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Regular expressions are a very useful tool for developers. They allow to find, identify or replace text, words or any kind of characters. In this article, I have compiled 15+ extremely useful regular expressions that any web developer should have in his toolkit.

For many beginners, regular expressions seems to be hard to learn and use. In fact, they're far less hard than you may think. Before we dive deep inside `re` with useful and reusable codes, let's quickly see the basics:

Regular expressions syntax

Regular Expression	Will match...
foo	The string "foo"
^foo	"foo" at the start of a string
foo\$	"foo" at the end of a string
^foo\$	"foo" when it is alone on a string
[abc]	a, b, or c
[a-z]	Any lowercase letter
[^A-Z]	Any character that is not an uppercase letter
(gif jpg)	Matches either "gif" or "jpg"
[a-z]+	One or more lowercase letters
[0-9.]	Any number, dot, or minus sign
^[a-zA-Z0-9_]{1,}\$	Any word of at least one letter, number or _
([wx])([yz])	wy, wz, xy, or xz
[^A-Za-z0-9]	Any symbol (not a number or a letter)
(([A-Z](3))([0-9](4)))	Matches three letters or four numbers

PHP regular expression functions

Function	Description
<code>preg_match()</code>	The <code>preg_match()</code> function searches string for pattern, returning true if pattern exists, and false otherwise.
<code>preg_match_all()</code>	The <code>preg_match_all()</code> function matches all occurrences of pattern in string.
<code>preg_replace()</code>	The <code>preg_replace()</code> function operates just like <code>preg_replace()</code> , except that regular expressions can be used in the pattern and replacement input parameters.
<code>preg_split()</code>	The <code>preg_split()</code> function operates exactly like <code>split()</code> , except that regular expressions are accepted as input parameters for pattern.
<code>preg_grep()</code>	The <code>preg_grep()</code> function searches all elements of <code>input_array</code> , returning all elements matching the <code>regex</code> pattern.
<code>preg_quote()</code>	Quote regular expression characters

Validate domain name

Verify if a string is a valid domain name.

```
$url = "http://komunitasweb.com/";  
if (preg_match("/^(http|https|ftp)?:/{([A-Z0-9_-]*)(?:(.[A-Z0-9_-]*)+)?(?:\d+)?/?/i", $url)) {  
    echo "Your url is ok.";  
} else {  
    echo "Wrong url.";  
}
```

➤ [Source](#)

Enlight a word from a text

This very useful regular expression find a specific word in a text, and enlight it. Extremely useful for search results.

```
$text = "Sample sentence from KomunitasWeb, regex has become popular in web programming. Now we learn regex. According to wikipedia, Regular expressions (abbreviated as regex or regexp, with plural forms regexes, regexps, or regexen) are written in a formal language that can be interpreted by a computer."
$text = preg_replace("/b(regex)b/i", 'span style="background:#5fc9e6">1</span>', $text);
echo $text;
```

➤ **Source**

Enlight search results in your WordPress blog

As I just said that the previous code snippet could be very handy on search results, here is a great way to implement it on a WordPress blog.

Open your *search.php* file and find the *the_title()* function. Replace it with the following:

```
echo $title;
```

Now, just before the modified line, add this code:

```
<?php
$title = get_the_title();
$keys= explode(" ",$s);
$title = preg_replace('/(.implode('|', $keys) .')/iu',
    '<strong class="search-excerpt">\0</strong>',
    $title);
```

Save the *search.php* file and open *style.css*. Append the following line to it:

```
strong.search-excerpt { background: yellow; }
```

➤ [Source](#)

Get all images from a HTML document

If you ever wished to be able to get all images from a webpage, this code is a must have for you. You should easily create an image downloader using the power of [cURL](#).

```
$images = array();
preg_match_all('/(img|src)=(.*)["'<\/script>"/i', $data, $media);
unset($data);
$data = preg_replace('/(img|src)="(.*)"=.*(.)"/i', '$3', $media[0]);
foreach($data as $url)
{
    $info = pathinfo($url);
    if (isset($info['extension']))
    {
        if ($info['extension'] == 'jpg') ||
            ($info['extension'] == 'jpeg') ||
            ($info['extension'] == 'png') ||
            ($info['extension'] == 'png')
        {
            array_push($images, $url);
        }
    }
}
```

➤ Source

Remove repeated words (case insensitive)

Often repeating words while typing? This handy regexp will be very helpful

```
$text = preg_replace("/s(w+s)l/i", "$1", $text);
```

➤ **Source**

Remove repeated punctuation

Same as above, but with punctuation. Goodbye repeated commas!

```
$text = preg_replace("/.+/i", ".", $text);
```

➤ [Source](#)

Matching a XML/HTML tag

This simple function takes two arguments: The first is the tag you'd like to match, and the second is the variable containing the XML or HTML. Once again, this can be very powerful used along with [cURL](#).

```
function get_tag( $tag, $xml ) {
    $tag = preg_quote($tag);
    preg_match_all( '<'. $tag. '[^>]*(.*)<\/'. $tag. '>'. '.*>',
        $xml,
        $matches,
        PREG_PATTERN_ORDER);

    return $matches[1];
}
```

➤ **Source**

Matching an XHTML/XML tag with a certain attribute value

This function is very similar to the previous one, but it allow you to match a tag having a specific attribute. For example, you could easily match `<div id="header">`.

```
function get_tag($attr, $value, $xml, $tag=null) {
    if (is_null($tag))
        $tag = '\w+';
    else
        $tag = preg_quote($tag);

    $attr = preg_quote($attr);
    $value = preg_quote($value);

    $tag_regex = "<(".$tag.")(>|>".$attr."=\"".$value."\"|>".$attr."=\'".$value."\'|>".$attr."=".$value."|>".$attr."=\'".$value."'\")(<|/|/)>";

    preg_match_all($tag_regex,
        $xml,
        $matches,
        PREG_PATTERN_ORDER);

    return $matches[3];
}
```

➤ Source

Matching hexadecimal color values

Another interesting tool for web developers! It allows you to match/validate a hexadecimal color value.

```
$string = "#5555555";
if (preg_match('/^#(?:[a-fd]{3}){1,2}$/i', $string)) {
    echo "example 6 successful.";
}
```

➤ [Source](#)

Find page title

This handy code snippet will find and print the text within the `<title>` and `</title>` tags of a html page

```
$fp = fopen("http://www.catswhocode.com/blog", "r");
while (!feof($fp)) {
    $page .= fgets($fp, 4096);
}

$title = eregi("<title>(.*?)</title>", $page, $regs);
echo $regs[1];
fclose($fp);
```

Parsing Apache logs

Most websites are running on the well-known Apache webserver. If your website does, what about using PHP and some regular expressions to parse Apache logs?

[illegible]

➤ **Source**

Replacing double quotes by smart quotes

If you're a typographer lover, you'll probably love this regexp, which allow you to replace normal double quotes by smart quotes. A regular expression of that kind is used by WordPress on contents.

```
preg_replace('Bb([ ^~x84x93x94rn]+)bB', '?1?', $text);
```

➤ Source

Checking password complexity

This regular expression will tests if the input consists of 6 or more letters, digits, underscores and hyphens.

The input must contain at least one upper case letter, one lower case letter and one digit.

$$^1\lambda(\{?=[_a-2\lambda-20-9]^* \{ \lambda-2 \} \} (?=[_a-2\lambda-20-9]^* \{ a-2 \}) (?=[_a-2\lambda-20-9]^* \{ 0-9 \}) \{ _a-2\lambda-20-9 \} \{ 6, \} 2$$

➤ [Source](#)

WordPress: Using regexp to retrieve images from post

As I know many of you are WordPress users, you'll probably enjoy that code which allow you to retrieve all images from post content and display it.

To use this code on your blog, simply paste the following code on one of your theme files.

```
<?php if (have_posts()) : ?>
<?php while (have_posts()) : the_post(); ?>

<?php
$posts = $wpdb->get_posts($post->post_content);
$wpdb->query("DELETE FROM $wpdb->posts WHERE post_content LIKE '%<img %>'"); //>

// Run regexp_match_all to grab all the images and save the results in $a1
regexp_match_all($wpdb->posts, $posts[0], $a1);

// Check to see if we have at least 1 image
if ($a1[0][0] > 0) {

    if ( $wpdb->query("SELECT * FROM $wpdb->posts WHERE post_content LIKE '%<img %>'") > 0 ) {
        // Now here you would do whatever you need to do with the images
        // For this example the images are just displayed
        for ( $i=0; $i < $wpdb->posts; $i++ ) {
            echo $a1[0][$i];
        }
    }
}

endif;
endfor;
endif;
?>
```

➤ Source

Generating automatic smileys

Another function used by WordPress, this one allow you to automatically replace a smiley symbol by an image.

```
$texte='A text with a smiley :-)';
echo str_replace(':-)', '', $texte);
```

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- Thanks a lot! Very useful tips and apps! I've tried a few already and can't be more happier.
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- [...] 15 PHP regular expressions for web developers (tags: regular-expressions web_development programacion tools tutorial php code programming development tutorials scripts tips regex expression regexp regularexpression expressions regular examples snippets) [...]
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33. [Leakey](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 2:53 am](#)
- Great set of regex's. Another good one to add would be a decent phone number validation, especially for international #'s, and maybe a clean credit card number validator.
- Anyway, good resource.
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- Validate domain name is not working.
- Anyone want to correct this regular expression?
- Error: Found:
Warning: preg_match() [function.preg-match]: Unknown modifier '/' in D:\projects\regex.php on line 3
Wrong url.
- ```
$url = "http://komunitasweb.com";
if (preg_match("/^(http|https|ftp):\/\/([A-Z0-9][A-Z0-9_-]*)(?::([A-Z0-9][A-Z0-9_-]*)?);(d+)?/?$/", $url)) {
 echo "Your url is ok.";
} else {
 echo "Wrong url.";
}
```
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- [...] Shared 15 PHP regular expressions for web developers [...]
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37. [Tom Stone](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 8:47 am](#)
- Regarding the example "Validate domain name" -- does that match IDN (Internationalized Domain Name) domains also? Like: [www.ÄVÄn-Ä&ä.se](http://www.ÄVÄn-Ä&ä.se)
- [Reply](#)
38. [Tadde](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 9:22 am](#)
- Good post!....
- would like to add the following ExtJS regex form validation that you can simply use for PHP regexp as well <http://extjs.com/forum/showthread.php?t=4271>
- [Reply](#)
39. [Francisco Brilj](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 9:59 am](#)
- Nice Post! Thanks
- [Reply](#)
40. [Paul Cook](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 10:02 am](#)
- Hi, Just wanted to say that this is an excellent post. I needed someone to explain clearly the meaning of symbols for reg expressions and this does it with ease. Bookmarked and I will be subscribing to the RSS. Many thanks.
- [Reply](#)
41. [Lundin](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 10:15 am](#)
- I love this post.... very useful thx
- [Reply](#)
42. [15 expresiones regulares en PHP para desarrolladores - rikidakio.com](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 10:35 am](#)
- [...] a un RT de Smashing Magazine llego a una genial lista de 15 expresiones regulares en PHP Añiles para desarrolladores en la que se pueden encontrar desde un validador de URI hasta una expresiÃn para perseguir logs de [...]
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43. [aldin](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 11:08 am](#)
- very great post! anyway this is very useful in some projects, specially for web scrap :) I use to work most this things for a year but suddenly I getting bored..
- [Reply](#)
44. [15 PHP regular expressions for web developers » Illuminations](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 12:57 pm](#)
- [...] 15 PHP regular expressions for web developers. Tags: [...]
- [Reply](#)
45. [Bilge](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 1:12 pm](#)
- Super cool story, bro. None of these examples actually work since all backslashes have been stripped.
- [Reply](#)
46. [Boris Moncloux](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 1:16 pm](#)
- Following one is wrong:
- Remove repeated punctuation  
Same as above, but with punctuation. Goodbye repeated commas!
- ```
$text = preg_replace("/,+/","",$text);
```
- You're replacing any number of any not a line break character with a dot. If you wished to replace dots, you must escape it first like:
- ```
$text = preg_replace("/\,+|'","",$text);
```
- Or if you wanted to replace multiple commas, put commas (no escaping needed).
- [Reply](#)
47. [Michael Doyle's Blog » PHP - Regular Expressions](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 1:47 pm](#)
- [...] <http://www.catswhocode.com/blog/15-php-regular-expressions-for-web-developers> [...]
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- [...] 15 PHP Regular Expressions for Web Developers [...]
- [Reply](#)
49. [Chris Jeay](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 2:56 pm](#)
- It looks like a number of the regex strings were modified when you copied and pasted them. Primarily, the backslashes were dropped. For example, you have "s(w+s)l/" for the remove repeated words regex when it should be "s(w+s)/l/". Repeated punctuation, hexadecimal color values, smart quotes, password complexity, and probably some others that I missed all have this problem.
- [Reply](#)
50. [Jim Huntin](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 8:13 pm](#)
- Love seeing a post not just about regular expressions, but actual usage and examples. Thanks for the post.
- [Reply](#)
51. [15 PHP regular expressions for web developers » HUGO TORRES](#) said: [July 29, 2009 at 8:36 pm](#)
- [...] Julio 29, 2009 15 PHP regular expressions for web developers. [...]











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