Phorum Administrator Reference Manual

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Introduction

This is the Phorum administrator reference manual for Phorum version 5.2.x and up. It is not intended for use with older versions of Phorum, although a lot of information will apply.

Please keep in mind that this manual is neither complete, nor final. If you have any remarks about it, please let us know in the development forum on our website. With your contribution, we hope to make this manual a useful tool for Phorum users in understanding and working with our software.

The Phorum development team
Phorum.org

Chapter 1

Installation instructions

1.1 Requirements

Requirement for running Phorum are:

- A webserver (like Apache or Microsoft IIS);
- PHP, version 5.2 or above;
- A MySQL server, version 5.0 or above.

If you do not run your own website, but have hosted your website with a hosting provider, then please ask your hosting provider if your account meets these requirements.

1.2 Quickstart guide

This is the quickstart guide for installing Phorum, aimed at people that are used to working with websites, PHP and databases. If you are having problems following this guide, then please read Section 1.3 instead.

- Unpack Phorum into a directory below your website's document root;
- Create a database and a full access database user for that database;
- Edit `include/db/config.php.sample`, save it as `include/db/config.php`;
- Open `{phorumurl}/admin.php` in your web browser and finish the install.

1.3 Detailed installation instructions

1.3.1 Download Phorum

If you haven't already done so, download the latest stable Phorum distribution from http://www.phorum.org.

1.3.2 Unpack the downloaded archive

From Windows:

If you have downloaded the .zip file, you can extract the files from that archive directly using Windows XP's zipfile support. If you downloaded the .tar.gz file or if you are using a Windows version that does not have built-in zipfile support, then you will have to download an appropriate tool for unpacking, e.g. WinZip (http://www.winzip.com/-).

From UNIX:

If you have access to a UNIX shell, you can unpack the .tar.gz archive using the following command:

```
shell> tar xvzf phorum-x.y.z.tar.gz
```

Or if the tar program on your system does not supprt the "z" flag:

```
shell> gunzip phorum-x-y-z.tar.gz
shell> tar xvf phorum-x.y.z.tar
```



3 Place the Phorum files in your website's document root

The document root for a website is the directory in which your site's web pages are stored. If your website's URL is `http://www.example.com` and you place the Phorum files in a directory called `forum` inside your document root, your Phorum installation will be available at the URL `http://www.example.com/forum`. From now on, we will name this URL simply `{phorumurl}`. So if you see `{phorumurl}/admin.php`, using the example we actually mean `http://www.example.com/forum/admin.php`.

If the webserver is running on the same system as where you have unpacked the downloaded archive, you can move the unpacked files to your website's document root.

If the webserver is running on another system, you will have to upload the files to your website's document root. In most cases, you will use FTP for this. You will need an FTP client (a good free one is FileZilla). Connect to ftp.yourdomain.com (or the FTP server that was assigned to you by your provider) and proceed to upload the files to the document root. The procedure for doing this differs depending on the client; if in doubt, refer to the client's documentation. However, some hosting providers require SCP (secure copy, which is more secure than FTP). If you do not know how or where to upload the Phorum files, please contact your hosting provider.

(simply ignore this if it does not make sense to you)

There are software packages that require you to make files writable for the webserver

(using the infamous "chmod 777"). *DO NOT DO THIS FOR ANY OF THE PHORUM FILES.* The webserver only needs read access on the distribution files, because all dynamic data is stored in the database. If you run into problems running Phorum, it will never be because you "forgot to do chmod 777" on any of the Phorum files.

The only directory that might have to be made writable for the webserver is `./cache` (see additional issues). But this directory is not used in a default installation.

1.3.4 Create a database and a database user

Phorum stores all its data in a database. So if you do not already have a database which you will be using for Phorum, you now need to create one. Officially, only the MySQL database server is supported by Phorum, so we recommend to use MySQL whenever possible.

If you have hosted your site with a hosting provider, you should have access to a control panel (usually cPanel or similar). There should be a MySQL database link on the main page of the control panel, and from there you can create a database. Alternatively, you could have access to phpMyAdmin. Log into phpMyAdmin using the username and password that your host has provided, and use the "create new database" function on the main page. If none of these options are available to you, contact your host and they will be able to do it for you.

If you run your own database server, then you will have to create the database and the user yourself. If you are using a control panel, like phpmyadmin, then use that control panel to create them. You can use the mysql SQL prompt to create the database by issuing the appropriate commands. For example:

```
mysql> CREATE DATABASE phorum;
mysql> GRANT ALL ON phorum.* TO 'myuser'@'localhost'  ↩
    IDENTIFIED BY 'mypassword';
```

Of course, for security reasons you would not use "myuser" and "mypassword" but a username and password that you made up yourself. Also "localhost" should match the hostname of the MySQL server to which Phorum will connect.

If you are unsure on how to create a database and a database user, then please refer to your system's documentation.

1.3.5 Configure the database access for Phorum

After setting up the database, you will have to tell Phorum how to access that database. The configuration for this is put in the file `include/db/config.php` inside your Phorum directory. This file is not included in the distribution. Only a differently named sample file is included (this is to prevent overwriting your configuration when upgrading Phorum). Copy or rename the sample configuration file `include/db/config.php.sample` to `include/db/config.php`. Then edit the `config.php` file to match the access settings for the database that was created in Section 1.3.4.

If you run your website on a remote server, then either edit the configuration file directly on that server (e.g. through a UNIX prompt or an FTP client that supports this) or upload the file to the correct location after editing it locally.

In the configuration file, you will find the following settings:

type This setting determines what database backend is used by Phorum. Phorum is distributed with the a MySQL backend. If you are using MySQL for the database server, then you can keep the default value `mysql` here.

If you use a third party database backend (e.g. PostgreSQL), then you can configure it here. The backend PHP script must be installed at the location `{phorumdir}/include/db/mybackend.php`. With this example, the setting of the type has to be `mybackend`.

server This is the hostname or IP-address of your database server. On a lot of systems, the database server will run on the same system as the web server. In those cases, the default value `localhost` will often be correct. Change this value if the database server is running on a different system than the web server.

name MySQL (and a lot of other database servers) can handle multiple databases in one database server. Each database is referenced by its own unique name. This setting is used for configuring the name of the database that Phorum has to use.

If you have created the database using the example command from above (`CREATE DATABASE phorum`), then you can use the default value `phorum`.

user The username of the user which is used for accessing the database server. The user must have full access rights to the database, for creating and maintaining the needed tables.

password The password for the database user.

table_prefix This table prefix will be prepended to all table names that Phorum uses. If other applications are using the same database or if you have multiple Phorum installations that use the same database name, this prefix can be used to prevent table name collisions. E.g. if you set the prefix to `myprefix`, then the full name of the users table will be `myprefix_users`. For most installations, you can keep the default value `phorum`.

Never change the table prefix on a running system!

port This port is used to connect to the database server. For most installations, you can keep the default value `3306` which is the regular port for mysql.

socket The socket which is used by the database server to connect to. Overrides the port if the hostname is localhost for mysql.

down_page, upgrade_page Phorum uses a built-in error message to inform visitors when no database connection can be made. If you want to provide a custom error message page for this, you can set this setting to the URL of the page that you want to display.

Phorum uses a simple built-in page to inform visitors and the site admin that the database has to be upgraded. If you want to provide a custom upgrade message page for this, you can set this setting to the URL of the page that you want to display.

upgrade_page An optional URL for redirecting the user when the database has to be upgraded. If you want to use this field, remove the "//" in front of it.

The following options apply only to the mysql-layer:

mysql_use_ft This setting determines whether Phorum will use MySQL's full text algorithm for searching through postings. If enabled, searching will be much faster.

To be able to use this feature, the MySQL server that you are using must be version 4.0.18 or higher and the database user must be allowed to create temporary tables. If these requirements are not met, then you will have to disable this setting by assigning the value `0`.

mysql_php_extension This option defines which MySQL PHP extension should be used. Either NULL, "mysql", "mysqli" or "mysqli_replication" for master/slave setups. If NULL, Phorum will autodetect the extension to use.

empty_search_table This option defines if Phorum should populate the search table with data for mysql fulltext search (useful if you use a alternate search backend which doesn't use the search table): 0 will put the messages into the search table, 1 will keep it empty.

charset This option specifies the charset used for the create table statements and the connection(s) later on. Never change the charset on a running system!

slaves This array can hold a number of slave servers to use in master/slave mode. All write queries will go to the default server above, which is the master server in this setup and read load will be split randomly over the slave servers specified in this array. If you want your master server to get read load as well you need to specify it here too. Some read queries will go to the master server anyway in case they are vulnerable to replication lag.

Example 1.3.1 Configuring slaves with the MySQL layer

```
<?php
    'slaves'=>array(
        array(    // Database connection 1.
        'name'          =>  'phorum5',
        'server'        =>  '192.168.1.5',
        'user'          =>  'phorum5',
        'password'      =>  'phorum5',
        'port'          =>  '3306',
        'socket'        =>  NULL),
        array(    // Database connection 2.
        'name'          =>  'phorum5',
        'server'        =>  '192.168.1.6',
        'user'          =>  'phorum5',
        'password'      =>  'phorum5',
        'port'          =>  '3306',
        'socket'        =>  NULL),
        array(    // Database connection 3.
        'name'          =>  'phorum5',
        'server'        =>  '192.168.1.7',
        'user'          =>  'phorum5',
        'password'      =>  'phorum5',
        'port'          =>  '3306',
        'socket'        =>  NULL)
    )
?>
```

1.3.6 Run the web based installer

Now that you have uploaded the files, created the database and configured the database access for Phorum, you are ready to run the web based installation script. Open `{phorumurl}/admin.php` using your web browser. This is the administration interface, which will automatically detect that a fresh install has to be performed.

Follow the instructions on screen to finish the Phorum installation.



Things to do after installing Phorum

Now the installation is complete, you could continue with the following actions to get started:

- test if the forum is working correctly by opening `{forumurl}` in your web browser. If you run into problems, please go to `{forumurl}/admin.php` and click on the option "System Sanity Checks" in the menu. This will perform a couple of system checks to rule out some basic problems. If problems are found, please follow the instructions on the sanity checks page to solve them.

- Login into the admin interface at `{forumurl}/admin.php` and check out what settings can be done to customize Phorum to your likings. This is also the place where you can create new forums.

- Customize the looks of Phorum to your needs by creating a custom template. Instructions for this can be found in the templates section of the developer manual.

- Read the additional issues for your system, the FAQ and any other parts of the documentation that may help you understand Phorum.

1.4 Additional issues

1.4.1 Additional issues for UNIX (Linux, BSD, Solaris, etc.)

1.4.1.1 Cache directory

In the Phorum settings, there is an entry called "Cache Directory". On UNIX systems, the installer will have set that to the default location `/tmp`. The cache directory is used for storing cached data and compiled templates. You can change the location of your cache directory if you do not want the Phorum files to be in `/tmp` or if you see the following kind of error message:

```
Warning:
fopen(/tmp/tpl-default-header- ↩
    a72fb9dd20915e5953aa9b07d3eb3871.php):
failed to open stream: permission denied in
/path/to/phorum/include/templates.php on line 184
```

If you want to change the cache directory settings, we advise you to change it to `./cache` (this directory is already in the Phorum directory).

You will have to make sure that this directory is writable by the webserver. Most likely this means that you have to make it world writable. On a UNIX shell prompt, you can do this using the following commands:

```
shell> cd /path/to/phorum
shell> chmod 777 cache
```

If you do not have access to the shell prompt of the server and are using FTP to access the server, please check your FTP client's help on how to set the permissions for a directory.

1.4.2 Additional issues for Windows

1.4.2.1 Cache directory

In the Phorum settings, there is an entry called "Cache Directory". On Windows systems, the installer will have set that to the default location `C:\Windows\Temp`. The cache directory is used for storing cached data and compiled templates. You can change the location of your cache directory if you do not want the Phorum files to be in `C:\Windows\Temp` or if you see the following kind of error message:

```
Warning:
fopen(c:\windows\temp\tpl-default-header- ↩
    a72fb9dd20915e5953aa9b07d3eb3871.php):
failed to open stream: permission denied in
c:\path\to\phorum\include\templates.php on line 184
```

In that case, you will have to change the cache directory setting to point to a valid location. We advise you to change it to `./cache` (this directory is already in the Phorum directory). Make sure that the webserver can write files to this directory.

1.4.2.2 Problems sending mail to end users

PHP has to be configured correctly on Windows systems to be able to send out mail. If this is not done, you might get errors and mail will not arrive. What you need to do is edit the file "php.ini" (this file holds the configuration for PHP). Find the section that is called "[mail function]". In this section, set the parameter "SMTP" to the hostname or IP address of the your SMTP server. If you do not know your SMTP server, please ask your internet access provider. After this, PHP will know what mailserver to use for sending out mail messages.

If you have no access to the php.ini file and the system administrator is not willing to update it for you, you will have to install the SMTP module for Phorum. You can download this module from the Phorum list of modules. In the settings for this module, you can specify the SMTP to use for sending mail. When using this module, you will completely bypass PHP's built-in mail system.

1.4.2.3 Date formatting

Windows does not fully support the date formatting function strftime(). So if you want to change the date formatting (which is configured using `$PHORUM['long_date']` and `$PHORUM['short_date']` in the language file `{phorumdir}/include/lang/yourlanguage.php`), please read the PHP documentation for strftime() and its limitations on the Windows platform at `http://www.php.net/strftime`

Support

If you have questions about installing Phorum which are not answered by this manual, then please visit the website http://www.phorum.org and ask the development team for help in the support forum.

Chapter 2

Upgrading instructions

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the Phorum upgrading process. We differentiate between three types of upgrades:

- Minor and Bugfix upgrades
  These are upgrades where only the last number in the Phorum version is raised (e.g. 5.2.1 to 5.2.2). These upgrades are mostly for implementing (security) bugfixes and minor enhancements that do not require any template and/or database changes.

- Minor and Bugfix upgrades
  These are upgrades where the second number in the Phorum version is raised (e.g. 5.1.10 to 5.2.2). These are upgrades where large new features are implemented. These upgrades will always require database and template changes.

- Major upgrades
  These are upgrades where also the first number in the Phorum version is raised (e.g. 3.4.8 to 5.2.2). Now and then, the Phorum team starts with a version of Phorum that is built from the ground up, to implement all the new insights and ideas that are gathered while building the previous version. Since completely new code is generated, the version number is raised in full. These upgrades will always require a full database and site layout conversion, which might implicate a lot of manual work.

2.2 Minor and Bugfix upgrades

2.2.1 Upgrading the database

2.2.1.1 Upgrade preparations

The upgrading process will preserve all of your active settings and modules, but will overwrite hacks and any changes made to the default template (in the directory {phorum dir}/templates/default). Other templates will be kept intact.

Here are the steps for upgrading:

- Backup your existing Phorum5 installation. Before doing an upgrade, it is always wise to make a good backup of your running system. Make a backup your Phorum install directory and the database in which your Phorum tables are stored
- Download a newer Phorum5 package
- Delete the folder include/db/upgrade for making sure that you have the correct db-upgrade-scripts.
- Extract the files and put them on top of the current installation
- Keep the database settings from {phorum dir}/include/db/config.php the same

Now you can choose whether you want to upgrade from a webbrowser or from a console.

2.2.1.2 From a webbrowser

Open your forum using your webbrowser. In case a database upgrade is needed, you will be prompted to go to the admin page. In that case open the {phorum url}/admin.php page, which will guide you through the upgrade.

2.2.1.3 From a system console

In the scripts directory of your Phorum installation, you will find the script "console_upgrade.php". Go to the scripts directory and execute the script from there. On most systems, you can do this using the following command:

```
shell>  php console_upgrade.php
```

If you want to run this script from a different locations, then edit the script and update the $PHORUM_DIRECTORY variable to match the location of your Phorum installation.

2.2.2 Upgrading templates and hacks

For minor upgrades, the Phorum team has the policy that templates should not change. For example, if you are upgrading version 5.1.1 to 5.1.2, you can simply keep the old templates.

Template functionality might change between major Phorum releases. For example, templates that were made for Phorum 5.0.x are not compatible with the templates for Phorum 5.1.x. So to upgrade these, you'll have to build new templates, based on the new default template that is included in the distribution. Simply copying the old template will most probably result in errors and missing functionality.

If you are doing a minor upgrade and you have to preserve changes that were made to the default template (which is not the recommended way of customizing Phorum, see creating_templates.txt), you can follow one of the following options:

- Extract the new Phorum distribution to its own directory and reapply your changes before putting it over the existing installation
- Create a backup of your existing installation. Install the new distribution on top of the old one and reapply the changes to the new version while it is "live"

2.3 Major upgrades

2.3.1 Upgrade preparations

- Download and unpack the Phorum5 package;
- Follow the installation instructions in Chapter 1. Install Phorum5 into a new directory.

2.3.2 Convert the old forum data

In the scripts directory of your Phorum5 distribution, you will find a script named phorum3to5convert.php. Instructions for using this script are given below. The script will convert your old forum to Phorum5. Everything, but permission levels, is converted.

Instructions from phorum3to5convert.php

This script will convert the data from a Phorum 3 database to a Phorum 5 database. **It does not change any of the old phorum3 tables. The data is only copied over to the new Phorum 5 tables.**

Instructions:

- Be sure your Phorum 3 is running a 3.4.x version. If you are running an older version of Phorum 3, first upgrade to 3.4.x.
- Copy or move this script one directory up, to the main Phorum 5 directory.
- Edit the $CONVERT variables in the beginning of phorum3to5convert.php to match the settings of your phorum3 installation (set there in the admin).
- Install Phorum 5 as usual. For speed and reliability, preferably use the same database as the database where Phorum 3 lives. Because Phorum 5 uses a table prefix (typically "phorum_"), the tables for Phorum 3 and Phorum 5 can safely live next to each other in the same database.

- Empty the phorum_messages and phorum_forums tables of the Phorum 5 installation. You can do this either by dropping all forums from the Phorum 5 admin interface or by issuing the appropriate SQL queries from the MySQL prompt or from a database tool like "phpmyadmin". The queries to execute are (replace "phorum" with your own table_prefix if you changed this during install):

```
DELETE FROM phorum_search;
                DELETE FROM phorum_messages;
                DELETE FROM phorum_forums;
```

  I could do this from this script as well, but I would find that a little bit rude ;-))

- Turn off unneeded modules for the conversion. All modules hooking into common.php or some other general hook will be run while doing the conversion which will lead to at least a slowdown, unexpected side effects and some strange output.

- If you have shell access to your webserver, run this script using the shell from the command line. This is the preferred way of running the upgrade:

```
shell> php phorum3to5convert.php
```

- If you do not have shell access, call the upgrade script from your browser:

```
{phorum url}/phorum3to5convert.php
```

  ***** THIS STEP MAY TAKE A WHILE *****

- Take a look at the Phorum 5 forums to see if everything was converted correctly.

- Delete the upgrade script phorum3to5convert.php.

2.3.3 Update the posted message counters for the users

In the scripts directory, you will also find a script named "update_postcount.php". This script can be used to update the number of posts for users to the right value. So if you want correct numbers to show up in the user profiles, just run this script once AFTER the conversion has been completed. To run it, you will have to copy it over to the main Phorum5 directory. After that you can either run it from the command line or by opening it from your webbrowser. See also the instructions in the script itself.



Support

If you have questions about installing or upgrading Phorum which are not answered by this manual, then please visit the website http://www.phorum.org and ask the development team for help in the support forum.

Chapter 3

How to configure and use the Phorum Features

3.1 Global Settings

3.1.1 General Settings

Phorum Title: Enter the title of your forum here. This will be displayed on the index page of your forum.

Phorum Description: A description of your forum. This will be displayed on the index page of your forum. This is also useful from a Search Engine Optimization perspective.

DNS Lookups: If enabled, this instructs forum to perform a DNS lookup on certain items, such as:

- logging the hostname from which a message was posted, instead of the plain IP address;
- being able to create IP ban items based on host and domain names;
- checking the email address that is for user registrations.

Generally this is a useful function for an administrator, and should be left enabled. However, if Phorum keeps reporting illegal email addresses during signup or if you are suffering from massive delays during posting messages, then there might be DNS problems on your server. In that case, disable DNS lookups as a work around.

Hide Forums: If this is enabled, forums which a user does not have the permissions to read will be hidden from them.

Show New Count in Forum List: This feature will show registered users how many new messages and threads there are in each forum on the forum list page. If you have a large number of posts, a large number of forums, a large number of users or some combination of the three, this setting could cause some performance issues. If you see performance issues, try setting it "No count, indicator only" or "No"

Folder/Forum Display Style: Since version 3, Phorum has included folders. Until version 5.1, forums inside folders did not show until you clicked on the folder. In 5.1, the list of forums in a folder can now be shown under that folder in the forum list. This allows admins to organize a large list of forums all on one page.

Enable Moderator Notifications: By setting this to Yes, Phorum will display a notice to the various kinds of moderators when they have a new item that requires their attention. For example, if this setting is enabled, moderators will see a notice whenever there is an unapproved message.

User Post Edit Time Limit: If set to a value larger then 0, this acts as a time limit for post editing. Users will only be able to edit their own posts within this time limit. This only applies if a user has the necessary permissions to edit their post, and does not affect moderators.

Track Edit Changes: When enabled, the changes made to a message will be stored and viewed by users. It can optionaly only be viewed by moderators.

Reply form appears: This setting specifies where the reply form for threads is displayed, either on the read page or on a separate page.

After posting goto: This setting specifies where the user is redirected after posting, either to the message read page or the message list.

After submitting a search query: On large forums or slow servers, searching for messages might take a little while. To prevent users from submitting the same search query over and over again (in case they think the search didn't work, because they didn't get their results fast enough), you can show an intermediate page, telling the user that the search is running. If your system can deliver search results quickly enough, then you can skip the intermediate page and go directly to the search results page.

Database error handling: This setting determines how Phorum handles database errors. The default is to show the errors on screen. "Errors will go to a logfile" is useful if you don't want your users to see the errors, and "Errors will be emailed" is useful if you want immediate notification of any database errors on your forums.

Secret private key for signing data: On several occasions, data is transferred from the Phorum system to the user's system and back again. To be sure that there was no tampering with this data on the way, it is signed by Phorum using this secret key. If you do not understand what this is for, then it is safe to simply keep the pre-configured value.
If you change this key, users who are active right now might experience problems.

Allow Linking to Uploaded Files: You may not want to allow other web sites to link to files that users have uploaded to your forums. If not, then set this option to "Only from the forum". If you want to use links on other parts of your web site, then use "From this web site". If you want to allow other websites to link to your forum file uploads, then select "From any web site".

If your needs are more specific than this (e.g. if you want to allow access from a specific group of web sites), you will need to use your web server's security features to accomplish this. Apache users can reference Prevent "Image Theft" at http://httpd.apache.org/-docs/env.html#examples. Users of the cPanel system can also configure this through the "Hotlink Protection" feature.

Put file name in pathinfo for file download URLs: All Phorum file downloads

(for user files and forum message attachments) run through the file.php script. As a result, users who right-click a file URL and choose "Save link as .." will end up in their browser with file.php as the default file name. With this option enabled however, Phorum will try to give the browser a real file name instead. This is done by putting the file name in the URL as pathinfo (which makes the download link look like `/file.php/downloadfile.ext?1,2,file=3`).

The webserver needs to support the use of pathinfo for this feature to work. So if you are unable to download files after enabling this option, your webserver probably lacks pathinfo support and you cannot use this feature.

Phorum HTML Title: This can be used to set the title of your Phorum. Equivalent to changing the HTML title tag.

Phorum Head Tags: This option can be used to provide additional HTML code that will be added to the head section of the pages. This could for example be used for adding meta keywords.

Show and allow feed links: A feed is a standardized format for providing information about new content on a web site. Various programs can be used to process and read feed information (e.g. specialized "feed readers", Firefox, Google's on line feed reader, Thunderbird mail). If you enable this feature, then your visitors will be able to subscribe to feeds for your forums.

Note that feed readers will automatically poll for feed updates using a client side defined time interval, so with a lot of active feed subscriptions, the number of requests to your web server will rise. Phorum uses server side caching of the feed data to keep the server load that is required for supporting feeds to a minimum.

Default feed type: There are multiple standards for providing content feeds. Phorum supports RSS and ATOM, which are the most widely spread XML based feed formats.
If you are unsure what to use, then select "RSS".

HTTP Path: This is the base URL of your Phorum.

Disabled URL: This url will be redirected to when the Phorum status is disabled. If no URL is given, a message in English will be displayed.

Time Zone Offset: If you and/or your users are in a different timezone than the server, you can have the default displayed time adjusted by using this option.

Use Cookies: Phorum can track logged in users by using cookies or session information on URLs.

Use No Cookies: The session information will always be included on the URL.

Allow Cookies: The session information will be stored in cookies, if the user's browser supports it. Otherwise, the information is included in the URL.

Require Cookies: Session information is only stored in cookies. If the user's browser does not support cookies, the user will not be able to log in.

Main Session Timeout (days): When users log in to your Phorum, they are issued a cookie. You can set the timeout value to a number of days that you want the cookies to stay on the users computer. If you set it to 0, the cookie will only last as long as the user has the browser open.

Session Path (start with /):: When cookies are sent to the client's browser, part of the cookies determines the path (URL) for which the cookies are valid. For example, if the URL is http://example.com/phorum, you could set the path to /phorum. Then,

the user's browser would only send the cookie information when the user accessed the Phorum. You could also simply / and the cookie info will be sent for any page on your site. This could be useful if you want to use Phorum's login system for other parts of your site.

Session Domain: Usually you can leave this blank. If you know you need to use a different domain (like if you use forums.example.com, you may want to just use example.com as the domain) you may enter it here.

Track User Usage: When set, the last time a user accessed the Phorum will be recorded as often as you have decided upon. This will require constant updates to your database. If you have a busy forum on weak equipment, it may be ill advised to use a short update interval.

Enable Tighter Security: Tight security in Phorum will require that users confirm their login information from time to time before posting messages, accessing private messages or using their Control Center. The length of time is determined by Short Session Timeout.

Short Session Timeout: When tight security is enabled, the users will be issued a second cookie when they type in their login information. If the user does not use the site for the period of time you set here, they will have to re-enter their login information before posting messages, accessing private messages or using their Control Center. They will still be allowed to read the Phorum as long as their Main Session is still good. The time is in minutes. The minimum is 5 minutes; otherwise, your users will be very angry at you.
P.S. 1 day = 1440 minutes

Allow Time Zone Selection: If enabled, this will allow users to change the time-zone of the forum (specific to their account).

Allow Template Selection: If enabled, users will find an option in their Control Center to select the template to use.
Note: The user selected template will only be used for forums, which do not have "Fixed Display Settings" enabled in the forum settings.

Registration Verification: This allows you to force users to follow a verification process after registration. You can have them verify either:

- by email - a link is sent to the user's email address, which they have to click on to activate their account)
- by moderator - a moderator must approve the user before their account is activated

Or both. This is a useful function to prevent spam, but keep in mind it adds extra hurdles for users trying to register, which could put certain people off.

Enable Drop-down user list: By setting this to Yes, Phorum will display a drop-down list of users instead of an empty text box on pages where you can select a user. Two examples of such pages are when sending a private message, and when adding users to a group in the grou moderation page. This option should be disabled if you have a large number of users, as a list of thousands of users will slow performance dramatically.

What to use as the display name: You can choose to use either the user's username of the real name (which can be edited by the user from the Control Center) as the name which the user is referenced to throughout all Phorum pages. This is not an option that you normally would want to change on a live system that has been running for a while. One reason is that all stored names will have to be updated in the database (e.g. the posting authors), which can take quite a while on a big forum (it will work though). More important is that you might confuse your users by changing their display names.

Hide Email Addresses: You can choose to set whether all email addresses should be hidden. This includes the email addresses of anonymous users and registered users in their profile. The separate option to hide the email address in the user Control Center will be hidden too.

File Uploads: These settings apply to personal file uploads that users can do in their Control Center. The users can link to these files by copying and pasting the file URLs. Some modules (like the avatar module) also make user of personal files (for example, for storing images that the user can use as the avatar to show). Keep in mind that upload file size is also restricted by the upload size limit of php.ini.
These settings do not control uploading of forum message attachments. For changing message attachment settings, you have to edit the settings of the forum for which you want to enable attachments.

Private Messaging (PM):: If enabled, this will allow users to access/use the private messaging system.

Check for new PM: By settings this to Yes, Phorum will check if a user has new private messages, and display an indicator. On a Phorum with a lot of users and private messages, this may hurt performance. This option has no effect if Private Messaging is disabled.

Maximum number of stored messages: This is the maximum number of private messages that a user may store on the server. The numbr of private messages is the total of all messages in all PM folders combined. Setting this value to 0 will allow for unlimited messages.

Allow notification of PM by email: If this option is enabled, Phorum will send a notification email to users that receive a new private message. The user will find an option in their Control Center which can be used to disable the notification email.

System Emails from Name: This allows you to specify what name system emails are signed by.

System Emails from Address: Specify which email address system emails are sent from.

Use Bcc in emails: This prevents recipients seeing the complete list of recipient addresses. If this is disabled, the system will use CC (carbon copy), so each recipient can see all recipient email addresses.

Ignore admin for moderator emails: If you select Yes for this option, then the moderator notifications and report message emails will not be sent to the administrator, only to moderators.

3.1.2 Cache Settings

Cache Directory: Caching is used to take some load off the database and web server. The cache directory is used for caching preprocessed Phorum templates and for caching data in case "file system based" is selected as the cache layer below.

For most installations, it will be fine to set it to the default temp directory for the server (/tmp on UNIX systems and C:\Windows\Temp for Windows system).

If your server has PHP Safe Mode enabled, you will need to create a directory under your Phorum directory and make it writable by the web server (you can use the directory "./cache" which was included in the Phorum distribution for this purpose). Additionally, if you are running Phorum on a shared server, it is generally advantageous to use the "./cache" directory instead of "/tmp".

Enable Caching stylesheet data (CSS): Phorum uses a system where modules can add data to the main stylesheet for the pages. By enabling this feature, Phorum can cache the dynamically generated data and improve caching of the stylesheet data in the browsers of your visitors. Enabling this feature is highly recommended. Only disable it if you are having problems with it.

Enable Caching JavaScript code: Phorum uses a system where modules can provide JavaScript code for the pages. By enabling this feature, Phorum can cache the dynamically generated data and improve caching of the JavaScript data in the browsers of your visitors. Enabling this feature is highly recommended. Only disable it if you are having problems with it.



3.1.3 Ban Lists

Ban items can be used to deny new user registrations and posting of (private) messages, based on various criteria. If a ban item applies to a user action, then this action will be fully blocked by Phorum. This can for example be used to block user registrations and postings from certain IP addresses or to prevent certain words from being used in forum messages.

If you want to fully ban a user, then it's best to set "Active" to "No" for the user in the "Edit Users" interface.

3.2 Virtual Roots

3.2.1 What are Virtual Roots?

Virtual Roots allow you to run "a phorum inside a phorum". It makes the selected folder to the "root folder" of all forums and folders below it which means that the "forum-list" links go as far up as to this folder and searches for "all forums" are limited to forums in this virtual root. The announcement-module has also functions to use a different forum per virtual root for the announcements. On the other hand, the administration-page is about all the forums/folders and users are valid about all forums (in all virtual roots) in the installation.

3.2.2 How do I create a virtual root?

To create a virtual root just create a folder and select the checkbox "Virtual Root for descending forums/folders" for this folder. From now on every folder or forum below this folder will be contained in this virtual root.

3.3 Phorum Modules

3.3.1 What are Phorum Modules?

Modules are (often) small extensions to Phorum-functionality without sacrificing performance of the Phorum-core. You can install them if needed for using their functionalities.
Take a look at the list of modules to see the currently available modules.

3.3.2 How do I install a module?

All modules are installed inside the subdirectory "mods" of your Phorum installation directory. There are two types of modules: single file and multi file modules.

- Single file modules Single file modules consist of a single php-file containing also the description and hook-names. These kind of modules can't have a settings-page.
  You install a single file module by simply dropping its php-file into the mods directory and enabling it in the administration pages.

- Multi file modules Multi file modules consist of at least a directory with a php-file named the same as the directory and an info.txt-file. Additionally for a settings-page there needs to be a settings.php. Beside these standard-files there can be all kind of files and directories used for the module's functions.
  You install a multi-file module by copying the whole directory (preserving its directory structure) into the mods-directory and enabling it in the admin.

3.3.3 Modules included in the distribution

3.3.3.1 Announcements

3.3.3.1.1 What are announcements? Announcements are important messages shown to all users and on all (or specified) pages which should stand out over the regular posts. Since Phorum-5.2 announcements are handled as a module which is distributed with Phorum. See Section 3.3 for generic module instructions. The module allows for better separation of posts and announcements and also some additional features like hiding announcements after a given time and it opens the way for other future announcements modules which offer even more functionalities.

3.3.3.1.2 How do I use announcements? The announcement-module works with a separate announcements-forum whose messages are shown above the message-list as specified. Therefore follow this description to enable announcements for your Phorum:

- Create a separate announcement-forum. The name doesn't matter, just try to remember it.
- Go to the Admin -> Modules panel and click on the "Settings" link of the announcements-module.
- Select the pages where announcements should be visible on (index, list and/or read)
- Select if only unread announcements should be shown to the user
  Note: Only announcements the user has clicked on to read the message are counted as read.
- Enter the number of announcements that should be shown.
  Attention: This number of announcements is all that is retrieved before doing the additional checks like for date and being new to the user.
- Enter the maximum number of days an announcement should be visible for.
  Note: The post-date is being used to calculate that. Edits are not taken into account.
- Select the announcement forum where the messages should be taken from
- Optional: If you have vroots then these will be listed and you have the chance to select different announcement forums for them.

3.3.3.2 BBCode

3.3.3.2.1 What is BBCode? BBCode (Bulletin Board Code) is a system of tags which allows users to add markup to messages (bold, italic, images, links etc) in a safe way. For example, if text in a post was enclosed like so: [i]text[/i], it would be rendered in italics, [b]text[/b] would be rendered in bold, and so on.

3.3.3.2.2 How do I use BBCode? BBCode is enabled by default. To configure it, go to the admin panel, click on "Modules" in the sidebar, and click on "Settings" next to the BBCode module. Here you can change a number of useful options, including whether or not to have a button for a certain BBCode in the editor tools bar, for added usability. See Section 3.3.3.3.1 for more information on this feature. Explanations of what the options do can be found by clicking on the help buttons next to them.

3.3.3.3 Editor tools

3.3.3.3.1 What is Editor tools? The editor tools module adds a toolbar to the Phorum message editor, which can be used by visitors to easily add things like BBcode tags and smileys to their postings. This is particularily useful for users unfamiliar with BBCode syntax. It is enabled by default.

3.3.3.3.2 How do I use Editor tools? Simply click on the button on the toolbar to insert the tags for the effect that you desire. By clicking on "Settings" in the admin panel Modules section, you can toggle whether or not for an additional help button to be displayed on the toolbar, which gives information on BBCode syntax and smilies.

3.3.3.4 Event Logging

3.3.3.4.1 What is Event Logging? This module implements an event logging system, which can be used for logging various events. Other modules can use this module for logging purposes too. This module can be useful for tracking the actions of your users and your moderators, or for tracking development issues. It is disabled by default.

3.3.3.4.2 How do I use Event Logging? First, go the the Modules section in the admin panel and enable the module. Then, click on Settings to configure what you want to be logged. You can view the logs from the Settings page by clicking on View logged events, or if you are trying to find something specific, filter them by selecting Filter logged events.

3.3.3.5 HTML in posts

3.3.3.5.1 What is HTML in posts? This module allow HTML to be used in posts. This includes allowing special characters (eg. UTF-8) that are HTML encoded. Note: BBCode is a safer alternative to HTML, due to the issues that HTML embedded in posts can cause. It is disabled by default. We recommend you leave it that way unless you know what you are doing ;)

3.3.3.5.2 How do I use HTML in posts? Enable the module in the admin panel, and Phorum will then render HTML in posts, instead of just as plain text.

3.3.3.6 Send mail through SMTP

3.3.3.6.1 What is Send mail through SMTP? This module allows to send the mail-messages from phorum (i.e. notifies) through an external SMTP-Server without using PHPs internal mail-function. This is useful for when PHP is not setup to use a local SMTP server, or if you need to use an SMTP server with SSL/TLS or smtp-auth. It is disabled by default.

3.3.3.6.2 How do I use Send mail through SMTP? Once you have enabled the module, you need to fill out the details of the SMTP server in the Settings page. If your Phorum is in a shared hosting environment, then your host should have sent them to you when you created your account. If not, ask them.

3.3.3.7 Simple Text Replacement

3.3.3.7.1 What is Simple Text Replacement? This module allows admins to define text replacement in messages. So for example, if you set the module to replace

the word "foobar" with "cake", if a user submits a post with "foobar" in it, it will be replaced with "cake". It is disabled by default.

3.3.3.7.2 How do I use Simple Text Replacement? Once you have enabled the module, click on Settings. Here, you can view the list of existing strings, or add your own. Simply enter a string to match, and what to replace it with. You can also use PCRE's (Perl Compatible Regular Expressions).

3.3.3.8 Smileys

3.3.3.8.1 What are Smileys? Smileys are graphical alternatives to the regularly used emoticons, such as :) and :(. This module is enabled by default. As long as the module is enabled, Phorum will render the supplied strings in the settings section as the image which is provided.

3.3.3.8.2 How do I use Smileys? In the Settings section of the Smiley module you can change the positioning of smilies on the page, add more smilies and other settings.

3.3.3.9 Spam Hurdles

3.3.3.9.1 What is Spam Hurdles? The Spam Hurdles contains a number of useful features designed to stop spamming of your board. It consists of CAPTCHA features, to prevent automated bots from posting and/or signing up, and various other checks. It is disabled by default. It is recommended that boards that do not require registration for posting enable this.

3.3.3.9.2 How do I use Spam Hurdles? Once you have enabled the module, go to the Settings page. Here, you can choose which checks should be enabled, ranging from CAPTCHA to features preventing multiple post submissions.

3.3.3.10 Tidy Output

3.3.3.10.1 What is Tidy Output? This module removes unneeded white space from Phorum's output saving bandwidth. It is disabled by default.

3.3.3.11 Username Restrictions

3.3.3.11.1 What is Username Restrictions? This module implements configurable features for enforcing user name restrictions. The module will check the user name at registration time and show an error to the user if the new username does not meet the restrictions. It is disabled by default.

3.3.3.11.2 How do I use Username Restrictions? Once you have enabled the module, you can configure settings such as username length and character preferences in the module settings page.