

# Best Practices in Web Form Security

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## Introduction

When you create a web form, your respondent's trust and security should be your number one concern. To help you build trust and boost security, the FormAssembly team conducted a class

outlining the most important principles of web form security. The class began with a series of three emails and concluded with a webinar. You can find the videos below.

This guide's purpose is to help you understand and apply best practices for web form security. You can also use our **FormAssembly Web Security Checklist** to determine whether your web form meets the security standards outlined here.

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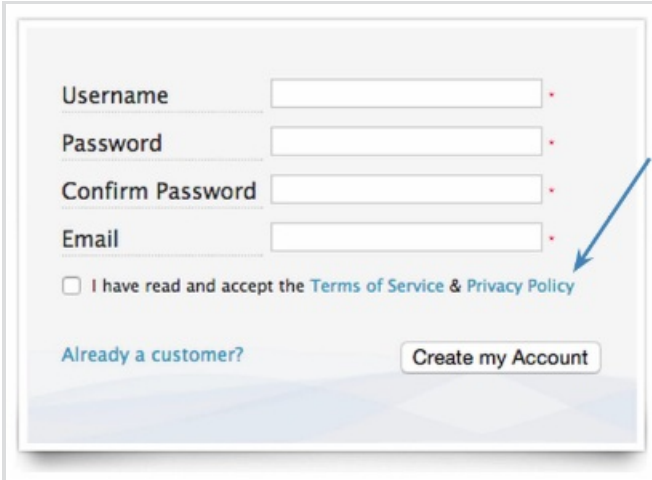
## Customer Expectations

When you ask your customers to fill out a form on your website, you are asking for a certain degree of trust. They are providing you with personal information, and by filling out your form, they are trusting you to handle their data in a safe and secure manner. In order to maintain this trust, and to ensure the security of your customer's data, there are several things to keep in mind.

- Privacy Policy
- Brand Recognition
- Contact Information
- Encryption
- Authentication
- Data Types

## Privacy Policy

Your privacy policy tells your customers how you will use their information. When you collect personal data, it's important to have an easily accessible privacy policy. If you don't have a privacy policy, it may be best to consult with a lawyer to help you with this process. To confirm that your customers have read your privacy policy, you might consider adding a check box:



The image shows a registration form with the following fields: Username, Password, Confirm Password, and Email. Below these fields is a checkbox labeled "I have read and accept the [Terms of Service & Privacy Policy](#)". A blue arrow points to this checkbox. At the bottom of the form, there is a link "Already a customer?" and a button "Create my Account".

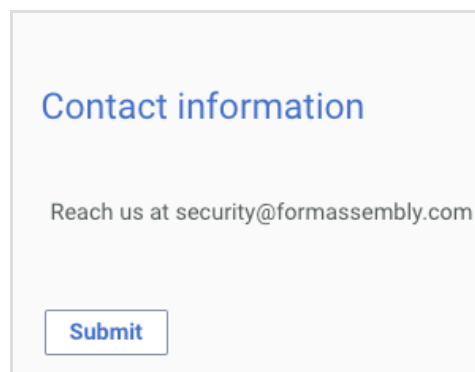
Additionally, it's worth considering adding your privacy policy to your website. The Privacy Policy applies anytime someone uses your Services. We offer our users choices about the data we collect, use and share as described in this [Privacy Policy](#), [Cookie Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

## Brand Recognition

When people open your form, it's important that they recognize it as part of your organization. Since they are providing you with personal information, there should be no doubt in their mind about who you are. The look and feel of your web form should always be consistent with your website, with the same logos, style, and design. You can use the [FormAssembly Theme Editor](#) to customize your form. For example, here is FormAssembly's [brand](#) guide.

## Contact Information

Your form should include contact information so that your respondents can reach you. If you've embedded your form, your contact information may appear in the footer of your site; however, if not, you'll want to make sure to add that information to the form. For forms hosted on FormAssembly, you can update your public contact information (under **My Account > Contact Information > Public Contact Information**), which will appear at the bottom of your form through the [Need Assistance?](#) link.



The image shows a rectangular form element with a light gray background and a thin border. At the top, the text "Contact information" is displayed in a blue font. Below this, the text "Reach us at [security@formassembly.com](mailto:security@formassembly.com)" is shown in a smaller, dark gray font. At the bottom of the form, there is a small rectangular button with the word "Submit" in a blue font.

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## Encryption and Types of Data

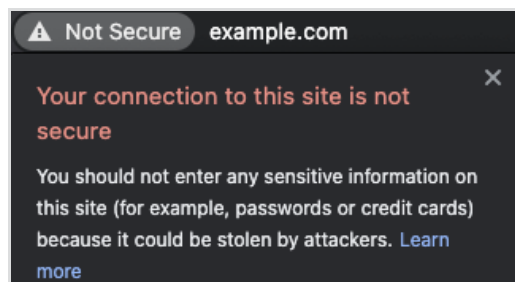
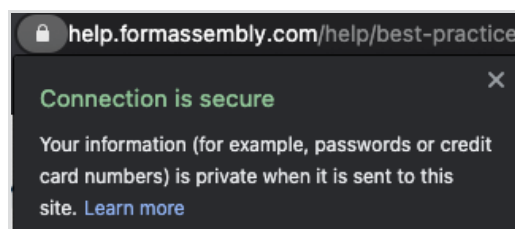
### Encryption

Encryption is the process of securing data and making it unreadable to people who do not have the key, which is usually the browser or the server. With TLS 1.2, you increase your form's security and help your customers feel more comfortable, especially when they are submitting sensitive or personal information.

Data sent using HTTPS is secured via Transport Layer Security protocol ([TLS](#)), which provides three key layers of protection:

1. Encryption—encrypting the exchanged data to keep it secure from eavesdroppers. That means that while the user is browsing a website, nobody can "listen" to their conversations, track their activities across multiple pages, or steal their information.
2. Data integrity—data cannot be modified or corrupted during transfer, intentionally or otherwise, without being detected.
3. Authentication—proves that your users communicate with the intended website. It protects against man-in-the-middle attacks and builds user trust, which translates into other business benefits.

If your website does not have a TLS certificate, you can direct respondents to the FormAssembly link to complete the form.



You can also take advantage of the Secure Browsing feature, this ensures that your connection is encrypted if you're collecting sensitive information.

**SECURE BROWSING:**

Keep the connection encrypted while I'm logged in.

Check this box only if you collect sensitive information with your form(s) and intend to browse it on FormAssembly Compliance Cloud | FormAssembly .

## Authentication

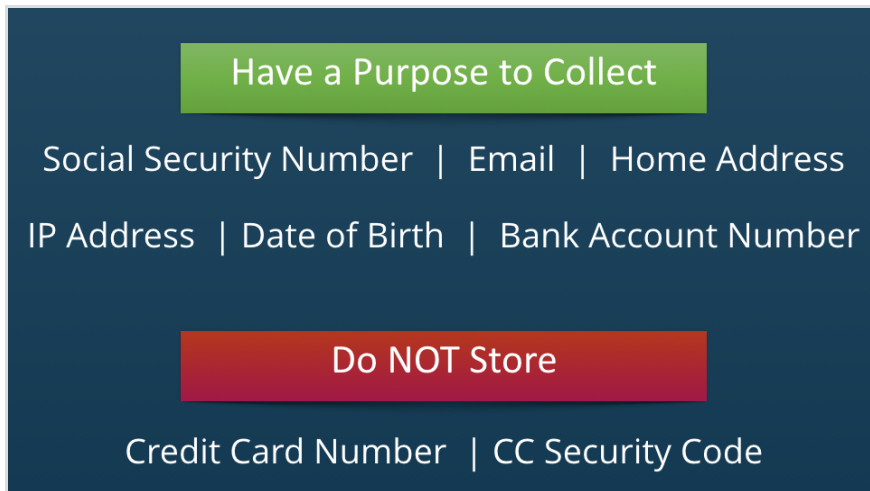
It's also important to note that once you save a FormAssembly form, it is automatically available through the public link (found on the form's publishing page). However, it might be better if your form is behind an added layer of protection, such as authentication, so that only people in your organization with the correct credentials can access the form. If that is the case you will want to consider the four authentication possibilities, which are offered for Team, Enterprise, and

Government Plan customers:

- [SAML Authentication](#)
- [CAS Authentication](#)
- [LDAP Authentication](#)
- [Salesforce Communities Authentication](#)

## Types of Data

Depending on the types of data you collect, a variety of laws or security regulations may apply to your form. It's always important to make sure that you collect only the types of data that you actually need.



For example, if you are based in the United States but want to collect data in the EU you will need to follow those requirements; however, FormAssembly has those controls baked into the product to help your every need.

GDPR

I have determined that EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies to my use of FormAssembly. [i](#)

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## PCI Compliance

When building a form, it is incredibly important to adhere to all applicable laws concerned with collecting and storing electronic data. PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance governs the collection and use of credit card data.

You MUST collect credit card information through a PCI-compliant provider such as PayPal or

Authorize.Net. FormAssembly is PCI DSS certified and meets the standards for PCI Compliance Level 1, which has the strictest requirements. We also offer integrations with PayPal, Stripe, CyberSource, Freshbooks, Authorize.Net, Chargent, and iATS Payments.

Please note that you **cannot** use the HTTP connector to process payment information.

PCI password requirements are integrated with FormAssembly, this ensures that you're following the controls to help protect your accounts.

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## HIPAA and ePHI Compliance

Special laws govern the collection of electronically protected health information (ePHI). In general, the content of the collected data is less important than who collects it and how it is handled. Since FormAssembly is now HIPAA compliant, you can collect ePHI, so long as you are a member of our Enterprise or Government Plans.

The image shows two side-by-side forms titled "Health Questionnaire". The left form is enclosed in a red border and has a large red diagonal line crossing it out from the top-left to the bottom-right. It contains the following fields: "First name" (text input), "Last name" (text input), "Date of birth" (text input), "Have you been diagnosed with cancer?" (radio buttons for Yes and No), "What type of cancer do you have?" (text input), and "Have you started treatment?" (text input). The right form is enclosed in a green border and contains the following fields: "Have you been diagnosed with cancer?" (radio buttons for Yes and No), "What type of cancer do you have?" (text input), "Have you started treatment?" (text input), "What is your age?" (text input), and "What is your ethnicity?" (text input).

Did you know that PHI is any health information that can be tied to an individual, which under HIPAA means protected health information includes one or more of the following 18 identifiers?

1. Names (Full or last name and initial)
2. All geographical identifiers
3. Dates (other than year) directly related to an individual
4. Phone Numbers
5. Fax numbers
6. Email addresses

7. Social Security numbers
8. Medical record numbers
9. Health insurance beneficiary numbers
10. Account numbers
11. Certificate/license numbers
12. Vehicle identifiers (including serial numbers and license plate numbers)
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
14. Web Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)
15. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers
16. Biometric identifiers, including finger, retinal, and voiceprints
17. Full face photographic images and any comparable images
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code except the unique code assigned by the investigator to code the data

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## IP Anonymization

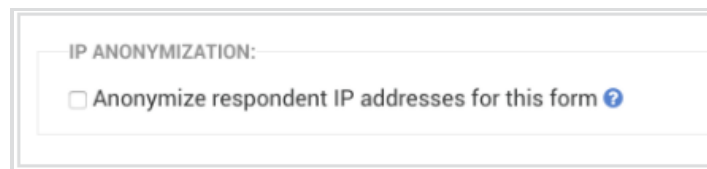
If you want to create a completely anonymous survey, simply leaving out a respondent's name and personal information is not enough: the location of the computer can still be determined by the user's IP address.

For Team, Enterprise, and Government Plan users, you can enable the IP Anonymization feature, which will replace the last half of the respondent's IP address with zeros. This guarantees that the IP address cannot be used to identify an individual computer or user.

The image shows a 'Privacy Settings' interface. At the top, 'IP Anonymization' is set to 'ON' with a blue toggle switch. A note states: 'Set to ON to anonymize IP addresses for all responses collected.' Below this are two side-by-side 'Metadata' comparison boxes. The left box shows a 'From' IP address of '216.249.90.170' highlighted in yellow. The right box shows the 'From' IP address as '216.249.0.0', also highlighted in yellow, demonstrating the anonymization process. Other metadata fields like 'Submitted on', 'Referrer', 'Completion time', 'Form revision', and 'Response Id' are identical in both boxes.

Metadata:	Metadata:
Submitted on: 10/16/2014 04:45:40 PM	Submitted on: 10/16/2014 04:44:32 PM
From: 216.249.90.170	From: 216.249.0.0
Referrer: /283450	Referrer: /283450
Completion time: 6 sec.	Completion time: 34 sec.
Form revision: #1	Form revision: #1
Response Id: 1246	Response Id: 1245

Additionally, for all users who must be in compliance with the GDPR, you now have the ability to [anonymize IP response addresses on a form by form basis](#).



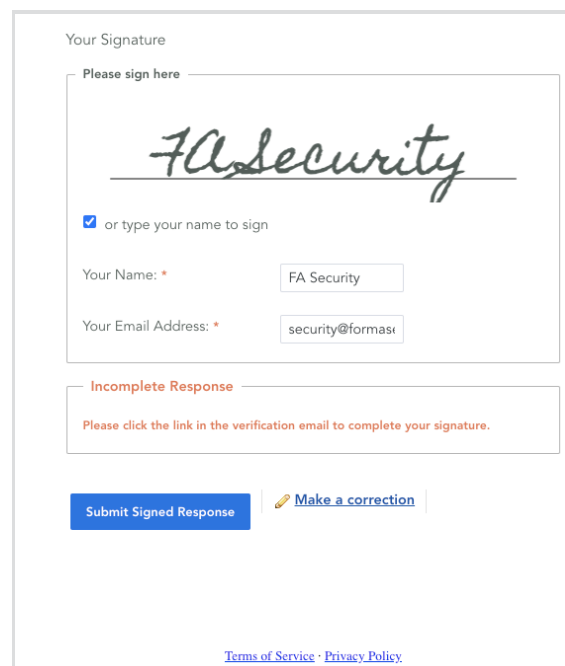
IP ANONYMIZATION:

Anonymize respondent IP addresses for this form [?](#)

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## eSignature

For a form that acts as a waiver or contract, you might want to include an [eSignature](#). However, while a signature may feel like the most important part of such a form, it's just as important to include form fields that identify the respondent without question. In short, you want to collect as much information as possible to confirm who is the person **signing** the document.



Your Signature

Please sign here

*FA Security*

or type your name to sign

Your Name: \*

Your Email Address: \*

**Incomplete Response**

Please click the link in the verification email to complete your signature.

[Make a correction](#)

[Terms of Service](#) · [Privacy Policy](#)

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## Accessing Data

The number one rule for data access within FormAssembly is that your account credentials should never be shared between colleagues. Although this may be less convenient, it is incredibly important to know who accesses data and how they use it. However, to make things easier, we do allow Single Sign-On, which lets you sign into FormAssembly through Salesforce and/or Google



Apps.

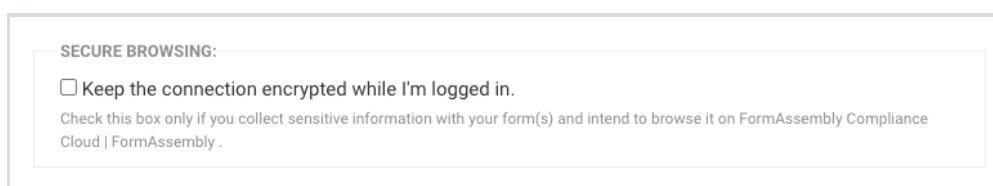
FormAssembly recommends using a third 3rd password management tool such as LastPass to store your passwords.

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## Secure Browsing and Purging

### Secure Browsing

If you read responses from within FormAssembly, and you collect sensitive data, you should go to **My Account > Preferences** and enable secure browsing, which will enable TLS 1.2 throughout FormAssembly. If you are using FormAssembly through Salesforce, this is enabled by default. Additionally, if you're using the Enterprise edition, administrators can force this option on their users.



SECURE BROWSING:

Keep the connection encrypted while I'm logged in.

Check this box only if you collect sensitive information with your form(s) and intend to browse it on FormAssembly Compliance Cloud | FormAssembly .

### Purging

You can use our purge feature to automatically get rid of sensitive data in FormAssembly Team, Enterprise, and Government Plans. Doing this will help reduce the risks of data exposure and data theft. You can choose to automatically delete all responses or specific fields, after a certain number of days or after the data is successfully sent to Salesforce.

If you visit the Admin Dashboard > Settings > Data Retention you'll be able to configure that setting.

### Data Retention

**CUSTOM DATA RETENTION POLICY**

on

Set to ON to enable automatic purge of collected responses on a custom schedule. OFF means data is never purged.

**DELETE ALL COMPLETED RESPONSES AFTER (IN DAYS)**

5

Enter the number of days after which completed responses are to be deleted. This is a global setting that applies to all forms. Leave empty if you have more selective purge requirements. \* This setting applies only if the Custom Retention Policy is enabled. It has no effect otherwise. \* Incomplete responses are preserved until they're finalized or manually deleted. CAUTION: Deletion is permanent and cannot be undone. Set this option only if you have strict requirements regarding data retention.

**ALLOW FIELD-LEVEL PURGE**

on

Set to ON to allow purge to run on a form by form and field by field basis. This allows you to delete sensitive information from specific fields without deleting all data. Further configuration of this feature is available under the Admin | Forms tab. CAUTION: Deletion is permanent and cannot be undone. Set this option only if you have strict requirements regarding data retention.

**ALLOW PURGE AFTER SUCCESSFUL CONNECTOR EXECUTION**

on

Set to ON to allow connectors to trigger a deletion of a response once it's been successfully processed. This setting is configurable on a form by form basis in the connector setup screen. CAUTION: Deletion is permanent and cannot be undone. Set this option only if you have strict requirements regarding data retention.

Apply

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## Accessing Data from Other Apps

For connectors like Salesforce and Google Apps, any data that is transferred to those services is automatically encrypted. However, if you're using our HTTP Connector, data encryption depends on how the third-party service is configured. Once your data has left FormAssembly and is stored on a remote service, it is up to that company to ensure the privacy and security of your data.

It is also important to note that email notifications are not secure. Because of this, it is not a good idea to use email notifications to send any kind of sensitive data.

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## Enabling reCAPTCHA


If your form is collecting payments and on a public website, we recommend enabling [reCAPTCHA](#). Oftentimes, public forms that accept credit card information can be targeted by spambots, and the best prevention against receiving spam submissions is to enable reCAPTCHA on your form.

## Log In to Your Account

The credentials you've entered do not match our records. Please try again.

Username or Email

Password [Show](#)

I'm not a robot   
reCAPTCHA  
Privacy - Terms

Log In

[Forgot username or password?](#)

## Using Moderation to Review Forms

For admins of Enterprise or Government Plans who would like additional control over their forms before they are live, you can use FormAssembly's [moderation features](#).

By enabling form moderation, an admin will need to preview forms before they go live. This gives you control over what is published and available online, and what is not.

You can [read more about Form Moderation Administration here](#).

## Managing User Permissions

Admins of Essentials Plans and above also have the ability to manage the different permissions that each FormAssembly user has access to. This can be helpful in controlling what your users can and cannot do within FormAssembly.

For example, if you want certain users to be able to access the connectors, and others to not have access, you can configure this in the [permission settings](#).

To manage these settings, go to the Admin Dashboard → Settings → User Roles and select the role that you would like to edit permissions for.

You can find [more information on managing permissions here](#).

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