HTML Forms

HTML Form Example

Top of Form

First name:

Last name:




Bottom of Form

The <form> Element

The HTML **<form>** element defines a form that is used to collect user input:

<form>
.
*form elements*
.
</form>

An HTML form contains **form elements**. Form elements are different types of input elements, like text fields, checkboxes, radio buttons, submit buttons, and more.

The <input> Element

The **<input>** element is the most important form element.

The <input> element can be displayed in several ways, depending on the **type** attribute.

Here are some examples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Description** |
| <input type="text"> | Defines a one-line text input field |
| <input type="radio"> | Defines a radio button (for selecting one of many choices) |
| <input type="submit"> | Defines a submit button (for submitting the form) |

Text Input

**<input type="text">** defines a one-line input field for **text input**:

Example

<form>
  First name:<br>
  <input type="text" name="firstname"><br>
  Last name:<br>
  <input type="text" name="lastname">
</form>

This is how it will look like in a browser:

First name:

Last name:


Radio Button Input

**<input type="radio">** defines a **radio button**.

Radio buttons let a user select ONE of a limited number of choices:

Example

<form>
  <input type="radio" name="gender" value="male" checked> Male<br>
  <input type="radio" name="gender" value="female"> Female<br>
  <input type="radio" name="gender" value="other"> Other
</form>

This is how the HTML code above will be displayed in a browser:

 Male
 Female
 Other

The Submit Button

**<input type="submit">** defines a button for **submitting** the form data to a **form-handler**.

The form-handler is typically a server page with a script for processing input data.

The form-handler is specified in the form's **action** attribute:

Example

<form action="/action\_page.php">
  First name:<br>
  <input type="text" name="firstname" value="Mickey"><br>
  Last name:<br>
  <input type="text" name="lastname" value="Mouse"><br><br>
  <input type="submit" value="Submit">
</form>

This is how the HTML code above will be displayed in a browser:

Top of Form

First name:

Last name:




Bottom of Form

The Action Attribute

The **action** attribute defines the action to be performed when the form is submitted.

Normally, the form data is sent to a web page on the server when the user clicks on the submit button.

In the example above, the form data is sent to a page on the server called "/action\_page.php". This page contains a server-side script that handles the form data:

<form **action="/action\_page.php**">

If the action attribute is omitted, the action is set to the current page.

The Method Attribute

The **method** attribute specifies the HTTP method (**GET**or **POST**) to be used when submitting the form data:

<form action="/action\_page.php" **method="get"**>

or:

<form action="/action\_page.php" **method="post"**>

When to Use GET?

The default method when submitting form data is GET.

However, when GET is used, the submitted form data will be **visible in the page address field**:

/action\_page.php?firstname=Mickey&lastname=Mouse

**Note:** GET must NOT be used when sending sensitive information! GET is best suited for short, non-sensitive, amounts of data, because it has size limitations too.

When to Use POST?

Always use POST if the form data contains sensitive or personal information. The POST method does not display the submitted form data in the page address field.

POST has no size limitations, and can be used to send large amounts of data.

The Name Attribute

Each input field must have a **name** attribute to be submitted.

If the name attribute is omitted, the data of that input field will not be sent at all.

This example will only submit the "Last name" input field:

Example

<form action="/action\_page.php">
  First name:<br>
  <input type="text" value="Mickey"><br>
  Last name:<br>
  <input type="text" name="lastname" value="Mouse"><br><br>
  <input type="submit" value="Submit">
</form>

Grouping Form Data with <fieldset>

The **<fieldset>** element is used to group related data in a form.

The **<legend>** element defines a caption for the <fieldset> element.

Example

<form action="/action\_page.php">
  <fieldset>
    <legend>Personal information:</legend>
    First name:<br>
    <input type="text" name="firstname" value="Mickey"><br>
    Last name:<br>
    <input type="text" name="lastname" value="Mouse"><br><br>
    <input type="submit" value="Submit">
  </fieldset>
</form>

This is how the HTML code above will be displayed in a browser:

Top of Form

Personal information:

First name:

Last name:




Bottom of Form

Here is the list of <form> attributes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attribute** | **Description** |
| accept-charset | Specifies the charset used in the submitted form (default: the page charset). |
| action | Specifies an address (url) where to submit the form (default: the submitting page). |
| autocomplete | Specifies if the browser should autocomplete the form (default: on). |
| enctype | Specifies the encoding of the submitted data (default: is url-encoded). |
| method | Specifies the HTTP method used when submitting the form (default: GET). |
| name | Specifies a name used to identify the form (for DOM usage: document.forms.name). |
| novalidate | Specifies that the browser should not validate the form. |
| target | Specifies the target of the address in the action attribute (default: \_self). |