

CGI (Common Gateway Interface)

Abbreviation of Common Gateway Interface, a specification for transferring information between a World Wide Web server and a CGI program. A CGI program is any program designed to accept and return data that conforms to the CGI specification. The program could be written in any programming language, including C, Perl, Java, or Visual Basic.

CGI programs are the most common way for web servers to interact dynamically with users. Many [HTML](#) pages that contain forms, for example, use a CGI program to process the form's data once it's submitted. Another increasingly common way to provide dynamic feedback for web users is to include scripts or programs that run on the user's machine rather than the web server. These programs can be Java applets, Java scripts, or ActiveX controls. These technologies are known collectively as client-side solutions, while the use of CGI is a server-side solution because the processing occurs on the web server.

One problem with CGI is that each time a CGI script is executed, a new process is started. For busy web sites, this can slow down the server noticeably. A more efficient solution, but one that it is also more difficult to implement, is to use the server's [API](#), such as [ISAPI](#) or [NSAPI](#). Another increasingly popular solution is to use Java servlets.

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