

A Short Introduction to Basic HTML Forms

1. Form Tag

The HTML FORM tag allows the collection of input from the user for transmission to a target URL. The basic appearance of the form tag is:

```
<FORM attributes>  
  ... HTML code ...  
</FORM>
```

The collection of data occurs in the HTML code between the beginning and end forms of the tag.

(a) Action Attribute

The ACTION attribute of the form tag gives the target of the data the form will transmit. The basic appearance of the form tag is:

```
ACTION="path-or-url";
```

(b) Method Attribute

The METHOD attribute of the form tag specifies the manner in which data will be transmitted to the target.

```
METHOD="method"
```

The possible methods are *get* and *post*. *Get* appends the data to the path or URL of the action, *post* transmits the information in hidden variable and does not append information onto the path or URL.

2. Input Tag

The INPUT tag is the simplest means of collecting user input. In its most basic form, the INPUT tag causes an editable text area to appear when the containing HTML document is displayed in a browser. In one possible variation, the INPUT tag causes a button to appear as part of a form. When this button is selected, the data in the form is transmitted.

The basic form of the input tag is: <INPUT *attributes*>

(a)Type Attribute

The TYPE attribute of the input tag specifies function of the input tag. The basic form of the TYPE attribute is:

TYPE="type"

Two possible values for the type are *text* and *submit*. *Text* indicates that the INPUT tag will produce an editable text field that the user can enter data. *Submit* indicates that the INPUT tag will produce a button that will cause the data collected by the form is to be transmitted. Generally, only one submit button is used per form.

(b)Name Attribute

The NAME attribute of the input tag allows a name to be given to the INPU tab. This is analogous to creating an identifier to represent a variable in a programming language. The form of the NAME attribute is:

NAME="name"

(c)Value Attribute

The VALUE attribute assigns a default value to the INPUT tag. In the case of an INPUT tag of type *submit*, the value specified is also the label of the button created. The form of the VALUE attribute is:

VALUE="value"

(d)Size Attribute

The SIZE attribute of the INPUT tag defines how large the text area or button created by the input tag will be when displayed. In theory, this is in units of something or other, be they pixels or character widths. In practice, this is highly dependent on how the browser chooses to deal with this attribute. The form of the SIZE attribute is:

SIZE=25

3.Example Form in an HTML File

```
<HTML>
  <HEAD>
    <TITLE>Call a Servlet</TITLE>
  </HEAD>
  <BODY bgcolor="white" text="navy" color="red">

    <form action=" http://www.whatfor.com/answers "
          method="post">

      What is your question?
      <br>
      <input type=text name=question size=50>
      <br>
      <br>
      Why do you care?
      <br>
      <input type=text name=reasonyou size=50>
      <br>
      <br>
      Why should I care?
      <br>
      <input type=text name=reasonme size=50>
      <br>
      <input type=submit value="Get An Answer">
    </form>

  </BODY>
</HTML>
```

When this HTML file is run, it produces the form shown here. When the user enters data and presses the "Get An Answer" button, the data in *question*, *reasonme* and *reasonyou* will be transmitted to <http://www.whatfor.com/answers>.

