

Writing PHP with Emacs

Turn vanilla Emacs into a powerful PHP editor

Phil Newton

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This book is for sale at <http://leanpub.com/php-with-emacs>

This version was published on 2021-12-26



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Checking syntax (and more) with flycheck

Modern IDE's often come with realtime syntax checking - those little squiggly lines that let you know something isn't quite right. Thanks to the magic of `flycheck`, Emacs can also check for errors as you type.

`flycheck` works with versions of Emacs above 24.3. It works best on *nix systems, but will also work on Windows with a little wrangling.

Installing flycheck

`flycheck` should be installed via `package-install` to get the most up-to-date version. The (`flycheck` homepage)[<https://www.flycheck.org>] contains detailed instructions for getting everything up and running.

Enabling the package is fairly straightforward:

```
1 ;; Load flycheck and hide it from the list of modes.
2 (use-package flycheck
3   :diminish flycheck-mode)
```

With this setup, `flycheck` needs to be manually enabled for each mode. Enabling it for `php-mode` looks like this:

```
1 (use-package php-mode
2   :hook (php-mode . flycheck))
```

To enable `flycheck` in all major modes we can use the `global-flycheck-mode` function. This should be called in the `after-init` hook:

```
1 ;; Load flycheck and enable it for all modes.
2 (use-package flycheck
3   :diminish flycheck-mode
4   :hook (after-init . global-flycheck-mode))
```

Now that `flycheck` is installed, it's time to set up individual checkers.

Installing PHP checkers

There are three primary checkers that flycheck can use when editing PHP code: php, phpcs, and phpmd.

- php checks for *syntax errors*. It doesn't always catch everything, but it's useful for finding typos and other mistakes.
- phpcs checks for *standards issues*. It can highlight incorrect function names, indentation issues, and other areas of code that don't meet a specific standard. This is particularly useful when contributing to other projects or when working on a team.
- phpmd checks for *style issues*. This includes functions with too many lines, unused function parameters, and uses of `eval` or `var_dump` in production code.

All of these checkers will be enabled if they are present, but later on we'll learn how to enable and disable them globally or on a per-project basis.

php

This checker uses the `php` executable to check for syntax errors in PHP code. If you're using Emacs to develop PHP, chances are you already have PHP installed on your local machine. If not, you'll need to install it before using this checker (or any of the others mentioned in this chapter).

Inside Emacs it looks like this:

```

/**
 * Fetch goal data including datapoints.
 *
 * @param string $slug Goal slug to retrieve.
 * @return stdClass Object containing the goal data with datapoints included
 *
 */
publiccfunction getGoalWithDatapoints($slug)
{
    return $this->getGoal($slug, true);
}

// -----
// -- Creating Goals
// -----

/**
 * Create a new goal for a user.
 *
 */

```

example.php 40% L71 (PHP/1 FlyC:1/0 Abbrev)
syntax error, unexpected 'publicc' (T_STRING), expecting function (T_FUNCTION) or const (T_CONST)

A highlighted PHP syntax error

This same check can be run from the command line by calling `php -l <file>`.

flycheck is pretty good at finding the PHP executable without additional configuration, but the `flycheck-php-executable` variable can be used to set an explicit path if you run into issues:

```

1 (use-package flycheck
2   :diminish flycheck-mode)
3   :custom
4   (flycheck-php-executable "/path/to/php"))

```

phpcs

PHP Code Sniffer¹ - phpcs for short - is a stand-alone utility that checks source files for standards compliance. For example, if a standard says a file must use `snake_case` for function names, phpcs will mark function names that don't comply.

¹https://github.com/squizlabs/PHP_CodeSniffer

```

<?php
>/** WordPress standards require functions to be snake_case, so this
// will shows an error.

>function doThis() {
}

```

File	Line	Col	Level	ID	Message (Checker)
standards...	2	1	error	Squiz...	You must use "/*..." style comments for a file c>
standards...	5	1	error	WordP...	Function name "doThis" is not in snake case fo>
standards...	5	1	error	Squiz...	You must use "/*..." style comments for a functi>

U:%%- *Flycheck errors* for buffer standards-error.php All L2 (Flycheck er

A highlighted standards error

phpcs can be installed in a couple of different ways; using composer, via a direct download, or through pear. The method of installation is down to personal preference.

Some standards rely on specific versions of phpcs to run, which is easier to do when using composer. The Drupal checker in particular has problems; Drupal 7's checker is not compatible with the version of phpcs required to check Drupal 8, and vice-versa.

There are two important variables for configuring phpcs:

- flycheck-php-phpcs-executable – The path to the phpcs binary.
- flycheck-phpcs-standard – The name of the standard to use when checking files.

Installing using a phar file

1. Download the phar file

Using the command line is the most straightforward approach, but it can be downloaded via a browser:

```
1  # Via curl
2  curl -OL https://squizlabs.github.io/PHP_CodeSniffer/phpcs.phar
3
4  # Via wget
5  wget https://squizlabs.github.io/PHP_CodeSniffer/phpcs.phar
```

2. Test the downloaded .phar file

```
1  php phpcs.phar -h
```

3. Move it to the application directory (optional)

I normally put shared tools in `/usr/local/bin`, but they could also go in `~/bin` if just a single user will use them.

```
1  mv phpcs.phar /usr/local/bin/phpcs
```

4. Make it executable

```
1  # Use +x if all users need to execute it.
2  chmod +x /usr/local/bin/phpcs
3
4  # Prefer u+x if it lives in a user's home directory.
5  chmod u+x ~/bin/phpcs
```

Installing via composer

To install globally via composer:

```
1  composer global require "squizlabs/php_codesniffer=*"
```

To install for a single project:

```
1  composer require-dev "squizlabs/php_codesniffer=*"
```

A few extra steps are required when using a project-specific installation to ensure Emacs uses the correct binary.

Configuring `flycheck-php-phpcs-executable` in the project's `.dir-locals.el` looks like this:

```

1 ((nil . ((eval . (progn (set (make-local-variable 'current-project-path)
2                               (file-name-directory
3                               (let ((d (dir-locals-find-file ".")))
4                                   (if (stringp d) d (car d))))))
5                               (set (make-local-variable 'flycheck-php-phpcs-executable)
6                                   (concat current-project-path "vendor/bin/phpcs"))))))))

```

phpmd

PHP Mess Detector² (phpmd) is a tool for finding messy code. It looks for things like unused function parameters, over-complicated expressions, and naming rules.

Like phpcs, phpmd can be installed through composer or via a direct download.

Configuration variables are:

- flycheck-php-phpmd-executable – The full path to the phpmd binary.
- flycheck-phpmd-rulesets – The list of rules to check against.

Installing using a phar file

These instructions are similar to the ones for phpcs:

1. Download the phar file

```

1 # Via curl
2 curl -OL https://phpmd.org/static/latest/phpmd.phar
3
4 # Via wget
5 wget https://phpmd.org/static/latest/phpmd.phar

```

2. Test the downloaded .phar file

```
1 php phpmd.phar -h
```

3. Move it to the application directory (optional)

```
1 mv phpmd.phar /usr/local/bin/phpmd
```

4. Make it executable

²<https://phpmd.org/>

```
1  # Use +x if all users need to execute it.
2  chmod +x /usr/local/bin/phpmd
3
4  # Prefer u+x if it lives in a user's home directory.
5  chmod u+x ~/bin/phpmd
```

Installing via composer

To install globally via composer:

```
1  composer global require "phpmd/phpmd=*"
```

To install for a single project:

```
1  composer require-dev "phpmd/phpmd=*"
```

Globally enabling and disabling checkers

flycheck will use all installed checkers by default. Checkers can be added to the flycheck-disabled-checkers list to disable them:

```
1  ;; Remove "php" from the list of flycheck checkers.
2  (setq-default flycheck-disabled-checkers '(php))
3
4  ;; Remove "phpcs" and "phpmd" from the list of flycheck checkers.
5  (setq-default flycheck-disabled-checkers '(php-phpcs php-phpmd))
```

Per-project enabling and disabling checkers

This is my preferred way to configure checks, and is done via a `.dir-locals.el` file in the project directory. With this method we configure the list of enabled checkers instead of disabling them individually:

```
1  ((php-mode . ((flycheck-checkers . '(php php-phpcs))
2                (flycheck-disabled-checkers . '()))))
```

Setting flycheck-disabled-checkers to an empty list prevents globally disabled checkers from being disabled in a project.

Quickly navigating projects with projectile

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Setting per-project docsets

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Fixing the GnuTLS error

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Sorting directories first

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Adding icons to the sidebar

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Configuring a Drupal 7 project

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Setting up indentation

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Setting up Drupal documentation lookup

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Setting up coding standards checking

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Adding Drupal 7 file type associations

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The full .dir-locals.el configuration

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Configuring a Drupal 8 project

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Setting up Laravel documentation lookup

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Configuring a Symfony project

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The full .dir-locals.el configuration

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Configuring a WordPress project

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Setting up coding standards checking with flycheck

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WordPress-specific `lsp` configuration

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The full `.dir-locals.el` configuration

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Appendix

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Appendix A: Intelephense Configuration Variables

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`lsp-intelephense-clear-cache`

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`lsp-intelephense-completion-fully-qualify-global-constants-and-functions`

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`lsp-intelephense-completion-insert-use-declaration`

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`lsp-intelephense-completion-max-items`

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`lsp-intelephense-completion-trigger-parameter-hints`

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`lsp-intelephense-files-exclude`

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`lsp-intelephense-files-max-size`

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`lsp-intelephense-format-enable`

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`lsp-intelephense-licence-key`

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`lsp-intelephense-multi-root`

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`lsp-intelephense-rename-exclude`

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`lsp-intelephense-storage-path`

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`lsp-intelephense-stubs`

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`lsp-intelephense-telemetry-enabled`

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`lsp-intelephense-trace-server`

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