

PHP

PHP (PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor) is a computer scripting language originally designed for producing dynamic web pages.[1] It is used mainly in server-side scripting, but can be used from a command line interface or in standalone graphical applications.

While PHP was originally created by Rasmus Lerdorf in 1994[2], the main implementation of PHP is now produced by The PHP Group and serves as the de facto standard for PHP, as there is no formal specification. Released under the PHP License, it is considered to be free software by the Free Software Foundation.

PHP is a full-featured programming language capable of managing huge database-driven web systems. The uses for PHP are practically endless, and it is therefore one of the most popular open-source languages.

PHP is now officially known as "PHP: HyperText Preprocessor". It is a server-side scripting language usually written in an HTML context. Unlike an ordinary HTML page, a PHP script is not sent directly to a client by the server; instead, it is parsed by the PHP binary or module, which is server-side installed. HTML elements in the script are left alone, but PHP code is interpreted and executed. PHP code in a script can query databases, create images, read and write files, talk to remote servers - the possibilities are endless. The output from PHP code is combined with the HTML in the script and the result sent to the user's web-browser, therefore it can never tell the user whether the web-server uses PHP or not, because all the browser sees is HTML.

PHP's support for Apache and MySQL further increases its popularity. Apache is now the most-used web-server in the world, and PHP can be compiled as an Apache module. MySQL is a powerful free SQL database, and PHP provides a comprehensive set of functions for working with it. The combination of Apache, MySQL and PHP is all but unbeatable.

That doesn't mean that PHP cannot work in other environments or with other tools. In fact, PHP supports an extensive list of databases and web-servers. The rise in popularity of PHP has coincided with a change of approach in web-publishing. While in the mid-1990s it was ok to build sites, even relatively large sites, with hundreds of individual hard-coded HTML pages, today's webmasters are making the most of the power of databases to manage their content more effectively and to personalize their sites according to individual user preferences.

There are some indisputable great reasons to work with PHP. As an open source product, PHP is well supported by a talented production team and a committed user community. Furthermore, PHP can be run on all the major operating systems with most servers.

The speed of development is also important. Because PHP allows you to separate HTML code from scripted elements, you will notice a significant decrease in development time on many projects. In many instances, you will be able to separate the coding stage of a project from the design and build stages. Not only can this make life easier for you as a programmer, but it also can remove obstacles that stand in the way of effective and flexible design.

Well-maintained open source projects offer users additional benefits. You benefit from an accessible and committed community who offer a wealth of experience in the subject, as fast and as cheap as possible. Chances are that any problem you encounter in your coding can be answered swiftly and easily with a little research. If that fails, a question sent to a mailing list or forum can have an intelligent, authoritative response. You also can be sure that bugs will be addressed as they are found, and that new features will be made available as the need is defined. You will not have to wait for the next commercial release before taking advantage of improvements, and there is no hidden interest in a particular server product or operating system. You are free to make choices that suit your needs or those of your clients and incorporate whatever components you want.

Sources:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PHP>
- <http://www.softwareprojects.org/php-what-is-01.htm>