PHP

The Right Way

Your guide to PHP best practices, coding standards, and authoritative tutorials.

By Josh Lockhart and Phil Sturgeon

with contributions from the open source PHP community.

PHP: The “Right” Way

Your guide to PHP best practices, coding standards, and authoritative tutorials.

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This book is built entirely from the hard work put in from the PHP community via GitHub. There are too many to name, but you know who you are. Without all the pull requests and suggestions from you folks, people would still be durp-clicking around outdated tutorials with PHP 4 code examples like it's 2003.

Contents

1. Getting Started

1.1 Use the Current Stable Version (7.0)

If you are getting started with PHP, start with the current stable release of PHP 7.0[1]. PHP 7.0 is very new, and adds many amazing new features over the older 5.x versions. The engine has been largely re-written, and PHP is now even quicker than older versions.

Most commonly in the near future you will find PHP 5.x being used, and the latest 5.x version is 5.6. This is not a bad option, but you should try to upgrade to the latest stable quickly - PHP 5.6 will not receive security updates beyond 2018[2]. Upgrading is really quite easy, as there are not many backwards compatibility breaks[3]. If you are not sure which version a function or feature is in, you can check the PHP documentation on the php.net[4] website.

1.2 Built-in web server

With PHP 5.4 or newer, you can start learning PHP without installing and configuring a full-fledged web server. To start the server, run the following command from your terminal in your project's web root:

```
1  › php -S localhost:8000
```

- Learn about the built-in, command line web server[5]

1.3 Mac Setup

OS X comes prepackaged with PHP but it is normally a little behind the latest stable. Mavericks has 5.4.17, Yosemite 5.5.9, El Capitan 5.5.29 and Sierra 5.6.24, but with PHP 7.0 out that is often not good enough.

There are multiple ways to install PHP on OS X.

Install PHP via Homebrew

Homebrew[6] is a powerful package manager for OS X, which can help you install PHP and various extensions easily. Homebrew PHP[7] is a repository that contains PHP-related "formulae" for Homebrew, and will let you install PHP.

[1] http://php.net/downloads.php
[2] http://php.net/supported-versions.php
[3] http://php.net/manual/migration70.incompatible.php
[4] http://php.net/manual/
[5] http://php.net/features.commandline.webserver
[6] http://brew.sh/
[7] https://github.com/Homebrew/homebrew-php#installation

At this point, you can install `php53`, `php54`, `php55`, `php56` or `php70` using the `brew install` command, and switch between them by modifying your `PATH` variable. Alternatively you can use brew-php-switcher[8] which will switch automatically for you.

Install PHP via Macports

The MacPorts[9] Project is an open-source community initiative to design an easy-to-use system for compiling, installing, and upgrading either command-line, X11 or Aqua based open-source software on the OS X operating system.

MacPorts supports pre-compiled binaries, so you don't need to recompile every dependency from the source tarball files, it saves your life if you don't have any package installed on your system.

At this point, you can install `php54`, `php55`, `php56` or `php70` using the `port install` command, for example:

```
sudo port install php56
sudo port install php70
```

And you can run `select` command to switch your active PHP:

```
sudo port select --set php php70
```

Install PHP via phpbrew

phpbrew[10] is a tool for installing and managing multiple PHP versions. This can be really useful if two different applications/projects require different versions of PHP, and you are not using virtual machines.

Install PHP via Liip's binary installer

Another popular option is php-osx.liip.ch[11] which provides one liner installation methods for versions 5.3 through 7.0. It doesn't overwrite the PHP binaries installed by Apple, but installs everything in a separate location (/usr/local/php5).

Compile from Source

Another option that gives you control over the version of PHP you install, is to compile it yourself[12]. In that case be sure to have installed either Xcode[13] or Apple's substitute "Command Line Tools for XCode"[14] downloadable from Apple's Mac Developer Center.

[8] https://github.com/philcook/brew-php-switcher
[9] https://www.macports.org/install.php
[10] https://github.com/phpbrew/phpbrew
[11] http://php-osx.liip.ch/
[12] http://php.net/install.macosx.compile
[13] https://github.com/kennethreitz/osx-gcc-installer
[14] https://developer.apple.com/downloads

All-in-One Installers

The solutions listed above mainly handle PHP itself, and do not supply things like Apache, Nginx or a SQL server. "All-in-one" solutions such as MAMP[15] and XAMPP[16] will install these other bits of software for you and tie them all together, but ease of setup comes with a trade-off of flexibility.

1.4 Windows Setup

You can download the binaries from windows.php.net/download[17]. After the extraction of PHP, it is recommended to set the PATH[18] to the root of your PHP folder (where php.exe is located) so you can execute PHP from anywhere.

For learning and local development, you can use the built in webserver with PHP 5.4+ so you don't need to worry about configuring it. If you would like an "all-in-one" which includes a full-blown webserver and MySQL too then tools such as the Web Platform Installer[19], XAMPP[20], EasyPHP[21], OpenServer[22] and WAMP[23] will help get a Windows development environment up and running fast. That said, these tools will be a little different from production so be careful of environment differences if you are working on Windows and deploying to Linux.

If you need to run your production system on Windows, then IIS7 will give you the most stable and best performance. You can use phpmanager[24] (a GUI plugin for IIS7) to make configuring and managing PHP simple. IIS7 comes with FastCGI built in and ready to go, you just need to configure PHP as a handler. For support and additional resources there is a dedicated area on iis.net[25] for PHP.

Generally running your application on different environment in development and production can lead to strange bugs popping up when you go live. If you are developing on Windows and deploying to Linux (or anything non-Windows) then you should consider using a Virtual Machine[26].

Chris Tankersley has a very helpful blog post on what tools he uses to do PHP development using Windows[27].

[15] http://www.mamp.info/en/downloads/
[16] http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp.html
[17] http://windows.php.net/download/
[18] http://www.windows-commandline.com/set-path-command-line/
[19] http://www.microsoft.com/web/downloads/platform.aspx
[20] http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp.html
[21] http://www.easyphp.org/
[22] http://open-server.ru/
[23] http://www.wampserver.com/en/
[24] http://phpmanager.codeplex.com/
[25] http://php.iis.net/
[26] /#virtualization_title
[27] http://ctankersley.com/2015/07/01/developing-on-windows/

2. Code Style Guide

The PHP community is large and diverse, composed of innumerable libraries, frameworks, and components. It is common for PHP developers to choose several of these and combine them into a single project. It is important that PHP code adhere (as close as possible) to a common code style to make it easy for developers to mix and match various libraries for their projects.

The Framework Interop Group[1] has proposed and approved a series of style recommendations. Not all of them related to code-style, but those that do are PSR-0[2], PSR-1[3], PSR-2[4] and PSR-4[5]. These recommendations are merely a set of rules that many projects like Drupal, Zend, Symfony, Laravel, CakePHP, phpBB, AWS SDK, FuelPHP, Lithium, etc are adopting. You can use them for your own projects, or continue to use your own personal style.

Ideally you should write PHP code that adheres to a known standard. This could be any combination of PSRs, or one of the coding standards made by PEAR or Zend. This means other developers can easily read and work with your code, and applications that implement the components can have consistency even when working with lots of third-party code.

- Read about PSR-0[6]
- Read about PSR-1[7]
- Read about PSR-2[8]
- Read about PSR-4[9]
- Read about PEAR Coding Standards[10]
- Read about Symfony Coding Standards[11]

You can use PHP_CodeSniffer[12] to check code against any one of these recommendations, and plugins for text editors like Sublime Text[13] to be given real-time feedback.

You can fix the code layout automatically by using one of the following tools:

- One is the PHP Coding Standards Fixer[14] which has a very well tested codebase.

[1] http://www.php-fig.org/
[2] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-0/
[3] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-1/
[4] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-2/
[5] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-4/
[6] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-0/
[7] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-1/
[8] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-2/
[9] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-4/
[10] http://pear.php.net/manual/en/standards.php
[11] http://symfony.com/doc/current/contributing/code/standards.html
[12] http://pear.php.net/package/PHP_CodeSniffer/
[13] https://github.com/benmatselby/sublime-phpcs
[14] http://cs.sensiolabs.org/

- Also, the PHP Code Beautifier and Fixer[15] tool which is included with PHP_CodeSniffer can be used to adjust your code accordingly.

And you can run phpcs manually from shell:

```
1 phpcs -sw --standard=PSR2 file.php
```

It will show errors and describe how to fix them. It can also be helpful to include this command in a git hook. That way, branches which contain violations against the chosen standard cannot enter the repository until those violations have been fixed.

If you have PHP_CodeSniffer, then you can fix the code layout problems reported by it, automatically, with the PHP Code Beautifier and Fixer[16].

```
1 phpcbf -w --standard=PSR2 file.php
```

Another option is to use the PHP Coding Standards Fixer[17]. It will show which kind of errors the code structure had before it fixed them.

```
1 php-cs-fixer fix -v --level=psr2 file.php
```

English is preferred for all symbol names and code infrastructure. Comments may be written in any language easily readable by all current and future parties who may be working on the codebase.

[15] https://github.com/squizlabs/PHP_CodeSniffer/wiki/Fixing-Errors-Automatically
[16] https://github.com/squizlabs/PHP_CodeSniffer/wiki/Fixing-Errors-Automatically
[17] http://cs.sensiolabs.org/

3. Language Highlights

3.1 Programming Paradigms

PHP is a flexible, dynamic language that supports a variety of programming techniques. It has evolved dramatically over the years, notably adding a solid object-oriented model in PHP 5.0 (2004), anonymous functions and namespaces in PHP 5.3 (2009), and traits in PHP 5.4 (2012).

Object-oriented Programming

PHP has a very complete set of object-oriented programming features including support for classes, abstract classes, interfaces, inheritance, constructors, cloning, exceptions, and more.

- Read about Object-oriented PHP[1]
- Read about Traits[2]

Functional Programming

PHP supports first-class functions, meaning that a function can be assigned to a variable. Both user-defined and built-in functions can be referenced by a variable and invoked dynamically. Functions can be passed as arguments to other functions (a feature called *Higher-order Functions*) and functions can return other functions.

Recursion, a feature that allows a function to call itself, is supported by the language, but most PHP code is focused on iteration.

New anonymous functions (with support for closures) are present since PHP 5.3 (2009).

PHP 5.4 added the ability to bind closures to an object's scope and also improved support for callables such that they can be used interchangeably with anonymous functions in almost all cases.

- Continue reading on Functional Programming in PHP[3]
- Read about Anonymous Functions[4]
- Read about the Closure class[5]
- More details in the Closures RFC[6]
- Read about Callables[7]
- Read about dynamically invoking functions with `call_user_func_array()`[8]

[1] http://php.net/language.oop5
[2] http://php.net/language.oop5.traits
[3] http://phptherightway.com/pages/Functional-Programming.html
[4] http://php.net/functions.anonymous
[5] http://php.net/class.closure
[6] https://wiki.php.net/rfc/closures
[7] http://php.net/language.types.callable
[8] http://php.net/function.call-user-func-array

Meta Programming

PHP supports various forms of meta-programming through mechanisms like the Reflection API and Magic Methods. There are many Magic Methods available like `__get()`, `__set()`, `__clone()`, `__toString()`, `__invoke()`, etc. that allow developers to hook into class behavior. Ruby developers often say that PHP is lacking `method_missing`, but it is available as `__call()` and `__callStatic()`.

- Read about Magic Methods[9]
- Read about Reflection[10]
- Read about Overloading[11]

3.2 Namespaces

As mentioned above, the PHP community has a lot of developers creating lots of code. This means that one library's PHP code might use the same class name as another. When both libraries are used in the same namespace, they collide and cause trouble.

Namespaces solve this problem. As described in the PHP reference manual, namespaces may be compared to operating system directories that *namespace* files; two files with the same name may co-exist in separate directories. Likewise, two PHP classes with the same name may co-exist in separate PHP namespaces. It's as simple as that.

It is important for you to namespace your code so that it may be used by other developers without fear of colliding with other libraries.

One recommended way to use namespaces is outlined in PSR-4[12], which aims to provide a standard file, class and namespace convention to allow plug-and-play code.

In October 2014 the PHP-FIG deprecated the previous autoloading standard: PSR-0[13]. Both PSR-0 and PSR-4 are still perfectly usable. The latter requires PHP 5.3, so many PHP 5.2-only projects implement PSR-0.

If you're going to use an autoloader standard for a new application or package, look into PSR-4.

- Read about Namespaces[14]
- Read about PSR-0[15]
- Read about PSR-4[16]

[9] http://php.net/language.oop5.magic
[10] http://php.net/intro.reflection
[11] http://php.net/language.oop5.overloading
[12] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-4/
[13] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-0/
[14] http://php.net/language.namespaces
[15] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-0/
[16] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-4/

3.3 Standard PHP Library

The Standard PHP Library (SPL) is packaged with PHP and provides a collection of classes and interfaces. It is made up primarily of commonly needed datastructure classes (stack, queue, heap, and so on), and iterators which can traverse over these datastructures or your own classes which implement SPL interfaces.

- Read about the SPL[17]
- SPL video course on Lynda.com(Paid)[18]

3.4 Command Line Interface

PHP was created to write web applications, but is also useful for scripting command line interface (CLI) programs. Command line PHP programs can help automate common tasks like testing, deployment, and application administration.

CLI PHP programs are powerful because you can use your app's code directly without having to create and secure a web GUI for it. Just be sure **not** to put your CLI PHP scripts in your public web root!

Try running PHP from your command line:

```
1  > php -i
```

The `-i` option will print your PHP configuration just like the `phpinfo()`[19] function.

The `-a` option provides an interactive shell, similar to ruby's IRB or python's interactive shell. There are a number of other useful command line options[20], too.

Let's write a simple "Hello, $name" CLI program. To try it out, create a file named `hello.php`, as below.

```
1  <?php
2  if ($argc !== 2) {
3      echo "Usage: php hello.php [name].\n";
4      exit(1);
5  }
6  $name = $argv[1];
7  echo "Hello, $name\n";
```

PHP sets up two special variables based on the arguments your script is run with. `$argc`[21] is an integer variable containing the argument *count* and `$argv`[22] is an array variable containing each argument's *value*. The first argument is always the name of your PHP script file, in this case `hello.php`.

[17] http://php.net/book.spl
[18] http://www.lynda.com/PHP-tutorials/Up-Running-Standard-PHP-Library/175038-2.html
[19] http://php.net/function.phpinfo
[20] http://php.net/features.commandline.options
[21] http://php.net/reserved.variables.argc
[22] http://php.net/reserved.variables.argv

The `exit()` expression is used with a non-zero number to let the shell know that the command failed. Commonly used exit codes can be found here[23].

To run our script, above, from the command line:

```
› php hello.php
Usage: php hello.php [name]
› php hello.php world
Hello, world
```

- Learn about running PHP from the command line[24]
- Learn about setting up Windows to run PHP from the command line[25]

3.5 Xdebug

One of the most useful tools in software development is a proper debugger. It allows you to trace the execution of your code and monitor the contents of the stack. Xdebug, PHP's debugger, can be utilized by various IDEs to provide Breakpoints and stack inspection. It can also allow tools like PHPUnit and KCacheGrind to perform code coverage analysis and code profiling.

If you find yourself in a bind, willing to resort to `var_dump()`/`print_r()`, and you still can't find the solution - maybe you need to use the debugger.

Installing Xdebug[26] can be tricky, but one of its most important features is "Remote Debugging" - if you develop code locally and then test it inside a VM or on another server, Remote Debugging is the feature that you will want to enable right away.

Traditionally, you will modify your Apache VHost or .htaccess file with these values:

```
php_value xdebug.remote_host 192.168.?.?
php_value xdebug.remote_port 9000
```

The "remote host" and "remote port" will correspond to your local computer and the port that you configure your IDE to listen on. Then it's just a matter of putting your IDE into "listen for connections" mode, and loading the URL:

```
http://your-website.example.com/index.php?XDEBUG_SESSION_START=1
```

Your IDE will now intercept the current state as the script executes, allowing you to set breakpoints and probe the values in memory.

Graphical debuggers make it very easy to step through code, inspect variables, and eval code against the live runtime. Many IDE's have built-in or plugin-based support for graphical debugging with Xdebug. MacGDBp is a free, open-source, stand-alone Xdebug GUI for Mac.

[23] http://www.gsp.com/cgi-bin/man.cgi?section=3&topic=sysexits
[24] http://php.net/features.commandline
[25] http://php.net/install.windows.commandline
[26] http://xdebug.org/docs/install

- Learn more about Xdebug[27]
- Learn more about MacGDBp[28]

[27] http://xdebug.org/docs/
[28] http://www.bluestatic.org/software/macgdbp/

4. Dependency Management

There are a ton of PHP libraries, frameworks, and components to choose from. Your project will likely use several of them â€“ these are project dependencies. Until recently, PHP did not have a good way to manage these project dependencies. Even if you managed them manually, you still had to worry about autoloaders. That is no longer an issue.

Currently there are two major package management systems for PHP â€“ Composer[1] and PEAR[2]. Composer is currently the most popular package manager for PHP, however for a long time PEAR was the primary package manager in use. Knowing PEAR's history is a good idea, since you may still find references to it even if you never use it.

4.1 Composer and Packagist

Composer is a **brilliant** dependency manager for PHP. List your project's dependencies in a `composer.json` file and, with a few simple commands, Composer will automatically download your project's dependencies and setup autoloading for you. Composer is analogous to NPM in the node.js world, or Bundler in the Ruby world.

There are already a lot of PHP libraries that are compatible with Composer, ready to be used in your project. These "packages" are listed on Packagist[3], the official repository for Composer-compatible PHP libraries.

How to Install Composer

The safest way to download composer is by following the official instructions[4].
This will verify the installer is not corrupt or tampered with.
The installer installs Composer *locally*, in your current working directory.

We recommend installing it *globally* (e.g. a single copy in /usr/local/bin) - to do so, run this afterwards:

```
1  mv composer.phar /usr/local/bin/composer
```

Note: If the above fails due to permissions, prefix with `sudo`.

To run a locally installed Composer you'd use `php composer.phar`, globally it's simply `composer`.

Installing on Windows

For Windows users the easiest way to get up and running is to use the ComposerSetup[5] installer, which performs a global install and sets up your `$PATH` so that you can just call `composer` from any directory in your command line.

[1] /#composer_and_packagist
[2] /#pear
[3] http://packagist.org/
[4] https://getcomposer.org/download/
[5] https://getcomposer.org/Composer-Setup.exe

How to Install Composer (manually)

Manually installing Composer is an advanced technique; however, there are various reasons why a developer might prefer this method vs. using the interactive installation routine. The interactive installation checks your PHP installation to ensure that:

- a sufficient version of PHP is being used
- `.phar` files can be executed correctly
- certain directory permissions are sufficient
- certain problematic extensions are not loaded
- certain `php.ini` settings are set

Since a manual installation performs none of these checks, you have to decide whether the trade-off is worth it for you. As such, below is how to obtain Composer manually:

```
curl -s https://getcomposer.org/composer.phar -o $HOME/local/bin/composer
chmod +x $HOME/local/bin/composer
```

The path `$HOME/local/bin` (or a directory of your choice) should be in your `$PATH` environment variable. This will result in a `composer` command being available.

When you come across documentation that states to run Composer as `php composer.phar install`, you can substitute that with:

```
composer install
```

This section will assume you have installed composer globally.

How to Define and Install Dependencies

Composer keeps track of your project's dependencies in a file called `composer.json`. You can manage it by hand if you like, or use Composer itself. The `composer require` command adds a project dependency and if you don't have a `composer.json` file, one will be created. Here's an example that adds Twig[6] as a dependency of your project.

```
composer require twig/twig:~1.8
```

Alternatively, the `composer init` command will guide you through creating a full `composer.json` file for your project. Either way, once you've created your `composer.json` file you can tell Composer to download and install your dependencies into the `vendor/` directory. This also applies to projects you've downloaded that already provide a `composer.json` file:

[6] http://twig.sensiolabs.org

```
composer install
```

Next, add this line to your application's primary PHP file; this will tell PHP to use Composer's autoloader for your project dependencies.

```
<?php
require 'vendor/autoload.php';
```

Now you can use your project dependencies, and they'll be autoloaded on demand.

Updating your dependencies

Composer creates a file called `composer.lock` which stores the exact version of each package it downloaded when you first ran `composer install`. If you share your project with others, ensure the `composer.lock` file is included, so that when they run `composer install` they'll get the same versions as you. To update your dependencies, run `composer update`. Don't use `composer update` when deploying, only `composer install`, otherwise you may end up with different package versions on production.

This is most useful when you define your version requirements flexibly. For instance, a version requirement of `~1.8` means "anything newer than `1.8.0`, but less than `2.0.x-dev`". You can also use the `*` wildcard as in `1.8.*`. Now Composer's `composer update` command will upgrade all your dependencies to the newest version that fits the restrictions you define.

Update Notifications

To receive notifications about new version releases you can sign up for VersionEye[7], a web service that can monitor your GitHub and BitBucket accounts for `composer.json` files and send emails with new package releases.

Checking your dependencies for security issues

The Security Advisories Checker[8] is a web service and a command-line tool, both will examine your `composer.lock` file and tell you if you need to update any of your dependencies.

Handling global dependencies with Composer

Composer can also handle global dependencies and their binaries. Usage is straight-forward, all you need to do is prefix your command with `global`. If for example you wanted to install PHPUnit and have it available globally, you'd run the following command:

[7] https://www.versioneye.com/
[8] https://security.sensiolabs.org/

```
composer global require phpunit/phpunit
```

This will create a `~/.composer` folder where your global dependencies reside. To have the installed packages' binaries available everywhere, you'd then add the `~/.composer/vendor/bin` folder to your `$PATH` variable.

- Learn about Composer[9]

4.2 PEAR

A veteran package manager that some PHP developers enjoy is PEAR[10]. It behaves similarly to Composer, but has some notable differences.

PEAR requires each package to have a specific structure, which means that the author of the package must prepare it for usage with PEAR. Using a project which was not prepared to work with PEAR is not possible.

PEAR installs packages globally, which means after installing them once they are available to all projects on that server. This can be good if many projects rely on the same package with the same version but might lead to problems if version conflicts between two projects arise.

How to install PEAR

You can install PEAR by downloading the `.phar` installer and executing it. The PEAR documentation has detailed install instructions[11] for every operating system.

If you are using Linux, you can also have a look at your distribution package manager. Debian and Ubuntu, for example, have an apt `php-pear` package.

How to install a package

If the package is listed on the PEAR packages list[12], you can install it by specifying the official name:

```
pear install foo
```

If the package is hosted on another channel, you need to `discover` the channel first and also specify it when installing. See the Using channel docs[13] for more information on this topic.

- Learn about PEAR[14]

Handling PEAR dependencies with Composer

If you are already using Composer[15] and you would like to install some PEAR code too, you can use Composer to handle your PEAR dependencies. This example will install code from `pear2.php.net`:

[9] http://getcomposer.org/doc/00-intro.md
[10] http://pear.php.net/
[11] http://pear.php.net/manual/en/installation.getting.php
[12] http://pear.php.net/packages.php
[13] http://pear.php.net/manual/en/guide.users.commandline.channels.php
[14] http://pear.php.net/
[15] /#composer_and_packagist

```
{
    "repositories": [
        {
            "type": "pear",
            "url": "http://pear2.php.net"
        }
    ],
    "require": {
        "pear-pear2/PEAR2_Text_Markdown": "*",
        "pear-pear2/PEAR2_HTTP_Request": "*"
    }
}
```

The first section `"repositories"` will be used to let Composer know it should "initialize" (or "discover" in PEAR terminology) the pear repo. Then the `require` section will prefix the package name like this:

> pear-channel/Package

The "pear" prefix is hardcoded to avoid any conflicts, as a pear channel could be the same as another packages vendor name for example, then the channel short name (or full URL) can be used to reference which channel the package is in.

When this code is installed it will be available in your vendor directory and automatically available through the Composer autoloader:

> vendor/pear-pear2.php.net/PEAR2_HTTP_Request/pear2/HTTP/Request.php

To use this PEAR package simply reference it like so:

```
<?php
$request = new pear2\HTTP\Request();
```

- Learn more about using PEAR with Composer[16]

[16] http://getcomposer.org/doc/05-repositories.md#pear

5. Coding Practices

5.1 The Basics

PHP is a vast language that allows coders of all levels the ability to produce code not only quickly, but efficiently. However, while advancing through the language, we often forget the basics that we first learnt (or overlooked) in favor of short cuts and/or bad habits. To help combat this common issue, this section is aimed at reminding coders of the basic coding practices within PHP.

- Continue reading on The Basics[1]

5.2 Date and Time

PHP has a class named DateTime to help you when reading, writing, comparing or calculating with date and time. There are many date and time related functions in PHP besides DateTime, but it provides nice object-oriented interface to most common uses. It can handle time zones, but that is outside this short introduction.

To start working with DateTime, convert raw date and time string to an object with `createFromFormat()` factory method or do `new DateTime` to get the current date and time. Use `format()` method to convert DateTime back to a string for output.

```
1  <?php
2  $raw = '22. 11. 1968';
3  $start = DateTime::createFromFormat('d. m. Y', $raw);
4
5  echo 'Start date: ' . $start->format('Y-m-d') . "\n";
```

Calculating with DateTime is possible with the DateInterval class. DateTime has methods like `add()` and `sub()` that take a DateInterval as an argument. Do not write code that expect same number of seconds in every day, both daylight saving and timezone alterations will break that assumption. Use date intervals instead. To calculate date difference use the `diff()` method. It will return new DateInterval, which is super easy to display.

[1] http://phptherightway.com/pages/The-Basics.html

```php
<?php
// create a copy of $start and add one month and 6 days
$end = clone $start;
$end->add(new DateInterval('P1M6D'));

$diff = $end->diff($start);
echo 'Difference: ' . $diff->format('%m month, %d days (total: %a days)') . "\n";
// Difference: 1 month, 6 days (total: 37 days)
```

On DateTime objects you can use standard comparison:

```php
<?php
if ($start < $end) {
    echo "Start is before end!\n";
}
```

One last example to demonstrate the DatePeriod class. It is used to iterate over recurring events. It can take two DateTime objects, start and end, and the interval for which it will return all events in between.

```php
<?php
// output all thursdays between $start and $end
$periodInterval = DateInterval::createFromDateString('first thursday');
$periodIterator = new DatePeriod($start, $periodInterval, $end, DatePeriod::EXCLUDE_START_\
DATE);
foreach ($periodIterator as $date) {
    // output each date in the period
    echo $date->format('Y-m-d') . ' ';
}
```

A popular PHP API extension is Carbon[2]. It inherits everything in the DateTime class, so involves minimal code alterations, but extra features include Localization support, further ways to add, subtract and format a DateTime object, plus a means to test your code by simulating a date and time of your choosing.

- Read about DateTime[3]
- Read about date formatting[4] (accepted date format string options)

5.3 Design Patterns

When you are building your application it is helpful to use common patterns in your code and common patterns for the overall structure of your project. Using common patterns is helpful because it makes it much easier to manage your code and lets other developers quickly understand how everything fits together.

[2] http://carbon.nesbot.com
[3] http://php.net/book.datetime
[4] http://php.net/function.date

If you use a framework then most of the higher level code and project structure will be based on that framework, so a lot of the pattern decisions are made for you. But it is still up to you to pick out the best patterns to follow in the code you build on top of the framework. If, on the other hand, you are not using a framework to build your application then you have to find the patterns that best suit the type and size of application that you're building.

- Continue reading on Design Patterns[5]

5.4 Working with UTF-8

This section was originally written by Alex Cabal[6] over at PHP Best Practices[7] and has been used as the basis for our own UTF-8 advice.

There's no one-liner. Be careful, detailed, and consistent.

Right now PHP does not support Unicode at a low level. There are ways to ensure that UTF-8 strings are processed OK, but it's not easy, and it requires digging in to almost all levels of the web app, from HTML to SQL to PHP. We'll aim for a brief, practical summary.

UTF-8 at the PHP level

The basic string operations, like concatenating two strings and assigning strings to variables, don't need anything special for UTF-8. However, most string functions, like `strpos()` and `strlen()`, do need special consideration. These functions often have an `mb_*` counterpart: for example, `mb_strpos()` and `mb_strlen()`. These `mb_*` strings are made available to you via the Multibyte String Extension[8], and are specifically designed to operate on Unicode strings.

You must use the `mb_*` functions whenever you operate on a Unicode string. For example, if you use `substr()` on a UTF-8 string, there's a good chance the result will include some garbled half-characters. The correct function to use would be the multibyte counterpart, `mb_substr()`.

The hard part is remembering to use the `mb_*` functions at all times. If you forget even just once, your Unicode string has a chance of being garbled during further processing.

Not all string functions have an `mb_*` counterpart. If there isn't one for what you want to do, then you might be out of luck.

You should use the `mb_internal_encoding()` function at the top of every PHP script you write (or at the top of your global include script), and the `mb_http_output()` function right after it if your script is outputting to a browser. Explicitly defining the encoding of your strings in every script will save you a lot of headaches down the road.

Additionally, many PHP functions that operate on strings have an optional parameter letting you specify the character encoding. You should always explicitly indicate UTF-8 when given the option. For example,

[5] http://phptherightway.com/pages/Design-Patterns.html
[6] https://alexcabal.com/
[7] https://phpbestpractices.org/#utf-8
[8] http://php.net/book.mbstring

`htmlentities()` has an option for character encoding, and you should always specify UTF-8 if dealing with such strings. Note that as of PHP 5.4.0, UTF-8 is the default encoding for `htmlentities()` and `htmlspecialchars()`.

Finally, If you are building a distributed application and cannot be certain that the `mbstring` extension will be enabled, then consider using the patchwork/utf8[9] Composer package. This will use `mbstring` if it is available, and fall back to non UTF-8 functions if not.

UTF-8 at the Database level

If your PHP script accesses MySQL, there's a chance your strings could be stored as non-UTF-8 strings in the database even if you follow all of the precautions above.

To make sure your strings go from PHP to MySQL as UTF-8, make sure your database and tables are all set to the `utf8mb4` character set and collation, and that you use the `utf8mb4` character set in the PDO connection string. See example code below. This is *critically important*.

Note that you must use the `utf8mb4` character set for complete UTF-8 support, not the `utf8` character set! See Further Reading for why.

UTF-8 at the browser level

Use the `mb_http_output()` function to ensure that your PHP script outputs UTF-8 strings to your browser.

The browser will then need to be told by the HTTP response that this page should be considered as UTF-8. The historic approach to doing that was to include the charset `<meta>` tag[10] in your page's `<head>` tag. This approach is perfectly valid, but setting the charset in the `Content-Type` header is actually much faster[11].

```
1  <?php
2  // Tell PHP that we're using UTF-8 strings until the end of the script
3  mb_internal_encoding('UTF-8');
4
5  // Tell PHP that we'll be outputting UTF-8 to the browser
6  mb_http_output('UTF-8');
7
8  // Our UTF-8 test string
9  $string = 'Êl síla erin lû e-govaned vîn.';
10
11 // Transform the string in some way with a multibyte function
12 // Note how we cut the string at a non-Ascii character for demonstration purposes
13 $string = mb_substr($string, 0, 15);
14
15 // Connect to a database to store the transformed string
16 // See the PDO example in this document for more information
```

[9] https://packagist.org/packages/patchwork/utf8
[10] http://htmlpurifier.org/docs/enduser-utf8.html
[11] https://developers.google.com/speed/docs/best-practices/rendering#SpecifyCharsetEarly

```php
// Note the `charset=utf8mb4` in the Data Source Name (DSN)
$link = new PDO(
    'mysql:host=your-hostname;dbname=your-db;charset=utf8mb4',
    'your-username',
    'your-password',
    array(
        PDO::ATTR_ERRMODE => PDO::ERRMODE_EXCEPTION,
        PDO::ATTR_PERSISTENT => false
    )
);

// Store our transformed string as UTF-8 in our database
// Your DB and tables are in the utf8mb4 character set and collation, right?
$handle = $link->prepare('insert into ElvishSentences (Id, Body) values (?, ?)');
$handle->bindValue(1, 1, PDO::PARAM_INT);
$handle->bindValue(2, $string);
$handle->execute();

// Retrieve the string we just stored to prove it was stored correctly
$handle = $link->prepare('select * from ElvishSentences where Id = ?');
$handle->bindValue(1, 1, PDO::PARAM_INT);
$handle->execute();

// Store the result into an object that we'll output later in our HTML
$result = $handle->fetchAll(\PDO::FETCH_OBJ);

header('Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8');
?><!doctype html>
<html>
    <head>
        <meta charset="UTF-8">
        <title>UTF-8 test page</title>
    </head>
    <body>
        <?php
        foreach($result as $row){
            print($row->Body);  // This should correctly output our transformed UTF-8 stri\
ng to the browser
        }
        ?>
    </body>
</html>
```

Further reading

- PHP Manual: String Operations[12]
- PHP Manual: String Functions[13]
  - `strpos()`[14]
  - `strlen()`[15]
  - `substr()`[16]
- PHP Manual: Multibyte String Functions[17]
  - `mb_strpos()`[18]
  - `mb_strlen()`[19]
  - `mb_substr()`[20]
  - `mb_internal_encoding()`[21]
  - `mb_http_output()`[22]
  - `htmlentities()`[23]
  - `htmlspecialchars()`[24]
- PHP UTF-8 Cheatsheet[25]
- Handling UTF-8 with PHP[26]
- Stack Overflow: What factors make PHP Unicode-incompatible?[27]
- Stack Overflow: Best practices in PHP and MySQL with international strings[28]
- How to support full Unicode in MySQL databases[29]
- Bringing Unicode to PHP with Portable UTF-8[30]
- Stack Overflow: DOMDocument loadHTML does not encode UTF-8 correctly[31]

[12] http://php.net/language.operators.string
[13] http://php.net/ref.strings
[14] http://php.net/function.strpos
[15] http://php.net/function.strlen
[16] http://php.net/function.substr
[17] http://php.net/ref.mbstring
[18] http://php.net/function.mb-strpos
[19] http://php.net/function.mb-strlen
[20] http://php.net/function.mb-substr
[21] http://php.net/function.mb-internal-encoding
[22] http://php.net/function.mb-http-output
[23] http://php.net/function.htmlentities
[24] http://php.net/function.htmlspecialchars
[25] http://blog.loftdigital.com/blog/php-utf-8-cheatsheet
[26] http://www.phpwact.org/php/i18n/utf-8
[27] http://stackoverflow.com/questions/571694/what-factors-make-php-unicode-incompatible
[28] http://stackoverflow.com/questions/140728/best-practices-in-php-and-mysql-with-international-strings
[29] http://mathiasbynens.be/notes/mysql-utf8mb4
[30] http://www.sitepoint.com/bringing-unicode-to-php-with-portable-utf8/
[31] http://stackoverflow.com/questions/8218230/php-domdocument-loadhtml-not-encoding-utf-8-correctly

6. Dependency Injection

From Wikipedia[1]:

> Dependency injection is a software design pattern that allows the removal of hard-coded dependencies and makes it possible to change them, whether at run-time or compile-time.

This quote makes the concept sound much more complicated than it actually is. Dependency Injection is providing a component with its dependencies either through constructor injection, method calls or the setting of properties. It is that simple.

6.1 Basic Concept

We can demonstrate the concept with a simple, yet naive example.

Here we have a `Database` class that requires an adapter to speak to the database. We instantiate the adapter in the constructor and create a hard dependency. This makes testing difficult and means the `Database` class is very tightly coupled to the adapter.

```
1  <?php
2  namespace Database;
3
4  class Database
5  {
6      protected $adapter;
7
8      public function __construct()
9      {
10         $this->adapter = new MySqlAdapter;
11     }
12 }
13
14 class MysqlAdapter {}
```

This code can be refactored to use Dependency Injection and therefore loosen the dependency.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dependency_injection

```php
<?php
namespace Database;

class Database
{
    protected $adapter;

    public function __construct(MySqlAdapter $adapter)
    {
        $this->adapter = $adapter;
    }
}

class MysqlAdapter {}
```

Now we are giving the `Database` class its dependency rather than it creating it itself. We could even create a method that would accept an argument of the dependency and set it that way, or if the `$adapter` property was `public` we could set it directly.

6.2 Complex Problem

If you have ever read about Dependency Injection then you have probably seen the terms *"Inversion of Control"* or *"Dependency Inversion Principle"*. These are the complex problems that Dependency Injection solves.

Inversion of Control

Inversion of Control is as it says, "inverting the control" of a system by keeping organizational control entirely separate from our objects. In terms of Dependency Injection, this means loosening our dependencies by controlling and instantiating them elsewhere in the system.

For years, PHP frameworks have been achieving Inversion of Control, however, the question became, which part of control are you inverting, and where to? For example, MVC frameworks would generally provide a super object or base controller that other controllers must extend to gain access to its dependencies. This **is** Inversion of Control, however, instead of loosening dependencies, this method simply moved them.

Dependency Injection allows us to more elegantly solve this problem by only injecting the dependencies we need, when we need them, without the need for any hard coded dependencies at all.

Dependency Inversion Principle

Dependency Inversion Principle is the "D" in the S.O.L.I.D set of object oriented design principles that states one should *"Depend on Abstractions. Do not depend on concretions."*. Put simply, this means our dependencies should be interfaces/contracts or abstract classes rather than concrete implementations. We can easily refactor the above example to follow this principle.

```php
<?php
namespace Database;

class Database
{
    protected $adapter;

    public function __construct(AdapterInterface $adapter)
    {
        $this->adapter = $adapter;
    }
}

interface AdapterInterface {}

class MysqlAdapter implements AdapterInterface {}
```

There are several benefits to the `Database` class now depending on an interface rather than a concretion.

Consider that you are working in a team and the adapter is being worked on by a colleague. In our first example, we would have to wait for said colleague to finish the adapter before we could properly mock it for our unit tests. Now that the dependency is an interface/contract we can happily mock that interface knowing that our colleague will build the adapter based on that contract.

An even bigger benefit to this method is that our code is now much more scalable. If a year down the line we decide that we want to migrate to a different type of database, we can write an adapter that implements the original interface and inject that instead, no more refactoring would be required as we can ensure that the adapter follows the contract set by the interface.

6.3 Containers

The first thing you should understand about Dependency Injection Containers is that they are not the same thing as Dependency Injection. A container is a convenience utility that helps us implement Dependency Injection, however, they can be and often are misused to implement an anti-pattern, Service Location. Injecting a DI container as a Service Locator in to your classes arguably creates a harder dependency on the container than the dependency you are replacing. It also makes your code much less transparent and ultimately harder to test.

Most modern frameworks have their own Dependency Injection Container that allows you to wire your dependencies together through configuration. What this means in practice is that you can write application code that is as clean and de- coupled as the framework it is built on.

6.4 Further Reading

- Learning about Dependency Injection and PHP[2]

[2] http://ralphschindler.com/2011/05/18/learning-about-dependency-injection-and-php

- What is Dependency Injection?[3]
- Dependency Injection: An analogy[4]
- Dependency Injection: Huh?[5]
- Dependency Injection as a tool for testing[6]

[3] http://fabien.potencier.org/article/11/what-is-dependency-injection
[4] https://mwop.net/blog/260-Dependency-Injection-An-analogy.html
[5] http://net.tutsplus.com/tutorials/php/dependency-injection-huh/
[6] http://philipobenito.github.io/dependency-injection-as-a-tool-for-testing/

7. Databases

Many times your PHP code will use a database to persist information. You have a few options to connect and interact with your database. The recommended option **until PHP 5.1.0** was to use native drivers such as mysqli[1], pgsql[2], mssql[3], etc.

Native drivers are great if you are only using *one* database in your application, but if, for example, you are using MySQL and a little bit of MSSQL, or you need to connect to an Oracle database, then you will not be able to use the same drivers. You'll need to learn a brand new API for each database — and that can get silly.

7.1 MySQL Extension

The mysql[4] extension for PHP is incredibly old and has superseded by two other extensions:

- mysqli[5]
- pdo[6]

Not only did development stop long ago on mysql[7], but it was deprecated as of PHP 5.5.0[8], and **has been officially removed in PHP 7.0**[9].

To save digging into your `php.ini` settings to see which module you are using, one option is to search for `mysql_*` in your editor of choice. If any functions such as `mysql_connect()` and `mysql_query()` show up, then `mysql` is in use.

Even if you are not using PHP 7.0 yet, failing to consider this upgrade as soon as possible will lead to greater hardship when the PHP 7.0 upgrade does come about. The best option is to replace mysql usage with mysqli[10] or PDO[11] in your applications within your own development schedules so you won't be rushed later on.

If you are upgrading from mysql[12] to mysqli[13], beware lazy upgrade guides that suggest you can simply find and replace `mysql_*` with `mysqli_*`. Not only is that a gross oversimplification, it misses out on the advantages that mysqli provides, such as parameter binding, which is also offered in PDO[14].

---

[1] http://php.net/mysqli
[2] http://php.net/pgsql
[3] http://php.net/mssql
[4] http://php.net/mysql
[5] http://php.net/mysqli
[6] http://php.net/pdo
[7] http://php.net/mysql
[8] http://php.net/migration55.deprecated
[9] http://php.net/manual/en/migration70.removed-exts-sapis.php
[10] http://php.net/mysqli
[11] http://php.net/pdo
[12] http://php.net/mysql
[13] http://php.net/mysqli
[14] http://php.net/pdo

- PHP: Choosing an API for MySQL[15]
- PDO Tutorial for MySQL Developers[16]

7.2 PDO Extension

PDO[17] is a database connection abstraction library — built into PHP since 5.1.0 — that provides a common interface to talk with many different databases. For example, you can use basically identical code to interface with MySQL or SQLite:

```
<?php
// PDO + MySQL
$pdo = new PDO('mysql:host=example.com;dbname=database', 'user', 'password');
$statement = $pdo->query("SELECT some_field FROM some_table");
$row = $statement->fetch(PDO::FETCH_ASSOC);
echo htmlentities($row['some_field']);

// PDO + SQLite
$pdo = new PDO('sqlite:/path/db/foo.sqlite');
$statement = $pdo->query("SELECT some_field FROM some_table");
$row = $statement->fetch(PDO::FETCH_ASSOC);
echo htmlentities($row['some_field']);
```

PDO will not translate your SQL queries or emulate missing features; it is purely for connecting to multiple types of database with the same API.

More importantly, `PDO` allows you to safely inject foreign input (e.g. IDs) into your SQL queries without worrying about database SQL injection attacks. This is possible using PDO statements and bound parameters.

Let's assume a PHP script receives a numeric ID as a query parameter. This ID should be used to fetch a user record from a database. This is the `wrong` way to do this:

```
<?php
$pdo = new PDO('sqlite:/path/db/users.db');
$pdo->query("SELECT name FROM users WHERE id = " . $_GET['id']); // <-- NO!
```

This is terrible code. You are inserting a raw query parameter into a SQL query. This will get you hacked in a heartbeat, using a practice called SQL Injection[18]. Just imagine if a hacker passes in an inventive `id` parameter by calling a URL like `http://domain.com/?id=1%3BDELETE+FROM+users`. This will set the `$_GET['id']` variable to `1;DELETE FROM users` which will delete all of your users! Instead, you should sanitize the ID input using PDO bound parameters.

[15] http://php.net/mysqlinfo.api.choosing
[16] http://wiki.hashphp.org/PDO_Tutorial_for_MySQL_Developers
[17] http://php.net/pdo
[18] http://wiki.hashphp.org/Validation

```
<?php
$pdo = new PDO('sqlite:/path/db/users.db');
$stmt = $pdo->prepare('SELECT name FROM users WHERE id = :id');
$id = filter_input(INPUT_GET, 'id', FILTER_SANITIZE_NUMBER_INT); // <-- filter your data f\
irst (see [Data Filtering](#data_filtering)), especially important for INSERT, UPDATE, etc\
.
$stmt->bindParam(':id', $id, PDO::PARAM_INT); // <-- Automatically sanitized for SQL by PDO
$stmt->execute();
```

This is correct code. It uses a bound parameter on a PDO statement. This escapes the foreign input ID before it is introduced to the database preventing potential SQL injection attacks.

For writes, such as INSERT or UPDATE, it's especially critical to still filter your data first and sanitize it for other things (removal of HTML tags, JavaScript, etc). PDO will only sanitize it for SQL, not for your application.

- Learn about PDO[19]

You should also be aware that database connections use up resources and it was not unheard-of to have resources exhausted if connections were not implicitly closed, however this was more common in other languages. Using PDO you can implicitly close the connection by destroying the object by ensuring all remaining references to it are deleted, i.e. set to NULL. If you don't do this explicitly, PHP will automatically close the connection when your script ends - unless of course you are using persistent connections.

- Learn about PDO connections[20]

7.3 Interacting with Databases

When developers first start to learn PHP, they often end up mixing their database interaction up with their presentation logic, using code that might look like this:

```
<ul>
<?php
foreach ($db->query('SELECT * FROM table') as $row) {
    echo "<li>".$row['field1']." - ".$row['field1']."</li>";
}
?>
</ul>
```

This is bad practice for all sorts of reasons, mainly that it's hard to debug, hard to test, hard to read and it is going to output a lot of fields if you don't put a limit on there.

While there are many other solutions to doing this - depending on if you prefer OOP[21] or functional programming[22] - there must be some element of separation.

[19] http://php.net/book.pdo
[20] http://php.net/pdo.connections
[21] /#object-oriented-programming
[22] /#functional-programming

Consider the most basic step:

```php
<?php
function getAllFoos($db) {
    return $db->query('SELECT * FROM table');
}

foreach (getAllFoos($db) as $row) {
    echo "<li>".$row['field1']." - ".$row['field1']."</li>"; // BAD!!
}
```

That is a good start. Put those two items in two different files and you've got some clean separation.

Create a class to place that method in and you have a "Model". Create a simple `.php` file to put the presentation logic in and you have a "View", which is very nearly MVC[23] - a common OOP architecture for most frameworks[24].

foo.php

```php
<?php
$db = new PDO('mysql:host=localhost;dbname=testdb;charset=utf8', 'username', 'password');

// Make your model available
include 'models/FooModel.php';

// Create an instance
$fooModel = new FooModel($db);
// Get the list of Foos
$fooList = $fooModel->getAllFoos();

// Show the view
include 'views/foo-list.php';
```

models/FooModel.php

[23] http://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/mvc-for-noobs--net-10488

[24] /#frameworks

```php
<?php
class FooModel
{
    protected $db;

    public function __construct(PDO $db)
    {
        $this->db = $db;
    }

    public function getAllFoos() {
        return $this->db->query('SELECT * FROM table');
    }
}
```

views/foo-list.php

```php
<?php foreach ($fooList as $row): ?>
    <?= $row['field1'] ?> - <?= $row['field1'] ?>
<?php endforeach ?>
```

This is essentially the same as what most modern frameworks are doing, albeit a little more manual. You might not need to do all of that every time, but mixing together too much presentation logic and database interaction can be a real problem if you ever want to unit-test[25] your application.

PHPBridge[26] has a great resource called Creating a Data Class[27] which covers a very similar topic, and is great for developers just getting used to the concept of interacting with databases.

7.4 Abstraction Layers

Many frameworks provide their own abstraction layer which may or may not sit on top of PDO[28]. These will often emulate features for one database system that is missing from another by wrapping your queries in PHP methods, giving you actual database abstraction instead of just the connection abstraction that PDO provides. This will of course add a little overhead, but if you are building a portable application that needs to work with MySQL, PostgreSQL and SQLite then a little overhead will be worth it the sake of code cleanliness.

Some abstraction layers have been built using the PSR-0[29] or PSR-4[30] namespace standards so can be installed in any application you like:

- Aura SQL[31]

[25] /#unit-testing
[26] http://phpbridge.org/
[27] http://phpbridge.org/intro-to-php/creating_a_data_class
[28] http://php.net/book.pdo
[29] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-0/
[30] http://www.php-fig.org/psr/psr-4/
[31] https://github.com/auraphp/Aura.Sql

- Doctrine2 DBAL[32]
- Propel[33]
- Zend-db[34]

[32] http://www.doctrine-project.org/projects/dbal.html
[33] http://propelorm.org/
[34] https://packages.zendframework.com/docs/latest/manual/en/index.html#zendframework/zend-db

8. Templating

Templates provide a convenient way of separating your controller and domain logic from your presentation logic. Templates typically contain the HTML of your application, but may also be used for other formats, such as XML. Templates are often referred to as "views", which make up **part of** the second component of the modelâ€"viewâ€"controller[1] (MVC) software architecture pattern.

8.1 Benefits

The main benefit to using templates is the clear separation they create between the presentation logic and the rest of your application. Templates have the sole responsibility of displaying formatted content. They are not responsible for data lookup, persistence or other more complex tasks. This leads to cleaner, more readable code which is especially helpful in a team environment where developers work on the server-side code (controllers, models) and designers work on the client-side code (markup).

Templates also improve the organization of presentation code. Templates are typically placed in a "views" folder, each defined within a single file. This approach encourages code reuse where larger blocks of code are broken into smaller, reusable pieces, often called partials. For example, your site header and footer can each be defined as templates, which are then included before and after each page template.

Finally, depending on the library you use, templates can offer more security by automatically escaping user-generated content. Some libraries even offer sand-boxing, where template designers are only given access to white-listed variables and functions.

8.2 Plain PHP Templates

Plain PHP templates are simply templates that use native PHP code. They are a natural choice since PHP is actually a template language itself. That simply means that you can combine PHP code within other code, like HTML. This is beneficial to PHP developers as there is no new syntax to learn, they know the functions available to them, and their code editors already have PHP syntax highlighting and auto-completion built-in. Further, plain PHP templates tend to be very fast as no compiling stage is required.

Every modern PHP framework employs some kind of template system, most of which use plain PHP by default. Outside of frameworks, libraries like Plates[2] or Aura.View[3] make working with plain PHP templates easier by offering modern template functionality such as inheritance, layouts and extensions.

Simple example of a plain PHP template

Using the Plates[4] library.

[1] http://phptherightway.com/pages/Design-Patterns.html#model-view-controller
[2] http://platesphp.com/
[3] https://github.com/auraphp/Aura.View
[4] http://platesphp.com/

```php
<?php // user_profile.php ?>

<?php $this->insert('header', ['title' => 'User Profile']) ?>

<h1>User Profile</h1>
<p>Hello, <?=$this->escape($name)?></p>

<?php $this->insert('footer') ?>
```

Example of plain PHP templates using inheritance

Using the Plates[5] library.

```php
<?php // template.php ?>

<html>
<head>
    <title><?=$title?></title>
</head>
<body>

<main>
    <?=$this->section('content')?>
</main>

</body>
</html>
```

```php
<?php // user_profile.php ?>

<?php $this->layout('template', ['title' => 'User Profile']) ?>

<h1>User Profile</h1>
<p>Hello, <?=$this->escape($name)?></p>
```

8.3 Compiled Templates

While PHP has evolved into a mature, object oriented language, it hasn't improved much[6] as a templating language. Compiled templates, like Twig[7], Brainy[8], or Smarty[9]*, fill this void by offering a new syntax that

[5] http://platesphp.com/
[6] http://fabien.potencier.org/article/34/templating-engines-in-php
[7] http://twig.sensiolabs.org/
[8] https://github.com/box/brainy
[9] http://www.smarty.net/

has been geared specifically to templating. From automatic escaping, to inheritance and simplified control structures, compiled templates are designed to be easier to write, cleaner to read and safer to use. Compiled templates can even be shared across different languages, Mustache[10] being a good example of this. Since these templates must be compiled there is a slight performance hit, however this is very minimal when proper caching is used.

**While Smarty offers automatic escaping, this feature is NOT enabled by default.*

Simple example of a compiled template

Using the Twig[11] library.

```
{% raw %}
{% include 'header.html' with {'title': 'User Profile'} %}

<h1>User Profile</h1>
<p>Hello, {{ name }}</p>

{% include 'footer.html' %}
{% endraw %}
```

Example of compiled templates using inheritance

Using the Twig[12] library.

```
{% raw %}
// template.html

<html>
<head>
    <title>{% block title %}{% endblock %}</title>
</head>
<body>

<main>
    {% block content %}{% endblock %}
</main>

</body>
</html>
{% endraw %}
```

[10] http://mustache.github.io/
[11] http://twig.sensiolabs.org/
[12] http://twig.sensiolabs.org/

```
{% raw %}
// user_profile.html

{% extends "template.html" %}

{% block title %}User Profile{% endblock %}
{% block content %}
    <h1>User Profile</h1>
    <p>Hello, {{ name }}</p>
{% endblock %}
{% endraw %}
```

8.4 Further Reading

Articles & Tutorials

- Templating Engines in PHP[13]
- An Introduction to Views & Templating in CodeIgniter[14]
- Getting Started With PHP Templating[15]
- Roll Your Own Templating System in PHP[16]
- Master Pages[17]
- Working With Templates in Symfony 2[18]
- Writing Safer Templates[19]

Libraries

- Aura.View[20] *(native)*
- Blade[21] *(compiled, framework specific)*
- Brainy[22] *(compiled)*
- Dwoo[23] *(compiled)*
- Latte[24] *(compiled)*
- Mustache[25] *(compiled)*

[13] http://fabien.potencier.org/article/34/templating-engines-in-php
[14] http://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/an-introduction-to-views-templating-in-codeigniter--net-25648
[15] http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2011/10/17/getting-started-with-php-templating/
[16] http://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/roll-your-own-templating-system-in-php--net-16596
[17] https://laracasts.com/series/laravel-from-scratch/episodes/7
[18] http://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/working-with-templates-in-symfony-2--cms-21172
[19] https://github.com/box/brainy/wiki/Writing-Safe-Templates
[20] https://github.com/auraphp/Aura.View
[21] http://laravel.com/docs/blade
[22] https://github.com/box/brainy
[23] http://dwoo.org/
[24] https://github.com/nette/latte
[25] https://github.com/bobthecow/mustache.php

- PHPTAL[26] *(compiled)*
- Plates[27] *(native)*
- Smarty[28] *(compiled)*
- Twig[29] *(compiled)*
- ZendView[30] *(native, framework specific)*

[26] http://phptal.org/
[27] http://platesphp.com/
[28] http://www.smarty.net/
[29] http://twig.sensiolabs.org/
[30] http://framework.zend.com/manual/2.3/en/modules/zend.view.quick-start.html

9. Errors and Exceptions

9.1 Errors

In many "exception-heavy" programming languages, whenever anything goes wrong an exception will be thrown. This is certainly a viable way to do things, but PHP is an "exception-light" programming language. While it does have exceptions and more of the core is starting to use them when working with objects, most of PHP itself will try to keep processing regardless of what happens, unless a fatal error occurs.

For example:

```
$ php -a
php > echo $foo;
Notice: Undefined variable: foo in php shell code on line 1
```

This is only a notice error, and PHP will happily carry on. This can be confusing for those coming from "exception-heavy" languages, because referencing a missing variable in Python for example will throw an exception:

```
$ python
>>> print foo
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
NameError: name 'foo' is not defined
```

The only real difference is that Python will freak out over any small thing, so that developers can be super sure any potential issue or edge-case is caught, whereas PHP will keep on processing unless something extreme happens, at which point it will throw an error and report it.

Error Severity

PHP has several levels of error severity. The three most common types of messages are errors, notices and warnings. These have different levels of severity; `E_ERROR`, `E_NOTICE`, and `E_WARNING`. Errors are fatal run-time errors and are usually caused by faults in your code and need to be fixed as they'll cause PHP to stop executing. Notices are advisory messages caused by code that may or may not cause problems during the execution of the script, execution is not halted. Warnings are non-fatal errors, execution of the script will not be halted.

Another type of error message reported at compile time are `E_STRICT` messages. These messages are used to suggest changes to your code to help ensure best interoperability and forward compatibility with upcoming versions of PHP.

Changing PHP's Error Reporting Behaviour

Error Reporting can be changed by using PHP settings and/or PHP function calls. Using the built in PHP function `error_reporting()` you can set the level of errors for the duration of the script execution by passing one of the predefined error level constants, meaning if you only want to see Errors and Warnings - but not Notices - then you can configure that:

```
1  <?php
2  error_reporting(E_ERROR | E_WARNING);
```

You can also control whether or not errors are displayed to the screen (good for development) or hidden, and logged (good for production). For more information on this check out the Error Reporting[1] section.

Inline Error Suppression

You can also tell PHP to suppress specific errors with the Error Control Operator `@`. You put this operator at the beginning of an expression, and any error that's a direct result of the expression is silenced.

```
1  <?php
2  echo @$foo['bar'];
```

This will output `$foo['bar']` if it exists, but will simply return a null and print nothing if the variable `$foo` or `'bar'` key does not exist. Without the error control operator, this expression could create a `PHP Notice: Undefined variable: foo` or `PHP Notice: Undefined index: bar` error.

This might seem like a good idea, but there are a few undesirable tradeoffs. PHP handles expressions using an `@` in a less performant way than expressions without an `@`. Premature optimization may be the root of all programming arguments, but if performance is particularly important for your application/library it's important to understand the error control operator's performance implications.

Secondly, the error control operator **completely** swallows the error. The error is not displayed, and the error is not sent to the error log. Also, stock/production PHP systems have no way to turn off the error control operator. While you may be correct that the error you're seeing is harmless, a different, less harmless error will be just as silent.

If there's a way to avoid the error suppression operator, you should consider it. For example, our code above could be rewritten like this:

```
1  <?php
2  echo isset($foo['bar']) ? $foo['bar'] : '';
```

One instance where error suppression might make sense is where `fopen()` fails to find a file to load. You could check for the existence of the file before you try to load it, but if the file is deleted after the check and before the `fopen()` (which might sound impossible, but it can happen) then `fopen()` will return false *and* throw an

[1] /#error_reporting

error. This is potentially something PHP should resolve, but is one case where error suppression might seem like the only valid solution.

Earlier we mentioned there's no way in a stock PHP system to turn off the error control operator. However, Xdebug[2] has an `xdebug.scream` ini setting which will disable the error control operator. You can set this via your `php.ini` file with the following.

```
xdebug.scream = On
```

You can also set this value at runtime with the `ini_set` function

```
<?php
ini_set('xdebug.scream', '1')
```

The "Scream[3]" PHP extension offers similar functionality to Xdebug's, although Scream's ini setting is named `scream.enabled`.

This is most useful when you're debugging code and suspect an informative error is suppressed. Use scream with care, and as a temporary debugging tool. There's lots of PHP library code that may not work with the error control operator disabled.

- Error Control Operators[4]
- SitePoint[5]
- Xdebug[6]
- Scream[7]

ErrorException

PHP is perfectly capable of being an "exception-heavy" programming language, and only requires a few lines of code to make the switch. Basically you can throw your "errors" as "exceptions" using the `ErrorException` class, which extends the `Exception` class.

This is a common practice implemented by a large number of modern frameworks such as Symfony and Laravel. By default Laravel will display all errors as exceptions using the Whoops![8] package if the `app.debug` switch is turned on, then hide them if the switch is turned off.

By throwing errors as exceptions in development you can handle them better than the usual result, and if you see an exception during development you can wrap it in a catch statement with specific instructions on how to handle the situation. Each exception you catch instantly makes your application that little bit more robust.

More information on this and details on how to use `ErrorException` with error handling can be found at ErrorException Class[9].

[2] http://xdebug.org/docs/basic
[3] http://php.net/book.scream
[4] http://php.net/language.operators.errorcontrol
[5] http://www.sitepoint.com/
[6] http://xdebug.org/docs/basic
[7] http://php.net/book.scream
[8] http://filp.github.io/whoops/
[9] http://php.net/class.errorexception

- Error Control Operators[10]
- Predefined Constants for Error Handling[11]
- `error_reporting()`[12]
- Reporting[13]

9.2 Exceptions

Exceptions are a standard part of most popular programming languages, but they are often overlooked by PHP programmers. Languages like Ruby are extremely Exception heavy, so whenever something goes wrong such as a HTTP request failing, or a DB query goes wrong, or even if an image asset could not be found, Ruby (or the gems being used) will throw an exception to the screen meaning you instantly know there is a mistake.

PHP itself is fairly lax with this, and a call to `file_get_contents()` will usually just get you a `FALSE` and a warning. Many older PHP frameworks like CodeIgniter will just return a false, log a message to their proprietary logs and maybe let you use a method like `$this->upload->get_error()` to see what went wrong. The problem here is that you have to go looking for a mistake and check the docs to see what the error method is for this class, instead of having it made extremely obvious.

Another problem is when classes automatically throw an error to the screen and exit the process. When you do this you stop another developer from being able to dynamically handle that error. Exceptions should be thrown to make a developer aware of an error; they then can choose how to handle this. E.g.:

```
1  <?php
2  $email = new Fuel\Email;
3  $email->subject('My Subject');
4  $email->body('How the heck are you?');
5  $email->to('guy@example.com', 'Some Guy');
6
7  try
8  {
9      $email->send();
10 }
11 catch(Fuel\Email\ValidationFailedException $e)
12 {
13     // The validation failed
14 }
15 catch(Fuel\Email\SendingFailedException $e)
16 {
17     // The driver could not send the email
18 }
19 finally
20 {
```

[10] http://php.net/language.operators.errorcontrol
[11] http://php.net/errorfunc.constants
[12] http://php.net/function.error-reporting
[13] /#error_reporting

```
21      // Executed regardless of whether an exception has been thrown, and before normal exec\
22  ution resumes
23  }
```

SPL Exceptions

The generic `Exception` class provides very little debugging context for the developer; however, to remedy this, it is possible to create a specialized `Exception` type by sub-classing the generic `Exception` class:

```
1  <?php
2  class ValidationException extends Exception {}
```

This means you can add multiple catch blocks and handle different Exceptions differently. This can lead to the creation of a lot of custom Exceptions, some of which could have been avoided using the SPL Exceptions provided in the SPL extension[14].

If for example you use the `__call()` Magic Method and an invalid method is requested then instead of throwing a standard Exception which is vague, or creating a custom Exception just for that, you could just `throw new BadMethodCallException;`.

- Read about Exceptions[15]
- Read about SPL Exceptions[16]
- Nesting Exceptions In PHP[17]
- Exception Best Practices in PHP 5.3[18]

[14] /#standard_php_library
[15] http://php.net/language.exceptions
[16] http://php.net/spl.exceptions
[17] http://www.brandonsavage.net/exceptional-php-nesting-exceptions-in-php/
[18] http://ralphschindler.com/2010/09/15/exception-best-practices-in-php-5-3

10. Security

10.1 Web Application Security

There are bad people ready and willing to exploit your web application. It is important that you take necessary precautions to harden your web application's security. Luckily, the fine folks at The Open Web Application Security Project[1] (OWASP) have compiled a comprehensive list of known security issues and methods to protect yourself against them. This is a must read for the security-conscious developer. Survive The Deep End: PHP Security[2] by Padraic Brady is also another good web application security guide for PHP.

- Read the OWASP Security Guide[3]

10.2 Password Hashing

Eventually everyone builds a PHP application that relies on user login. Usernames and passwords are stored in a database and later used to authenticate users upon login.

It is important that you properly *hash*[4] passwords before storing them. Password hashing is an irreversible, one-way function performed against the user's password. This produces a fixed-length string that cannot be feasibly reversed. This means you can compare a hash against another to determine if they both came from the same source string, but you cannot determine the original string. If passwords are not hashed and your database is accessed by an unauthorized third-party, all user accounts are now compromised.

Passwords should also be individually *salted*[5] by adding a random string to each password before hashing. This prevents dictionary attacks and the use of "rainbow tables" (a reverse list of crytographic hashes for common passwords.)

Hashing and salting are vital as often users use the same password for multiple services and password quality can be poor.

Fortunately, nowadays PHP makes this easy.

Hashing passwords with `password_hash`

In PHP 5.5 `password_hash()` was introduced. At this time it is using BCrypt, the strongest algorithm currently supported by PHP. It will be updated in the future to support more algorithms as needed though. The `password_compat` library was created to provide forward compatibility for PHP >= 5.3.7.

Below we hash a string, and then check the hash against a new string. Because our two source strings are different ('secret-password' vs. 'bad-password') this login will fail.

[1] http://php.net/book.filter
[2] http://php.net/filter.filters.validate
[3] http://php.net/filter.filters.sanitize
[4] http://php.net/filter.filters.validate
[5] http://php.net/function.filter-input

```php
<?php
require 'password.php';

$passwordHash = password_hash('secret-password', PASSWORD_DEFAULT);

if (password_verify('bad-password', $passwordHash)) {
    // Correct Password
} else {
    // Wrong password
}
```

`password_hash()` takes care of password salting for you. The salt is stored, along with the algorithm and "cost", as part of the hash. `password_verify()` extracts this to determine how to check the password, so you don't need a separate database field to store your salts.

- Learn about `password_hash()`[6]
- `password_compat` for PHP >= 5.3.7 && < 5.5[7]
- Learn about hashing in regards to cryptography[8]
- Learn about salts[9]
- PHP `password_hash()` RFC[10]

10.3 Data Filtering

Never ever (ever) trust foreign input introduced to your PHP code. Always sanitize and validate foreign input before using it in code. The `filter_var()` and `filter_input()` functions can sanitize text and validate text formats (e.g. email addresses).

Foreign input can be anything: `$_GET` and `$_POST` form input data, some values in the `$_SERVER` superglobal, and the HTTP request body via `fopen('php://input', 'r')`. Remember, foreign input is not limited to form data submitted by the user. Uploaded and downloaded files, session values, cookie data, and data from third-party web services are foreign input, too.

While foreign data can be stored, combined, and accessed later, it is still foreign input. Every time you process, output, concatenate, or include data in your code, ask yourself if the data is filtered properly and can it be trusted.

Data may be *filtered* differently based on its purpose. For example, when unfiltered foreign input is passed into HTML page output, it can execute HTML and JavaScript on your site! This is known as Cross-Site Scripting (XSS) and can be a very dangerous attack. One way to avoid XSS is to sanitize all user-generated data before outputting it to your page by removing HTML tags with the `strip_tags()` function or escaping characters

[6] http://php.net/book.filter
[7] http://php.net/filter.filters.sanitize
[8] http://php.net/filter.filters.validate
[9] http://php.net/function.filter-input
[10] http://php.net/function.filter-var

with special meaning into their respective HTML entities with the `htmlentities()` or `htmlspecialchars()` functions.

Another example is passing options to be executed on the command line. This can be extremely dangerous (and is usually a bad idea), but you can use the built-in `escapeshellarg()` function to sanitize the executed command's arguments.

One last example is accepting foreign input to determine a file to load from the filesystem. This can be exploited by changing the filename to a file path. You need to remove `"/"`, `"../"`, null bytes[11], or other characters from the file path so it can't load hidden, non-public, or sensitive files.

- Learn about data filtering[12]
- Learn about `filter_var`[13]
- Learn about `filter_input`[14]
- Learn about handling null bytes[15]

Sanitization

Sanitization removes (or escapes) illegal or unsafe characters from foreign input.

For example, you should sanitize foreign input before including the input in HTML or inserting it into a raw SQL query. When you use bound parameters with PDO, it will sanitize the input for you.

Sometimes it is required to allow some safe HTML tags in the input when including it in the HTML page. This is very hard to do and many avoid it by using other more restricted formatting like Markdown or BBCode, although whitelisting libraries like HTML Purifier[16] exists for this reason.

See Sanitization Filters[17]

Unserialization

It is dangerous to `unserialize()` data from users or other untrusted sources. Doing so can allow malicious users to instantiate objects (with user-defined properties) whose destructors will be executed, **even if the objects themselves aren't used**. You should therefore avoid unserializing untrusted data.

If you absolutely must unserialize data from untrusted sources, use PHP 7's `allowed_classes`[18] option to restrict which object types are allowed to be unserialized.

[11] http://php.net/security.filesystem.nullbytes
[12] http://php.net/book.filter
[13] http://php.net/function.filter-var
[14] http://php.net/function.filter-input
[15] http://php.net/security.filesystem.nullbytes
[16] http://htmlpurifier.org/
[17] http://php.net/filter.filters.sanitize
[18] https://secure.php.net/manual/en/function.unserialize.php

Validation

Validation ensures that foreign input is what you expect. For example, you may want to validate an email address, a phone number, or age when processing a registration submission.

See Validation Filters[19]

10.4 Configuration Files

When creating configuration files for your applications, best practices recommend that one of the following methods be followed:

- It is recommended that you store your configuration information where it cannot be accessed directly and pulled in via the file system.
- If you must store your configuration files in the document root, name the files with a `.php` extension. This ensures that, even if the script is accessed directly, it will not be output as plain text.
- Information in configuration files should be protected accordingly, either through encryption or group/user file system permissions.
- It is a good idea to ensure that you do not commit configuration files containing sensitive information e.g. passwords or API tokens to source control.

10.5 Register Globals

NOTE: As of PHP 5.4.0 the `register_globals` setting has been removed and can no longer be used. This is only included as a warning for anyone in the process of upgrading a legacy application.

When enabled, the `register_globals` configuration setting that makes several types of variables (including ones from `$_POST`, `$_GET` and `$_REQUEST`) available in the global scope of your application. This can easily lead to security issues as your application cannot effectively tell where the data is coming from.

For example: `$_GET['foo']` would be available via `$foo`, which can override variables that have not been declared. If you are using PHP < 5.4.0 **make sure** that `register_globals` is **off**.

- Register_globals in the PHP manual[20]

10.6 Error Reporting

Error logging can be useful in finding the problem spots in your application, but it can also expose information about the structure of your application to the outside world. To effectively protect your application from issues that could be caused by the output of these messages, you need to configure your server differently in development versus production (live).

Development

To show every possible error during **development**, configure the following settings in your `php.ini`:

[19] http://php.net/filter.filters.validate
[20] http://php.net/security.globals

```
display_errors = On
display_startup_errors = On
error_reporting = -1
log_errors = On
```

> Passing in the value `-1` will show every possible error, even when new levels and constants are added in future PHP versions. The `E_ALL` constant also behaves this way as of PHP 5.4. - php.net[21]

The `E_STRICT` error level constant was introduced in 5.3.0 and is not part of `E_ALL`, however it became part of `E_ALL` in 5.4.0. What does this mean? In terms of reporting every possible error in version 5.3 it means you must use either `-1` or `E_ALL | E_STRICT`.

Reporting every possible error by PHP version

- < 5.3 `-1` or `E_ALL`
- 5.3 `-1` or `E_ALL | E_STRICT`
- > 5.3 `-1` or `E_ALL`

Production

To hide errors on your **production** environment, configure your `php.ini` as:

```
display_errors = Off
display_startup_errors = Off
error_reporting = E_ALL
log_errors = On
```

With these settings in production, errors will still be logged to the error logs for the web server, but will not be shown to the user. For more information on these settings, see the PHP manual:

- error_reporting[22]
- display_errors[23]
- display_startup_errors[24]
- log_errors[25]

[21] http://php.net/function.error-reporting
[22] http://php.net/errorfunc.configuration#ini.error-reporting
[23] http://php.net/errorfunc.configuration#ini.display-errors
[24] http://php.net/errorfunc.configuration#ini.display-startup-errors
[25] http://php.net/errorfunc.configuration#ini.log-errors

11. Testing

Writing automated tests for your PHP code is considered a best practice and can lead to well-built applications. Automated tests are a great tool for making sure your application does not break when you are making changes or adding new functionality and should not be ignored.

There are several different types of testing tools (or frameworks) available for PHP, which use different approaches - all of which are trying to avoid manual testing and the need for large Quality Assurance teams, just to make sure recent changes didn't break existing functionality.

11.1 Test Driven Development

From Wikipedia[1]:

> Test-driven development (TDD) is a software development process that relies on the repetition of a very short development cycle: first the developer writes a failing automated test case that defines a desired improvement or new function, then produces code to pass that test and finally refactors the new code to acceptable standards. Kent Beck, who is credited with having developed or 'rediscovered' the technique, stated in 2003 that TDD encourages simple designs and inspires confidence.

There are several different types of testing that you can do for your application:

Unit Testing

Unit Testing is a programming approach to ensure functions, classes and methods are working as expected, from the point you build them all the way through the development cycle. By checking values going in and out of various functions and methods, you can make sure the internal logic is working correctly. By using Dependency Injection and building "mock" classes and stubs you can verify that dependencies are correctly used for even better test coverage.

When you create a class or function you should create a unit test for each behavior it must have. At a very basic level you should make sure it errors if you send it bad arguments and make sure it works if you send it valid arguments. This will help ensure that when you make changes to this class or function later on in the development cycle that the old functionality continues to work as expected. The only alternative to this would be `var_dump()` in a test.php, which is no way to build an application - large or small.

The other use for unit tests is contributing to open source. If you can write a test that shows broken functionality (i.e. fails), then fix it, and show the test passing, patches are much more likely to be accepted. If you run a project which accepts pull requests then you should suggest this as a requirement.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Test-driven_development

PHPUnit[2] is the de-facto testing framework for writing unit tests for PHP applications, but there are several alternatives

- atoum[3]
- Kahlan[4]
- Peridot[5]
- SimpleTest[6]

Integration Testing

From Wikipedia[7]:

> Integration testing (sometimes called Integration and Testing, abbreviated "I&T") is the phase in software testing in which individual software modules are combined and tested as a group. It occurs after unit testing and before validation testing. Integration testing takes as its input modules that have been unit tested, groups them in larger aggregates, applies tests defined in an integration test plan to those aggregates, and delivers as its output the integrated system ready for system testing.

Many of the same tools that can be used for unit testing can be used for integration testing as many of the same principles are used.

Functional Testing

Sometimes also known as acceptance testing, functional testing consists of using tools to create automated tests that actually use your application instead of just verifying that individual units of code are behaving correctly and that individual units can speak to each other correctly. These tools typically work using real data and simulating actual users of the application.

Functional Testing Tools

- Selenium[8]
- Mink[9]
- Codeception[10] is a full-stack testing framework that includes acceptance testing tools
- Storyplayer[11] is a full-stack testing framework that includes support for creating and destroying test environments on demand

[2] http://phpunit.de
[3] https://github.com/atoum/atoum
[4] https://github.com/crysalead/kahlan
[5] http://peridot-php.github.io/
[6] http://simpletest.org
[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integration_testing
[8] http://seleniumhq.com
[9] http://mink.behat.org
[10] http://codeception.com
[11] http://datasift.github.io/storyplayer

11.2 Behavior Driven Development

There are two different types of Behavior-Driven Development (BDD): SpecBDD and StoryBDD. SpecBDD focuses on technical behavior of code, while StoryBDD focuses on business or feature behaviors or interactions. PHP has frameworks for both types of BDD.

With StoryBDD, you write human-readable stories that describe the behavior of your application. These stories can then be run as actual tests against your application. The framework used in PHP applications for StoryBDD is Behat[12], which is inspired by Ruby's Cucumber[13] project and implements the Gherkin DSL for describing feature behavior.

With SpecBDD, you write specifications that describe how your actual code should behave. Instead of testing a function or method, you are describing how that function or method should behave. PHP offers the PHPSpec[14] framework for this purpose. This framework is inspired by the RSpec project[15] for Ruby.

BDD Links

- Behat[16], the StoryBDD framework for PHP, inspired by Ruby's Cucumber[17] project;
- PHPSpec[18], the SpecBDD framework for PHP, inspired by Ruby's RSpec[19] project;
- Codeception[20] is a full-stack testing framework that uses BDD principles.

11.3 Complementary Testing Tools

Besides individual testing and behavior driven frameworks, there are also a number of generic frameworks and helper libraries useful for any preferred approach taken.

Tool Links

- Selenium[21] is a browser automation tool which can be integrated with PHPUnit[22]
- Mockery[23] is a Mock Object Framework which can be integrated with PHPUnit[24] or PHPSpec[25]
- Prophecy[26] is a highly opinionated yet very powerful and flexible PHP object mocking framework. It's integrated with PHPSpec[27] and can be used with PHPUnit[28].

[12] http://behat.org/
[13] http://cukes.info/
[14] http://www.phpspec.net/
[15] http://rspec.info/
[16] http://behat.org/
[17] http://cukes.info/
[18] http://www.phpspec.net/
[19] http://rspec.info/
[20] http://codeception.com/
[21] http://seleniumhq.org/
[22] https://github.com/giorgiosironi/phpunit-selenium/
[23] https://github.com/padraic/mockery
[24] http://phpunit.de/
[25] http://www.phpspec.net/
[26] https://github.com/phpspec/prophecy
[27] http://www.phpspec.net/
[28] http://phpunit.de/

12. Servers and Deployment

PHP applications can be deployed and run on production web servers in a number of ways.

12.1 Platform as a Service (PaaS)

PaaS provides the system and network architecture necessary to run PHP applications on the web. This means little to no configuration for launching PHP applications or PHP frameworks.

Recently PaaS has become a popular method for deploying, hosting, and scaling PHP applications of all sizes. You can find a list of PHP PaaS "Platform as a Service" providers in our resources section.

12.2 Virtual or Dedicated Servers

If you are comfortable with systems administration, or are interested in learning it, virtual or dedicated servers give you complete control of your application's production environment.

nginx and PHP-FPM

PHP, via PHP's built-in FastCGI Process Manager (FPM), pairs really nicely with nginx[1], which is a lightweight, high-performance web server. It uses less memory than Apache and can better handle more concurrent requests. This is especially important on virtual servers that don't have much memory to spare.

- Read more on nginx[2]
- Read more on PHP-FPM[3]
- Read more on setting up nginx and PHP-FPM securely[4]

Apache and PHP

PHP and Apache have a long history together. Apache is wildly configurable and has many available modules[5] to extend functionality. It is a popular choice for shared servers and an easy setup for PHP frameworks and open source apps like WordPress. Unfortunately, Apache uses more resources than nginx by default and cannot handle as many visitors at the same time.

Apache has several possible configurations for running PHP. The most common and easiest to setup is the prefork MPM[6] with mod_php5. While it isn't the most memory efficient, it is the simplest to get working and

[1] http://nginx.org/
[2] http://nginx.org/
[3] http://php.net/install.fpm
[4] https://nealpoole.com/blog/2011/04/setting-up-php-fastcgi-and-nginx-dont-trust-the-tutorials-check-your-configuration/
[5] http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.4/mod/
[6] http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.4/mod/prefork.html

to use. This is probably the best choice if you don't want to dig too deeply into the server administration aspects. Note that if you use mod_php5 you MUST use the prefork MPM.

Alternatively, if you want to squeeze more performance and stability out of Apache then you can take advantage of the same FPM system as nginx and run the worker MPM[7] or event MPM[8] with mod_fastcgi or mod_fcgid. This configuration will be significantly more memory efficient and much faster but it is more work to set up.

If you are running Apache 2.4 or later, you can use mod_proxy_fcgi[9] to get great performance that is easy to setup.

- Read more on Apache[10]
- Read more on Multi-Processing Modules[11]
- Read more on mod_fastcgi[12]
- Read more on mod_fcgid[13]
- Read more on mod_proxy_fcgi[14]
- Read more on setting up Apache and PHP-FPM with mod_proxy_fcgi[15]

12.3 Shared Servers

PHP has shared servers to thank for its popularity. It is hard to find a host without PHP installed, but be sure it's the latest version. Shared servers allow you and other developers to deploy websites to a single machine. The upside to this is that it has become a cheap commodity. The downside is that you never know what kind of a ruckus your neighboring tenants are going to create; loading down the server or opening up security holes are the main concerns. If your project's budget can afford to avoid shared servers, you should.

To make sure your shared servers are offering the latest versions of PHP, check out PHP Versions[16].

12.4 Building and Deploying your Application

If you find yourself doing manual database schema changes or running your tests manually before updating your files (manually), think twice! With every additional manual task needed to deploy a new version of your app, the chances for potentially fatal mistakes increase. Whether you're dealing with a simple update, a comprehensive build process or even a continuous integration strategy, build automation[17] is your friend.

Among the tasks you might want to automate are:

[7] http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.4/mod/worker.html
[8] http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.4/mod/event.html
[9] https://httpd.apache.org/docs/current/mod/mod_proxy_fcgi.html
[10] http://httpd.apache.org/
[11] http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.4/mod/mpm_common.html
[12] https://blogs.oracle.com/opal/entry/php_fpm_fastcgi_process_manager
[13] http://httpd.apache.org/mod_fcgid/
[14] https://httpd.apache.org/docs/current/mod/mod_proxy_fcgi.html
[15] https://serversforhackers.com/video/apache-and-php-fpm
[16] http://phpversions.info/shared-hosting/
[17] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Build_automation

- Dependency management
- Compilation, minification of your assets
- Running tests
- Creation of documentation
- Packaging
- Deployment

Deployment Tools

Deployment tools can be described as a collection of scripts that handle common tasks of software deployment. The deployment tool is not a part of your software, it acts on your software from 'outside'.

There are many open source tools available to help you with build automation and deployment, some are written in PHP others aren't. This shouldn't hold you back from using them, if they're better suited for the specific job. Here are a few examples:

Phing[18] can control your packaging, deployment or testing process from within a XML build file. Phing (which is based on Apache Ant[19]) provides a rich set of tasks usually needed to install or update a web application and can be extended with additional custom tasks, written in PHP. It's a solid and robust tool and has been around for a long time, however the tool could be perceived as a bit old fashioned because of the way it deals with configuration (XML files).

Capistrano[20] is a system for *intermediate-to-advanced programmers* to execute commands in a structured, repeatable way on one or more remote machines. It is pre-configured for deploying Ruby on Rails applications, however you can successfully deploying PHP systems with it. Successful use of Capistrano depends on a working knowledge of Ruby and Rake. Dave Gardner's blog post PHP Deployment with Capistrano[21] is a good starting point for PHP developers interested in Capistrano.

Rocketeer[22] gets its inspiration and philosophy from the Laravel framework. Its goal is to be fast, elegant and ease to use with smart defaults. It features multiple servers, multiple stages, atomic deploys and deployment can be performed in parallel. Everything in the tool can be hot swapped or extended, and everything is written in PHP.

Deployer[23] is a deployment tool written in PHP, it's simple and functional. Runs tasks in parallel, atomic deployment, keeps consistency between servers. Recipes of common tasks for Symfony, Laravel, Zend Framework and Yii. Younes Rafie's article Easy Deployment of PHP Applications with Deployer[24] is a great tutorial for deploying your application with the tool.

Magallanes[25] another tool written in PHP with simple configuration done in YAML files. It has support for multiple servers and environments, atomic deployment, and have some built in tasks that you can leverage for common tools and frameworks.

[18] http://www.phing.info/
[19] http://ant.apache.org/
[20] https://github.com/capistrano/capistrano/wiki
[21] http://www.davegardner.me.uk/blog/2012/02/13/php-deployment-with-capistrano/
[22] http://rocketeer.autopergamene.eu/
[23] http://deployer.org/
[24] http://www.sitepoint.com/deploying-php-applications-with-deployer/
[25] http://magephp.com/

Further reading:

- Automate your project with Apache Ant[26]
- Expert PHP Deployments[27] - free book on deployment with Capistrano, Phing and Vagrant.
- Deploying PHP Applications[28] - paid book on best practices and tools for PHP deployment.

Server Provisioning

Managing and configuring servers can be a daunting task when faced with many servers. There are tools for dealing with this so you can automate your infrastructure to make sure you have the right servers and that they're configured properly. They often integrate with the larger cloud hosting providers (Amazon Web Services, Heroku, DigitalOcean, etc) for managing instances, which makes scaling an application a lot easier.

Ansible[29] is a tool that manages your infrastructure through YAML files. It's simple to get started with and can manage complex and large scale applications. There is an API for managing cloud instances and it can manage them through a dynamic inventory using certain tools.

Puppet[30] is a tool that has its own language and file types for managing servers and configurations. It can be used in a master/client setup or it can be used in a "master-less" mode. In the master/client mode the clients will poll the central master(s) for new configuration on set intervals and update itself if necessary. In the master-less mode you can push changes to your nodes.

Chef[31] is a powerful Ruby based system integration framework that you can build your whole server environment or virtual boxes with. It integrates well with Amazon Web Services through their service called OpsWorks.

Further reading:

- An Ansible Tutorial[32]
- Ansible for DevOps[33] - paid book on everything Ansible
- Ansible for AWS[34] - paid book on integrating Ansible and Amazon Web Services
- Three part blog series about deploying a LAMP application with Chef, Vagrant, and EC2[35]
- Chef Cookbook which installs and configures PHP and the PEAR package management system[36]
- Chef video tutorial series[37]

[26] http://net.tutsplus.com/tutorials/other/automate-your-projects-with-apache-ant/
[27] http://viccherubini.com/assets/Expert-PHP-Deployments.pdf
[28] http://www.deployingphpapplications.com
[29] https://www.ansible.com/
[30] https://puppet.com/
[31] https://www.chef.io/
[32] https://serversforhackers.com/an-ansible-tutorial
[33] https://leanpub.com/ansible-for-devops
[34] https://leanpub.com/ansible-for-aws
[35] http://www.jasongrimes.org/2012/06/managing-lamp-environments-with-chef-vagrant-and-ec2-1-of-3/
[36] https://github.com/chef-cookbooks/php
[37] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL11cZfNdwNyPnZA9D1MbVqldGuOWqbumZ

Continuous Integration

> Continuous Integration is a software development practice where members of a team integrate their work frequently, usually each person integrates at least daily â€" leading to multiple integrations per day. Many teams find that this approach leads to significantly reduced integration problems and allows a team to develop cohesive software more rapidly.

– Martin Fowler

There are different ways to implement continuous integration for PHP. Travis CI[38] has done a great job of making continuous integration a reality even for small projects. Travis CI is a hosted continuous integration service for the open source community. It is integrated with GitHub and offers first class support for many languages including PHP.

Further reading:

- Continuous Integration with Jenkins[39]
- Continuous Integration with PHPCI[40]
- Continuous Integration with Teamcity[41]

[38] https://travis-ci.org/
[39] http://jenkins-ci.org/
[40] http://www.phptesting.org/
[41] http://www.jetbrains.com/teamcity/

13. Virtualization

Running your application on different environments in development and production can lead to strange bugs popping up when you go live. It's also tricky to keep different development environments up to date with the same version for all libraries used when working with a team of developers.

If you are developing on Windows and deploying to Linux (or anything non-Windows) or are developing in a team, you should consider using a virtual machine. This sounds tricky, but besides the widely known virtualization environments like VMware or VirtualBox, there are additional tools that may help you setting up a virtual environment in a few easy steps.

13.1 Vagrant

Vagrant[1] helps you build your virtual boxes on top of the known virtual environments and will configure these environments based on a single configuration file. These boxes can be set up manually, or you can use "provisioning" software such as Puppet[2] or Chef[3] to do this for you. Provisioning the base box is a great way to ensure that multiple boxes are set up in an identical fashion and removes the need for you to maintain complicated "set up" command lists. You can also "destroy" your base box and recreate it without many manual steps, making it easy to create a "fresh" installation.

Vagrant creates folders for sharing your code between your host and your virtual machine, which means that you can create and edit your files on your host machine and then run the code inside your virtual machine.

A little help

If you need a little help to start using Vagrant there are some services that might be useful:

- Rove[4]: service that allows you to pre-generate typical Vagrant builds, PHP among the options. The provisioning is made with Chef.
- Puphpet[5]: simple GUI to set up virtual machines for PHP development. **Heavily focused in PHP**. Besides local VMs, it can be used to deploy to cloud services as well. The provisioning is made with Puppet.
- Protobox[6]: is a layer on top of vagrant and a web GUI to setup virtual machines for web development. A single YAML document controls everything that is installed on the virtual machine.
- Phansible[7]: provides an easy to use interface that helps you generate Ansible Playbooks for PHP based projects.

[1] http://vagrantup.com/
[2] http://www.puppetlabs.com/
[3] https://www.chef.io/
[4] http://rove.io/
[5] https://puphpet.com/
[6] http://getprotobox.com/
[7] http://phansible.com/

13.2 Docker

Docker[8] - a lightweight alternative to a full virtual machine - is so called because it's all about "containers". A container is a building block which, in the simplest case, does one specific job, e.g. running a web server. An "image" is the package you use to build the container - Docker has a repository full of them.

A typical LAMP application might have three containers: a web server, a PHP-FPM process and MySQL. As with shared folders in Vagrant, you can leave your application files where they are and tell Docker where to find them.

You can generate containers from the command line (see example below) or, for ease of maintenance, build a `docker-compose.yml` file for your project specifying which to create and how they communicate with one another.

Docker may help if you're developing multiple websites and want the separation that comes from installing each on it's own virtual machine, but don't have the necessary disk space or the time to keep everything up to date. It's efficient: the installation and downloads are quicker, you only need to store one copy of each image however often it's used, containers need less RAM and share the same OS kernel, so you can have more servers running simultaneously, and it takes a matter of seconds to stop and start them, no need to wait for a full server boot.

Example: Running your PHP Applications in Docker

After installing docker[9] on your machine, you can start a web server with one command. The following will download a fully functional Apache installation with the latest PHP version, map `/path/to/your/php/files` to the document root, which you can view at `http://localhost:8080`:

```
1  docker run -d --name my-php-webserver -p 8080:80 -v /path/to/your/php/files:/var/www/html/\
2   php:apache
```

This will initialize and launch your container. `-d` makes it runs in the background. To stop and start it, simply run `docker stop my-php-webserver` and `docker start my-php-webserver` (the other parameters are not needed again).

Learn more about Docker

The command above shows a quick way to run a basic server. There's much more you can do (and thousands of pre-built images in the Docker Hub[10]). Take time to learn the terminology and read the Docker User Guide[11] to get the most from it, and don't run random code you've downloaded without checking it's safe â€“ unofficial images may not have the latest security patches. If in doubt, stick to the official repositiories[12].

The PHPDocker.io[13] site will auto-generate all the files you need for a fully-featured LAMP/LEMP stack, including your choice of PHP version and extensions.

[8] http://docker.com/
[9] https://docs.docker.com/installation/
[10] https://hub.docker.com/
[11] https://docs.docker.com/userguide/
[12] https://hub.docker.com/explore/
[13] https://phpdocker.io/generator

- Docker Website[14]
- Docker Installation[15]
- Docker User Guide[16]
- Docker Hub[17]
- Docker Hub - official images[18]

[14] http://docker.com/
[15] https://docs.docker.com/installation/
[16] https://docs.docker.com/userguide/
[17] https://hub.docker.com/
[18] https://hub.docker.com/explore/

14. Caching

PHP is pretty quick by itself, but bottlenecks can arise when you make remote connections, load files, etc. Thankfully, there are various tools available to speed up certain parts of your application, or reduce the number of times these various time-consuming tasks need to run.

14.1 Opcode Cache

When a PHP file is executed, it must first be compiled into opcodes[1] (machine language instructions for the CPU). If the source code is unchanged, the opcodes will be the same, so this compilation step becomes a waste of CPU resources.

An opcode cache prevents redundant compilation by storing opcodes in memory and reusing them on successive calls. It will typically check signature or modification time of the file first, in case there have been any changes.

It's likely an opcode cache will make a significant speed improvement to your application. Since PHP 5.5 there is one built in - Zend OPcache[2]. Depending on your PHP package/distribution, it's usually turned on by default -Â check opcache.enable[3] and the output of `phpinfo()` to make sure. For earlier versions there's a PECL extension.

Read more about opcode caches:

- Zend OPcache[4] (bundled with PHP since 5.5)
- Zend OPcache (formerly known as Zend Optimizer+) is now open source[5]
- APC[6] - PHP 5.4 and earlier
- XCache[7]
- WinCache[8] (extension for MS Windows Server)
- list of PHP accelerators on Wikipedia[9]

14.2 Object Caching

There are times when it can be beneficial to cache individual objects in your code, such as with data that is expensive to get or database calls where the result is unlikely to change. You can use object caching software

[1] http://php.net/manual/en/internals2.opcodes.php
[2] http://php.net/book.opcache
[3] http://php.net/manual/en/opcache.configuration.php#ini.opcache.enable
[4] http://php.net/book.opcache
[5] https://github.com/zendtech/ZendOptimizerPlus
[6] http://php.net/book.apc
[7] http://xcache.lighttpd.net/
[8] http://www.iis.net/download/wincacheforphp
[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_PHP_accelerators

to hold these pieces of data in memory for extremely fast access later on. If you save these items to a data store after you retrieve them, then pull them directly from the cache for following requests, you can gain a significant improvement in performance as well as reduce the load on your database servers.

Many of the popular bytecode caching solutions let you cache custom data as well, so there's even more reason to take advantage of them. APCu, XCache, and WinCache all provide APIs to save data from your PHP code to their memory cache.

The most commonly used memory object caching systems are APCu and memcached. APCu is an excellent choice for object caching, it includes a simple API for adding your own data to its memory cache and is very easy to setup and use. The one real limitation of APCu is that it is tied to the server it's installed on. Memcached on the other hand is installed as a separate service and can be accessed across the network, meaning that you can store objects in a hyper-fast data store in a central location and many different systems can pull from it.

Note that when running PHP as a (Fast-)CGI application inside your webserver, every PHP process will have its own cache, i.e. APCu data is not shared between your worker processes. In these cases, you might want to consider using memcached instead, as it's not tied to the PHP processes.

In a networked configuration APCu will usually outperform memcached in terms of access speed, but memcached will be able to scale up faster and further. If you do not expect to have multiple servers running your application, or do not need the extra features that memcached offers then APCu is probably your best choice for object caching.

Example logic using APCu:

```
<?php
// check if there is data saved as 'expensive_data' in cache
$data = apc_fetch('expensive_data');
if ($data === false) {
    // data is not in cache; save result of expensive call for later use
    apc_add('expensive_data', $data = get_expensive_data());
}

print_r($data);
```

Note that prior to PHP 5.5, APC provides both an object cache and a bytecode cache. APCu is a project to bring APC's object cache to PHP 5.5+, since PHP now has a built-in bytecode cache (OPcache).

Learn more about popular object caching systems:

- APCu[10]
- APC Functions[11]
- Memcached[12]
- Redis[13]
- XCache APIs[14]

[10] https://github.com/krakjoe/apcu
[11] http://php.net/ref.apc
[12] http://memcached.org/
[13] http://redis.io/
[14] http://xcache.lighttpd.net/wiki/XcacheApi

- WinCache Functions[15]

[15] http://php.net/ref.wincache

15. Documenting your Code

15.1 PHPDoc

PHPDoc is an informal standard for commenting PHP code. There are a *lot* of different tags[1] available. The full list of tags and examples can be found at the PHPDoc manual[2].

Below is an example of how you might document a class with a few methods;

```
<?php
/**
 * @author A Name <a.name@example.com>
 * @link http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/index.html
 */
class DateTimeHelper
{
    /**
     * @param mixed $anything Anything that we can convert to a \DateTime object
     *
     * @throws \InvalidArgumentException
     *
     * @return \DateTime
     */
    public function dateTimeFromAnything($anything)
    {
        $type = gettype($anything);

        switch ($type) {
            // Some code that tries to return a \DateTime object
        }

        throw new \InvalidArgumentException(
            "Failed Converting param of type '{$type}' to DateTime object"
        );
    }

    /**
     * @param mixed $date Anything that we can convert to a \DateTime object
     *
     * @return void
```

[1] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/index.html
[2] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/index.html

```
32          */
33         public function printISO8601Date($date)
34         {
35             echo $this->dateTimeFromAnything($date)->format('c');
36         }
37
38         /**
39          * @param mixed $date Anything that we can convert to a \DateTime object
40          */
41         public function printRFC2822Date($date)
42         {
43             echo $this->dateTimeFromAnything($date)->format('r');
44         }
45     }
```

The documentation for the class as a whole has the @author[3] tag and a @link[4] tag. The @author[5] tag is used to document the author of the code and can be repeated for documenting several authors. The @link[6] tag is used to link to a website indicating a relationship between the website and the code.

Inside the class, the first method has a @param[7] tag documenting the type, name and description of the parameter being passed to the method. Additionally it has the @return[8] and @throws[9] tags for documenting the return type, and any exceptions that could be thrown respectively.

The second and third methods are very similar and have a single @param[10] tag as did the first method. The important difference between the second and third methods' doc block is the inclusion/exclusion of the @return[11] tag. `@return void` explicitly informs us that there is no return; historically omitting the `@return void` statement also results in the same (no return) action.

[3] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/author.html
[4] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/link.html
[5] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/author.html
[6] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/link.html
[7] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/param.html
[8] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/return.html
[9] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/throws.html
[10] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/param.html
[11] http://www.phpdoc.org/docs/latest/references/phpdoc/tags/return.html

16. Resources

16.1 From the Source

- PHP Website[1]
- PHP Documentation[2]

16.2 People to Follow

It's difficult to find interesting and knowledgeable PHP community members when you are first starting out. You can find a comprehensive list of PHP community members and their Twitter handles at:

- 25 PHP Developers to Follow Online[3]

16.3 Mentoring

- php-mentoring.org[4] - Formal, peer to peer mentoring in the PHP community.

16.4 PHP PaaS Providers

- PagodaBox[5]
- AppFog[6]
- Heroku[7]
- fortrabbit[8]
- Engine Yard Cloud[9]
- Red Hat OpenShift Platform[10]
- AWS Elastic Beanstalk[11]
- Windows Azure[12]

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[1] http://php.net/
[2] http://php.net/docs.php
[3] https://blog.newrelic.com/2014/05/02/25-php-developers-follow-online/
[4] http://php-mentoring.org/
[5] https://pagodabox.io/
[6] https://www.ctl.io/appfog/
[7] https://devcenter.heroku.com/categories/php
[8] https://www.fortrabbit.com/
[9] https://www.engineyard.com/features
[10] https://www.openshift.com/
[11] https://aws.amazon.com/elasticbeanstalk/
[12] http://www.windowsazure.com/

- Google App Engine[13]
- Jelastic[14]
- Platform.sh[15]
- Cloudways[16]
- IBM Bluemix Cloud Foundry[17]
- Pivotal Web Service Cloud Foundry[18]

To see which versions these PaaS hosts are running, head over to PHP Versions[19].

16.5 Frameworks

Rather than re-invent the wheel, many PHP developers use frameworks to build out web applications. Frameworks abstract away many of the low-level concerns and provide helpful, easy-to-use interfaces to complete common tasks.

You do not need to use a framework for every project. Sometimes plain PHP is the right way to go, but if you do need a framework then there are three main types available:

- Micro Frameworks
- Full-Stack Frameworks
- Component Frameworks

Micro-frameworks are essentially a wrapper to route a HTTP request to a callback, controller, method, etc as quickly as possible, and sometimes come with a few extra libraries to assist development such as basic database wrappers and the like. They are prominently used to build remote HTTP services.

Many frameworks add a considerable number of features on top of what is available in a micro-framework and these are known Full-Stack Frameworks. These often come bundled with ORMs, Authentication packages, etc.

Component-based frameworks are collections of specialized and single-purpose libraries. Disparate component-based frameworks can be used together to make a micro- or full-stack framework.

- Popular PHP Frameworks[20]

[13] https://cloud.google.com/appengine/docs/php/
[14] http://jelastic.com/
[15] https://platform.sh/
[16] https://www.cloudways.com/en/
[17] https://console.ng.bluemix.net/
[18] https://run.pivotal.io/
[19] http://phpversions.info/paas-hosting/
[20] https://github.com/codeguy/php-the-right-way/wiki/Frameworks

16.6 Components

As mentioned above "Components" are another approach to the common goal of creating, distributing and implementing shared code. Various component repositories exist, the main two of which are:

- Packagist[21]
- PEAR[22]

Both of these repositories have command line tools associated with them to help the installation and upgrade processes, and have been explained in more detail in the Dependency Management[23] section.

There are also component-based frameworks and component-vendors that offer no framework at all. These projects provide another source of packages which ideally have little to no dependencies on other packages, or specific frameworks.

For example, you can use the FuelPHP Validation package[24], without needing to use the FuelPHP framework itself.

- Aura[25]
- FuelPHP[26]
- Hoa Project[27]
- Orno[28]
- Symfony Components[29]
- The League of Extraordinary Packages[30]
- Laravel's Illuminate Components
  - IoC Container[31]
  - Eloquent ORM[32]
  - Queue[33]

Laravel's Illuminate components[34] will become better decoupled from the Laravel framework. For now, only the components best decoupled from the Laravel framework are listed above.

[21] /#composer_and_packagist
[22] /#pear
[23] /#dependency_management
[24] https://github.com/fuelphp/validation
[25] http://auraphp.com/framework/2.x/en/
[26] https://github.com/fuelphp
[27] https://github.com/hoaproject
[28] https://github.com/orno
[29] http://symfony.com/doc/current/components/index.html
[30] http://thephpleague.com/
[31] https://github.com/illuminate/container
[32] https://github.com/illuminate/database
[33] https://github.com/illuminate/queue
[34] https://github.com/illuminate

16.7 Other Useful Resources

Cheatsheets

- PHP Cheatsheets[35] - for variable comparisons, arithmetics and variable testing in various PHP versions
- PHP Security Cheatsheet[36]

More best practices

- PHP Best Practices[37]
- Best practices for Modern PHP Development[38]

PHP universe

- PHP Developer blog[39]

16.8 Video Tutorials

YouTube Channels

- PHP Academy[40]
- The New Boston[41]
- Sherif Ramadan[42]
- Level Up Tuts[43]

Paid Videos

- Standards and Best practices[44]
- PHP Training on Pluralsight[45]
- PHP Training on Lynda.com[46]
- PHP Training on Tutsplus[47]
- Laracasts[48]

[35] http://phpcheatsheets.com/
[36] https://www.owasp.org/index.php/PHP_Security_Cheat_Sheet
[37] https://phpbestpractices.org/
[38] https://www.airpair.com/php/posts/best-practices-for-modern-php-development
[39] http://blog.phpdeveloper.org/
[40] https://www.youtube.com/user/phpacademy
[41] https://www.youtube.com/user/thenewboston
[42] https://www.youtube.com/user/businessgeek
[43] https://www.youtube.com/user/LevelUpTuts
[44] http://teamtreehouse.com/library/standards-and-best-practices
[45] http://www.pluralsight.com/search/?searchTerm=php
[46] http://www.lynda.com/search?q=php
[47] http://code.tutsplus.com/categories/php/courses
[48] https://laracasts.com/

16.9 Books

There are many PHP books; sadly some are now quite old and no longer accurate. In particular, avoid books on "PHP 6", a version that will now never exist. The next major release of PHP after 5.6 was "PHP 7", partly because of this[49].

This section aims to be a living document for recommended books on PHP development in general. If you would like your book to be added, send a PR and it will be reviewed for relevancy.

Free Books

- PHP Pandas[50] - Aims to teach everyone how to be a web developer.
- PHP The Right Way[51] - This website is available as a book completely for free.
- Using Libsodium in PHP Projects[52] - Guide to using Libsodium PHP extension for modern, secure, and fast cryptography.

Paid Books

- Build APIs You Won't Hate[53] - Everyone and their dog wants an API, so you should probably learn how to build them.
- Modern PHP[54] - covers modern PHP features, best practices, testing, tuning, deployment and setting up a dev environment.
- Building Secure PHP Apps[55] - Learn the security basics that a senior developer usually acquires over years of experience, all condensed down into one quick and easy handbook
- Modernizing Legacy Applications In PHP[56] - Get your code under control in a series of small, specific steps
- Securing PHP: Core Concepts[57] - A guide to some of the most common security terms and provides some examples of them in every day PHP
- Scaling PHP[58] - Stop playing sysadmin and get back to coding
- Signaling PHP[59] - PCNLT signals are a great help when writing PHP scripts that run from the command line.
- The Grumpy Programmer's Guide To Building Testable PHP Applications[60] - Learning to write testable code doesn't have to suck.
- Minimum Viable Tests[61] - Long-time PHP testing evangelist Chris Hartjes goes over what he feels is the minimum you need to know to get started.

[49] https://wiki.php.net/rfc/php6
[50] http://daylerees.com/php-pandas/
[51] https://leanpub.com/phptherightway/
[52] https://paragonie.com/book/pecl-libsodium
[53] https://apisyouwonthate.com/
[54] http://shop.oreilly.com/product/0636920033868.do
[55] https://leanpub.com/buildingsecurephpapps
[56] https://leanpub.com/mlaphp
[57] https://leanpub.com/securingphp-coreconcepts
[58] http://www.scalingphpbook.com/
[59] https://leanpub.com/signalingphp
[60] https://leanpub.com/grumpy-testing
[61] https://leanpub.com/minimumviabletests

17. Community

The PHP community is as diverse as it is large, and its members are ready and willing to support new PHP programmers. Consider joining your local PHP user group (PUG) or attending larger PHP conferences to learn more about the best practices shown here. You can hang out on IRC in the #phpc channel on irc.freenode.com[1] and follow the @phpc[2] twitter account. Get out there, meet new developers, learn new topics, and above all, make new friends! Other community resources include the Google+ PHP Programmer community[3] and StackOverflow[4].

Read the Official PHP Events Calendar[5]

17.1 PHP User Groups

If you live in a larger city, odds are there's a PHP user group nearby. You can easily find your local PUG at the usergroup-list at php.net[6] which is based upon PHP.ug[7]. Alternate sources might be Meetup.com[8] or a search for `php user group near me` using your favorite search engine (i.e. Google[9]). If you live in a smaller town, there may not be a local PUG; if that's the case, start one!

Special mention should be made of two global user groups: NomadPHP[10] and PHPWomen[11]. NomadPHP[12] offers twice monthly online user group meetings with presentations by some of the top speakers in the PHP community. PHPWomen[13] is a non-exclusive user group originally targeted towards the women in the PHP world. Membership is open to everyone who supports a more diverse community. PHPWomen provide a network for support, mentorship and education, and generally promote the creating of a "female friendly" and professional atmosphere.

Read about User Groups on the PHP Wiki[14]

17.2 PHP Conferences

The PHP community also hosts larger regional and national conferences in many countries around the world. Well-known members of the PHP community usually speak at these larger events, so it's a great opportunity to learn directly from industry leaders.

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[1] http://webchat.freenode.net/?channels=phpc
[2] https://twitter.com/phpc
[3] https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/104245651975268426012
[4] http://stackoverflow.com/questions/tagged/php
[5] http://php.net/cal.php
[6] http://php.net/ug.php
[7] http://php.ug/
[8] http://www.meetup.com/find/
[9] https://www.google.com/search?q=php+user+group+near+me
[10] https://nomadphp.com/
[11] http://phpwomen.org/
[12] https://nomadphp.com/
[13] http://phpwomen.org/
[14] https://wiki.php.net/usergroups

Find a PHP Conference[15]

17.3 ElePHPants

ElePHPant[16] is that beautiful mascot of the PHP project with elephant in their design. It was originally designed for the PHP project in 1998 by Vincent Pontier[17] - spiritual father of thousands of elePHPants around the world and 10 years later adorable plush elephant toy came to birth as well. Now elePHPants are present at many PHP conferences and with many PHP developers at their computers for fun and inspiration.

Interview with Vincent Pontier[18]

[15] http://php.net/conferences/index.php
[16] http://php.net/elephpant.php
[17] http://www.elroubio.net/
[18] http://7php.com/elephpant/