

Using PHPList

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2. What is PHP List

PHPList is a program available for installation on web sites that manages emailing to a list of people with the following features:

- Can be operated via any browser so emails can be sent from any location.
- Handles virtually unlimited number of addresses
- Each recipient sees only their email address and will not see the address of anyone else.
- Can be configured to limit emails per hour
- Can be configured to send at set intervals – e.g. one second apart
- Allows recipients to unsubscribe as required by US anti-spam laws
- Provides for HTML and Plain text versions – selection can be by individual
- Email addresses can be imported from a .csv tab limited file – this in turn can be produced by Excel
- Email addresses can be exported to a .csv tab limited file
- Multiple mailing lists are possible
- Mailing list data base must include email addresses but can also include additional data. This would typically include recipient's name but might also include address, company and anything else. However, for a large data base, this could be onerous to maintain. It is recommended that only email address and name be stored.
- Can send mail merge emails – for example, the recipient's name can be included in the message.
- Although bounces can be managed, the configuration and management is complex and not used. So if email addresses are wrong, the emails will simply not go through.

It is called PHP List because it uses PHP which is a very popular program used worldwide and resident on servers. It is used to process scripts written to do things like manage data bases, send emails, create surveys, blogs, forums and more. [Background info – PHP was invented by Rasmus Lerdorf who was born in Greenland but raised in Canada and graduated from Waterloo University.]

3. Installation and upgrades

For Cobourg Internet, Installation is done semi-automatically using Fantastico. Sometimes there are incompatibilities that require special settings to be made – see appendix 1. Then the various parameters are set using the configuration section. Upgrades can also be done using Fantastico – the adjustments for incompatibilities may have to be repeated.

4. Access to PHPList

To Access PHPList, you will need a user name and password. The user name is usually admin and the password will be provided separately.

5. Configuration

This is done during set-up – there is no requirement for the user to do any of this configuration unless a change is wanted. For example, a new template or new list. All these settings can be changed at any time.

Before starting, assign an email address where reports will be sent – this should be the address of the person responsible for the system who in turn could be the person who sends most messages

5.1 Main Configuration Page

Access from main menu, most settings do not require explanation.

Parameters include:

- Email addresses to use for system messages
- Text of all system messages
- Text of Footer

5.2 Edit config.php

Set Emails per hour to 450. Emails should also be spaced 1 second apart.

5.3 Set up a template

This defines formatting and allows for a header either text or graphic. Templates could be different for different situations – e.g. one for monthly newsletters, another when no special heading is wanted. Templates can include a custom signature and footer. The minimum requirement for a template is that it include [CONTENT] which defines where the message will be placed.

To create a template, go to templates on the side menu and then click add a new template. Creating a template is very similar to creating a message so see section 6 below.

5.4 Users

To send emails, you need a list of email addresses, preferably with accompanying names. These can be imported into PHPList – you may need assistance on this since it's not immediately obvious what options to choose.

5.5 Lists

At least one list must be created and names added to it. An e-mail address is the minimum content per user but **Name** or other info can be added.

6. Composing your message

6.1 Using Text Editor

Enter PHPList Admin and click "Send a message".

1. Type content into editor's box. (Or paste per below). Formatting is done by the buttons at the top of the box. Most are self explanatory – although I avoid using "Style" and "Format".
2. For Links, do not use available "insert links" box. Instead go into the HTML code by clicking **Source**. Then type a link to (e.g. cobourginternet) as follows: `www.cobourginternet.com` Click **Source** again to return to normal view and you'll see that content inside the `< >` tags is not shown and the link appears as the text bracketed inside these tags.
3. In the boxes at the top, enter the subject as you want recipients to see it. In the "from" line, enter two things per the following example: **John jdraper9@cogeco.ca** These two items, separated by a space,

specify the name and email address that the email will say it has been sent by. You can put anything here but common courtesy requires you to put your name and an address that will reach you. Also, if some recipients are on Box-trapper (and know that to be the case), use an email address they are likely to have previously approved. This is also the address that they will send any replies to.

4. When completed, SAVE.
5. Go to Format tab and select the template wanted and SAVE.
6. Then from either tab, enter your email address and click **Send a test message**. This sends this message to the email address selected. Note that your email address must be one of the users in the data base. Look at it in your email programme and see if there is anything you'd like to change. You will receive two copies – one HTML and the other plain text.

6.2 Using Word

Or, if you'd like to first compose in Word, then do the following:

1. Compose message with formats, colours, links and images as desired.
2. Print a copy so you can replicate it in the editor.
3. Select all (CTRL-A), then copy (e.g. CTRL-C) to clipboard.
4. Open Note Pad and paste (CTRL-V).
5. Once again, select all (CTRL-A), then copy (e.g. CTRL-C) to clipboard. This process removes all the "web" formatting that Word has added that is NOT wanted. Then paste into the editor's box (per above)
6. Continue per above – you'll note you have not saved much time – if any - doing this.

6.3 Adding a download

Downloads should be referenced as a link. This means the item to be downloaded is stored on your server then accessed from the link. For example let's say you wanted to "attach" a document called Special.pdf. You would first put this document on the server in a suitable place – e.g. in a directory called "attachments". If you don't know how to do this, ask Cobourg Internet – it's a 5 minute job. If you'd like to know how, also ask Cobourg Internet – it's not hard and required programs are free.

Once on the server, you might want your message text to read like this: Download Special here. So you go to the HTML **Source** and enter the following: ` Download Special here`. That's it, you're done! Remember any "Source" HTML is case sensitive so be sure to get it right. Anyway, you can test it from your test email.

If your download is already on your web site, it does not have to be uploaded – it's already there! You can find the required info by right clicking on the link on your web page and selecting "properties". The address including file name is shown.

6.4 Adding an embedded picture

This is done in a similar fashion to a download with a few detailed differences. As for a download, you'll need the picture to be on the server. It should be in jpeg format and be the size you want it to appear on the page. Most user displays are 800 pixels wide or more - I recommend about 450 – 550 pixels wide to look best. If you don't know how to do this, then again ask Cobourg Internet. Sizing then uploading is about a 10 minute job. Fixing a photo may take longer. You need to know the dimensions in pixels so note them down. Let's assume that you have embedded pictures put in a directory on your site called "embedded" and that the picture details are as follows:

Name: picture.jpg

Width: 550 px

Height: 100 px

Your Site name: mydomain.com

Then once again, go to **Source** and at the location in the text you want the message to appear, type the following:

```

```

Remember to change the picture details to suit your case.

In this example, you'll see the entry alt=" " – if you prefer you can change this to include a description of the picture so anyone who has pictures turned off will still know what it is. (E.g. alt="Invitation to upcoming Convention").

That's it, you're done! Remember any "Source" HTML is case sensitive so be sure to get it right and all spaces and words must be exact. But don't worry too much, you can test it from your test email.

If your picture is already on your web site, it does not have to be uploaded – it's already there! You can find the required info by right clicking on the picture on your web page and selecting "properties". The address including file name (URL) and dimensions (W x H) are shown.

7. Send Message

[Note, if you quit PHPList at this point – it is best to not do this - but you **can** return to this message. To do this, instead of selecting "send a message", select "messages" then choose the "Draft" tab. Find the message you were working on and click edit.]

The next step is to send the message!

1. After completing the Content and Format and saving, select the "Lists" tab.
2. Choose the list to be used (you may have only one).
3. Click "Send message to the Selected mailing List(s)"
4. Then click "Process the message queue".
5. You will get a status screen that will show progress. If you are sending more than 450 emails, it will ask that you do not leave this screen. I don't think it really is critical but certainly do not do any other PHPList tasks until the mailout is 100% complete.
6. Once complete, there will be a status screen saying so plus an email giving the same details.

8. Customizing

In addition to templates, all messages to users can have custom wording and formats for footers can be modified.

Templates can specify not only a custom header picture (banner) and custom footer text and graphics but also all the default formatting for the page

9. When to Use PHPList

If you send emails to more than 10 -20 people at a time, especially if they are large emails (e.g. if there are attachments), you should use PHPList. Otherwise you risk email problems such as overloading your account, emails failing to be sent. All professional organizations sending newsletters and mass e-mailings use either PHP list or a program like it.

10. Appendix 1

10.1 Configure for limiting rate of sending

In PHP file:

`/config/config.php`

```
310 # define the amount of emails you want to send per period. If 0, batch processing
311 # is disabled and messages are sent out as fast as possible
312 define("MAILQUEUE_BATCH_SIZE",450);
314 # define the length of one batch processing period, in seconds (3600 is an hour)
315 define("MAILQUEUE_BATCH_PERIOD",3600);
317 # to avoid overloading the server that sends your email, you can add a little delay
318 # between messages that will spread the load of sending
319 # you will need to find a good value for your own server
320 # value is in seconds (or you can play with the autothrottle below)
321 define('MAILQUEUE_THROTTLE',1);
```

10.2 To fix problem on User page

Probably not needed on later versions

Below is from the user forum

I'm pretty sure it's a coding error - the users page is incompatible with one or more of the plugins that are installed.

If you're comfortable editing the code, you can make either one of these changes to fix the problem:

Option one

Edit `admin/commonlib/pages/users.php`, starting on line 384. Change this:

Code:

```
### allow plugins to add columns
foreach ($GLOBALS['plugins'] as $plugin) {
    $plugin->displayUsers($user, $user['email'], $ls);
}
```

into this:

Code:

```
### allow plugins to add columns
foreach ($GLOBALS['plugins'] as $plugin) {
    if(method_exists($plugin, "displayUsers")) {
        $plugin->displayUsers($user, $user['email'], $ls);
    }
}
```

Recommendation
Use following!

Option two

Edit admin/defaultplugin.php, insert the following code between lines 29 and 30.

Code:

```
function displayUsers($user, $email, $listing) {
    # Do nothing
}
```

10.3 htaccess in directory of phplist

The following works:

DirectoryIndex index.php

```
<FilesMatch "\.(php|inc)$">
Order allow,deny
deny from all
</FilesMatch>
<FilesMatch "(index.php|dl.php|ut.php|lt.php|download.php)$">
Order allow,deny
allow from all
</FilesMatch>
#php_flag magic_quotes_gpc on
```

Only change is commenting out last line re magic quotes