

Week 13 – Forms

To interact with our viewers, we web designers need to open the communication as a two-way street. So far, we have only been sending information to our viewers. By using Forms, we enable the user to send requested information back to us. We could allow viewers to “log-in” to certain areas, to apply for credit, to give their opinion, take a survey or a plethora of other options.

Front End and Back End Web Development

You are currently a Front End Web Developer. You work with the aspects of a website that users can see – the HTML and the CSS. The Back End of a web site requires programming or scripts to operate and will usually be created by a Web Developer or Programmer. These genius’ take care of the stuff we can’t see but does amazingly powerful things.

When you make a form on a real web site, it will often be your first experience communicating with the “Back End” of a web site.

For example:

You go to a web site and you order some custom Nike Shoes. You filled out a form that asked for all of your custom order information (color, size, etc) and of course, your billing information. When you filled out the form, you filled out information on the “front end” of the web site. When you hit “Submit” you then sent that information to the “back end” of the site.

Most of these sites use a Form processing script on the Web Server to collect the information and then distribute it where it needs to go. In the case above, the form you sent was forwarded into many different areas at Nike such as shipping, accounts receivable, manufacturing, inventory, and marketing.

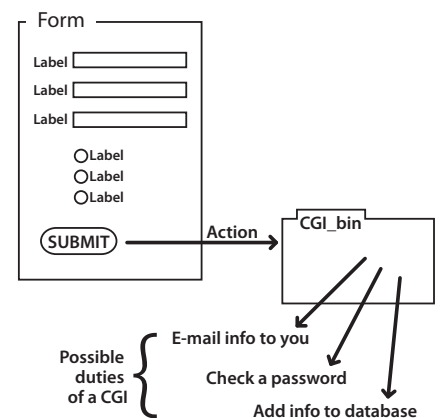
It is common for a design firm to have Web Designers doing front end work, while working with Programmers who take care of the back end programming.

What is a Form processing script?

1. The Form processing script is the program that processes the information that someone types in a form. Without a Form processing script the information will go nowhere.
2. A typical Form processing script is the form e-mailer—it e-mails the filled out form to you. Other Form processing scripts might check a password, add information to a database or display search results (for instance a Google search).
3. A programmer usually writes the Form processing script. If a client wants a form, you will have to hire someone to write the Form processing script.

The screenshot shows a web form with the following sections:

- Ship To:** Fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, and Phone.
- Choose Your Beans:** A dropdown menu currently showing "Kickapoo Dark Roast".
- Ground or Whole:** Radio buttons for "Ground" and "Whole Bean".
- Extras:** Checkboxes for "Include a catalog" and "Giftwrap".
- Comments:** A large text area for user input.
- Buttons: A small "Reset" button and a prominent blue "Send Order" button.




A few important points:

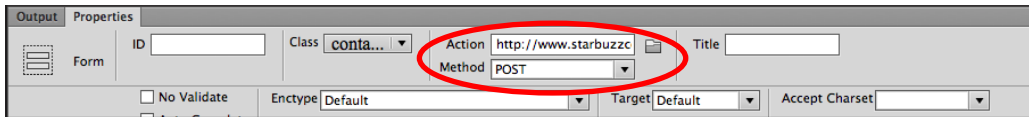
You might never have to make a form, but if you do, there are three huge things you need to understand.

1. Every form needs to be linked to a form processing script to process the data your viewer inputs. If you don't link to a Form processing script, the form will not work.
2. Every form has to be built inside a form tag — insert the form tag before you begin.
3. Plan your form on paper/photoshop before you begin making it in Dreamweaver. It helps you design the form and it helps the programmer anticipate and write the required code.

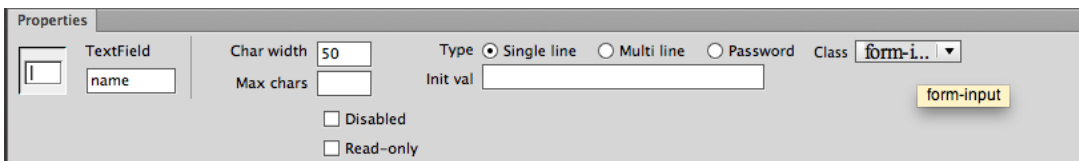
Make a form

You can have multiple forms on a page, but each form has to be built in a separate form tag.

1. Insert a form tag.  This is how you would link the form to the Form processing script
 - **Actions** field: add the form processing script (In our HTML class we use <http://www.starbuzzcoffee.com/processorder.php>. Use it here for practice.)
 - **Method** field: Use POST for sensitive information, otherwise use GET.



1. In the form, Insert a **<fieldset>** element (from the insert panel)
 - The fieldset element let's you break apart sections of your form.
2. In the **legend** prompt type **Ship to:**
 - The legend element acts like the caption in a table.
3. *** Select the whole form (red box) in Design View ***
4. Insert a **Text field** form element
 - In text of the <label> element, type "Name"
 - Put your cursor in the <input> element
 - Properties panel: change the name to "**name**", Size to "**50**", and class to "**.form-input**"



- Nest both the <label> and <input> elements into the first <fieldset> element
 - Insert five more text fields and name and Label them:
"address" "city"
"state" "zip"
"phone"
 - Make sure each has Char width of 50 and the form-input class applied.
5. Apply the **.form-label** class to each <label> tag (you may have to type it: class="form-label")

1. Insert a second **<fieldset>** element after the first one
2. Type the legend **"Choose your beans:"**
3. Insert a **Select (List/Menu)** form element
4. Name it **"beans"**
5. Click the **List Values** button in the Properties palette to add values.
Input the following ("Label" is what a user sees, "Value" is what the Form processing script sends):
Label=Kickapoo Dark Roast, **value**=Kickapoo Dark,
Label=Black Earth Organic, **value**=Black Earth Organic
Label=Co-op House Blend, **value**=Co-op House Blend

1. Insert a third **<fieldset>** element
2. Type the legend **"Ground or whole"**
3. Insert a **Radio Button Group** (users can only select one radio option at a time) form element
4. Name the group **"beantype"**
Label=Ground, **value**=ground
Label=Whole bean, **value**=whole
Apply the **.radio-checkbox-input** class to each.

1. Insert a fourth **<fieldset>** element
2. Type the legend **"Extras:"**
3. Insert a **Check box group** (users can select multiple items) form element
4. Name it **"extras"**
Input the following:
Label=Include a catalog, **value**=catalog
Label=Giftwrap, **value**=giftwrap
Apply the **.radio-checkbox-input** class to each.
Note the "checked" option in the properties (this is how you "accidentally" get on mailing lists)

1. Insert a fifth **<fieldset>** element
2. Type the legend **"Comments:"**
3. Insert a **Textarea** form element.
4. Name it **"comments"**
Give it **40** columns and **5** rows

1. Insert a **Submit Button** form element.
2. name = **"Submit"**
3. Value = **"Send Order"**
4. Apply the **.send-order** class

1. Insert a **Reset Button** form element (Clears the form)

Jotform.com Form templates and Widgets

If you want to get started with a functioning form, but don't have the resources to hire a programmer to write a script, a robust online tool at Jotform.com can get you started.

Pros

- It's WYSIWYG
- Start blank, with a template, or a theme and easily customize fields, options, and text.
- Limited transactions are Free, and if you need more, you can upgrade (pay)
- Free SSL and e-commerce integration (Paypal, etc..)

Cons

- The CSS is hosted remotely (depending on integration method). To modify your form you have to go back to jotform (consider making an account so it is saved).
- It's third party so if the script breaks, so does your form.

Activity: Explore and Create a Form

Go to "My Forms" and create a new blank form or explore "templates" or "Themes" to begin with.

The first time you save a form, be sure to enter your email address - that way you get notifications when someone submits it.

Use the preview tab to see your form as a user would.

In the Quick tools and Form Tools area on the left:

- Add elements and modify some text
- Rearrange some boxes by clicking and dragging
- Each Field is context sensitive. customize field properties in the upper tab as they are selected.

Click the Designer button (paint palette icon)

- Makes some global form changes
- The Form Designer will take you to a nicer WYSIWYG design interface (make sure to save changes)
- In the form layout area there is a small checkbox to "make this form responsive"

In the "Set up and Embed Tab"

- Click the **email** link and add/modify your email "notifier" (this is where notifications get sent)
- Customize a thank you page
- Click the **publish** option and copy embed <script> source code (this links to jotforms stuff)
- Paste it in an HTML page.

Preview and Submit your form to send yourself a message.