

Creating WebMail Forms

WebMail is a special program which takes a user's input from a Web page and generates an email message containing the data. When the user submits the form, a confirmation of the information they submitted will appear on the Web browser, which they can print for their records.

View WebMail Form Example (shown below)

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/help/creating-pages/style/forms/example.shtml>

Example WebMail Form

* Required Fields

Your name: *

Your email address:

Your hobby: *

How do I use it?

1. Request a WebMail "nickname":
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/help/creating-pages/request/webmail.shtml>
2. Create an HTML form that contains special input fields that tell WebMail what to do.
3. Tell your form to call WebMail when the user submits the information.
4. WebMail sends the contents of the submitted form to one or more recipients, who you specify.

Requesting a WebMail Nickname

Before a form can send data to you by email, you must request a WebMail "nickname". The nickname is *not* the same as an email alias or mailing list; they are completely independent (though, of course, a WebMail nickname can specify an email mailing list as the recipient.)

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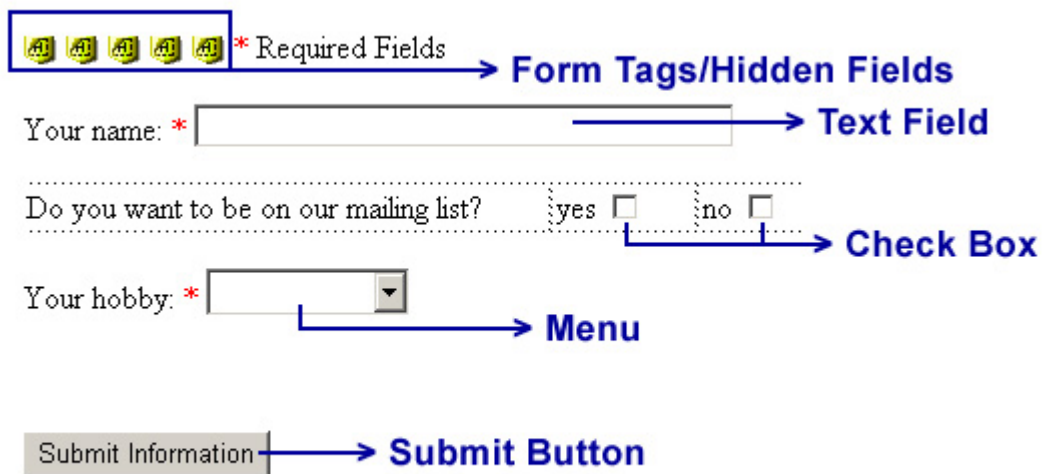
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WebMail nicknames are currently not provided for personal use, only for purposes related to courses and college business.

Creating the Form

A form contains properties that are invisible to the user. The properties specify how the form will be processed. A form consists of three basic parts:

1. Form tags, which include the URL of the CGI script that will process the form, and the method in which the data will be sent to a server. Form tags appear in Dreamweaver as “hidden fields”.
2. Form fields, which include text fields, menus, checkboxes, or radio buttons.
3. Submit button, which sends the data to the CGI script on the server. For more information, see Creating text form buttons, and Creating a graphical Submit button.



For more information about inserting text fields, checkboxes and radio buttons, and menus, read more about form objects on next page.

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About Form Objects

Insert Form inserts a form in the document. Dreamweaver inserts opening and closing form tags in the HTML source code. Any additional form objects, such as text fields, buttons, and so on must be inserted between the form tags for the data to be processed correctly by all browsers.

Insert Text Field inserts a text field in a form. Text fields accept any type of text, alphabetic, or numeric entries. The entered text can be displayed as a single line, as multiple lines, or as bullets or asterisks (for password protection).

Insert Button inserts a text button in a form. Buttons perform tasks when clicked, such as submitting or resetting forms. You can add a custom name or label for a button, or use one of the predefined labels—Submit or Reset.

Insert Checkbox inserts a checkbox in a form. Checkboxes allow multiple responses in a single group of options, a user can select as many options as apply.

Insert Radio Button inserts a radio button in a form. Radio buttons represent exclusive choices. Selecting a button within a group deselects all others in the group, for example a user can select Yes or No.

Insert List/menus allows you to create user choices in a list. The List option displays the option values in a scrolling list and allows users to select multiple options in the list. The Menu option displays the option values in a drop-down list and allows users to select only a single choice.

Insert File field inserts a blank text field and a Browse button in a document. File fields let users browse to files on their hard disks and upload the files as form data.

Insert Image Field allows you to insert an image in a form. Image fields can be used in place of Submit buttons to make graphical buttons.

Insert Hidden field inserts a field in the document in which user data can be stored. Hidden fields let you store information entered by a user, such as a name, e-mail address, or purchase preference, and then use that data when the user next visits your site..

Note: If you attempt to insert a form object without first creating the form, you'll get a Dreamweaver message "Add form tags?" Choose Yes to have Dreamweaver create form tags for the object.

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To add a form to a document (in Dreamweaver):

1. In the document, place the insertion point where you want the form to appear, then do one of the following:
2. In the Objects panel's Forms category, select the Insert Form icon.
3. Choose Insert > Form. When a form is created a dotted red outline appears in the Document window. If you don't see this outline, check that View > Visual Aids > Invisible Elements is selected.
4. In the document, click the form outline to select the form, if it isn't already selected.
5. In the Property inspector's Form Name field, type a unique name to label the form. Naming a form makes it possible to reference or control the form with a scripting language, such as JavaScript or VBScript.
6. Choose POST to send the form values in the body of a message. Note: Don't use the GET method with long forms. Note that WebMail requires that you use the POST method. All of the information passed to WebMail is passed as input fields. You have complete discretion as to the method of creating the information: You may submit the information yourself as hidden elements, or you can have the user enter information.
7. You need to go into HTML view of your Web page and edit the form method; for example:

```
<form method="POST" action="/cgi/WebMail" enctype="x-www-form-encoded">
```

Note: you may want to make some of the form fields *required*, which will require the visitor to complete specific fields of information that you indicate are required. If a *required* field is blank, they are instructed to "go back" and fill in the required field. The form will not be submitted until all *required* fields are completed. Below is an example of what the user will see in their browser if they are missing a required field:



The form you have submitted requires values for each of the fields listed below:

Field Name	Your Entry
Your name	(missing)
Hobby	(missing)

Please press your browser's **Back** button, complete the missing fields, and submit the form again.

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Note: Include a red asterisk next to the required fields (on the form) and indicate (at the top of the form) that the asterisk represents *required* fields.

Required Fields

Certain fields are required for WebMail to function properly. If a form is submitted to WebMail without one of these fields, WebMail generates an error message and displays it to the user. No information will be sent to the recipient.

Field Name	What it Does
to_nickname	<p>This is the nickname of the WebMail recipient(s) who will receive the information from the form. WebMail recipients must be registered with the OIC Operations Group before they can begin receiving messages from WebMail (see how to request a WebMail "nickname" above). Nicknames will typically be MHC usernames for single recipients (e. g. dwilga) or a mnemonic for a group (e. g. libref for the library reference desk).</p> <p>To see what the output would look like without sending any email, use the value test.</p>
from_name	<p>This is the real name of the person sending the form. WebMail uses this information in the mail header so that the recipient will know who the mail came from. This value is usually entered by the user submitting the form.</p>
from_address	<p>This is the email address of the person sending the form. WebMail uses this information in the mail header so that the recipient will be able to reply to the message. This value is usually entered by the user submitting the form.</p>
subject	<p>This is the subject of the message. In free-form messages, it's best to let the user enter the subject. However, for many standard forms, you can use a standard subject line and make it a hidden input so the user can't change it.</p>
message	<p>This is the body of the message. In free-form messages, it's best to let the user enter the message. However, for many standard forms, you can use a standard message (e.g. Please renew the following book that I have checked out:) and make it hidden so that the user can't change it.</p>

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Additional Fields

You can add any additional fields that you like to contain the information in your form. Be sure to assign each item its own name (with the exception of radio buttons, which are grouped under the same name). You can have WebMail print the contents of any or all of these extra fields at the bottom of your message. The following list consists of other optional fields that you can use to control WebMail's behavior.

Field Name	What It Does
field_required	<p>Use this field to make some of your own fields required. If the user doesn't fill them in, WebMail will return an error message telling him or her which fields are missing. The value of this field should be a list of field names, each enclosed in {curly braces}. For example, if I have two that I want to make required, called "city" and "state", I could enter <code><input type=hidden name "field_required" value="{city}{state}"></code>.</p> <p>By default, the error message that the user sees if a required value is left blank contains the exact name of the field. Depending on how the field was named, this may not provide a very good description for the user. In this case, you can use the format {fieldname=Long Name}. This way, the error message will show the Long Name of the field, which will hopefully give them a better idea which field to fill-in. For example: <code><input type=hidden name "field_required" value= "{city=The City were you live} {state=Your State}"></code></p>
field_order	<p>Use this field to tell WebMail to list your own fields at the bottom of the message. If you create your own fields and want them to display, you must include a field_order field. The value of the field should be a space-separated list of field names in the order in which you want them to be listed. You may use any valid field name, whether it is a standard field or one of your own. For example, <code><input type=hidden name="field_order" value="from_name from_address city state"></code>.</p>
from_info	<p>Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and WebMail will report back to you the Internet address and browser used by the person sending the message.</p>
keep_eols	<p>Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and WebMail will not convert the end-of-line characters that are sent as part of text fields into spaces. This has the advantage that you will see things exactly as the user typed them, particularly in textboxes. It has the disadvantage, however, that your email program may try to impose its own idea of where the linebreaks should be, thus defeating the purpose.</p>
assume_MHC	<p>Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and when WebMail receives a from_address without a host name, it will assume that the string @mtholyoke.edu should be tacked onto the end. This option should only be used for forms that are targeted at the MHC community, since doing this for a non-MHC address would lead to an incorrect email address. In this case, it is far better that the user get the standard error message telling her to correct the address.</p>

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Field Name	What It Does
verify_MHC_user	Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and WebMail will attempt to confirm that the e-mail address given in from_address belongs to a user at MHC. This is very easy for someone to fake, but is a way to check identities and also for screening for cases when users type in their own email address incorrectly. This option automatically turns on the from_info option.
no_log	Normally, WebMail logs all data users submit, in a location that can only be read by system administrators. Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and WebMail will log only very minimal information about what happens when the user submits a form. Use this option at your own risk. If you accidentally delete the email, or if an error occurs when the web server tries to send it to you, the data submitted by the user will be permanently lost.
return_URI	WebMail posts a receipt to the sender that contains a " Return " button. This button normally points to the original form. If you would like the " Return " button to point to something else, use this tag. The value is the URL of the place the button should go. For example, <code><input type=hidden name="return_URI" value="http://www.mtholyoke.edu"></code> .
send_MIME	Set the value of this field to anything ("yes" is a good choice) and WebMail will send the email message in a two-part MIME format, with the data appearing in the second part. This makes it easier to print just the data on a sheet of paper, without all of the email header information. To access this "part" by itself within Pine, press "V" to View attachments, then choose part #2.
receipt_page	If this field is set to the name of an HTML (or SHTML) file in the same directory as the page containing the form, that page is displayed instead of the default confirmation page. This allows you to create a custom confirmation page. To include the standard results within the custom confirmation page, place the comment <code><!--%%PREVIEW%%--></code> at the location where you want them to appear. Note: If your receipt page has any images or links to other pages in it, they must be absolute URLs. This is because at the time your page is being displayed the "working directory" of the URL is that of /cgi/WebMail.cgi. For instance, if the receipt page was stored in /offices/reg/thankyou.html and wanted to refer to an image in that same folder, it should use a URL like /offices/reg/someimage.gif. If this is left as just someimage.gif, the Web browser will try to load /cgi/someimage.gif, which does not exist.

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Example

Here's an example of a form that uses WebMail to find out some information about the reader:

```
<form method="POST" action="/cgi/WebMail" enctype="x-www-form-encoded">
<input type="hidden" name="to_nickname" value="test">
<input type="hidden" name="subject" value="User Status">
<input type="hidden" name="message" value="Please record the information below.">
<input type="hidden" name="field_order" value="from_name Race">
<input type="hidden" name="field_required" value="{from_name=Your name}{Race}">
Your name: <input name="from_name" size=45><p>
Your email address: <input name="from_address" size=45><p>
Your race:
<select name="Race">
  <option value="">(Choose One)</option>
  <option value="weakling">Human</option>
  <option value="warrior">Klingon</option>
  <option value="fascist">Romulan</option>
  <option value="mercenary">Farengi</option>
  <option value="communist">Borg</option>
</select><p>
<input type="submit" value="Submit Information">
</form>
```