

# The Layout File

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While the template layout file is a PHP file, it is written mostly in HTML with only a few snippets of PHP. You do not have to be a master of PHP to write a template file. All you need to be able to do is learn where to place the key "hooks" into the Joomla templating engine.

## Within

the HTML framework you place "windows" that look into the database behind your web site. There are typically several small windows called Modules and usually one larger opening (like a frontdoor) for a Component. You are encouraged to write templates in XHTML. While there is debate over whether XHTML \*is\* the way of the future, it is a well formed XML standard, whereas HTML is a loose standard. Future versions of Joomla will rely more and more on XML so it is wise to adopt this model now.

The index.php file for a typical 3-column layout would look like the following in a skeletal form:

```

1: <?php
2: $iso = explode( '=', _ISO );
3: echo '<?xml version="1.0" encoding="' . $iso[1] . "\"?>\n";
4: /** ensure this file is being included by a parent file */
5: defined( '_VALID_MOS' ) or die( 'Direct Access to this location is not allowed.' );
6: ?>
7: <!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
   "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">
8: <html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" lang="<?php echo _LANGUAGE; ?>">
9: <head>
10:  <title><?php echo $mosConfig_sitename; ?></title>
11:  <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; <?php echo _ISO; ?>" />
12: <?php
13: if ($my->id) {
14:   initEditor();
15: }
16: ?>
17: <?php mosShowHead(); ?>
18: <link href="<?php echo $mosConfig_live_site; ?>/templates/basic_template/css/template_css.css"
   rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" />
19: </head>
20: <body>
21: <table cellspacing="0" cellpadding="5" border="0">
22:  <tr>
23:   <td colspan="3">
24:    <?php echo $mosConfig_sitename; ?>
25:   </td>
26: </tr>
27: <tr>
28:  <td colspan="3">
29:    <?php mosLoadModules ( 'top', 1 ); ?>
30:  </td>
31: </tr>
32: <tr>

```

```
33: <td width="20%" valign="top">
34:   <?php mosLoadModules ( 'left' ); ?>
35: </td>
36: <td width="60%" valign="top">
37:   <?php mosMainBody(); ?>
38: </td>
39: <td width="20%" valign="top">
40:   <?php mosLoadModules ( 'right' ); ?>
41: </td>
42: </tr>
43: <tr>
44:   <td colspan="3" valign="top">
45:     <?php mosLoadModules ( 'bottom' ); ?>
46:   </td>
47: </tr>
48: </table>
49: </body>
50: </html>
```

Let's have a look at the main features. We are assuming you already know a bit about HTML pages so things like head tags, body tags, tables, etc will be skipped over.

Line 1-3: Defines the file as a valid XML file. `Â _ISO` is a special constant defining the character set encoding to use. `Â` It is defined in your language file.

Line 5: Prevents direct access to this file. It is essential that you include this line in your template.

Lines 7-8: Set up the XHTML standard for the page.

Line 10: Prints out the Site Name configuration variable with the opening and closing title tags.

Line 11: `_ISO` is used again to define the character set to use.

Line 12-16: `$my->id` is a script variable that is non-zero if a user is logged in to your site. If a user is logged in then the nominated WYSIWYG editor is pre-loaded. You may, if you wish, always pre-load the editor, but generally an anonymous visitor will not have the need to add content. This saves a little script overhead for normal browsing of your site.

Line 17: Inserts several metadata blocks.

Lines 18: Loads the CSS stylesheet.  
`$mosConfig_live_site` is a configuration variable that holds the absolute URL of your site.

Line 24: This prints the Site Name in a table cell (spanning the three columns).

Line 29: This loads any modules that are published in the "top" position. The second argument, "1", indicates that the modules are to be aligned horizontally.

Line 34: This loads any modules that are published in the "left" position. These modules will be displayed in a single column.

Line 37: This loads the component into your template.  
The component is set by the URL, for example, `index.php?option=com_content` will display the Content Component in this area.

Line 40: This loads any modules that are published in the "right" position. These modules will be displayed in a single column.

Line 45: This loads any modules that are published in the "bottom" position.