

To get current datetime (now) with PHP you can use **date** with any PHP version, or better **datetime class** with PHP >= 5.2

Various date format expressions are available [here](#).

## Example using **date**

This expression will return NOW in format *Y-m-d H:i:s*

```
1 <?php
2 echo date('Y-m-d H:i:s');
3 ?>
```

## Example using **datetime class**

This expression will return NOW in format *Y-m-d H:i:s*

```
1 <?php
2 $dt = new DateTime();
3 echo $dt->format('Y-m-d H:i:s');
4 ?>
```

## A more complete approach

Above examples will return NOW using your server timezone, as it is defined in *php.ini*, for example:

```
1 [Date]
2 ; Defines the default timezone used by the date functions
3 ; http://php.net/date.timezone
4 date.timezone = Europe/Athens
```

But, the best approach is to save dates to **UTC**. UTC (also called Zulu time) is the **standard international time**. All time zones are expressed as offsets of UTC. Especially, if your application users are located in different timezones. Using php DateTime class it is easy to compute the time in user timezone from UTC, and you don't have to worry about for Daylight Savings Time changes.

Define server timezone and server date format according to your preferences. My preferences are:

```
1 /* server timezone */
2 define('CONST_SERVER_TIMEZONE', 'UTC');
3
4 /* server dateformat */
5 define('CONST_SERVER_DATEFORMAT', 'YmdHis');
```

In this case, you may use the following simple function:

```
<?php
/**
 * Converts current time for given timezone (considering DST)
 * to 14-digit UTC timestamp (YYYYMMDDHHMMSS)
 *
 * DateTime requires PHP >= 5.2
 *
 * @param $str_user_timezone
 * @param string $str_server_timezone
 * @param string $str_server_dateformat
 * @return string
 */
function now($str_user_timezone,
             $str_server_timezone = CONST_SERVER_TIMEZONE,
             $str_server_dateformat = CONST_SERVER_DATEFORMAT) {

    // set timezone to user timezone
    date_default_timezone_set($str_user_timezone);

    $date = new DateTime('now');
    $date->setTimezone(new DateTimeZone($str_server_timezone));
    $str_server_now = $date->format($str_server_dateformat);

    // return timezone to server default
    date_default_timezone_set($str_server_timezone);

    return $str_server_now;
}
?>
```