



Introduction

Guest*Star lets you quickly and easily create a guestbook-type WWW document and its associated CGI. The guestbook, when opened through any forms-capable WWW browser (e.g. NetScape) displays various form elements for the users to enter their responses. When the 'Submit' button is pressed a CGI will be executed on your server to collect all the information the user has entered and record it in another nominated file. The information is **stored in HTML format (guestlog.html) as well as plain text (guestlog.txt) in the same directory where the guestbook resides.** The program **also can be asked to mail** the form input to a designated E_mail address.

JavaScript

The guestbook form created by Guest*Star **incorporates several JavaScript functions to display short messages** in response to the selection of buttons. This feature, associated with some buttons, can be a lot of fun to the user. For example, when the user clicks the button that says 'I love it' a short message will pop up to thank the user.

In order to create a guestbook and CGI with all the above functions the user does not need to know anything about HTML authoring, Perl programming or JavaScript. Your guestbook and the CGI, in their fully functional forms, will be created within minutes in response to a few mouse clicks. All that has to be done is to transfer the files to an appropriate directory on your WWW server and set the CGI file's protection to "rwxr-xr-x" (by the command, 'chmod 755 filename.cgi'), if yours is a UNIX-based webserver.

You can, of course, edit the original HTML and CGI to customize. Since the framework is already there it is a simple job. However, this may require some basic understanding of Perl and JavaScript in addition to HTML authoring, which are easily acquired by studying the forms and CGIs created with Guest*Star.



- YourGuestbook



- About Guest*Star - version and contact details



- This help.



- Register



- Guest*Star-Special - Creates a guestbook from scratch.

Frequently Asked Questions

Your Guestbook

This dialog lets you open any existing HTML file and write a CGI for it so that the input from the form elements in that file are formatted in HTML/plain-text format and stored on your server. A button in this dialog, when pressed, will create a guestbook for you from scratch. Please click on the following links to know more about them and other controls.

Buttons:



- This help.



- Open HTML - Opens an existing HTML file to create a CGI for it.



- WriteCGI - Writes a CGI script (in PERL) for the form contained in your HTML file.



- Saves the current settings and closes the window.



- Guest*Star-Special - Creates a guestbook from scratch.

RadioButtons:

Mail the entry everytime to me -In addition to storing the user input in HTML and text format on your server, the CGI creates another file containing the user input as plain text and mails it to a specified address. This option is useful if you want to be notified when an entry is made in your guestbook.

UNIX webserver

Check this button (default) if your WWW server is UNIX-based.

NT webserver

Check this button if your WWW server is Windows-NT based.

Guestbook Styles:

Four styles are presented for auto-generation. Check one before clicking the “Guest*Star Special” button. Each option creates a different HTML file. The CGI that drives these files is always called ‘guestbk.cgi’ and hence, if you need to keep more than one type of guestbook on the server they must be in separate directories. Alternatively, you can manually edit the HTML file to change the “action” field in the <Form...>

declaration to point to a different CGI and rename the guestbk.cgi to that name.

The styles are:

- **Academic**
- **Commercial**
- **Personal**
- **Social**

EditBoxes:

The edit boxes relate to the parameters required for writing the CGI. They are automatically filled in for your convenience, but you can change their contents before writing the CGI.

- **E-Mail Address:** The address to which the form input will be sent.
- **Perl Program :** If UNIX webserver, this field must be filled in. If you do not know the perl path on your server please type the UNIX command, 'whereis perl'. In the case of an NT webserver the perl program directory must be specified in the PATH variable of the server.
- **Form elements in the HTML File:** This box will be filled in when you auto-generate the guestbook or when reading an existing file. Initially the lines in this box will be the name IDs of the form elements in your guestbook and will be used as the subject headings for recording the form input.. You can edit these lines , **but do not add or delete any line. The number of form elements match the number of lines in this box.**

Tip: You can "hide" the user input from being displayed in the guestbook logfile by typing a space before the first character of a line in this box. The input from its corresponding element will still be recorded in the 'guestlog.txt' file but not in 'guestlog.html'. This feature can be used as a way to gather survey items that do not have to be made public.

- **Page to go to after signing the guestbook:** Type the full URL of the page that will be displayed, following the acknowledgment message, after the user presses the "submit" button. The default is the guestbook itself.

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UNIX Server Details

This dialog box is displayed when you choose the mail and the UNIX webserver options together. It asks for the mailer and the subject line. Once typed in they are permanently recorded in the INI file and you do not have to retype it every time.

NT Server Details

This dialog box is displayed when you choose the mail and the NT webserver options together. It asks for some details about the mailer. The current version of Guest*Star only supports 'postmail' but other mailers will be added in future. You will need to supply the name of an SMTP mail server for the postmail. This is usually the same machine on which you have the E_mail account. Once typed in they are permanently recorded in the INI file and you do not have to retype it every time.

Guest*Star Special Guestbook

This dialog box asks a few details and prepares a fully functional guestbook for you. You can freely edit the HTML file using a text editor and add, change or delete items. Please remember that it contains a fair amount of JavaScript code, and any introduced error in the code will result in error messages when the user clicks a button.

Options:

Title: The string used as the title of your guest book.

Your Home Page: To put a link back to any page you want the user should go. Unless the file is in the same directory on the server you must provide the path (e.g. either as `http://www.yourserver.com/home.html` or `../home.html`)

cgi-bin (if different): If you intend to place the guestbook and its CGI in the same directory on the webserver, then leave this field blank. If your cgi-bin is different, please type in the full URL (e.g. `http://www.company.com/cgi-bin/`) or the relative path (e.g. `/cgi-bin`). **Do NOT include the CGI filename.** It will be added by the program.

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Register the program



- Click on this button, on the top toolbar, to start the dialog, which lets you enter the registration key string to override the expiry date of the program.

How to enter the registration string:

- Type in the registration string (exactly, including the hyphens; no spaces) and press the button marked, 'Record Code'.
- Exit the program and restart. (The registration will take effect *only after exiting* the program).

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Write CGI

After a guestbook has been created, either by yourself or by Guest*Star, a CGI has to be written specifically to process the input through forms contained in it. This is done automatically when you press the 'Write CGI' button in the 'Your Guestbook' dialog.

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Open HTML

Opens your saved HTML documents to create a CGI for the form contained in it. Only one form per document and only up to 50 controls per form allowed (use CGI*Star for bigger files). A few simple restrictions are:

1. The Form declaration must not span more than one line.

e.g. `<Form Method=POST Action="Guestbk.cgi">`

2. Each form element must be one per line and must not span more than one line.

e.g. `<input name="visitor_name" size=60 maxlength=60><p>`

1. Maximum 75 chars per name ID (e.g. 'visitor_name')

2. Spaces and non-alphanumeric characters are NOT allowed in the nameIDs

(e.g. illegal: 2ndinput, 'visitor name', visitor-name, visitor#, etc.)

5. A maximum of 50 unique form elements (e.g. text input, buttons) per document is allowed. Mutually exclusive radio buttons are considered as one element.

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Frequently Asked Questions

These are some of the common problems users have been experiencing:

- **Server Error 500** - When I press the 'Sign the guestbook' button the server reports an error which says 'misconfiguration in your CGI has prevented...'

The most common cause is the specification of your E_mail address in the CGI. The **@ char in the address must be escaped** (i.e. preceded with a backslash [`\@`]). Guest*Star will automatically format the E_mail address, supplied through the dialog box, when creating the CGI. But if you insert another E_mail address manually then it must be formatted as above.

Another reason for Server 500 error is the **presence of illegal chars in nameIDs**. Again, Guest*Star will warn you if it finds any but will not correct them in the HTML file. You must edit the HTML until all errors are gone.

- **403 Forbidden** - The server says that your client has no privilege to access the required CGI.

The CGI must have a world 'read,execute' privilege. You must set this explicitly by the UNIX command, '`chmod 755 cgifilename`'. On an NT webserver this step may not be necessary.

- **404 URL not found** -

Check your **form declaration in the HTML** file and ensure that the CGI file specified there is present in the correct directory.

- **Method is not implemented**

Your webserver does not recognize the **file name extension of your CGI** file (e.g. .cgi or .pl) as an executable CGI. Please ask your system administrator for the correct extension. Most servers do recognize the .cgi and .pl as extensions for CGIs.

- **Error occurred when sending the mail** -

The command line argument to send the mail is wrong. On a UNIX machine you must use either '`/usr/bin/mail`' or '`/usr/ucb/Mail`' as the mail program for sending the mail. On NT server the mailer 'postmail' is the only one supported by Guest*Star at the moment.

- **Error in appending to the guestbook logfile**

The directory for your guestbook logfile may be write-protected. Please login to your server and type '`chmod 777 dirname`' from the parent directory of the one where you want to store the file.

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