



# Pubble Hill Feedback API Interface Toolkit PH-FAIT

## OBJECTIVES

- This document will show you how to integrate Pubble Hill features into your website whether you are running a single site with only one Pubble Hill Member (your company) or you are running an auction type website with multiple users, some with Pubble Hill memberships and others without
- Discuss the rules surrounding the API.
- Covers the most important features of the feedback system.

## PREREQUISITE SKILLS

- Intermediate-Advanced PHP and MySQL.
- Intermediate understanding of web server development.

## OVERVIEW

The Pubble Hill API is a free online service that enables online or offline businesses to transparently build their reputation.

Customers of participating sites can leave feedback about their business experience at Pubble Hill. All feedback information is intelligently analysed on an ongoing basis to ensure that feedback is genuine. People can only leave feedback about products and services if they are permitted to do so by the company providing the product or service.

Integrated search systems based at Pubble Hill allow potential customers visiting Pubble Hill to find your products based on your location, product/service and reputation.

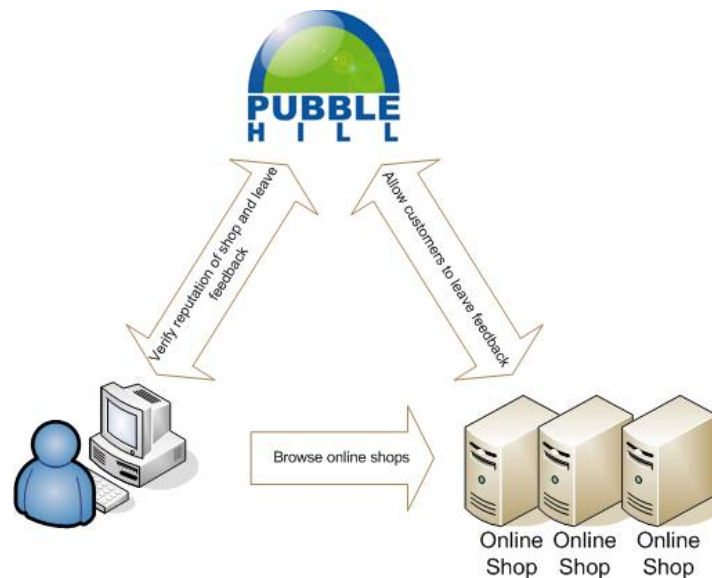


Figure 1. API block diagram

### Document revision: B

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## OVERVIEW

Integrating Pubble Hill features into your website is very straightforward but does require an intermediate knowledge of MySQL and PHP. The use of Pubble Hill services is free subject to the terms and conditions set out by Pubble Hill Limited.

If you have difficulty using these services, you can consult our community pages <http://www.developer.pubblehill.com/smf/> for free.

We also offer an installation service. For this service, we charge a small fee based on the amount of work required to integrate Pubble Hill services into your site.

### Introduction

Regardless of whether you have an auction website with thousands of sellers or you own a domain name that hosts a single online shop, the Pubble Hill API can meet your needs.

In order to work, the Pubble Hill API needs a MySQL database and PHP running on the web server.

In order to use Pubble Hill feedback on your site you must first create a table in your database. To save you time you should then create a way of populating this store of information automatically.

## Configure your database

Setup a table in your database to store information for Pubble Hill members. This table can be inserted into your database using the file 'ph\_member.sql'. We recommend using this table format as it is referred to throughout the example code.

If you are the only Pubble Hill member selling a product or service on this site, then you can manually enter the appropriate username into this table. You should still update the contents via a cron job or some other automatic means.

Field Name	Field description
site_user_name	The user name the Pubble Hill member uses to access this site. If you are the only person who uses this site, put 'admin' here. Don't forget to link your Pubble Hill account to this site with this user name.
ph_user_name	Your Pubble Hill user name.
ph_fp_percent	Your Pubble Hill rating. Do not change, this is automatically updated.
ph_score	Your Pubble Hill Score. Do not change, this is automatically updated.
is_ph	Set to 1 if your Pubble Hill account is correctly linked to your site. This setting is especially important when there are multiple sellers on your site.

Table 1. The recommended MySQL table format – as used by the API.

## Example files

In the API example, the following files are provided;

API test.php, ph\_cron.php and pubble\_hill\_functions.php.

In the same compressed file is a folder containing the member rating images. To help ensure that the example files link correctly, the following folder structure should be maintained;

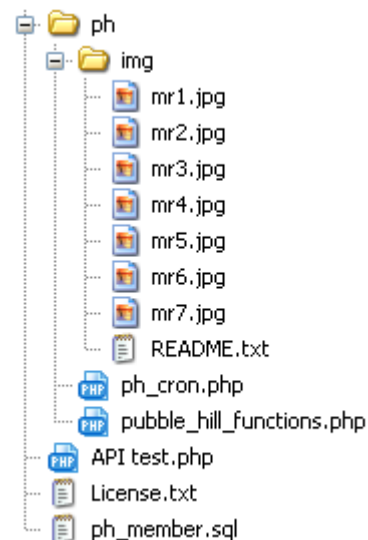


Figure 2. Example files directory structure.

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## Before you start

Setup a Pubble Hill account.

You need to setup a free Pubble Hill account. You should use your business name as your Pubble Hill user name as this may be used as your online identity in the future.

Link your site and get an API key.

Once you have signed up and verified your account via e-mail, you need to link your Pubble Hill account with your website. To do this, login to Pubble Hill and click the Developers Link. Please ensure that the domain you enter is in the format 'http://www.yourdomain.com/'.

Once you have done this, an xml string will be displayed along with your secret key. You need to copy this text into a text file, rename it as an xml file called pubblehill.xml and copy it to the www directory of your web server. Within 24 hours, Pubble Hill will have checked for this file and activated your account and therefore your API key.

## Exclusions

Please note that if you are under 18, you may not be eligible to own a registered business so the API will not work for registered members that are younger than 18. If there is good reason, allowances may be made for this in the future.

## NECESSARY FUNCTIONS

THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR SITES THAT HAVE MULTIPLE MEMBERS.

### HAS A MEMBER CORRECTLY LINKED THEIR PUBBLE HILL ACCOUNT TO YOUR SITE

Before attempting to retrieve feedback information (or any other information) for one of your site members, you need to ensure that that member has correctly linked their Pubble Hill account to your site. Unless the site is correctly linked, you will not be able to retrieve information for this member.

To get linkage information from the API, you need to post it to <http://www.api.pubblehill.com/api/data.php> with the fields in table 2 (Is member linked post fields).

Field Name	Field Description
owner_name	Your Pubble Hill member name
ph_user_name	The user name of the Pubble Hill account you would like to check.
site_user_name	The user name this person uses for your website.
user_url	Your website URL
user_k	Your encrypted secret key.
data_op	Set this to 'usr' to return linked member status.

Table 2. Is member linked post fields.

If the member is correctly linked, the page will return '1', otherwise, it will return '0'. If an incorrectly formatted field is sent, the page may display nothing.

The function in the API example code 'MemberIsLinkedToPubbleHill' implements this feature.

### MEMBER FEEDBACK INFORMATION

Before attempting to retrieve feedback information for one of your site members, you should have verified that they have correctly linked their Pubble Hill account to your site. Once this has been done, you should set the is\_ph field to 1 in the table ph\_member in your database. This table should be referred to before attempting to retrieve feedback for a member. In the event that feedback retrieval fails, this bit could be set to 0. Setting this bit to 0 as a response to a retrieve feedback failure may be a bad

idea since other factors may have influenced the result (site running slow under a heavy load, site down). It may be necessary to try a number of times before setting this bit to 0.

To get feedback information from the API, you need to post it to <http://www.api.pubblehill.com/api/data.php> with the fields in table 3 (Get member feedback fields.).

Field Name	Field Description
ph_user_name	The user name of the Pubble Hill account you would like to check.
site_user_name	The user name this person uses for your website.
user_url	Your website URL
user_k	Your encrypted secret key.
data_op	Set this to 'ph' to return member feedback.

Table 3. Get member feedback fields.

The page will return an xml formatted string that needs to be parsed for the results.

The tags that contain the members feedback information are;

ph\_items – for the feedback score

ph\_percent – for the feedback rating.

The function GetMemberFeedback in the test code demonstrates how to do this and parse the results.

## GENERATE FEEDBACK PERMISSION

Field name	Field Description
owner_name	Your Pubble Hill user name.
ph_user_name	This is the Pubble Hill user name of the person who has sold an item on your site. If you are the only person that sells on this site, put your Pubble Hill user name here. If this person does not have a registered Pubble Hill account, put 'anyone' here. They can still leave feedback once they have the feedback key.
site_user_name	This is the site user name of the person who has sold an item on your site. This is not a Pubble Hill user name.  If you are the only person that sells on this site, put your user name here. This is the user name you linked to this site in your Pubble Hill account.
dun	This is the Pubble Hill user name of the person who purchased an item on your site. If this person does not have a registered Pubble Hill account, put 'anyone' here. They can still leave feedback once they have the feedback key.
ides	Item Description. Only alphabetic characters, numbers and spaces can be used here. This field should not be larger than 20 characters.
fb	This is a 7 digit binary number (a number containing only 1s and 0s) that represents the feedback that you would like customers to leave.
gt	This represents the number of days you would like to offer a guarantee for your product. Do not include if you do not want to offer a guarantee.
vr	If you want to offer your customers a voucher, set this to your voucher code. This must be alphanumeric and 5 digits or less.
vrp	If you are offering a voucher, you can include the percentage discount that this voucher entitles the customer.
user_url	Your URL as listed in your Pubble Hill account.
user_r	A random string 10 digits in length.
user_k	\$user_k=md5('Your secret key here'.\$user_r)
data_op	Set this to 'ph' to return Pubble Hill feedback.

Table 4. Fields for generating feedback permission.

### GENERATE FEEDBACK PERMISSION

When a Pubble Hill member sells an item on your site, you can allow their customer to leave feedback for them at Pubble Hill. This benefits both buyer and seller as their respective Pubble Hill feedback increases. The result of a feedback permission is a code that can be given to the customer to allow them to leave feedback for the seller. This is a single use key. If the field 'dun' (destination user name) is set to a Pubble Hill members name, only that member can leave feedback for that seller for that item.

If the customer does not have a Pubble Hill account or you are unsure if they have a Pubble Hill account (you

can check this through the API so this should never be the case), you can set this value to 'anyone'. In this case, any Pubble Hill member with this number can leave feedback for this seller. This is less secure as someone could possibly guess this number (although this scenario is highly unlikely).

To generate feedback permission from the API, you need to post it to <http://www.api.pubblehill.com/api/data.php> with the fields in table 2 (Fields for generating feedback permission). A function called GenerateFBPermission that demonstrates this feature is provided in the example code.

## FB SETTINGS

fb (as shown in the table above) is an important parameter in setting up feedback. It is made up of a 7 digit number, each digit signifies whether or not you want to allow your customer to leave feedback on a specific subject. Setting the digit to 1 means you want to allow the associated feedback type, setting it to 0 means you do not allow that feedback type to be commented on. You must insert a complete 7 digit number here or your submission to Pubble Hill will fail.

Digit	Description	Comment
1	Reasonable postage and packing fee	This allows your customers to provide comments based on postage and packing fees.
2	Postage speed	Allows customers to provide feedback on the time it took to receive their item.
3	Sellers description of the item	Allows customers to provide feedback on how well the purchased item was described.
4	Sellers communication	Allows customers to provide feedback on how well the seller kept them informed on details relevant to their purchase.
5	Allow Guarantee	Set this if you would like to provide a guarantee for your customers. This allows customers to provide feedback until the guarantee expires. It also allows you to keep track of items you have sold that are still covered by maintenance contracts or guarantees.
6	Professionalism	This allows customers to comment on how professional their service was.
7	Voucher available	Set this if you would like to give your customers a voucher for a discount off their next purchase. This can be a good inducement for your customers to leave feedback and do repeat business with you.

*Table 5. Setting desired feedback types.*

The following fields can be added if necessary.

Field	Field name	Field Description
gt	Guarantee duration in days.	This is the duration of the guarantee. Do not include if you do not want to give your customer a guarantee.
vr	Voucher code.	This is the code your customer can use to get a discount off future products or services you provide. After the customer leaves feedback, Pubble Hill will automatically send them a mail with their voucher code.  Do not include if you do not want to offer a voucher for discounts to your customers.  This code must only be 5 alpha numeric digits long or less.
vrp	Voucher %.	A 3 digit number representing the max percentage discount available to your customers for your product or service. 0 to 100 are valid numbers here.

*Table 6. Optional fields.*

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The following feedback items cannot be selected/deselected.

Recommend this seller	This is where the customer leaves feedback based on their overall approval of your product/service
Advance feedback permission	Sometimes a seller may give feedback permission when they know that the customer is happy and will not give bad feedback. Allowing customers to verify that feedback permission was given in advance of a product/service being provided demonstrates a level of commitment on the part of the seller.

*Table 7. Mandatory fields.*

## EXAMPLES

### AN AUCTION WEBSITE.

In this example, a PHPProBid auction website was chosen as an example site. While API code is supplied for this, you could also modify this code for operation on other types of auction websites.

An auction website has integrated the free Pubble Hill feedback API into their site. In order for their members to sign up to Pubble Hill services, they must first create an account at Pubble Hill and link their account to the auction website (otherwise, the site will not be permitted to get feedback information on this user). Once this is done, the API allows for automatic synchronisation of their Pubble Hill feedback with their account on your site.

All the necessary functions have been added to the API so you can add Pubble hill features into your website.

You first must create a table in your database as shown in the API. Once this is present, the API can check to see if your site member is signed up to Pubble Hill services. If not, the appropriate form is displayed.

This table is consulted to find out if this member has signed up to Pubble Hill services.

#### Pubble Hill Support

**Auction.IE has signed up to Pubble Hill services.**  
PubbleHill.com is a website that allows you to build your reputation online. If you have an e-bay account, you can add your e-bay feedback to your Pubble Hill feedback. Access to your Pubble Hill reputation is free and secure and can be accessed on participating websites (including your own website). To sign up for a free Pubble account go to [www.pubblehill.com](http://www.pubblehill.com).

Pubble Hill - user name:

Figure 3. How a site member activates or deactivates their Pubble Hill link on this site.

If your member submits the form to join Pubble Hill services, then you should use the API to check if that member has correctly linked their account with your site. If this has been done correctly, you will be notified by the API and can retrieve feedback for this member.

#### Pubble Hill Support

**Auction.IE has signed up to Pubble Hill services.**  
PubbleHill.com is a website that allows you to build your reputation online. If you have an e-bay account, you can add your e-bay feedback to your Pubble Hill feedback. Access to your Pubble Hill reputation is free and secure and can be accessed on participating websites (including your own website). To sign up for a free Pubble account go to [www.pubblehill.com](http://www.pubblehill.com).

Your Pubble Hill reference has been added to <http://www.auction.ie/>

Figure 4. Responding to a request to add Pubble Hill link.

If the member has already signed up with Pubble Hill services, the appropriate message should be displayed.

#### Pubble Hill Support

**Auction.IE has signed up to Pubble Hill services.**  
PubbleHill.com is a website that allows you to build your reputation online. If you have an e-bay account, you can add your e-bay feedback to your Pubble Hill feedback. Access to your Pubble Hill reputation is free and secure and can be accessed on participating websites (including your own website). To sign up for a free Pubble account go to [www.pubblehill.com](http://www.pubblehill.com).

Your Pubble Hill account **sean** is actively linked with this site.

Figure 5. Showing your member their active Pubble Hill link.

If a member decides to unlink their account from Pubble Hill services and submits the form to request this, then you should remove their Pubble hill information from the local database and notify them that they should also unlink your site from their Pubble Hill account. Until this is done, your site will be able to continue to download feedback information for this member.

#### Pubble Hill Support

**Auction.IE has signed up to Pubble Hill services.**  
PubbleHill.com is a website that allows you to build your reputation online. If you have an e-bay account, you can add your e-bay feedback to your Pubble Hill feedback. Access to your Pubble Hill reputation is free and secure and can be accessed on participating websites (including your own website). To sign up for a free Pubble account go to [www.pubblehill.com](http://www.pubblehill.com).

Your Pubble Hill information has been removed from <http://www.auction.ie/>.

You should also consider unlinking your pubble hill account with this site. This can be done once logged into your Pubble Hill account at [www.pubblehill.com](http://www.pubblehill.com)

Pubble Hill - user name:

Figure 6. Unlinking your members Pubble Hill account.

## EXAMPLE OF THE MEMBER RATING IMAGE

It is part of your Pubble Hill user agreement that you preserve the look of the member rating image.

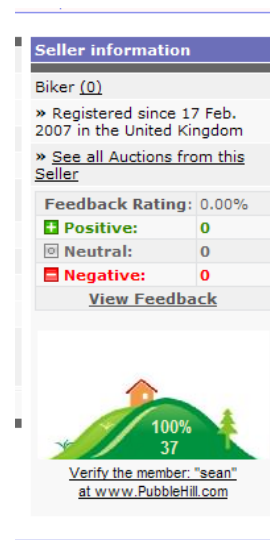


Figure 7. Example of the Pubble Hill feedback icon on an auction website.

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Once the API is correctly set up and the member has linked their account to your site, their Pubble Hill feedback information will appear in all auction listings. This feedback will be automatically updated using the supplied cron file.

## TESTING

In order to test the data you post to Pubble Hill is correct, a test API has been provided. This test API will return text based clues to potential errors in data posted to Pubble Hill. Sending requests to the test API will not make any changes to the Pubble Hill data base but will allow you to test your code in a way that is very close to a real life application. To use the test API, just change the file you access on [api.pubblehill.com](http://api.pubblehill.com) to `test.php`. For example, to request that Pubble Hill index your new products, just send:

```
http://www.api.pubblehill.com/api/test.php?user_k=YourUserKey&data_op=ir&ph_user_name=YourUserName
```

## CRON

This supplied cron will go through the local database and for all Pubble Hill entries, it will retrieve the member feedback ratings and update the local account. This cron should be run no more than once a day although running it once a week will minimize server loads and in most

cases will have little or no impact on your customers feedback.

While this cron was designed for use with PHPBidPro, with minor modifications it should also plug nicely into most applications (assuming you have maintained the recommended table structure).

## SERVER LOAD

This API is designed to minimize server load. Please respect other Pubble Hill API users and do not unnecessarily download information from the Pubble Hill server. This responsible use of this free service will ensure that everyone can benefit.

## API SECURITY

Please remember that it is your responsibility to ensure that your site is secure. All scripts and code provided by Pubble Hill are provided to help you integrate Pubble hill services and are for example only.

## OTHER FEATURES

### ENCRYPTION

In order to protect your secret key from anyone else using (or abusing) it, it must be encrypted before posting any requests to the Pubble Hill API. This is done by getting an MD5 hash of the concatenated Pubble Hill public key and your secret key. The public key can be found at <http://www.api.pubblehill.com/api/publickey.php>

Currently this public key does not change. However as operating conditions dictate, this may be changed on a transaction by transaction basis.

Key encryption is implemented in the function EncryptKey shown in the API example code for your convenience.

#### Automatic Signup

Function has been created to help you link your site members with Pubble Hill services. The function DisplaySignup in the API example code does the following;

- Checks the local database (the table ph\_member) and displays the appropriate form.
- This form intelligently offers your site member the option of signing up to Pubble Hill services or signing off from Pubble Hill services.
- Checks that the member has correctly linked their Pubble Hill account with your site.
- Updates the local database with the results of

Please note that this form does not do any field checking. This must be implemented by the site owner and should be done to prevent SQL injection attacks etc.

### RULES AND CONDITIONS

- Before attempting to retrieve feedback from any member of Pubble Hill, you must verify that the account is active and appropriately linked to your site using the API.
- You may only attempt to get a Pubble Hill members feedback information if that member has expressly requested it (through a form on your website or by written means).
- You should only retrieve members feedback information once a week. This is to reduce server loads. If it becomes clear that it is necessary for API users to do this more regularly, then this will be extended.
- You may not attempt to spider the Pubble Hill database. Pubble Hill member information can only be used in specific ways.
- You may not display use, store or process any information relating to a Pubble Hill member other than in the ways described in the API documentation.
- Pubble Hill reserve the right to delete/suspend any members account or to bar any members account should they act in any way that is contrary to the rules and conditions set out by Pubble Hill (or the spirit of these rules) either on the Pubble Hill website or in this documentation.
- Deletion or suspension of an account in cases where a Pubble Hill member has acted dishonestly (i.e. granting feedback permission when no item/service was sold) may result in other accounts being suspended or related feedback being automatically and retrospectively removed from the database.
- You must not edit or modify the member rating images in any way. Display of this member rating image is subject to the terms and conditions of the API.
- Additions to these rules and conditions may be made at any time and will be displayed on the Pubble Hill website.

*These rules are designed to protect Pubble Hill members so failure to comply with these rules and any amendments or additions to them that are displayed on PubbleHill.com may result in your access to Pubble Hill features being cancelled without notice.*

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## NOTES

### REVISION HISTORY

**3/08—Revision A: Initial Version**

**3/08—Revision B: Added examples and explanation on selecting feedback types.**

**4/08—Revision C: Added information on test file – how to test the API.**