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Website Comments System ® v1.0

Webmaster's Manual

Please read this manual entirely at least once **BEFORE** installing and using the Website Comments System (WCS) on your web server

- The Website Comments System is a server-side application written in PHP by *Andrea Cabibbo*
- Contact/Help/Support e-mail address: andrea.cabibbo@fastwebnet.it
- Software official web page:
http://www.cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/free_php_guestbook.html
- Support forum:
http://www.cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/guestbook/free_php_guestbook_test.html
- **BEFORE** using the software please read the disclaimer. If you do not agree with the disclaimer or licence terms please do not use the software

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1. Licence

The copyright of the script belongs to the developer, Andrea Cabibbo. You are hereby granted a licence to use the software in the understanding that the copyright owner remains, in all cases, the original developer of the script.

You can use and modify this code to set up a website comments system in one domain, for yourself or a client if you are a webmaster, that allows the comments feature to be added to an unlimited number of html pages within this domain.

You may not redistribute or resell this code in any way or produce derivative software to be sold or distributed as a script package. Conversely, you can indeed charge your clients for script installation and/or customization.

We very much appreciate the inclusion of this line somewhere in your website, however this is not strictly required:

Powered by the Website Comments System v1.0.

Editing of the powered by line(s) or credits/copyright lines within the script source code is strictly forbidden.

You can avoid having a link to us on your html pages but you cannot, in any way, modify the credit line(s) within the script or in the admin section/admin pages/login pages.

Any violation of this licence will be actively prosecuted by legal means.

2. Disclaimer

Although we make any effort to provide you with the best possible software, the use of this software is entirely AT YOUR OWN RISK. Make a backup of your important files before installing and using the software.

If you use the software to turn an existing html page into a guestbook, please make a backup of this page before proceeding.

Therefore:

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If you do not agree with these conditions, please do not use our software products.

3. Technical requirements for installation and use

Tested with PHP 4.3 or higher, in a linux environment. Requires a version of PHP compiled with GD image library support, most PHP installations will have this. GD is required in particular for the generation of the captcha image. The guestbook will work fine with no GD if image validation is turned off in the admin section, however this will leave you unprotected against spam bots. Bad idea, we suggest you use this feature only for testing purposes.

An additional requirement is that PHP SAFE MODE should be off on the server, as this prevents the script from creating the needed subdirectories in the gbooks folder.

Note on Windows systems: we have no direct experience of using WCS v1.0. in a windows server environment. However there are several users who got the script working on a windows server without any issue.

Based on the experience with our other guestbook software products, we anticipate that on a minority of windows hosts you might experience problems to grant the correct files and directories permissions. In order to use the script, your hosting should be configured in such a way that web processes (scripts) can be granted write permission on some of the script directories and files. On some windows hosts, folders 777 permission is not allowed and a 755 permission should be used instead (actually the same is true for some linux hosts). If you experience issues with permissions on a windows host, we suggest you contact your web host and investigate the matter with them.

Here is a very informative web page that could help you understand and solve permission issues on Windows and to better “negotiate” permission matters with your web hosting service:

<http://www.xav.com/scripts/installer/3008.html>

Thanks to the guys at XAV to sharing such a useful resource!

Should you experience any issue during the installation, either on a unix or on a windows environment, feel free to contact the developer.

4. Main features

This script allows the user to set up an unlimited number of “Guestbooks” on a web domain/web site. Guestbook means an html page or other static page on which the website visitors can leave comments by using this software. For a more comprehensive definition of “guestbook” in this document, please refer to the “background knowledge” in the “create guestbook” section, page 5 of this manual.

Individual guestbook configuration: each guestbook can be individually configured to have it’s own look and it’s own posting parameters such as number of posts per page, active/inactive moderation mode, header and footer of the pages created by the script when the number of posts per page is exceeded for a particular guestbook and other important variables. The individual configuration settings for any guestbook can be accessed through the “Guestbook Manager” tab of the admin section.

Global configuration: a number of parameters are set centrally, such as the administrator e-mail address, the WCS e-mail address, the badwords list, the banned Ips list, and others. These central/global parameters are set in the “global configuration” tab of the admin page.

Default configuration: the webmaster can also set the default values that will be applied to all newly created guestbooks. Modification of these default values will not affect existing guestbooks. Once a guestbook is created with the default values, those values can be customized in the individual guestbook configuration page. The default values can be viewed and edited in the “global configuration” tab of the admin section.

5. Installation instructions

- Upload files and set permissions
- Login
- Configure the WCS
- Create a guestbook
- Make a test post

Upload files and set permissions

Upload the files included in the unzipped distribution folder in a directory on your web site. We will refer to the directory containing the script files on your website as the **wcs or main directory**.

The files you need to upload in the wcs directory are:

- php_guestbook.php file
- index.html file (contains a login form to the admin section, allows you to login for example at <http://www.yourdomain.com/wcs/>)
- admin.html file (contains a login form to the admin section, allows you to login for example at <http://www.yourdomain.com/wcs/admin.html>)
- include folder
- gbooks folder
- images folder

Grant the following permissions:

wcs directory:	777 (755 required instead on some hosts)
gbooks directory:	777 (755 required instead on some hosts)
include/global_conf.php:	666 (read and write by all)
include/default_conf.php:	666
include/gb_ids.txt:	666

If you are on a windows host, please read the note in the requirements section.

Login

Visit the admin page. Sample URL, change to your own:

<http://www.yourdomain.com/wcs/admin.html>

or login directly through the script. Sample URL:

http://www.yourdomain.com/wcs/php_guestbook.php?task=login

The default admin password is "pass" (without quotes).

Tip: if you upload everything, grant 777 permissions to the folders and then get a 500 error on trying to login from the admin login page, try a 755 permission for the folders instead.

You can also place an admin login box or login link in the guestbook html file for example, here is the code for the admin form:

```
##### START ADMIN FORM HTML #####
<form action="php_guestbook.php" method="post">
Password: <input text name="adpass"><P>
<input type="hidden" name="task" value="show">
<input type="submit" value="Go to admin section">
</P>
##### END ADMIN FORM HTML #####
```

Configure the WCS

Visit the admin section and follow the “global configuration” link. Set the global variables, in particular your e-mail address (where notifications of events will be sent) and the WCS e-mail address (this will go in the “from” field of the notifications).

Review the default values for the creation of new guestbooks. See the “Features” section of this document for more details.

Mind that all the configuration sections in administration come with lengthy explanations for every variable/configuration option available. It should be easy to understand what each option does. If you have questions about this feel free to post in the support forum or send an e-mail to the developer.

Create and customize a guestbook

Background knowledge

Please note that by “guestbook” we mean the files, folders, configuration files created by the script at the time of new guestbook creation. This is distinct from the “guestbook html page” which is your html page on which you wish your visitors to comment. Each guestbook html page will have an associated “guestbook” in the WCS script with a unique guestbook id, constituted by:

- a guestbook folder, created within the “gbooks” folder, with the name gb1, gb2...according to guestbook id. This will contain all the guestbook files and folders listed below
- a guestbook-specific configuration file (gbconf.php)
- a “posts” folder
- a posts file where messages will be stored (set by default to posts/posts.txt, filename can be changed in admin)
- a log file where all messages will be logged and stored, even if you delete them in administration (posts/gbook_log.txt, filename can be changed in admin)
- a “pages” folder where new guestbook pages will be created when the number of posts on the main guestbook html page exceeds the posts per page setting for this guestbook.

Creating a guestbook

It is assumed that you already have an html or static page on which you wish to have visitors post comments.

Go to the “guestbook manager” tab to create a new guestbook. Just follow the instructions there closely to create a new guestbook.

In short, you should manually copy-paste the provided code for the posting form in the guestbook html page, then manually grant this page a 666 permission (write by all). Then input the URL for this html page and a guestbook title in the form and press ‘create guestbook’.

Each time you create a new guestbook, copy and paste the code for the form FROM THE GUESTBOOK MANAGER PAGE. For each single guestbook the posting form is different. In particular each guestbook has a different gbid (guestbook id) value as hidden field in the form.

A number of “verbose” (with text output) checks will be run by the system on form submission. In particular:

- If the files and folders for the new guestbook cannot be created or already exist, you will be notified about this and the guestbook will not be created. If the files cannot be created, most likely you have to fix the permissions of the “gbooks” folder to 777 (or 755 on some windows hosts) and/or the permissions of the include/gb_ids file to 666.
- A check to see if your guestbook html page is ready for accepting messages. If this one fails, the guestbook will still be created but you will have to fix the issues with your html page before you can post. Namely the guestbook html page should contain the posting form code and should have a 666 permission.

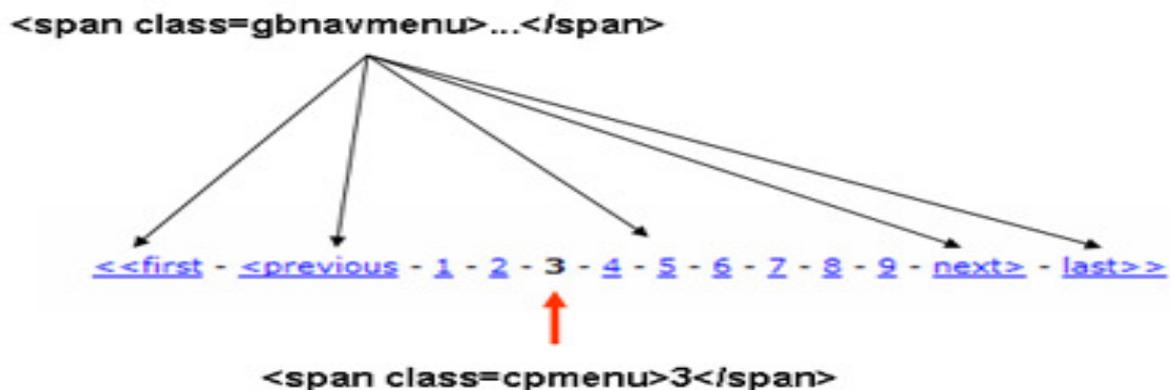
Customizing the guestbook appearance

In order to have the graphic appearance of the posts in harmony with the graphics of your website or your guestbook html page, you can edit the “posts template” in the individual guestbook configuration section. You can use plain html or, if you are familiar with CSS, you can include span or div tags around the \$name, \$email and \$message variables and control their appearance with styles. Feel free to contact us for tips on this topic.

Customizing with style

A few elements of the script output, that would be difficult for the webmaster to customize otherwise, come with span tags embedded, that allow a control of their appearance with CSS if the associated styles are defined by the webmaster. Namely:

- when the posts per page exceeds the limit fixed in administration, the guestbook creates new pages, as required. When this happens, in the first page (original guestbook html file) and the other pages, a navigation menu is shown to navigate the comments pages. This navigation menu can be customized with styles:
 - The links to other pages and the “first, previous, next, last” elements of the menu have an associated link style called gbnavigation
 - The number that indicate the current page, which is not linked, also have a style (to be defined by you) called cpmenu



You can control the appearance of these elements both in your guestbook page, by inserting a definition of these 2 styles in the HEAD of your guestbook html page, and in the subsequent pages created by the script, by inserting a style definition in the “header” section in the guestbook configuration page. Here’s a sample code, to control these styles:

```
<style type="text/css"><!--
```

```
.cpmenu{ font-size:12px;font-face:verdana;font-weight:bold;color:black;}  
a.gbnavmenu{ font-size:12px;font-face:verdana;color:blue;}  
/--></style>
```

Other elements that come with predetermined style names. Please note that although these elements come ready into span tags, it is up to you to define the styles.

The line that appears above the top navigation menu, that says: Comments for page *link to home*: the unlinked part “Comments for page” is controlled by the style

.cfp_style

and the link right after by the style

a.cfp_link_style

- when a “private” e-mail or message appears: the appearance of the word “private” can be controlled with a link style: a.privmail for e-mail, a.privmess for the message.

As a reference, and as further example of controlling elements appearance with styles (see the span tag and classes in the footer and the corresponding definition in then HEAD section of the header), here are the default footer and header codes used for the comments pages outputted by the script:

Header:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE="website comments">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="Tue, 26-Oct-1965 12:00:00">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="NOW">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="last modified" CONTENT="NOW">
<style type="text/css">
.gbnavmenu{font-size:12px;}
.cpmenu{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
.cfp_style{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
a.cfp_link_style{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
.pwby{font-size:10px;font-family:verdana;}
a.pwby{font-size:10px;font-family:verdana;}
</style>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<CENTER><TABLE WIDTH=1024 CELLPADDING=5>
<TR><TD>
<img src=../../images/WCS_head_fp.gif><P>
```

Footer:

```
</TD></TR></TABLE>
<CENTER><HR width=80%></center><BR>
<span class="pwby">Comments powered by the</span> <a class="pwby"
href="http://www.cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/free_php_guestbook.html" target="_blank">Website Comments System
&reg;</A><span class="pwby"> v1.0</span><P>
```

Managing the guestbooks

The guestbooks can be managed in the Guestbook Manager tab of the admin section. The “existing guestbooks” part of the page has 2 views:

- the default view (selected guestbooks shown), in which only guestbooks with a “shown” status are displayed
- the “view all” mode, in which all existing guestbooks are shown irrespective of their status

A link is provided to toggle between the two states at the top-left of the guestbook table.

You can **hide** a guestbook from the default view. To **show** it back in default mode, you can go to the “view all” mode and select “show” in the guestbook line.

You can also **block** a guestbook. If a guestbook is blocked, no posts will be accepted from the corresponding posting form in the guestbook html page. On posting in a blocked guestbook a warning that the guestbook is temporarily closed is issued.

Once a guestbook is blocked, you can **delete** it. This will delete all the files and folders related to this guestbook in the WCS. Your original guestbook html page will instead be left untouched.

Make a test post

Make a test post from your guestbook html page. Then visit the “edit/delete messages” (find it in the guestbook manager under “existing guestbooks”) and check that the message was stored correctly.

Once you have the system working, you can create as many guestbooks as you like by repeating the procedure outlined above.

For any issue or question feel free to post in the support forum or to write an e-mail to the developer.