Variables | Buffer Pool | InnoDB Status]

InnoDB is the default storage engine on this MySQL server.

innodb_adaptive_flushing	ON
innodb_adaptive_flushing_lwm	10
innodb_adaptive_hash_index	ON
innodb_adaptive_max_sleep_delay	150000
innodb_additional_mem_pool_size	2,048 KiB
innodb_api_bk_commit_interval	5
innodb_api_disable_rowlock	OFF
table_binlog	OFF

Figure 16-3. Confirmation that InnoDB is supported

4. If there's no **Engines** tab in phpMyAdmin, select any table in your database and click the **Operations** tab at the top right of the screen. In the **Table options** section, click the down arrow to the right of the **Storage Engine** field to display the available options (see [Figure 16-4](#)). If InnoDB is listed, it's supported.

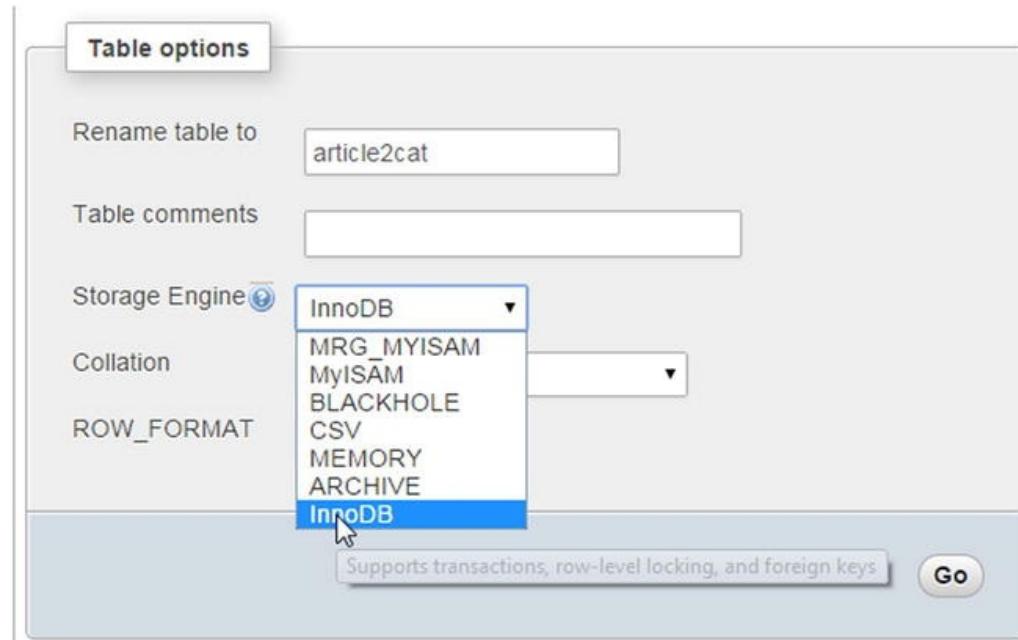


Figure 16-4. The available storage engines are listed in the Table options

5. If neither of the preceding methods gives you the answer, open `storage_engines.php` in the `ch16` folder. Edit the first three lines to insert the hostname, username, and password for the database on your remote server.
6. Upload `storage_engines.php` to your website and load the page into a browser. You should see a list of storage engines and level of support, as shown in [Figure 16-5](#). In some cases, NO will be replaced by DISABLED.

Storage Engine	Supported
FEDERATED	NO
MRG_MYISAM	YES
MyISAM	YES
BLACKHOLE	YES
CSV	YES
MEMORY	YES
ARCHIVE	YES
InnoDB	DEFAULT
PERFORMANCE_SCHEMA	YES

Figure 16-5. The SQL query in `storage_engines.php` reports which ones are supported

As Figure 16-5 shows, a typical installation of MySQL supports several storage engines. What may come as a surprise is that you can use different storage engines within the same database. In fact, it's recommended that you do. Even if your remote server supports InnoDB, it's usually more efficient to use MyISAM for tables that don't have a foreign-key relationship. Use InnoDB for tables that have foreign-key relationships. You should also use InnoDB if you need support for transactions.

Note A **transaction** is a series of related SQL queries. If one part of the series fails, the transaction is terminated and the database rolls back to its original state from before the transaction. Financial databases make extensive use of transactions, which are beyond the scope of this book.

I'll explain how to convert tables to InnoDB and set up foreign-key constraints later in this chapter. Before that, let's look at how to establish and use foreign-key relationships regardless of the storage engine being used.

Inserting records into multiple tables

~~Inserting records into multiple tables~~

An **INSERT** query can insert data into only one table. Consequently, when working with multiple tables, you need to plan your insert scripts carefully to ensure that all the information is stored and that the correct foreign-key relationships are established.

PHP Solutions 15-2 (MySQLi) and 15-3 (PDO) in the previous chapter showed how to add the correct foreign key for an image that is already registered in the database. However, when inserting a new blog entry, you need to be able to select an existing image, upload a new image, or choose to have no image at all. This means that your processing script needs to check whether an image has been selected or uploaded and execute the relevant commands accordingly. In addition, tagging a blog entry with zero or more categories increases the number of decisions the script needs to make. [Figure 16-6](#) shows the decision chain.

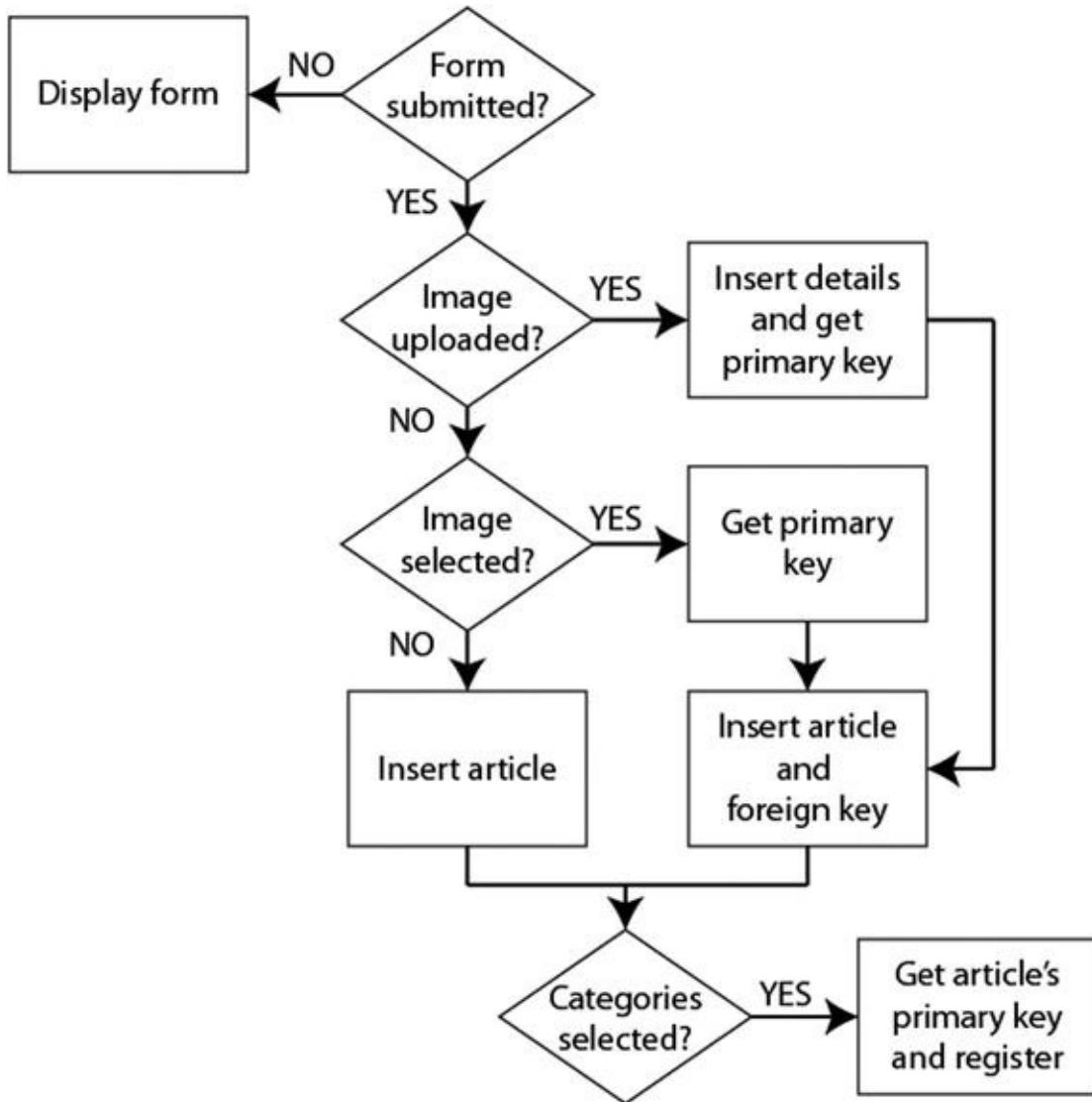


Figure 16-6. The decision chain for inserting a new blog article with an image and categories

When the page first loads, the form hasn't been submitted, so the page simply displays the insert form. Both the existing images and categories are listed in the insert form by querying the database in the same way as was done for the images in the update form in PHP Solutions 15-2 and 15-3.

After the form has been submitted, the processing script goes through the following steps:

1. If an image has been uploaded, the upload is processed, the details of the image are stored in the `images` table, and the script gets the primary key of the new record.
2. If no image has been uploaded, but an existing image has

been selected, the script gets its foreign key from the value submitted through the `$_POST` array.

3. In either case, the new blog article is inserted in the `blog` table along with the image's primary key as a foreign key. However, if an image has neither been uploaded nor selected from the existing ones, the article is inserted in the `blog` table without a foreign key.
4. Finally, the script checks whether any categories have been selected. If they have, the script gets the new article's primary key and combines it with the primary keys of the selected categories in the `article2cat` table.

If there's a problem at any stage, the script needs to abandon the rest of the process and redisplay the user's input. The script is quite long, so I'll break it up into several sections. The first stage is to create the `article2cat` cross-reference table.

Creating a cross-reference table

When dealing with many-to-many relationships in a database, you need to build a cross-reference table like the one in [Figure 16-1](#). A cross-reference table consists of just two columns, which are jointly declared as the table's primary key (known as a **composite primary key**). If you look at [Figure 16-7](#), you'll see that the `article_id` and `cat_id` columns both contain the same number several times—something that's unacceptable in a primary key, which must be unique. However, in a composite primary key, it's the combination of both values that is unique. The first two combinations, `1, 3` and `2, 1`, are not repeated anywhere else in the table, nor are any of the others.

article_id	cat_id
1	3
2	1
2	2
3	1
3	4
4	1
4	3
4	5

Figure 16-7. In a cross-reference table, both columns together form a composite primary key

Setting up the categories and cross-reference tables

In the ch16 folder, you'll find `categories.sql`, which contains the SQL to create the `categories` table and the cross-reference table, `article2cat`, together with some sample data. The settings used to create the tables are listed in Tables 16-1 and 16-2. Both database tables have just two columns.

Table 16-1. Settings for the `categories` table

Name	Type	Length/Values	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
cat_id	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	Selected
category	VARCHAR	20		Deselected		

Table 16-2. Settings for the `article2cat` cross-reference table

Name	Type	Length/Values	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
article_id	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	
cat_id	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	

The important thing about the definition for a cross-reference table is that both columns are set as primary key, and that the A_I (AUTO_INCREMENT) check box is not selected for either column.

Caution To create a composite primary key, you must declare both columns to be primary keys at the same time. If, by mistake, you declare only one as the primary key, the database prevents you from adding the second one later. You must delete the primary-key index from the single column and then reapply it to both. It's the combination of the two columns that is treated as the primary key.

Getting the filename of an uploaded image

The script makes use of the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#), but the class needs slight tweaking because the filenames of uploaded files are incorporated into the `$messages` property.

PHP Solution 16-2: Improving the `Upload` class

This PHP solution adapts the `Upload` class from [Chapter 6](#) by creating a new protected property in which to store the names of successfully uploaded files, together with a public method to retrieve the array of names.

1. Open `Upload.php` in the `PhpSolutions/File` folder. Alternatively, copy `Upload.php` from the `ch16/PhpSolutions/File` folder and save it in `PhpSolutions/File` in the `phpsol1` site root.
2. Add the following line to the list of properties at the top of the file:

```
protected $filenames = [];
```

This initializes a protected property called `$filenames` as an empty array.

3. Amend the `moveFile()` method to add the amended filename to the `$filenames` property if the file is successfully uploaded. The new code is highlighted in bold.

```
protected function moveFile($file) {
```

```

        $filename = isset($this->newName)
    ? $this->newName : $file['name'];
        $success
    = move_uploaded_file($file['tmp_name'],
$this->destination . $filename);
        if ($success) {
            // add the amended filename to the array
            of uploaded files
            $this->filenames[] = $filename;
            $result = $file['name'] . ' was
uploaded successfully';
            if (!is_null($this->newName)) {
                $result .= ', and was renamed
' . $this->newName;
            }
            $this->messages[] = $result;
        } else {
            $this->messages[] = 'Could not
upload ' . $file['name'];
        }
    }
}

```

The name is added to the `$filenames` array only if the file is successfully moved to the destination folder.

4. Add a public method to return the values stored in the `$filenames` property. The code looks like this:

```

public function getFilenames() {
    return $this->filenames;
}

```

It doesn't matter where you put this code in the class definition, but it's common practice to keep all public methods together.

5. Save `Upload.php`. If you need to check your code, compare it with `Upload_01.php` in the `ch16/PhpSolutions/File` folder.

Adapting the insert form to deal with multiple tables

The insert form for blog articles that you created in [Chapter 13](#) already contains the code needed to insert most of the details in the `blog` table. Rather than start again from scratch, it makes sense to adapt the existing page. As it stands, the page contains only a text input field for the title and a text area for the article.

You need to add a multiple-choice `<select>` list for categories and a drop-down `<select>` menu for existing images.

To prevent a user from selecting an existing image at the same time as uploading a new one, a check box and JavaScript control the display of the relevant input fields. Selecting the check box disables the drop-down menu for existing images and displays the input fields for a new image and caption. Deselecting the check box hides and disables the file and caption fields and re-enables the drop-down menu. If JavaScript is disabled, the options for uploading a new image and captions are hidden.

 **Note** To save space, the remaining PHP solutions in this chapter give detailed instructions only for MySQLi. The structure and PHP logic for the PDO version are the same. The only differences lie in the commands used to submit the SQL queries to the database and to display the results. Fully commented PDO files are in the `ch16` folder.

PHP Solution 16-3: Adding the category and image input fields

This PHP solution begins the process of adapting the blog entry insert form from [Chapter 13](#) by adding the input fields for categories and images.

1. In the `admin` folder, find and open the version of `blog_insert_mysql.php` that you created in [Chapter 13](#). Alternatively, copy `blog_insert_mysql_01.php` from the `ch16` folder to the `admin` folder and remove `_01` from the filename.

2. The <select> elements for the categories and existing images need to query the database when the page first loads, so you need to move the connection script and database connection outside the conditional statement that checks if the form has been submitted. Locate the lines highlighted in bold:

```
if (isset($_POST['insert'])) {  
    require_once '../includes/connection.php';  
    // initialize flag  
    $OK = false;  
    // create database connection  
    $conn = dbConnect('write');
```

Move them outside the conditional statement, like this:

```
require_once '../includes/connection.php';  
// create database connection  
$conn = dbConnect('write');  
    if (isset($_POST['insert'])) {  
        // initialize flag  
        $OK = false;
```

3. The form in the body of the page needs to be capable of uploading a file, so you need to add the enctype attribute to the opening <form> tag, like this:

```
<form method="post" action=""  
enctype="multipart/form-data">
```

4. If an error occurs when trying to upload a file—for example, if it's too big or is not an image file—the insert operation will be halted. Amend the existing text input field and text area to redisplay the values, using the same technique as shown in [Chapter 5](#). The text input field looks like this:

```
<input name="title" type="text"  
id="title" value="php if (isset($error)) {<br/    echo htmlentities($_POST['title']);  
} ?>">
```

The text area looks like this:

```
<textarea name="article" id="article">
<?php if (isset($error)) {
    echo htmlentities($_POST['article']);
} ?></textarea>
```

Make sure there's no gap between the opening and closing PHP tags and the HTML. Otherwise, you'll add unwanted whitespace inside the text input field and text area.

5. The new form elements go between the text area and the Submit button. First, add the code for the multiple-choice <select> list for categories. The code looks like this:

```
<p>
    <label for="category">Categories:</label>
    <select name="category[]" size="5"
multiple id="category">
    <?php
        // get categories
        $getCats = 'SELECT cat_id,
category FROM categories ORDER BY
category';
        $categories = $conn-
>query($getCats);
        while ($row = $categories-
>fetch_assoc()) {
            ?
            <option value="<?=
$row['cat_id']; ?>" <?php
                if (isset($_POST['category']))
&& in_array($row['cat_id'],
$_POST['category']))
            { echo 'selected';
                ?
            } ?>><?php echo
$row['category']; ?></option>
            <?php } ?>
    </select>
</p>
```

To allow the selection of multiple values, the `multiple` attribute has been added to the `<select>` tag, and the `size` attribute has been set to 5. The values need to be submitted as an array, so a pair of square brackets has been appended to the `name` attribute.

The SQL queries the `categories` table, and a `while` loop populates the `<option>` tags with the primary keys and category names. The conditional statement in the `while` loop adds `selected` to the `<option>` tag to redisplay selected values if the `insert` operation fails.

6. Save `blog_insert mysqli.php` and load the page into a browser. The form should now look like [Figure 16-8](#).

Insert New Blog Entry

Title:

Article:

Categories:

- Autumn
- Food
- Kyoto
- People
- Temples

[Figure 16-8](#). The multiple-choice `<select>` list pulls the values from the `categories` table

7. View the page's source code to verify that the primary key of each category is correctly embedded in the `value` attribute of each `<option>` tag. You can compare your

code with blog_insert_mysql_02.php in the ch16 folder.

8. Next, create the <select> drop-down menu to display the images already registered in the database. Add this code immediately after the code you inserted in step 5:

```
<p>
    <label for="image_id">Uploaded
    image:</label>
    <select name="image_id"
    id="image_id">
        <option value="">Select
    image</option>
        <?php
            // get the list of images
            $getImages = 'SELECT image_id,
            filename
                FROM images ORDER BY
            filename';
            $images = $conn-
        >query($getImages);
            while ($row = $images-
        >fetch_assoc()) {
                ?>
                <option value="<?=
            $row['image_id']; ?>">
                    <?php
                    if
                        (isset($_POST['image_id'])) &&
                        $row['image_id'] ==
                            $_POST['image_id']) {
                            echo 'selected';
                    }
                    ?>><?php echo
            $row['filename']; ?></option>
                    <?php } ?>
            </select>
</p>
```

This creates another SELECT query to get the primary key and filename of each image stored in the `images` table. The code should be very familiar by now, so it needs no explanation.

9. The check box, file input field, and text input field for the caption go between the code in the previous step and the Submit button. The code looks like this:

```
<p id="allowUpload">
    <input type="checkbox"
name="upload_new" id="upload_new">
    <label for="upload_new">Upload new
image</label>
</p>
<p class="optional">
    <label for="image">Select image:
</label>
    <input type="file" name="image"
id="image">
</p>
<p class="optional">
    <label for="caption">Caption:
</label>
    <input name="caption" type="text"
id="caption">
</p>
```

The paragraph that contains the check box has been given the ID `allowUpload`, and the two other paragraphs have been assigned a class called `optional`. The style rules in `admin.css` set the `display` property of these three paragraphs to `none`.

10. Save `blog_insert mysqli.php` and load the page in a browser. The `images` `<select>` drop-down menu is displayed below the `categories` list, but the three form elements you inserted in step 9 are hidden. This is what will be displayed if JavaScript is disabled in the browser. Users will have the option to select categories

and an existing image but not to upload a new image.

If necessary, check your code against
`blog_insert mysqli_03.php` in the ch16 folder.

11. Copy `toggle_fields.js` from the `ch16` folder to the `admin` folder. The file contains the following JavaScript:

```
var cbox
= document.getElementById('allowUpload');
cbox.style.display = 'block';
var uploadImage
= document.getElementById('upload_new');
uploadImage.onclick = function () {
    var image_id
= document.getElementById('image_id');
    var image
= document.getElementById('image');
    var caption
= document.getElementById('caption');
    var sel = uploadImage.checked;
    image_id.disabled = sel;
    image.parentNode.style.display
= sel ? 'block' : 'none';
    caption.parentNode.style.display
= sel ? 'block' : 'none';
    image.disabled = !sel;
    caption.disabled = !sel;
}
```

This uses the IDs of the elements inserted in step 8 to control their display. If JavaScript is enabled, the check box is automatically displayed when the page loads, but the file input field and text input field for the caption remain hidden. If the check box is checked, the drop-down menu of existing images is disabled, and the hidden elements are displayed. If the check box is subsequently unchecked, the drop-down menu is re-enabled, and the file input field and caption field are hidden again.

12. Link `toggle_fields.js` to `blog_insert_mysql.php` with a `<script>` tag just before the closing `</body>` tag, like this:

```
</form>
<script src="toggle_fields.js"></script>
</body>
```

Adding the JavaScript at the bottom of the page speeds up downloading and display. The code in `toggle_fields.js` won't work correctly if you add it to the `<head>`.

13. Save `blog_insert_mysql.php` and load the page in a browser. In a JavaScript-enabled browser, the check box should be displayed between the `<select>` drop-down menu and the Submit button. Select the check box to disable the drop-down menu and display the hidden fields, as shown in [Figure 16-9](#).

The figure consists of two side-by-side screenshots of a web form. Both screenshots show the same form fields: a 'Categories' dropdown menu containing 'Autumn', 'Food', 'Kyoto', 'People', and 'Temples'; an 'Uploaded image:' dropdown menu with 'Select image' as the option; a checkbox labeled 'Upload new image' which is checked in the right screenshot; and a 'Caption:' text input field. Below the 'Caption:' field is an 'Insert New Entry' button. The right screenshot also includes a 'Select image:' label and a 'Choose File' button with 'No file chosen' displayed.

[Figure 16-9](#). The check box controls the display of the file and caption input fields

14. Deselect the check box. The file and caption input fields are hidden, and the drop-down menu is re-enabled. You can check your code, if necessary, with `blog_insert_mysql_04.php` and `toggle_fields.js` in the ch16 folder.

If you’re wondering why I used JavaScript rather than PHP to control the display of the file and caption input fields, it’s because PHP is a server-side language. After the PHP engine has sent the output to the browser, it has no further interaction with the page unless you send another request to the web server. JavaScript, on the other hand, works in the browser, so it’s able to manipulate the content of the page locally. JavaScript can also be used in conjunction with PHP to send requests to the web server in the background, and it can use the result to refresh part of the page without reloading it—a technique known as Ajax, which is beyond the scope of this book.

The updated insert form now has input fields for categories and images, but the processing script still handles only the text input field for the title and the text area for the blog entry.

PHP Solution 16-4: Inserting data into multiple tables

This PHP solution adapts the existing script in `blog_insert_mysqli.php` to upload a new image (if required) and then insert data into the `images`, `blog`, and `article2cat` tables following the decision chain outlined in [Figure 16-6](#). It assumes you have set up the `article2cat` cross-reference table and have completed PHP Solutions 16-2 and 16-3.

Don’t attempt to rush through this section. The code is quite long, but it brings together many of the techniques you have learned previously.

Note If you’re using PDO, a separate section after this PHP solution describes the main differences in the code.

1. The `Upload` class that you updated in PHP Solution 16-2 uses a namespace, so you need to import it at the top level of the script. Add this line immediately after the opening PHP tag at the top of `blog_insert_mysqli.php`:

```
use PhpSolutions\File\Upload;
```

2. Immediately after the prepared statement has been initialized, insert the following conditional statement to process the image if one has been uploaded or selected.

```

// initialize prepared statement
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();

// if a file has been uploaded, process it
if(isset($_POST['upload_new']) &&
$_FILES['image']['error'] == 0) {
    $imageOK = false;
    require_once
'./PhpSolutions/File/Upload.php';
    $loader = new Upload('../images/');
    $loader->upload();
    $names = $loader->getFilenames();
    // $names will be an empty array if the
    upload failed
    if ($names) {
        $sql = 'INSERT INTO images (filename,
caption) VALUES (?, ?)';
        if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
            $stmt->bind_param('ss', $names[0],
$_POST['caption']);
            $stmt->execute();
            $imageOK = $stmt->affected_rows;
        }
    }
    // get the image's primary key or find out
what went wrong
    if ($imageOK) {
        $image_id = $stmt->insert_id;
    } else {
        $imageError = implode(' ', $loader-
>getMessages());
    }
} elseif (isset($_POST['image_id']) &&
!empty($_POST['image_id'])) {
    // get the primary key of a previously
    uploaded image
    $image_id = $_POST['image_id'];
}
// create SQL
$sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (title,
article, created) VALUES(?, ?, NOW())';

```

This begins by checking if `$_POST['upload_new']` has been set. As explained in [Chapter 5](#), a check box is included in the `$_POST` array only if it has been selected.

So, if the check box hasn't been selected, the condition fails, and the `elseif` clause at the bottom is tested instead. The `elseif` clause checks for the existence of `$_POST['image_id']`. If it exists and is not empty, it means that an existing image has been selected from the drop-down menu, and the value is stored in `$image_id`.

If both tests fail, an image has neither been uploaded nor selected from the drop-down menu. The script later takes this into account when preparing the `INSERT` query for the `blog` table, allowing you to create a blog entry without an image.

However, if `$_POST['upload_new']` exists, the check box has been selected, and an image has probably been uploaded. To make sure, the conditional statement also checks the value of `$_FILES['image']['error']`. As you learned in [Chapter 6](#), the error code `0` indicates a successful upload. Any other error code means the upload failed or that no file was selected.

Assuming a file has been successfully uploaded from the form, the conditional statement includes the `Upload` class definition and creates an object called `$loader`, setting the destination folder to `images`. It then calls the `upload()` method to process the file and store it in the `images` folder. To avoid complicating the code, I'm using the default maximum size and MIME types.

The changes you made to the `Upload` class in PHP Solution 16-2 add the name of an uploaded file to the `$filenames` property only if the file was moved successfully to the destination folder. The `getFilenames()` method retrieves the contents of the `$filenames` property and assigns the result to `$names`.

If the file was moved successfully, its filename is stored

as the first element of the `$names` array. So if `$names` contains a value, you can safely proceed with the `INSERT` query, which binds the values of `$names[0]` and `$_POST['caption']` as strings to the prepared statement.

After the statement has been executed, the `affected_rows` property resets the value of `$imageOK`. If the `INSERT` query succeeded, `$imageOK` is `1`, which is treated as `true`.

If the image details were inserted in the `images` table, the prepared statement's `insert_id` property retrieves the primary key of the new record and stores it in `$image_id`. The `insert_id` property must be accessed before running any other SQL queries because it contains the primary key of the most recent query.

However, if `$imageOK` is still false, the `else` block calls the upload object's `getMessages()` method and assigns the result to `$imageError`. The `getMessages()` method returns an array, so the `implode()` function is used to join the array elements as a single string. The most likely causes of failure are a file that's too big or that's of the wrong MIME type.

3. As long as the image upload didn't fail, the next stage in the process is to insert the blog entry into the `blog` table. The form of the `INSERT` query depends on whether an image is associated with the blog entry. If it is, `$image_id` exists and needs to be inserted in the `blog` table as a foreign key. Otherwise, the original query can be used.

Amend the original query like this:

```
// don't insert blog details if the image failed  
// to upload  
if (!isset($imageError)) {  
    // if $image_id has been set, insert it as
```

```

a foreign key
if (isset($image_id)) {
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (image_id,
title, article) VALUES(?, ?, ?)';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        $stmt->bind_param('iss', $image_id,
$_POST['title'], $_POST['article']);
        $stmt->execute();
    }
} else {
    // create SQL
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (title,
article)
VALUES(?, ?)';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        // bind parameters and
        execute statement
        $stmt->bind_param('ss',
$_POST['title'], $_POST['article']);
        $stmt->execute();
    }
}
if ($stmt->affected_rows > 0) {
    $OK = true;
}
}

```

This whole section of code is wrapped in a conditional statement that checks whether `$imageError` exists. If it does, there's no point in inserting the new blog entry, so the entire code block is ignored.

However, if `$imageError` doesn't exist, the nested conditional statement prepares different `INSERT` queries depending on whether `$image_id` exists and then executes whichever one has been prepared.

The conditional statement that checks the `affected_rows` property is moved out of the `else` block so that it applies to either `INSERT` query.

4. The next stage of the process inserts values into the

article2cat cross-reference table. The code follows immediately after the code in the previous step and looks like the following:

```
// if the blog entry was inserted
// successfully, check for categories
if ($OK && isset($_POST['category'])) {
    // get the article's primary key
    $article_id = $stmt->insert_id;
    foreach ($_POST['category'] as
$cat_id) {
        if (is_numeric($cat_id)) {
            $values[] = "($article_id, "
. (int) $cat_id . ')';
        }
    }
    if ($values) {
        $sql = 'INSERT INTO article2cat
(article_id, cat_id)
VALUES ' . implode(', ',
$values);
        // execute the query and get
error message if it fails
        if (!$conn->query($sql)) {
            $catError = $conn->error;
        }
    }
}
```

The value of \$OK is determined by the affected_rows property from the query that inserted the data in the blog table, and the multiple-choice <select> list is included in the \$_POST array only if any categories are selected. So, this code block is run only if the data was successfully inserted in the blog table and at least one category was selected in the form. It begins by obtaining the primary key of the insert operation from the prepared statement's insert_id property and assigning it to \$article_id.

The form submits the category values as an array. The `foreach` loop checks each value in `$_POST['category']`. If the value is numeric, the following line is executed:

```
$values[] = "($article_id, " . (int)  
$cat_id . ')';
```

This creates a string with the two primary keys, `$article_id` and `$cat_id`, separated by a comma and wrapped in a pair of parentheses. The `(int)` casting operator makes sure that `$cat_id` is an integer. The result is assigned to an array called `$values`. For example, if `$article_id` is 10 and `$cat_id` is 4, the resulting string assigned to the array is `(10, 4)`.

If `$values` contains any elements, `implode()` converts it to a comma-separated string and appends it to the SQL query. For example, if categories 2, 4, and 5 are selected, the resulting query looks like this:

```
INSERT INTO article2cat (article_id,  
cat_id)  
VALUES (10, 2), (10, 4), (10, 5)
```

As explained in “Reviewing the four essential SQL commands” in [Chapter 13](#), this is how you insert multiple rows with a single `INSERT` query.

Because `$article_id` comes from a reliable source and the data type of `$cat_id` has been checked, it’s safe to use these variables directly in an SQL query without using a prepared statement. The query is executed with the `query()` method. If it fails, the connection object’s error property is stored in `$catError`.

5. The final section of code handles the redirect on success and error messages. The amended code looks like this:

```
// redirect if successful or display
```

```

error
if ($OK && !isset($imageError) &&
!isset($catError)) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/admin/blog_list_mysql.php');
    exit;
} else {
    $error = $stmt->error;
    if (isset($imageError)) {
        $error .= ' ' . $imageError;
    }
    if (isset($catError)) {
        $error .= ' ' . $catError;
    }
}

```

The condition controlling the redirect now ensures that `$imageError` and `$catError` don't exist. If either does, the value is concatenated to the original `$error`, which contains any error message from the prepared statement object.

6. Save `blog_insert_mysql.php` and test it in a browser. Try uploading an image that's too big or a file of the wrong MIME type. The form should be redisplayed with an error message and the blog details preserved. Also try inserting blog entries both with and without images and/or categories. You now have a versatile insert form.

If you don't have suitable images to upload, use the images in the `phpsols/images` folder. The `Upload` class renames them to avoid overwriting the existing files.

You can check your code against `blog_insert_mysql_05.php` in the `ch16` folder.

Main differences in the PDO version

The final PDO version can be found in `blog_insert pdo_05.php` in the `ch16` folder. It follows the same basic structure and logic as the MySQLi

version, but has some important differences in the way values are inserted in the database.

The code in step 2 follows the MySQLi version closely but uses named placeholders instead of anonymous ones. To get the number of affected rows, PDO uses the `rowCount()` method on the statement object. The primary key of the most recent insert operation is obtained using the `lastInsertId()` method on the connection object. Like the MySQLi `insert_id` property, you need to access it immediately after the `INSERT` query has been executed.

The biggest changes are in the code in step 3 that inserts the details into the blog table. Because PDO can insert a `null` value into a column using `bindValue()`, only one prepared statement is needed. The PDO code for step 3 looks like this:

```
// don't insert blog details if the image failed to
upload
if (!isset($imageError)) {
    // create SQL
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO blog (image_id, title,
article)
            VALUES(:image_id, :title, :article)';
    // prepare the statement
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    // bind the parameters
    // if $image_id exists, use it
    if (isset($image_id)) {
        $stmt->bindParam(':image_id', $image_id, PDO::PARAM_INT);
    } else {
        // set image_id to NULL
        $stmt->bindValue(':image_id', NULL, PDO::PARAM_NULL);
    }
    $stmt->bindParam(':title', $_POST['title'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    $stmt->bindParam(':article', $_POST['article'],
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    // execute and get number of affected rows
    $stmt->execute();
    $OK = $stmt->rowCount();
}
```

If an image has been uploaded, the conditional statement highlighted in bold

binds the value of `$image_id` to the named `:image_id` placeholder. But if no image has been uploaded, `bindValue()` sets the value to `NULL`.

In step 4, the PDO version uses `exec()` instead of `query()` to insert the values into the `article2cat` table. The `exec()` method executes an SQL query and returns the number of rows affected, so it should be used with `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, and `DELETE` queries when a prepared statement is not required.

The other important difference is in the code that builds the error message if there's a problem. Because creating and preparing a statement is a one-step process in PDO, the statement object might not exist if a problem arises. So, you need to check for its existence before trying to call the `errorInfo()` method. If there's no statement, the code gets the error message from the database connection object. It's also necessary to initialize `$error` as an empty string to concatenate the various messages to it, like this:

```
// redirect if successful or display error
if ($OK && !isset($imageError) && !isset($catError)) {
    header('Location:
http://localhost/phpsols/admin/blog_list_pdo.php');
    exit;
} else {
    $error = '';
    if (isset($stmt)) {
        $errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
    } else {
        $errorInfo = $conn->errorInfo();
    }
    if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
        $error .= $errorInfo[2];
    }
    if (isset($imageError)) {
        $error .= ' ' . $imageError;
    }
    if (isset($catError)) {
        $error .= ' ' . $catError;
    }
}
```

Updating and Deleting Records in Multiple Tables

The addition of the `categories` and `article2cat` tables means that the changes to `blog_update_mysql .php` and `blog_update_pdo.php` in PHP Solutions 15-2 and 15-3 in the previous chapter no longer adequately cover the foreign-key relationships in the `phpsols` database. In addition to amending the update form, you also need to create scripts to delete records without destroying the database's referential integrity.

Updating records in a cross-reference table

Each record in a cross-reference table contains only a composite primary key. Normally, primary keys should never be altered. Moreover, they must be unique. This poses a problem for updating the `article2cat` table. If you make no changes to the selected categories when updating a blog entry, the cross-reference table doesn't need to be updated. However, if the categories are changed, you need to work out which cross references to delete and which new ones to insert.

Rather than getting tied up in knots working out whether any changes have been made, a simple solution is to delete all existing cross references and insert the selected categories again. If no changes have been made, you simply insert the same ones again.

PHP Solution 16-5: Adding categories to the update form

This PHP solution amends `blog_update_mysql .php` from PHP Solution 15-2 in the previous chapter to allow you to update the categories associated with a blog entry. To keep the structure simple, the only change that can be made to the image associated with the entry is to select a different existing image or no image at all.

1. Continue working with `blog_update_mysql .php`

from PHP Solution 15-2. Alternatively, copy `blog_update mysqli_04.php` from the `ch16` folder and save it in the `admin` folder as `blog_update mysqli.php`.

- When the page first loads, you need to run a second query to get the categories associated with the blog entry. Add the following highlighted code to the conditional statement that gets details of the selected record:

```
$stmt->free_result();
// get categories associated with the article
$sql = 'SELECT cat_id FROM article2cat
        WHERE article_id = ?';
if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
    $stmt->bind_param('i', $_GET['article_id']);
    $OK = $stmt->execute();
    $stmt->bind_result($cat_id);
    // loop through the results to store them in
    an array
    $selected_categories = [];
    while ($stmt->fetch()) {
        $selected_categories[] = $cat_id;
    }
}
```

The query selects `cat_id` from all records in the cross-reference table that match the primary key of the selected blog entry. The results are bound to `$cat_id`, and a `while` loop extracts the values into an array called `$selected_categories`.

- In the body of the HTML page, add a multiple-choice `<select>` list between the text area and the `<select>` drop-down menu that displays the list of images. Use another SQL query to populate it, like this:

```
<p>
    <label for="category">Categories:
</label>
    <select name="category[]" size="5"
multiple id="category">
    <?php
```

```

    // get categories
    $getCats = 'SELECT cat_id,
category FROM categories
                    ORDER BY category';
    $categories = $conn-
>query($getCats);
    while ($row = $categories-
>fetch_assoc()) {
        ?>
        <option value="<?=
$row['cat_id']; ?>" <?php
            if
(isset($selected_categories) &&
                in_array($row['cat_id'],
$selected_categories)) {
                echo 'selected';
            } ?>><?= $row['category']; ?>
</option>
        <?php } ?>
    </select>
</p>

```

The `while` loop builds each `<option>` tag by inserting `cat_id` in the `value` attribute and displaying the category between the opening and closing tags. If `cat_id` is in the `$selected_categories` array, `selected` is inserted in the `<option>` tag. This selects the categories already associated with the blog entry.

4. Save `blog_update_mysqli.php` and select one of the `EDIT` links in `blog_list_mysqli.php` to make sure the multiple-choice list is populated with the categories. If you inserted a new entry in PHP Solution 16-4, the categories you associated with the item should be selected, as shown in the following screenshot.

Categories:



You can check your code, if necessary, against `blog_update_mysql_05.php` in the ch16 folder. The PDO version is found in `blog_update pdo_05.php`.

5. Next, you need to edit the section of code that updates the record when the form is submitted. The new code begins by removing all entries in the cross-reference table that match `article_id` and then inserts the values selected in the update form. Inline comments indicate where existing code has been omitted to save space.

```
// if form has been submitted, update
record
if (isset($_POST ['update'])) {
    // prepare update query
    if (!empty($_POST['image_id'])) {
        // existing code omitted
    } else {
        // existing code omitted
        $stmt->execute();
    }
    // delete existing values in the cross-
    reference table
    $sql = 'DELETE FROM article2cat WHERE
article_id = ?';
    if ($stmt->prepare($sql)) {
        $stmt->bind_param('i',
$_POST['article_id']);
        $stmt->execute();
    }
    // insert the new values in articles2cat
    if (isset($_POST['category']) &&
is_numeric($_POST['article_id'])) {
        $article_id = (int)
```

```
$_POST['article_id'];
        foreach ($_POST['category'] as $cat_id)
{
        $values[] = "($article_id, " . (int)
$cat_id . ')';
}
if ($values) {
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO article2cat
(article_id, cat_id)
            VALUES ' . implode(',', 
$values);
    if (!$conn->query($sql)) {
        $catError = $conn->error;
    }
}
}
```

The code that inserts the values selected in the update form is identical to the code in step 4 of PHP Solution 16-4. The key thing to note is that it uses an `INSERT` query, not `UPDATE`. The original values have been deleted, so you're adding them anew.

6. Save `blog_update mysqli.php` and test it by updating existing records in the `blog` table. You can check your code, if necessary, against `blog_update mysqli_06.php` in the `ch16` folder. The PDO version is found in `blog_update pdo_06.php`.

Preserving referential integrity on deletion

In PHP Solution 16-5, there was no need to worry about referential integrity when you deleted records in the cross-reference table because the values stored in each record are foreign keys. Each record simply refers to the primary keys stored in the `blog` and `categories` tables. Referring to [Figure 16-1](#) at the beginning of this chapter, deleting from the cross-reference table the record that combines `article_id` 2 with `cat_id` 1 simply breaks the link between the article titled “Trainee Geishas Go Shopping” and the Kyoto category. Neither the article nor the category is affected. They both remain in their

respective tables.

The situation is very different if you decide to delete either the article or the category. If you delete the “Trainee Geishas Go Shopping” article from the `blog` table, all references to `article_id 2` must also be deleted from the cross-reference table. Similarly, if you delete the `Kyoto` category, all references to `cat_id 1` must be removed from the cross-reference table. Alternatively, you must halt the deletion if an item’s primary key is stored elsewhere as a foreign key.

The best way to do this is through the establishment of foreign-key restraints. To do so, related tables must use the InnoDB storage engine. If you’re using MySQL or MariaDB 5.5 or later, InnoDB is the default. Also, all the `.sql` files that accompany this book select the InnoDB engine. However, if you have existing tables that were created using the MyISAM storage engine, you need to convert them before you can establish foreign-key constraints.

PHP Solution 16-6: Converting tables to the InnoDB storage engine

This PHP solution shows how to convert a table from MyISAM to InnoDB. If you plan to upload the tables to your remote server, it must also support InnoDB (see PHP Solution 16-1).

1. Select the `phpsol`s database in phpMyAdmin, and then select the `article2cat` table.
2. Click the Operations tab at the top right of the screen.
3. In the Table options section, the Storage Engine field reports which engine the table is currently using. If it says MyISAM, select InnoDB from the drop-down menu, as shown in [Figure 16-10](#).

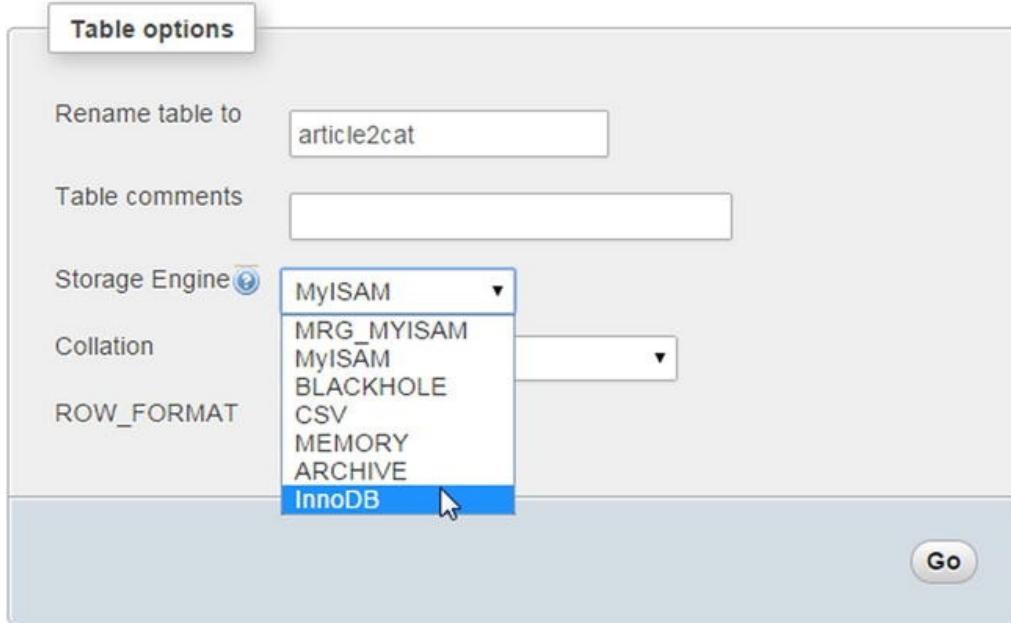


Figure 16-10. Changing a table's storage engine is very easy in phpMyAdmin

4. Click Go. Changing the storage engine is as simple as that!

Note Each table needs to be converted individually. You cannot change all tables in a database in a single operation.

PHP Solution 16-7: Setting up foreign-key constraints

This PHP solution describes how to set up foreign-key constraints between the `article2cat`, `blog`, and `categories` tables in phpMyAdmin. The foreign-key constraints must always be defined in the child table. In this case, the child table is `article2cat`, because it stores the `article_id` and `cat_id` primary keys from the other tables as foreign keys.

1. Select the `article2cat` table in phpMyAdmin and click the Structure tab.
2. Click Relation view (circled in Figure 16-11) at the bottom of the structure table.

Figure 16-11. Foreign-key constraints are defined in phpMyAdmin’s Relation view

3. Foreign-key constraints can be set up only on columns that are indexed. The `article_id` and `cat_id` columns in `article2cat` are the table’s composite primary key, so they’re both listed in the screen that opens. If your version of phpMyAdmin has an option labeled “Internal relations,” you can ignore it.

In the `article_id` row, open the drop-down menu under “Foreign key constraint (INNODB)” to reveal the list of indexed columns in the database, and select ``phpsol` . `blog` . `article_id`` as shown in [Figure 16-12](#). This will be used to establish a formal foreign-key relationship between `article_id` in the `article2cat` table and `article_id` in the `blog` table.

Figure 16-12. Selecting the parent table’s primary key

4. This opens up more options (in older versions of phpMyAdmin, they’re always visible). Leave “Constraint name” blank. phpMyAdmin will automatically generate a name for the constraint.

The ON DELETE drop-down menu has the following options:

- CASCADE: When you delete a record in the parent table, all dependent records are deleted in the child table. For example, if you delete the record with the primary key `article_id` 2 in the `blog` table, all records with `article_id` 2 in the `article2cat` table are automatically deleted.
- SET NULL: When you delete a record in the parent table, all dependent records in the child table have the foreign key set to NULL. The foreign-key column must accept NULL values.
- NO ACTION: On some database systems, this allows foreign-key constraint checks to be delayed. MySQL performs checks immediately, so this has the same effect as RESTRICT.
- RESTRICT: This prevents the deletion of a record in the parent table if dependent records still exist in the child table.

Note The same options are available for ON UPDATE. With the exception of RESTRICT, they are of limited interest because you should change the primary key of a record only in exceptional circumstances. ON UPDATE RESTRICT not only stops changes from being made to the primary key in the parent table; it also rejects any inserts or updates in the child table that would result in foreign-key values that don’t have a match in the parent table.

In the case of a cross-reference table, CASCADE is the logical choice. If you decide to delete a record in the parent table, you want all cross-references to that record to be removed at the same time. However, to demonstrate the default behavior of foreign-key constraints, select RESTRICT for both ON DELETE and ON UPDATE.

5. In the cat_id row, select `phpsol` . `categories` . `cat_id` from the “Foreign key restraint (INNODB)” drop-down menu, and set ON DELETE and ON UPDATE to RESTRICT. Click Save.

Note If RESTRICT isn’t available in the drop-down menu, leave the option blank.

6. If you have not already done so, update at least one blog entry to associate it with a category.
7. In phpMyAdmin, select the categories table and click Delete next to a category that you know to be associated with a blog entry, as shown in [Figure 16-13](#).

	cat_id	category
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Kyoto
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	People
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Autumn
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Food
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Temples

[Figure 16-13](#). Try to delete a record in the categories table

Note In older versions of phpMyAdmin, the delete icon is a large red X.

8. Click OK when phpMyAdmin asks you to confirm the deletion. If you have set up the foreign-key constraints correctly, you'll see an error message similar to that in Figure 16-14.

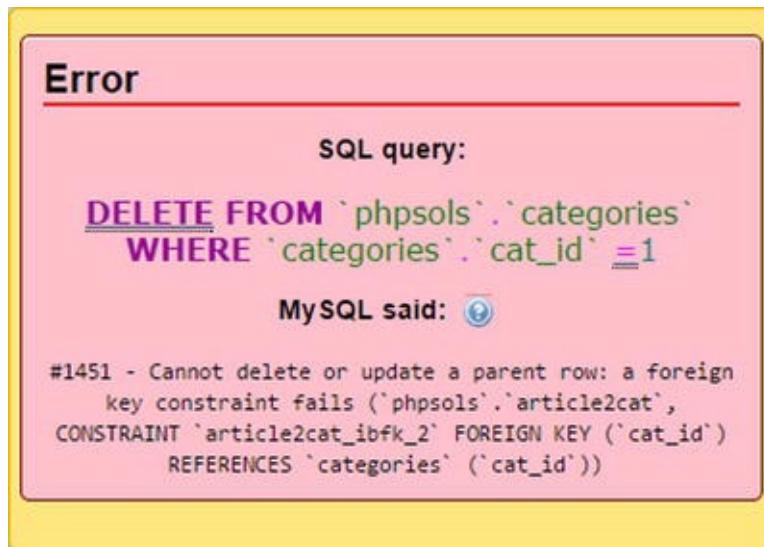


Figure 16-14. The foreign-key constraint prevents the deletion if dependent records exist

9. If the error message appears in a modal dialog box, click the box to dismiss it.
10. Select the `article2cat` table, and click the Structure tab. Then click “Relation view.”

Note In older versions of phpMyAdmin, `ON DELETE` and `ON UPDATE` may be blank. Leaving these options blank has the same effect as selecting `RESTRICT`, which is the default for both.

11. Change both `ON DELETE` settings to `CASCADE`, and click Save.
12. Select a record in the `blog` table that you know is associated with a category. Make a note of its `article_id` and then delete the record.

13. Check the `article2cat` table. The records associated with the record you have just deleted have also been deleted.

To continue your exploration of foreign-key constraints, select the `blog` table, and establish a foreign-key relationship with `image_id` in the `images` table. If you delete a record from the `images` table, the `image_id` foreign key in the `blog` table needs to be set to `NULL`. This is done automatically if you set the value of `ON DELETE` to `SET NULL`. Test it by deleting a record from the `images` table and checking the associated record(s) in the `blog` table.

 **Note** If you need to convert an InnoDB table back to MyISAM, you must first remove any foreign-key constraints. Select “Relation view,” set the “Foreign key (INNODB)” fields to blank, and click **Save**. After removing the foreign-key constraints, you can change the storage engine as described in PHP Solution 16-6. Select **MyISAM** instead of **InnoDB**.

Creating delete scripts with foreign-key constraints

Choosing the values for `ON DELETE` in InnoDB tables depends on the nature of the relationship between tables. In the case of the `phpsols` database, it's not only safe but desirable to set the option to `CASCADE` for both columns in the `article2cat` cross-reference table. If a record is deleted in either the `blog` or `categories` parent tables, the related values need to be deleted in the cross-reference table.

The relationship between the `images` and `blog` tables is different. If you delete a record from the `images` table, you probably don't want to delete related articles in the `blog` table. In that case, `SET NULL` is an appropriate choice. When a record is deleted from the `images` table, the foreign key in related articles is set to `NULL`, but the articles remain intact.

On the other hand, if images are vital to the understanding of articles, select `RESTRICT`. Any attempt to delete an image that still has related articles is automatically halted.

These considerations affect how you handle deletion scripts. When the

foreign-key constraint is set to CASCADE or SET NULL, you don't need to do anything special. You can use a simple DELETE query and leave the rest to the database.

However, if the foreign-key constraint is set to RESTRICT, the DELETE query will fail. To display an appropriate error message, use the `errno` property of a MySQLi statement object. The MySQL error code for a query that fails as a result of a foreign-key constraint is 1451. After calling the `execute()` method, you can check for errors in MySQLi as follows:

```
$stmt->execute();
if ($stmt->affected_rows > 0) {
    $deleted = true;
} else {
    $deleted = false;
    if ($stmt->errno == 1451) {
        $error = 'That record has dependent files in
a child table, and cannot be deleted.';
    } else {
        $error = 'There was a problem deleting the
record.';
    }
}
```

If you are using PDO, use the `errorCode()` method. The code for a query that fails as a result of a foreign-key constraint is HY000. After checking the number of affected rows, you can check the error code with a PDO prepared statement, like this:

```
$deleted = $stmt->rowCount();
if (!$deleted) {
    if ($stmt->errorCode() == 'HY000') {
        $error = 'That record has dependent files in
a child table, and cannot be deleted.';
    } else {
        $error = 'There was a problem deleting the
record.';
    }
}
```

The technique is the same if you use the PDO `exec()` method, which returns the number of affected rows with a non-SELECT query. When using `exec()`, the `errorCode()` method is called on the database connection.

```
$deleted = $conn->exec($sql);
if (!$deleted) {
    if ($conn->errorCode() == 'HY000') {
        $error = 'That record has dependent files in
a child table, and cannot be deleted.';
    } else {
        $error = 'There was a problem deleting the
record.';
    }
}
```

Creating delete scripts without foreign-key constraints

If you can't use InnoDB tables, you need to build the same logic into your own delete scripts. To achieve the same effect as `ON DELETE CASCADE`, run two consecutive `DELETE` queries, like this:

```
$sql = 'DELETE FROM article2cat WHERE article_id = ?';
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['article_id']);
$stmt->execute();
$sql = 'DELETE FROM blog WHERE article_id = ?';
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['article_id']);
$stmt->execute();
```

To achieve the same effect as `ON DELETE SET NULL`, run an `UPDATE` query combined with a `DELETE` query, like this:

```
$sql = 'UPDATE blog SET image_id = NULL WHERE image_id
= ?';
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['image_id']);
```

```

$stmt->execute();
$sql = 'DELETE FROM images WHERE image_id = ?';
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['image_id']);
$stmt->execute();

```

To achieve the same effect as `ON DELETE RESTRICT`, you need to run a `SELECT` query to find if there are dependent records before continuing with the `DELETE` query, like this:

```

$sql = 'SELECT image_id FROM blog WHERE image_id = ?';
$stmt->prepare($sql);
$stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['image_id']);
$stmt->execute();
// store result to find out how many rows it contains
$stmt->store_result();
// if num_rows is not 0, there are dependent records
if ($stmt->num_rows) {
    $error = 'That record has dependent files in
a child table, and cannot be deleted.';
} else {
    $sql = 'DELETE FROM images WHERE image_id = ?';
    $stmt->prepare($sql);
    $stmt->bind_param('i', $_POST['image_id']);
    $stmt->execute();
}

```

Chapter Review

Once you have learned the basic SQL and the PHP commands necessary to communicate with a database, working with single tables is very easy. Linking tables through foreign keys, however, can be quite challenging. The power of a relational database comes from its sheer flexibility. The problem is that this infinite flexibility means there is no single “right” way of doing things.

Don't let this put you off, though. Your instinct may be to stick with single tables, but down that route lies even greater complexity. The key to making it easy to work with databases is to limit your ambitions in the early stages. Build simple structures like the one in this chapter, experiment with them, and get to

know how they work. Add tables and foreign-key links gradually. People with a lot of experience working with databases say they frequently spend more than half the development time just thinking about the table structure. After that, the coding is the easy bit!

In the final chapter, we move back to working with a single table, addressing the important subject of user authentication with a database and how to handle encrypted passwords.

CHAPTER 17



Authenticating Users with a Database

[Chapter 9](#) showed you the principles of user authentication and sessions to password protect parts of your website, but the login scripts all relied on usernames and passwords stored in a CSV file. Keeping user details in a database is both more secure and more efficient. Instead of just storing a list of usernames and passwords, a database can store other details, such as first name, family name, email address, and so on. Databases also give you the option of using either one- or two-way encryption. In the first section of this chapter, we'll examine the difference between the two. Then you'll create registration and login scripts for both types of encryption.

What this chapter covers:

- Deciding how to encrypt passwords
- Using one-way encryption for user registration and login
- Using two-way encryption for user registration and login
- Decrypting passwords

Choosing an Encryption Method

The PHP solutions in [Chapter 9](#) use the one-way encryption method—once a password has been encrypted, there's no way of reversing the process. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. It offers the user greater security because passwords encrypted this way remain secret. However, there's no way of reissuing a lost password, since not even the site administrator can decrypt it. The only solution is to reset it.

The alternative is to use two-way encryption, which relies on a pair of

functions: one to encrypt the password and another to convert it back to plain text, making it easy to reissue passwords to forgetful users. Two-way encryption uses a secret key that is passed to both functions to perform the conversion. The key is simply a string that you make up yourself. Obviously, to keep the data secure, the key needs to be sufficiently difficult to guess and should never be stored in the database. However, you need to embed the key in your registration and login scripts—either directly or through an include file—so if your scripts are ever exposed, your security is blown wide apart.

MySQL and MariaDB offer a number of two-way encryption functions, but `AES_ENCRYPT()` is considered the most secure. It uses the Advanced Encryption Standard with a 128-bit key length (AES-128) approved by the U.S. government for the protection of classified material up to the SECRET level (TOP SECRET material requires AES-192 or AES-256).

Both one-way and two-way encryption have advantages and disadvantages. Many security experts recommend that passwords should be changed frequently. So, forcing a user to change a forgotten password because it can't be decrypted could be regarded as a good security measure. On the other hand, users are likely to be frustrated by the need to deal with a new password each time they forget the existing one. I'll leave it to you to decide which approach is best suited to your circumstances, and I'll concentrate solely on the technical implementation.

Using One-Way Encryption

In the interests of keeping things simple, I'm going to use the same basic forms as in [Chapter 9](#), so only the username and encrypted password are stored in the database.

 **Note** The following PHP solutions use `password_hash()` and `password_verify()`, which require PHP 5.5 or later. You can emulate these functions on older versions of PHP (minimum 5.3.7) using the `password_compat` library from https://github.com/ircmaxell/password_compat.

Creating a Table to Store Users' Details

In phpMyAdmin, create a new table called `users` in the `phpsols` database. The table needs three columns with the settings listed in [Table 17-1](#).

Table 17-1. Settings for the `users` table

Name	Type	Length/Values	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
<code>user_id</code>	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	Selected
<code>username</code>	VARCHAR	15		Deselected	UNIQUE	
<code>pwd</code>	VARCHAR	255		Deselected		

To ensure no one can register the same username as one that's already in use, the `username` column is given an `UNIQUE` index.

The `pwd` column, which is for the password, allows a string of up to 255 characters to be stored. This is much longer than the 60 characters required by the default encryption method used by `password_hash()` in PHP 5.5 and 5.6. But the `PASSWORD_DEFAULT` constant is designed to change over time as new and stronger algorithms are added to PHP. So, the recommended size is 255 characters.

Registering New Users in the Database

To register users in the database, you need to create a registration form that asks for a username and password. The `username` column has been defined with a `UNIQUE` index, so the database will return an error if anyone attempts to register the same username as an existing one. In addition to validating the user input, the processing script needs to detect the error and advise the user to choose a different username.

PHP Solution 17-1: Creating a User Registration Form

This PHP solution shows how to adapt the registration script from [Chapter 9](#) to work with MySQL or MariaDB. It uses the `CheckPassword` class from PHP Solution 9-6 and `register_user_csv.php` from PHP Solution 9-7.

If necessary, copy `CheckPassword.php` from the `ch17/PhpSolutions/Authenticate` folder to the

PhpSolutions/Authenticate folder in the phpsols site root, and copy register_user_csv.php from the ch17 folder to the includes folder. You should also read the instructions in PHP Solutions 9-6 and 9-7 to understand how the original scripts work.

1. Copy register_db.php from the ch17 folder to a new folder called authenticate in the phpsols site root. The page contains the same basic user registration form as in [Chapter 9](#), with a text input field for the username, a password field, another password field for confirmation, and a button to submit the data, as shown in the following screenshot:



2. Add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
if (isset($_POST['register'])) {  
    $username  
= trim($_POST['username']);  
    $password = trim($_POST['pwd']);  
    $retyped  
= trim($_POST['conf_pwd']);  
    require_once
```

```
' ../includes/register_user_mysqli.php';  
}
```

This is very similar to the code in PHP Solution 9-7. If the form has been submitted, the user input is stripped of leading and trailing whitespace and assigned to simple variables. Then an external file called `register_user_mysqli.php` is included. If you plan to use PDO, name the include file `register_user pdo.php` instead.

3. The file that processes the user input is based on `register_user_csv.php`, which you created in [Chapter 9](#). Make a copy of your original file and save it in the `includes` folder as `register_user_mysqli.php` or `register_user pdo.php`.
4. In the file you have just copied and renamed, locate the conditional statement that begins like this (around line 24):

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // encrypt password using default  
    encryption  
    $password  
    = password_hash($password,  
    PASSWORD_DEFAULT);
```

5. Delete the rest of the code inside the conditional statement. The conditional statement should now look like this:

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // encrypt password using default  
    encryption  
    $password  
    = password_hash($password,  
    PASSWORD_DEFAULT);  
}
```

6. The code that inserts the user's details in the database goes inside the conditional statement. Begin by including the database connection file and creating a connection with read and write privileges.

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // encrypt password using default  
    // encryption  
    $password  
    = password_hash($password,  
    PASSWORD_DEFAULT);  
    // include the connection file  
    require_once 'connection.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('write');  
}
```

The connection file is also in the `includes` folder, so you need only the filename. For PDO, add '`pdo`' as the second argument to `dbConnect()`.

7. The final section of the code prepares and executes the prepared statement to insert the user's details into the database. Because the `username` column has a `UNIQUE` index, the query fails if the username already exists. If that happens, the code needs to generate an error message. The code is different for MySQLi and PDO.

For MySQLi, add the code highlighted in bold:

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // encrypt password using default  
    // encryption  
    $password  
    = password_hash($password,  
    PASSWORD_DEFAULT);  
    // include the connection file  
    require_once 'connection.php';  
    $conn = dbConnect('write');  
    // prepare SQL statement  
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO users (username, pwd)  
VALUES (?, ?)';
```

```

$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
if ($stmt = $conn->prepare($sql)) {
    // bind parameters and insert the
    details into the database
    $stmt->bind_param('ss', $username,
    $password);
    $stmt->execute();
}
if ($stmt->affected_rows == 1) {
    $success = "$username has been
    registered. You may now log in.";
} elseif ($stmt->errno == 1062) {
    $errors[] = "$username is already in
    use. Please choose another username.";
} else {
    $errors[] = $stmt->error;
}
}

```

The new code begins by binding the parameters to the prepared statement. The username and password are strings, so the first argument to `bind_param()` is 'ss' (see “Embedding variables in MySQLi prepared statements” in [Chapter 11](#)). After the statement has been executed, the conditional statement checks the value of the `affected_rows` property. If it's 1, the details have been inserted successfully.

Tip You need to check the value of `affected_rows` explicitly because it's -1 if there's an error. Unlike some programming languages, PHP treats -1 as `true`.

The alternative condition checks the value of the prepared statement's `errno` property, which contains the MySQL error code. The code for a duplicate value in a column with a `UNIQUE` index is 1062. If that error code is detected, an error message is added to the `$errors` array asking the user to choose a different username. If a different error code is generated, the message stored in the statement's `error` property is added to the `$errors`

array instead.

The PDO version looks like this:

```
if (!$errors) {
    // encrypt password using default
    // encryption
    $password
= password_hash($password,
PASSWORD_DEFAULT);
    // include the connection file
    require_once 'connection.php';
    $conn = dbConnect('write', 'pdo');
    // prepare SQL statement
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO users (username, pwd)
VALUES (:username, :pwd)';
    $stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
    // bind parameters and insert the details
    // into the database
    $stmt->bindParam(':username', $username,
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    $stmt->bindParam(':pwd', $password,
PDO::PARAM_STR);
    $stmt->execute();
    if ($stmt->rowCount() == 1) {
        $success = "$username has been
registered. You may now log in.";
    } elseif ($stmt->errorCode() == 23000) {
        $errors[] = "$username is already in
use. Please choose another username.";
    } else {
        $errorInfo = $stmt->errorInfo();
        if (isset($errorInfo[2])) {
            $errors[] = $errorInfo[2];
        }
    }
}
```

The prepared statement uses named parameters for the `username` and `pwd` columns. The submitted values are bound to it by the `bindParam()` method, using the `PDO::PARAM_STR` constant to specify the data type as a string. After the statement has been executed, the

conditional statement uses the `rowCount()` method to check if the record has been created.

If the prepared statement fails because the username already exists, the value generated by the `errorCode()` method is `23000`. PDO uses error codes defined by the ANSI SQL standard instead of those generated by MySQL. If the error code matches, a message is added to the `$errors` array asking the user to choose a different username. Otherwise, the error message from the `errorInfo()` method is used.

Note In both the MySQLi and PDO scripts, replace the code in the `else` block with a generic error message when deploying the registration script on a live website. Displaying the value of the statement's `error` property (MySQLi) or `$errorInfo[2]` (PDO) is intended for testing purposes only.

8. All that remains is to add the code that displays the outcome on the registration page. Add the following code just before the opening `<form>` tag in `register_db.php`:

```
<h1>Register user</h1>
<?php
if (isset($success)) {
    echo "<p>$success</p>";
} elseif (isset($errors) && !empty($errors)) {
    echo '<ul>';
    foreach ($errors as $error) {
        echo "<li>$error</li>";
    }
    echo '</ul>';
}
?>
<form method="post" action="">
```

9. Save `register_db.php`, and load it in a browser. Test

it by entering input that you know breaks the rules for the strength of the password. If you make multiple mistakes in the same attempt, a bulleted list of error messages should appear at the top of the form, as shown in the next screenshot.

Register user

- Username must be at least 6 characters.
- Password must be at least 10 characters.
- Password should include uppercase and lowercase characters.
- Password should include at least 2 number(s).
- Password should include at least 1 nonalphanumeric character(s).
- Your passwords don't match.

Username:

Password:

Confirm password:

10. Now fill in the registration form correctly. You should see a message telling you that an account has been created for the username you chose.
11. Try registering the same username again. This time you should get a message similar to the one shown in the following screenshot:

Register user

- davidp is already in use. Please choose another username.

Username:

Password:

Confirm password:

12. Check your code, if necessary, against `register_db_mysql.php` and `register_user_mysql.php`, or against `register_db_pdo.php` and `register_user_pdo.php`, all found in the `ch17` folder.

Now that you have a username and password registered in the database, you need to create a login script. The `ch17` folder contains a set of files that replicates the setup in PHP Solution 9-9: a login page and two password-protected pages.

PHP Solution 17-2: Authenticating a user's credentials with a database

This PHP solution shows how to authenticate a user's stored credentials by querying the database to find the username's encrypted password and then passing it as an argument to `password_verify()` together with the user-submitted password. If `password_verify()` returns `true`, the user is redirected to a restricted page.

1. Copy `login_db.php`, `menu_db.php`, and `secretpage_db.php` from the `ch17` folder to the `authenticate` folder. Also copy `logout_db.php` and `session_timeout_db.php` from the `ch17`

folder to the `includes` folder.

This sets up the same basic test platform as was used in [Chapter 9](#). The only difference is that the links have been changed to redirect to the `authenticate` folder.

2. In `login_db.php` add the following code in a PHP block above the DOCTYPE declaration:

```
$error = '';
if (isset($_POST['login'])) {
    session_start();
    $username
= trim($_POST['username']);
    $password = trim($_POST['pwd']);
    // location to redirect on success
    $redirect
= 'http://localhost/phpsols/authenticate/men
        require_once
'..../includes/authenticate_mysql.php';
}
```

This follows a similar pattern to the code in the login form in [Chapter 9](#). It begins by initializing `$error` as an empty string. The conditional statement initiates a session if the form has been submitted. Whitespace is trimmed from the user input fields, and the location of the page the user will be redirected to on success is stored in a variable. Finally, the authentication script, which you'll build next, is included.

If you're using PDO, use `authenticate pdo.php` as the processing script.

3. Create a new file called `authenticate_mysql.php` or `authenticate pdo.php` and save it in the `includes` folder. The file will contain only PHP script, so strip out any HTML markup.
4. Include the database connection file, create a connection to the database with the read-only account, and use a

prepared statement to fetch the user's details.

For MySQLi use the following code:

```
<?php
require_once 'connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('read');
// get the username's encrypted
password from the database
$sql = 'SELECT pwd FROM users WHERE
username = ?';
// initialize and prepare statement
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
$stmt->prepare($sql);
// bind the input parameter
$stmt->bind_param('s', $username);
$stmt->execute();
// bind the result, using a new
variable for the password
$stmt->bind_result($storedPwd);
$stmt->fetch();
```

This is such a straightforward SELECT query that I haven't used a conditional statement when passing it to the MySQLi `prepare()` method. The username is a string, so the first argument to `bind_param()` is 's'. If a match is found, the result is bound to `$storedPwd`. You need to use a new variable for the stored password to avoid overwriting the password submitted by the user.

After the statement has been executed, the `fetch()` method gets the result.

For PDO, use the following code instead:

```
<?php
require_once 'connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('read', 'pdo');
// get the username's encrypted
password from the database
```

```

$sql = 'SELECT pwd FROM users WHERE
username = ?';
// prepare statement
$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
// pass the input parameter as
a single-element array
$stmt->execute([$username]);
$storedPwd = $stmt->fetchColumn();

```

This code does the same as the MySQLi version does, but uses PDO syntax. The username is passed to the `execute()` method as a single-element array. Because there's only one column in the result, `fetchColumn()` returns the value and assigns it to `$storedPwd`.

- Once you have retrieved the username's password, all you need to do is to pass the submitted and stored versions to `password_verify()`. If `password_verify()` returns `true`, create the session variables to indicate a successful login and the time the session began, regenerate the session ID, and redirect to the restricted page. Otherwise, store an error message in `$error`.

Insert the following code after the code you entered in the preceding step. It's the same for both MySQLi and PDO.

```

// check the submitted password against
the stored version
if (password_verify($password,
$storedPwd)) {
    $_SESSION['authenticated']
= 'Jethro Tull';
    // get the time the session started
    $_SESSION['start'] = time();
    session_regenerate_id();
    header("Location: $redirect");
    exit;
} else {
    // if not verified, prepare error
message

```

```
    $error = 'Invalid username or  
password';  
}
```

As in [Chapter 9](#), the value of `$_SESSION['authenticated']` is of no real importance.

6. Save `authenticate_mysql.php` or `authenticate_pdo.php`, and test `login_db.php` by logging in with the username and password that you registered at the end of PHP Solution 17-1. The login process should work in exactly the same way as in [Chapter 9](#). The difference is that all the details are stored more securely in a database.

You can check your code, if necessary, against `login_mysql.php` and `authenticate_mysql.php`, or `login_pdo.php` and `authenticate_pdo.php`, all found in the `ch17` folder. If you encounter problems, the most common mistake is creating too narrow a column for the encrypted password in the database. It must be at least 60 characters wide, and it's recommended to make it capable of storing up to 255 characters in case future encryption methods generate longer strings.

Although storing an encrypted password in a database is more secure than using a text file, the password is sent from the user's browser to the server in plain, unencrypted text. This is adequate for most websites, but if you need a higher level of security, the login and access to subsequent pages should be made through a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) connection.

Using Two-Way Encryption

The main differences in setting up user registration and authentication for two-way encryption are that the password needs to be stored in the database as a binary object using the BLOB data type (see “Storing binary data” in [Chapter 10](#)

for more information), and that the password verification takes place in the SQL query, rather than in the PHP script.

Creating the table to store users' details

In phpMyAdmin, create a new table called `users_2way` in the `phpsol`s database. It needs three columns, with the settings listed in [Table 17-2](#).

Table 17-2. Settings for the `users_2way` table

Name	Type	Length/Values	Attributes	Null	Index	A_I
<code>user_id</code>	INT		UNSIGNED	Deselected	PRIMARY	Selected
<code>username</code>	VARCHAR	15		Deselected	UNIQUE	
<code>pwd</code>	BLOB			Deselected		

Registering new users

The `AES_ENCRYPT()` function takes two arguments: the value to be encrypted and an encryption key. The encryption key can be any string of characters you choose. For the purposes of this example, I have chosen `takeThisWith@PinchOfSalt`, but a random series of alphanumeric characters and symbols would be more secure.

The basic registration scripts for one-way and two-way encryption are the same. The only difference lies in the section that inserts the user's data into the database.

Tip The following scripts embed the encryption key directly in the page. If you have a private folder outside the server root, it's a good idea to define the key in an include file and store it in your private folder.

The code for MySQLi looks like this (the full listing is in `register_2way_mysql.php` in the `ch17` folder):

```
if (!$errors) {  
    // include the connection file
```

```

require_once 'connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('write');
// create a key
$key = 'takeThisWith@PinchOfSalt';
// prepare SQL statement
$sql = 'INSERT INTO users_2way (username, pwd)
        VALUES (?, AES_ENCRYPT(?, ?))';
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
if ($stmt = $conn->prepare($sql)) {
    // bind parameters and insert the details into
    the database
    $stmt->bind_param('sss', $username, $password,
$key);
    $stmt->execute();
}
if ($stmt->affected_rows == 1) {
    $success = "$username has been registered. You
may now log in.";
} elseif ($stmt->errno == 1062) {
    $errors[] = "$username is already in use.
Please choose another username.";
} else {
    $errors[] = $stmt->error;
}
}

```

For PDO, it looks like this (see `register_2way_pdo.php` in the `ch17` folder for the full listing):

```

if (!$errors) {
    // include the connection file
    require_once 'connection.php';
    $conn = dbConnect('write', 'pdo');
    // create a key
    $key = 'takeThisWith@PinchOfSalt';
    // prepare SQL statement
    $sql = 'INSERT INTO users_2way (username, pwd)
            VALUES (:username, AES_ENCRYPT(:pwd,
:key))';
}

```

```

$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
// bind parameters and insert the details into the
database
$stmt->bindParam(':username', $username,
PDO::PARAM_STR);
$stmt->bindParam(':pwd', $password,
PDO::PARAM_STR);
$stmt->bindParam(':key', $key, PDO::PARAM_STR);
$stmt->execute();
if ($stmt->rowCount() == 1) {
    $success = "$username has been registered. You
may now log in.";
} elseif ($stmt->errorCode() == 23000) {
    $errors[] = "$username is already in use.
Please choose another username.";
} else {
    $errors[] = 'Sorry, there was a problem with
the database.';
}
}

```

Strictly speaking, it's not necessary to use a bound parameter for \$key because it doesn't come from user input. If you embed it directly in the query, however, the whole query needs to be wrapped in double quotes, and \$key needs to be in single quotes.

To test the preceding scripts, just include them in `register_db.php` instead of `register_db_mysql.php` or `register_db_pdo.php`.

User authentication with two-way encryption

Creating a login page with two-way encryption is very simple. After connecting to the database, you incorporate the username, secret key, and unencrypted password in the WHERE clause of a SELECT query. If the query finds a match, the user is allowed into the restricted part of the site. If there's no match, the login is rejected. The code is the same as in PHP Solution 17-2, except for the following section.

For MySQLi, it looks like this (see

authenticate_2way_mysql.php):

```
<?php
require_once 'connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('read');
// create key
$key = 'takeThisWith@PinchofSalt';
$sql = 'SELECT username FROM users_2way
        WHERE username = ? AND pwd = AES_ENCRYPT(?, ?)';
// initialize and prepare statement
$stmt = $conn->stmt_init();
$stmt->prepare($sql);
// bind the input parameters
$stmt->bind_param('sss', $username, $password, $key);
$stmt->execute();
// to get the number of matches, you must store the
// result
$stmt->store_result();
// if a match is found, num_rows is 1, which is
// treated as true
if ($stmt->num_rows) {
    $_SESSION['authenticated'] = 'Jethro Tull';
    // get the time the session started
    $_SESSION['start'] = time();
    session_regenerate_id();
    header("Location: $redirect"); exit;
} else {
    // if not verified, prepare error message
    $error = 'Invalid username or password';
}
```

Note that you need to store the result of the prepared statement before you can access the `num_rows` property. If you fail to do this, `num_rows` will always be 0, and the login will fail even if the username and password are correct.

The revised code for PDO looks like this (see `authenticate_2way_pdo.inc.php`):

```

<?php
require_once 'connection.php';
$conn = dbConnect('read', 'pdo');
// create key
$key = 'takeThisWith@PinchOfSalt';
$sql = 'SELECT username FROM users_2way
        WHERE username = ? AND pwd = AES_ENCRYPT(?, ?)';
// prepare statement
$stmt = $conn->prepare($sql);
// bind variables by passing them as an array when
executing statement
$stmt->execute([$username, $password, $key]);
// if a match is found, rowCount() produces 1, which
is treated as true
if ($stmt->rowCount()) {
    $_SESSION['authenticated'] = 'Jethro Tull';
    // get the time the session started
    $_SESSION['start'] = time();
    session_regenerate_id();
    header("Location: $redirect"); exit;
} else {
    // if not verified, prepare error message
    $error = 'Invalid username or password';
}

```

To test these scripts, use them in place of `authenticate_mysqli.php` and `authenticate_pdo.php`.

Decrypting a password

Decrypting a password that uses two-way encryption simply involves passing the secret key as the second argument to `AES_DECRYPT()` in a prepared statement, like this:

```

$key = 'takeThisWith@PinchOfSalt';
$sql = "SELECT AES_DECRYPT(pwd, '$key') AS pwd FROM
users_2way

```

```
WHERE username = ?";
```

The key must be exactly the same as the one originally used to encrypt the password. If you lose the key, the passwords remain as inaccessible as those stored using one-way encryption.

Normally, the only time you need to decrypt a password is when a user requests a password reminder. Creating the appropriate security policy for sending out such reminders depends a great deal on the type of site that you're operating. However, it goes without saying that you shouldn't display the decrypted password onscreen. You need to set up a series of security checks, such as asking for the user's date of birth or mother's maiden name, or posing a question whose answer only the user is likely to know. Even if the user gets the answer right, you should send the password by email to the user's registered address.

All the necessary knowledge should be at your fingertips if you have succeeded in getting this far in this book.

Updating User Details

I haven't included any update forms for the user registration pages. It's a task that you should be able to accomplish by yourself at this stage. The most important point about updating user registration details is that you should not display the user's existing password in the update form. If you're using one-way encryption, you can't, anyway.

Where Next?

This book has covered a massive amount of ground. If you've mastered all the techniques covered here, you are well on your way to becoming an intermediate PHP developer, and with a little more effort, you will enter the advanced level. If it's been a struggle, don't worry. Go over the earlier chapters again. The more you practice, the easier it becomes.

You're probably thinking, "How on earth can I remember all this?" You don't need to. Don't be ashamed to look things up. Bookmark the PHP online manual (<http://php.net/manual/en/>) and use it regularly. It's

constantly updated, and it has lots of useful examples. Type a function name into the search box at the top right of every page to be taken straight to a full description of that function. Even if you can't remember the correct function name, the manual takes you to a page that suggests the most likely candidates. Most pages have practical examples showing how the function or class is used.

What makes dynamic web design easy is not an encyclopedic knowledge of PHP functions and classes but a solid grasp of how conditional statements, loops, and other structures control the flow of a script. Once you can visualize your projects in terms of "if this happens, what should happen next?" you're the master of your own game. I consult the PHP online manual frequently. To me, it's like a dictionary. Most of the time, I just want to check that I have the arguments in the right order, but I often find that something catches my eye and opens up new horizons. I may not use that knowledge immediately, but I store it at the back of my mind for future use and go back when I need to check the details.

The MySQL online manual (<http://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/5.6/en/index.html>) is equally useful. The documentation for MariaDB is at <https://mariadb.com/kb/en/>. Make both the PHP and database online manuals your friends, and your knowledge will grow by leaps and bounds.

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