



APPLICATION NOTE SERIES

Information Technology Group
Computer Software & Systems
U.S Coast Guard Auxiliary

WOW II Pushbutton Website Platform: Using Hidden Pages

Hidden Pages Exposed

In typical use, WOW webmasters normally create two types of pages in WOW: “unprotected” and “protected”. Unprotected pages are those which are visible at all times, while protected pages are only visible in the “Member Zone” – that is, to users who have “logged on”. Both types of pages are automatically shown in the left navigation menu, with protected pages identified with a special “Do Not Enter” icon “⊗”.

Hidden Pages allow webmasters to create unprotected pages that *do not appear in the left navigation menu*. Such pages can *only* be reached via a link, and the left menu will render fully “closed” (a la the Home Page).

Uses for Hidden Pages

Typical uses for hidden pages are as follows:

- Landing pages for forms completion (see Application Note *WOW II Platform: Creating Email Response Forms*);
- “Seasonal” pages that were painstakingly created, but are only used a few months each year. In the “off season”, they can be marked “hidden”. Note: the pages will still be reachable by direct link, and discoverable by search engines.
- Content that merits its own page, but does not merit a direct link from the left menu.
- Other: submit your creative use via the Feedback button in the WOW Dashboard, and it could be added here.

Creating a Hidden Page

The “visibility” of a WOW page (protected or unprotected) is controlled by radio buttons in the MENU AREA of the WOW Dashboard. Any page can be turned into a hidden page simply by clicking a new, third radio button captioned “Hidden”, followed by “SAVE MENU”. See the following figure. A “Menu Name” is still required, and the text you enter for “Page Title” will be the title and caption of your hidden page.

Add Custom Menu Item

— MENU AREA —

Menu Name:	<input type="text" value="Form Confirmation"/>	(Required; keep short; Title Case)	<input type="button" value="SAVE MENU"/>
Page Title:	<input type="text" value="Form Confirmation: Your Form was sent!"/>	(Doubles as Menu Tip)	
Menu Order:	<input type="text" value="30"/>	Menu Level: <input checked="" type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3	Protected: <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> Hidden
<input type="button" value="CANCEL"/>			

Figure 1: Menu Area Showing “Hidden” Radio Button

You may change the visibility of a page as often as you want.

Linking to a Hidden Page

Since the only way to reach a hidden page is via a direct link, you need to know how to capture the URL for *internal* use (i.e., from another WOW page in your unit or others) and for *external* use (for posting on a third-party website or publishing in a flyer, brochure, or documentation).

Here are the steps:

1. If the page does not already exist, create a new “CUSTOM” page, set the menu visibility to “Protected: Yes” (not “Hidden”).
2. Click the “Return to Unit Page” button to exit the Dashboard;
3. Navigate to your new page, using the left menu (if not already there);
4. Highlight and copy the page’s entire URL from the navigation area of your browser (see Figure #2);
5. Paste this URL into a temporary text document (e.g., Notepad on PC, Text Edit on Mac) and save.
6. Return to the Dashboard, change the page visibility to “Hidden”, and SAVE MENU.

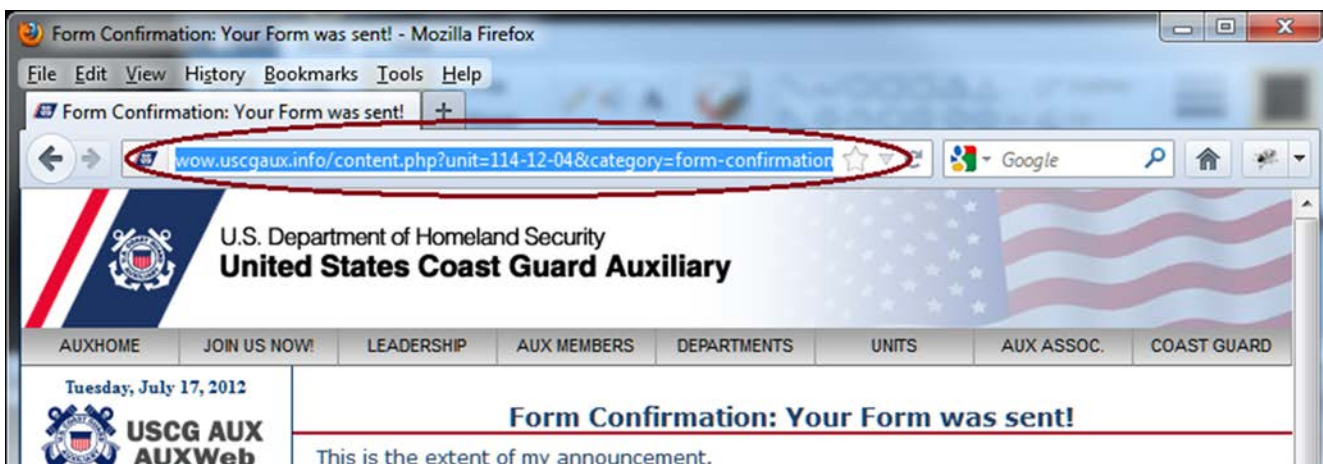


Figure 2: Copying the Page URL From the Browser

If you are going to publish this URL on a third-party website, or in a printed document, then the URL that you just copied and saved is the correct “external” link. Use it as is.

If however, you wish to put a link to your hidden page on another page in your (or any) WOW website, you may *either* use the URL you just saved, or just the parameters from the URL (the “?” mark and everything to the right). For example, if the URL you copied was:

`http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=114-12-04&category=form-confirmation`

then the portion of the link that you will need for *internal* use – the parameters – is as follows:

`?unit=114-12-04&category=form-confirmation`

Do not forget the leading question mark. Again, this short form is optional.

To actually use this link in an announcement (post) on your WOW website, proceed as follows:

1. In the WOW Dashboard, navigate to the page and announcement where you wish to put the link;
2. Type in the text that you wish to appear in the link, and clean up your page formatting;
3. Select only the link text you just entered, and click on the Link Tool (the chain link icon) in the Cute Editor;

4. In the Link Properties box that appears, paste either the entire URL, or the abbreviated version, into the "Url:" field;
5. Leave "Target:" "Not Set" to have the page open in the same window, or change to "New Window";
6. Type any "Menu Tip" (pop-up text) in the "Title:" box, and,
7. Click OK to dismiss the dialog box, and SAVE to save your announcement changes.
8. Return to Unit Page to test your link.

Left Menu Color Coding

To assist you in readily determining the visibility of your left menu items while you are in the Dashboard, WOW now color codes the menu entries, as follows:

- Normal visibility, not protected: Black text, same as before;
- Protected page: **Dark red text**;
- Hidden page: **Dark green text** with strikethrough ~~like this~~.

"Do's" and "Don'ts"

- DO use this feature for "internal" pages that do not merit a left menu item;
- DO use this feature for form confirmation pages (when available);
- DO use this feature for seasonal pages that you don't want to archive outside WOW (see below), which otherwise have a lot of work in them, but,
- DON'T use hidden pages to archive content you may never display again. It bloats the database, costs real money to back up, and slows the system down. Also, hidden pages are still "on" the Internet, and can be discovered by Google and other search engines.

Mini Application Note: Archiving WOW Content

If you have some WOW content that you wish to save for possible future use, but don't want to lose all the work that went into creating it, you have two options, as follows. Both options require saving the underlying HTML content of an announcement (or page) into a text file, using a text editor. Here is the process:

1. Open your favorite text editor (e.g., *Notebook* on Windows, *Text Edit* on Mac) and create a new, empty page. Do *not* use Microsoft Word, or any equivalent word processing software.
2. To save a single announcement, navigate to it, and EDIT the announcement. In the Cute Editor, click the HTML icon, click inside the editing window, "Select All", and "Copy" the entire contents of the window. Paste what you copied into the open text document, and jump to step 6.
3. To save an entire page (comprised of multiple announcements) as a single announcement, return to the unit page, and view the page normally. RIGHT-click (PC) in the content area of the page and choose "View Page Source" (or equivalent; varies by browser). Select All, then copy the entire page to your open text file.
4. In the text editor, *remove all HTML* from the top of the page through and including:
`"<div class="wow_content ">"`
5. In the text editor, *remove all HTML* from the *bottom* of the page starting with
`"</div><!-- End of ID wow_content -->"` and continuing to the end of the page.

6. In the text editor, "Save as New" to a filename that describes the announcement, such as "Upcoming_Events_Page-Natl_Safe_Boating_Week.txt", and move the file to an archive directory on your computer.

To resurrect content that you archived, simply create an announcement to hold the content on the desired page, edit the announcement, click on the HTML button, paste the archived HTML content into the editor window, and SAVE. If you referenced any photos or artwork on your WOW site that you subsequently removed, you will have to re-upload those images with the same name they had before. Otherwise, the page should display normally.

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