

## Better Monitoring with WebWatchBot Series

### Advanced Monitoring: Web Forms

Web forms are everywhere and for that reason, they should be monitored with the same weight if not more than any other page on a website. Due to some initial complexities or lack of understanding, it can be hard to monitor a page with a web form, but it shouldn't be.

A web form is a web page that contains one or more data entry fields. It can be as simple as a newsletter signup that only requires the input of an email address to an e-commerce system that includes many fields in a form and multiple pages of forms. Under the covers, simple and complex forms are handled much in the same way.

In HTML source, a form includes the form tag (<form>), and one or more input tags (<input>), and a closing form tag (</form>). There are different types of input tags: "text", which accepts alphanumeric text entry and is the most common, and "submit" which is a button that the user can click to send the completed form's data back to the web server. There are two different ways to send the completed form's data back to the server called the form "method", that are GET and POST.

The GET method takes the forms data and appends it to a URL which has a limitation of 1024 characters and less commonly used. The POST method is the most common way of sending a completed form's data back to the server, and is commonly referred to as POSTing data.

By POSTing data, one can monitor a web form as if a real user were entering form data and sending it to the server on a regular basis. By exercising a form in this way, one can be assured that a web form is behaving properly when a real human being is entering and submitting form data.

Since most web forms when POSTed send data to the server for processing, to be inserted into a database or sending an email, one can expect a few different aspects of a website application to be tested: the web server obviously, a back-end database, middleware such as transaction coordinators, and email servers.

When formulating a website monitoring strategy, ensure web forms are a key part of it. A critical web form on your website could be broken at any time, but with the right website monitoring software keeping a watchful eye, you can lessen the impact and reduce downtime.