

PHP and Its Importance:

"PHP is an HTML-embedded scripting language. Much of its syntax is borrowed from C, Java and Perl with a couple of unique PHP-specific features thrown in. The goal of the language is to allow web developers to write dynamically generated pages quickly."

This is generally a good definition of PHP. However, it does contain a lot of terms you may not be used to. Another way to think of PHP is a powerful, behind the scenes scripting language that your visitors won't see! When someone visits your PHP webpage, your web server processes the PHP code. It then sees which parts it needs to show to visitors (content and pictures) and hides the other stuff (file operations, math calculations, etc.) then translates your PHP into HTML. After the translation into HTML, it sends the webpage to your visitor's web browser.

There are three main areas where PHP scripts are used.

- Server-side scripting. This is the most traditional and main target field for PHP. You need three things to make this work. The PHP parser (CGI or server module), a web server and a web browser. You need to run the web server, with a connected PHP installation. You can access the PHP program output with a web browser, viewing the PHP page through the server. All these can run on your home machine if you are just experimenting with PHP programming. See the [installation instructions](#) section for more information.
- Command line scripting. You can make a PHP script to run it without any server or browser. You only need the PHP parser to use it this way. This type of usage is ideal for scripts regularly executed using cron (on *nix or Linux) or Task Scheduler (on Windows). These scripts can also be used for simple text processing tasks. See the section about [Command line usage of PHP](#) for more information.
- Writing desktop applications. PHP is probably not the very best language to create a desktop application with a graphical user interface, but if you know PHP very well, and would like to use some advanced PHP features in your client-side applications you can also use PHP-GTK to write such programs. You also have the ability to write cross-platform applications this way. PHP-GTK is an extension to PHP, not available in the main distribution. If you are interested in PHP-GTK, visit [» its own website](#).

It is also helpful to think of PHP in terms of what it can do for you. PHP will allow you to:

- Reduce the time to create large websites.
- Create a customized user experience for visitors based on information that you have gathered from them.
- Open up thousands of possibilities for online tools. Check out [PHP - HotScripts](#) for examples of the great things that are possible with PHP.
- Allow creation of shopping carts for e-commerce websites.