## **FOrum Tutorial**

**Overview**

Forum is a place for people to virtually meet online where they can post messages and respond to each other via replies. These usually are set up to discuss a specific topic (i.e. children, computing, social issues etc).

Open the website ***php-herdesign*** in Expression Web. This forum website will allow users to view and post forum questions/answers. Here, we are going to create four PHP pages:

1. forum.php  
2. create\_topic.php  
3. view\_topic.php  
4. create\_reply.php

**Step 1**: **Set up two tables in database**

Go to phpMyAdmin and select database called herdesign\_database. Create two new tables. Name the first table forum\_question. It has seven fields as follow:

**Field Name             Type              Remarks**  
id             int           auto-increment and it is a primary key  
topic         varchar(90)   
detail            text         forum’s question content   
email         varchar(60) user email which will link to membership   
datetime             datetime             
view         int counter for keeping track the number of views  
reply          int           counter for keeping track the number of replies

Name the second table forum\_answer and it has five fields as follow:

**Field Name             Type               Remarks**  
question\_id   int          it is related to the id field of forum\_question table

a\_id             int          auto-increment and it is a primary Key   
a\_email             varchar(60) user email which will link to membership

a\_answer             text       question’s reply content      
a\_datetime       datetime

**Step 2: Create a Forum page**  
forum.php  
This is the main page of the forum. On this forum page, we need to list all the forum topics. Here, it also provides a link to create\_topic.php page where the user can create a forum topic.

<h3>

Listing of the forum topics &nbsp;&nbsp;

<input type="button" value="Create a topic" onClick="window.location.href='create\_topic.php';" />

</h3>

<table width="90%" border="0" align="center" cellpadding="4" cellspacing="0" bgcolor="#CCCCCC">

<tr bgcolor="#CCCCCC">

<td width="65%" align="center"><strong>Topic</strong></td>

<td width="10%" align="center"><strong>Views</strong></td>

<td width="10%" align="center"><strong>Replies</strong></td>

<td width="15%" align="center"><strong>Date/Time</strong></td>

</tr>

<?php

include "config.php"; // connect and select database

$query = "SELECT \* FROM forum\_question ORDER BY id DESC";

$result = mysqli\_query($link, $query);

while($row = mysqli\_fetch\_array($result)) {

?>

<tr bgcolor="#EEEEEE">

<td>

<?php

extract($row); // extract() function?

?>

<a href="view\_topic.php?id=<?php echo $id; ?>">

<?php echo $row['topic']; ?>

</a>

</td>

<td align="center">

<?php echo $row['view']; ?>

</td>

<td align="center">

<?php echo $row['reply']; ?>

</td>

<td align="center">

<?php echo $row['datetime']; ?>

</td>

</tr>

<?php

} // end of while loop

?>

</table>

**Step 3: Create a Forum Topic**

create\_topic.php  
From the forum create\_topic page, we need to create a web form that will allow the user to fill in forum topic, detail, user, email etc. Then, also on your page, add code that runs only when information has been passed via the form. Finally, it redirects to forum.php page.

<?php

include "config.php"; // connect to database

$error = ""; // for validation; set error to blank

if (isset($\_POST['Submit'])) {

$topic=$\_POST['topic'];

$detail=$\_POST['detail'];

$email=$\_POST['email'];

$datetime=date("y/m/d h:i:s"); //create date time

if ($topic=="" || $detail=="") {

$error = "Forum topic or content must not be empty"; }

else {

$query="INSERT INTO forum\_question (topic, detail, email, datetime) VALUES ('$topic', '$detail', '$email', '$datetime')";

mysqli\_query($link, $query);

header("Location: forum.php");

}// end of else

} // end of if statement

?>

The web form for creating a topic for the forum is listed below:

<h3>Create Forum Topic</h3>

<p>

<?php

if ($error != "")

echo "<h3>$error</h3>";

?>

</p>

<form method="post">

<table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="3" cellspacing="1" bgcolor="#FFFFFF">

<tr>

<td width="14%"><strong>Topic</strong></td>

<td width="2%">:</td>

<td width="84%"><input name="topic" type="text" size="50" /></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td valign="top"><strong>Content</strong></td>

<td valign="top">:</td>

<td><textarea name="detail" cols="40" rows="6"></textarea></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><strong>Name</strong></td>

<td>:</td>

<td><input name="name" type="text" size="50" /></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><strong>Email</strong></td>

<td>:</td>

<td><input name="email" type="text" size="50" /></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td>&nbsp;</td>

<td>&nbsp;</td>

<td><input type="submit" name="Submit" value="Submit" />

<input type="reset" name="Reset" value="Reset" />

</td>

</tr>

</table>

</form>

**Step 4: View a Topic**

view\_topic.php  
  
When the user has selected a forum topic, we need to display the details of the topic and its replies. Hence this page involves displaying both database’s tables. We also create a link to create\_reply.php page for allowing users to reply to the topic.

<?php

include "config.php"; // connect to database

// get query string’s id from URL

$id = $\_GET['id'];

$query="SELECT view FROM forum\_question WHERE id='$id'";

$result=mysqli\_query($link, $query);

$row=mysqli\_fetch\_array($result);

$view = $row['view'];

$view = $view + 1;// add 1 to $view

$query="update forum\_question set view='$view' WHERE id='$id'";

mysqli\_query($link, $query);

$query="SELECT \* FROM forum\_question WHERE id='$id'";

$result=mysqli\_query($link, $query);

$row=mysqli\_fetch\_array($result);

?>

Add the following codes for displaying forum’s topic and its replies.

<h3>View the topic’s detail and its replies

<table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="3" cellspacing="1" bordercolor="1" bgcolor="#F8F7F1">

<tr>

<td><h3><?php echo $row['topic']; ?></h3></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><?php echo $row['detail']; ?></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><strong>By :</strong><?php echo $row['email'];?></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><strong>Date/time : </strong><?php echo $row['datetime']; ?></td>

</tr>

</table>

<br>

<p align="center">

<input type="button" value="Create a reply" onClick="window.location.href='create\_reply.php?id=<?php echo $id; ?>';">

</p>

<?php

//Now process forum\_answer table to retrieve its replies

$query="SELECT \* FROM forum\_answer WHERE question\_id='$id'";

$result=mysqli\_query($link, $query);

while($row=mysqli\_fetch\_array($result)){

?>

<table width="100%" border="0" align="center" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="1" bgcolor="#CCCCCC">

<tr>

<td>

<table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="3" cellspacing="1" bgcolor="#F8F7F1">

<tr>

<td width="18%"><strong>Reply by</strong></td>

<td width="5%">:</td>

<td width="77%"><?php echo $row['a\_email']; ?></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td valign="top"><strong>Content</strong></td>

<td>:</td>

<td><?php echo $row['a\_answer']; ?></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td><strong>Date/Time</strong></td>

<td>:</td>

<td><?php echo $row['a\_datetime']; ?></td>

</tr>

</table>

</td>

</tr>

</table><br>

<?php

} // end of while loop

?>

<p align="center">

<input type="button" value="&lt;&lt;Back" onClick="window.location.href='forum.php';" />

</p>

**Step 5: Reply the topic**  
  
create\_reply.php  
  
Here we need to create a web form that will allow the user to fill in the reply for the topic. It includes reply answer, user, email etc. On your page, add code that runs only when information has been passed via the form. Finally, it redirects to forum.php page.

<?php

include "config.php"; // connect to database

// get query string’s id from URL

$id = $\_GET['id'];

// Checks whether user submit reply

if (isset($\_POST['Submit'])) {

// get values that sent from FORM

$a\_email=$\_POST['a\_email'];

$a\_answer=$\_POST['a\_answer'];

$datetime=date("d/m/y H:i:s"); // create date and time

// Insert answer into database

$query="INSERT INTO forum\_answer (question\_id, a\_id, a\_email, a\_answer, a\_datetime) VALUES ('$id', '', '$a\_email', '$a\_answer', '$datetime')";

mysqli\_query($link, $query);

// If added new reply, add value +1 in reply column

$query="SELECT reply FROM forum\_question WHERE id='$id'";

$result=mysqli\_query($link, $query);

$row = mysqli\_fetch\_array($result);

$reply = $row['reply'] + 1;

$query="UPDATE forum\_question SET reply='$reply' WHERE id='$id'";

mysqli\_query($link, $query);

header("Location: forum.php");

} // end of if statement

?>

Finally, we add the web form for replies to the body of the page.

<h3>Topic’s reply</h3>

<form method="post">

<table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="3" cellspacing="1" bgcolor="#FFFFFF">

<tr>

<td><strong>Email</strong></td>

<td>:</td>

<td><input name="a\_email" type="text" size="45"></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td valign="top"><strong>Reply</strong></td>

<td valign="top">:</td>

<td><textarea name="a\_answer" cols="46" rows="6" ></textarea></td>

</tr>

<tr>

<td>&nbsp;</td>

<td>&nbsp;</td>

<td><input type="submit" name="Submit" value=" Reply "><input type="reset" name="Reset" value=" Reset ">

</td>

</tr>

</table>

<p align="center">

<input type="button" value="Back to Forum" onClick="window.location.href='forum.php';">

</p>