

ASP vs. PHP: A Quick Comparison

For the development of [dynamic web sites and applications](#), both ASP (Active Server Pages) and PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) are popular development tools for [web developers](#). Dynamic web sites provide an interactive experience for visitors, and can interact with information stored in databases. I will briefly review both web scripting languages to provide some insight into each.

ASP version 1.0 was developed by Microsoft in 1996 and has been systematically revised throughout the years, leading to its current release - ASP.NET 3.5.

PHP was developed in 1995 by the Danish/Greenlandic developer, Rasmus Lerdorf. Similar to ASP, PHP has greatly evolved from version 1.0, in its early years, to its current release, version 5.2.0. PHP is now produced and maintained by The PHP Group.

Platform

ASP web pages are stored and run on Microsoft's IIS (Internet Information Server) server platform.

PHP web pages can be stored and run on a variety of server platforms including Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X, Unix and Linux.

Cost

The latest versions of ASP have been released as part of Microsoft's .NET development framework and environment. An Express (limited feature set) version of ASP.NET is freely available from Microsoft; while the complete development environment will set you back approximately \$700 USD. As ASP websites and applications require a Windows server, a server license is required. A license for the current version of Windows servers (Windows Server 2003 family), will set you back another \$400 - \$4,000 USD, depending on the version chosen. Most advanced websites and applications connect to a database for data storage. Similar to ASP.NET, Microsoft offers a limited feature version of their SQL Server database for free. A complete version ranges in from \$4,000 - \$25,000. While SQL Server database use is most common for ASP developers, free database solutions, such as MySQL are also available.

PHP is considered to be free software by the Free Software Foundation. PHP can be downloaded at no cost from The PHP Group. In contrast to ASP, PHP can be installed on the Linux platform. Linux operating systems are also free software, and can be downloaded and installed on servers at no cost. Most advanced PHP websites and applications connect to a MySQL database, which is also available as free software. Like ASP, PHP websites that are configured to run on Windows servers or with a SQL Server databases, require similar Microsoft licenses.

Ease of Use

ASP.NET is a pleasure to use for object-oriented programmers. The development interface is clean, intuitive and well implemented. The point and click interface and programming language may present a learning curve for seasoned developers.

PHP language syntax is familiar to programmers that have worked with other languages such as Perl, C and Java. While PHP is not a pure object-oriented language, it borrows the structure where it is convenient. As community support is strong with PHP, most questions by developers can be answered with only a quick Google search.

Conclusion

While ASP is a user friendly, sophisticated, development tool, associated licensing costs become a necessary evil. Where PHP lacks in luster, it makes up in leaps and bounds in familiarity and community support.

About the Author

[Crocus Plains Software](#) Ltd is a leading software development services and enterprise solutions agency. Crocus Plains offers business services for web design and development, Internet marketing and search engine optimization, and customized enterprise software development.

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