nTicket Helpdesk for Joomla! and nBill – Documentation

Version 1.0

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Author: Russell Walker

www.nticket.co.uk

1.0 Introduction

nTicket provides a basic helpdesk ticketing system which works 'out of the box', yet provides plenty of features normally only found in much more expensive systems. It can be installed as an extension for Joomla! or as an extension for nBill (which is itself available as an extension for Joomla!). Both the Joomla! extension and the nBill extension run from the same code and have identical features - the main exception being that the nBill extension allows for access to categories to be restricted based on whether or not a client has purchased a particular product (this is useful if you wish to sell product support subscriptions).

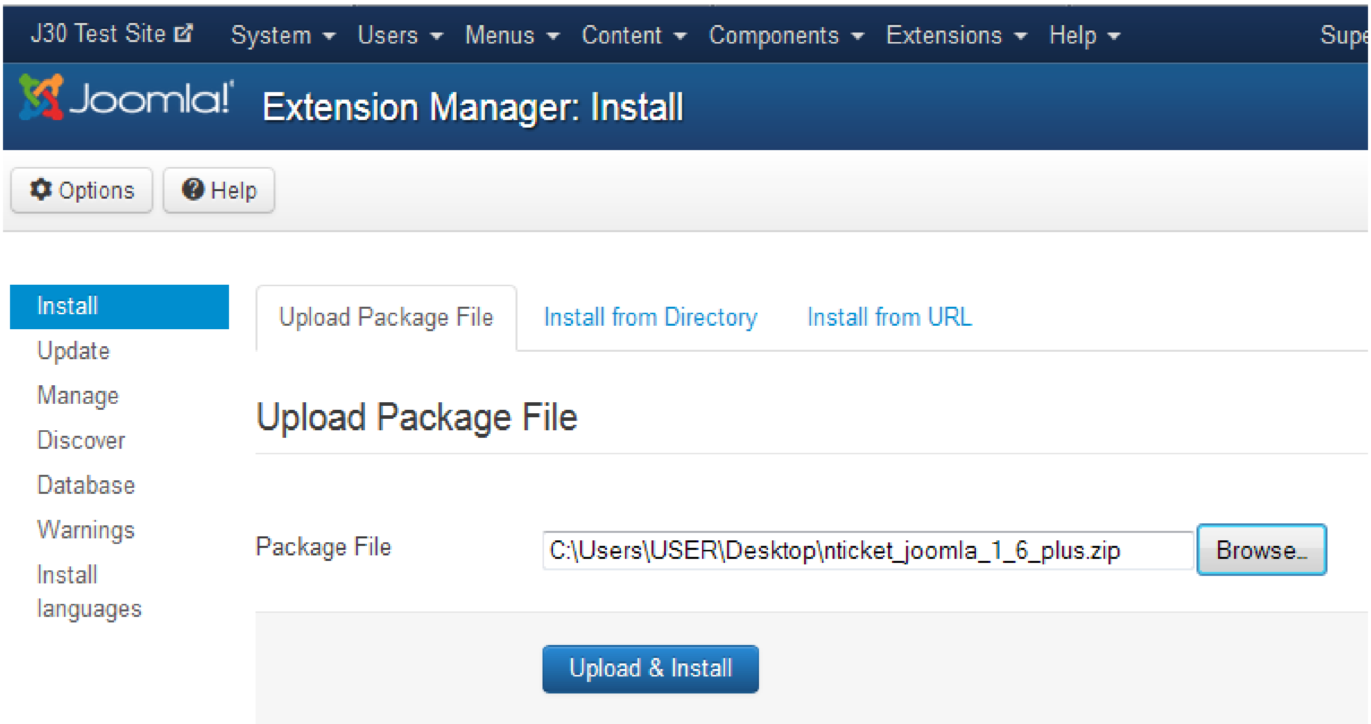
The minimum requirements for running nTicket are a server running PHP 5.2 or above, and an installation of Joomla!. nTicket works on every version of Joomla! from 1.0 to the latest version (at the time of writing, that is 3.1, but it will be kept up-to-date with new releases of Joomla!). You do not need to have nBill installed, as nTicket works as a standalone Joomla! component, but if you do have nBill you should use the nBill extension, not the Joomla! extension (the nTicket extension for nBill is available from nbill.co.uk).

2.0 Installation (nTicket for Joomla!)

For installation instructions for nTicket for nBill, please skip to the next section.

When you purchase nTicket for Joomla!, you should receive an e-mail with 3 file attachments (in addition to this documentation file): nticket_joomla_1_0.zip, nticket_joomla_1_5.zip, and nticket_joomla_1_6_plus.zip. If you are using Joomla 1.6 or above (including 2.5, 3.0, etc.), you will need the file nticket_joomla_1_6_plus.zip. For Joomla 1.5, use nticket_joomla_1_5.zip, and for Joomla 1.0 use nticket_joomla_1_0.zip.

To install nTicket, login to Joomla! administrator, and go to Extensions->Extension Manager (or Extensions->Install/Uninstall in Joomla 1.5; Installers->Components in Joomla 1.0). Browse for the appropriate zip file, wherever you stored it on your computer, and click on 'Upload and Install'.



2.1 Adding a menu item for the helpdesk

After you install nTicket for Joomla!, the only thing you need to do to get your helpdesk up and running is create a menu item to point to nTicket in your website front-end. In Joomla! administrator, select the menu you would like to add a link to from the 'Menus' menu (eg. Menus->Main Menu). Then click on the 'New' toolbar button.

You are prompted to select a menu item type - one of the types listed should be 'nTicket' (if you are still using Joomla 1.0, you will need to select the type 'Component', and then select nTicket from the component list). Select nTicket as the item type, and give your menu item a title, then click the 'Save' toolbar button.

That's it - you now have a functioning helpdesk. By default, it is set up with a single default category, and it will send ticket notifications to the e-mail address you have defined as the 'From e-mail' in your Joomla! configuration. You can change this of course, but if you wish you can just start using the helpdesk in your website front-end straight away.

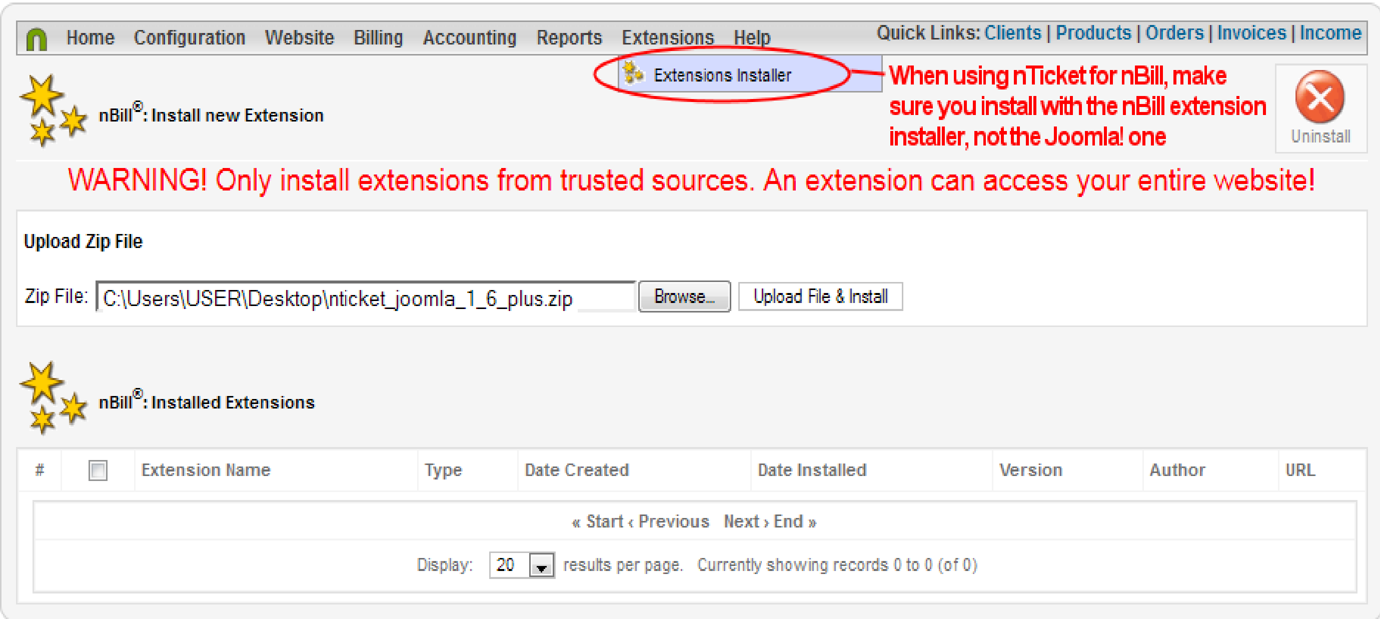
You can also add links directly to a particular category, but that will be covered later in the section on Categories, below.

3.0 Installation (nTicket for nBill)

For installation instructions for nTicket for Joomla!, please see the previous section.

When you purchase nTicket for nBill, you should receive an e-mail with a file attachment (in addition to this documentation file) named extension_nticket.zip.

To install nTicket, login to Joomla Administrator, enter nBill administration and select Extensions->Extensions Installer from the nBill admin main menu. Browse for the appropriate zip file, wherever you stored it on your computer, and click on 'Upload File & Install'.



3.1 Linking to the helpdesk

Unlike the standalone version of nTicket for Joomla!, you do not necessarily need to create a menu item to use nTicket for nBill. A link to the helpdesk will automatically be added to the nBill 'My Account' page in your website front-end. However, if you want to add a link to the helpdesk from your menu as well (generally a good idea), you will need to add a menu item of type 'External URL' (even though the actual URL we will use is an internal one).

To link to the ticket list, use the URL:
index.php?option=com_nbill&action=nb_helpdesk

To link to the page that allows a new ticket to be submitted, use the URL:
index.php?option=com_nbill&action=nb_helpdesk&task=new_ticket

Of course you can also use these links within your website content articles. You can also add links directly to a particular category, but that will be covered later in the section on Categories, below.

4.0 Using nTicket Administration

When you enter nTicket administration (either by selecting nTicket from the Extensions menu in Joomla!, or going to Extensions->nTicket in nBill), you are presented with an action bar along the top of the page offering 5 different activities:

Click on an activity to access the corresponding features - the action bar will remain at the top of the page throughout for easy access to the other activities. Each activity is explained in more detail below.

5.0 Configuration

This activity contains lots of settings to enable you to fine-tune your helpdesk system how you want it. All of the options are accompanied by explanatory notes which should make it obvious what is required for each setting.

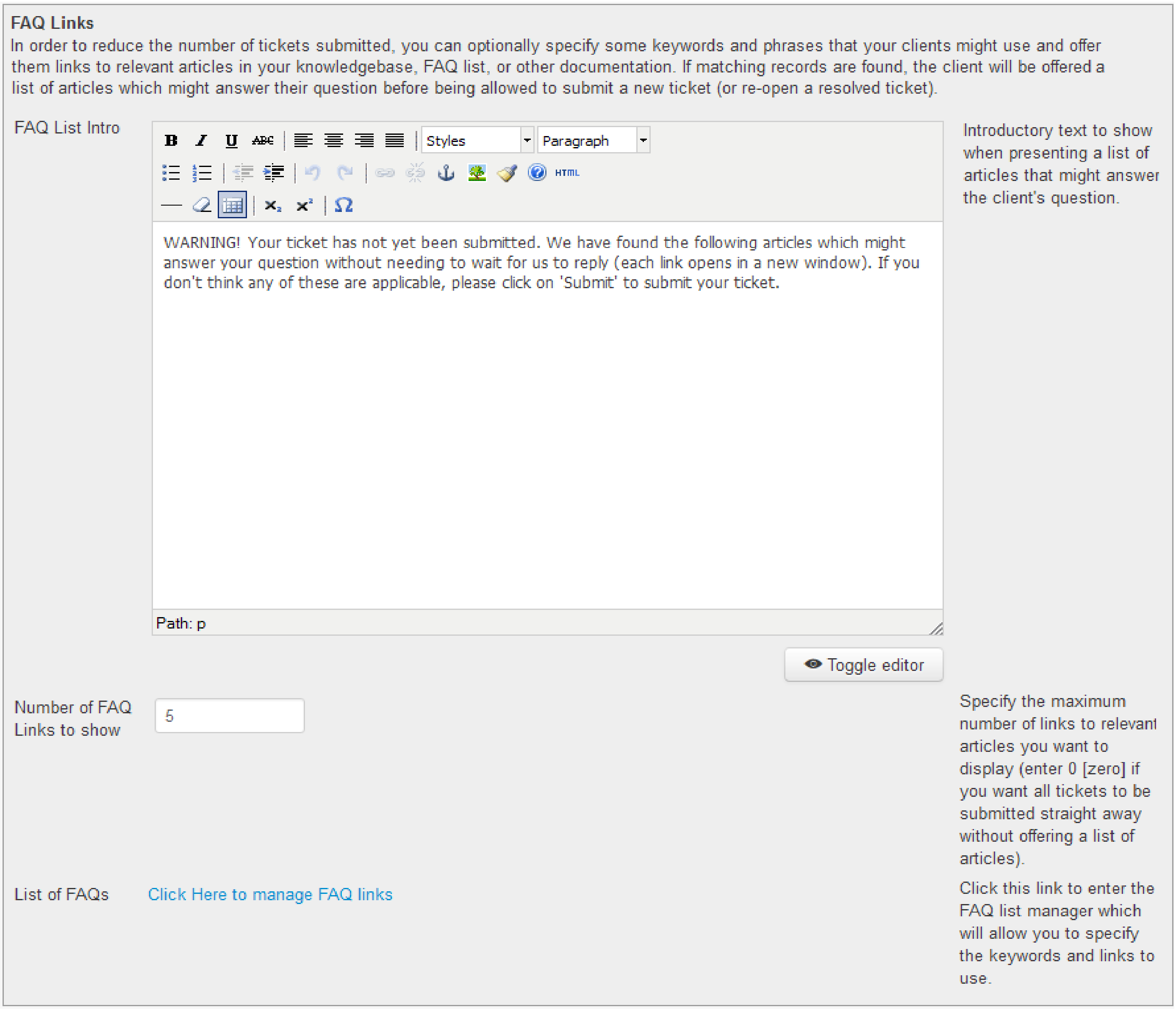
5.1 E-mail Templates

You will notice that there is an 'E-mail Template' setting, which by default has a single template listed. This template controls how ticket notification e-mails are presented. You could tweak the supplied template, but if you want to make changes to the layout of e-mail notifications, it is better to create your own template and select it from the list on the configuration activity. Creating an e-mail template requires knowledge of HTML, CSS, and PHP.

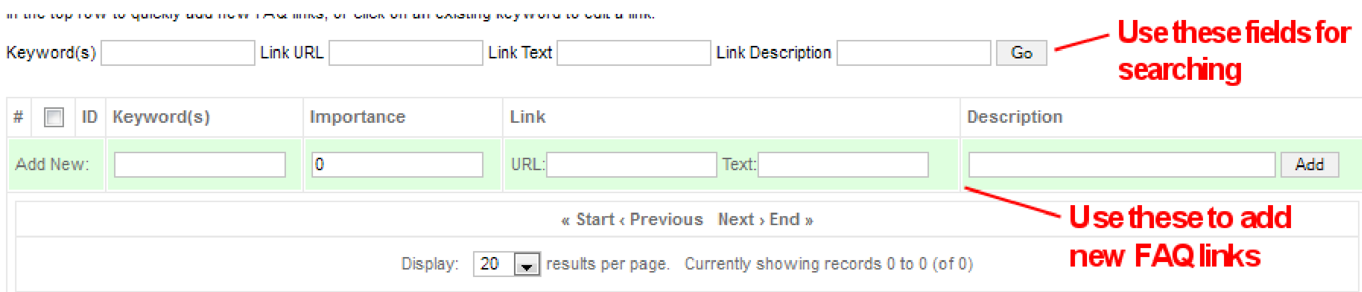
If you are using nTicket for Joomla!, the e-mail templates are stored in the folder /components/com_nticket/email_templates/. If you are using nTicket for nBill, they are stored in /components/com_nbill/email_templates/. You can copy the default template and rename it to whatever you want, but the file name should include either the word 'helpdesk' or 'ticket' otherwise it will not appear in the list of templates on the nTicket configuration page.

5.2 FAQ Links

In order to reduce your support workload, you can define key words and phrases that are often used by your clients and use these to direct them to a relevant knowledgebase article, FAQ, or page in your online documentation. When a key word or phrase is used in a message submitted by a client, rather than creating a new support ticket straight away, the client is presented with a list of links that might answer their question - with the option to continue with the ticket submission if none apply.



To define how many and which links appear in which order for which key words and phrases, there is an 'FAQ Links' section at the end of the Configuration page. If you click the link provided in that section, it takes you to a new page to define the FAQ links:



You can quickly add a new FAQ link by entering the key word or phrase, link URL, link text, and description on the green highlighted line, and clicking 'Add' (note: the very top line of the page allows you to search the FAQ links - use the green highlighted row to add new ones). The value you enter for 'importance' determines the order in which the FAQ links are shown if more than one match is found. The higher the number you enter (between 1 and 100), the more important that match is, so use higher numbers where the key word or phrase has a very strong connection to the link, and lower numbers where the subject discussed in the help article is less likely to pertain to the key word or phrase.

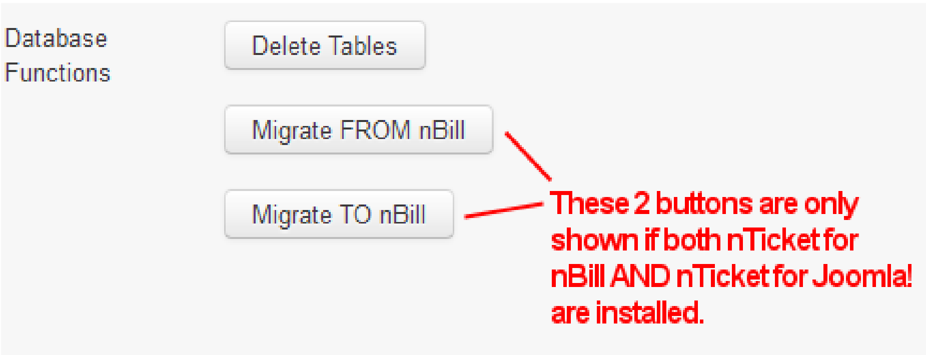
In many cases, there may be a number of different key words or phrases that might be used by a client to refer to a particular problem, all of which should trigger the display of an FAQ link. In that case, use a comma to separate each key word or phrase. If more than one key word or phrase must be present in the message before the FAQ link is shown, use a '+' (plus) symbol to join the key words or phrases together.

For example, 'cannot + install, blank screen + install, installation' would match if the client's message includes BOTH 'cannot' and 'install', OR 'blank screen' and 'install', OR just the word 'installation'.

You can add multiple entries pointing to the same link for different key words. If more than one match for the same page is detected, only one link will be shown to the client for that page.

5.2 Database Functions (nTicket for Joomla! only)

Use with caution! The buttons supplied in the 'Database Functions' section at the end of the configuration page will permanently delete or overwrite your data.



In most cases the 'Database Functions' section will just show a single button which allows you to delete the nTicket tables from the database. You should ONLY use this button if you want to completely uninstall nTicket. Deleting the database tables will permanently delete all of your helpdesk data, and render nTicket inoperable. Uninstalling nTicket without deleting the tables first will leave all of your data intact in the database, so if you want to completely remove all traces of nTicket from your site, you will need to click that button. This is not necessary in nTicket for nBill, as you are given the option of removing the database tables when you uninstall the extension.

If you want to migrate your helpdesk data from the standalone nTicket for Joomla! component to nTicket for nBill, or vice-versa, you can install both editions of nTicket on the same site. When nTicket for Joomla! detects that nTicket for nBill is installed on the same site, it will offer 2 more buttons in the 'Database Functions' section - one to migrate data from nTicket to nBill, and one to migrate data from nBill to nTicket. Please note however, that you should not normally have both editions installed on the same site - only do this temporarily while migrating data (nTicket for Joomla! may not work well with other nBill extensions such as nCart, so if you use nBill, you should only use nTicket for nBill, not nTicket for Joomla!).

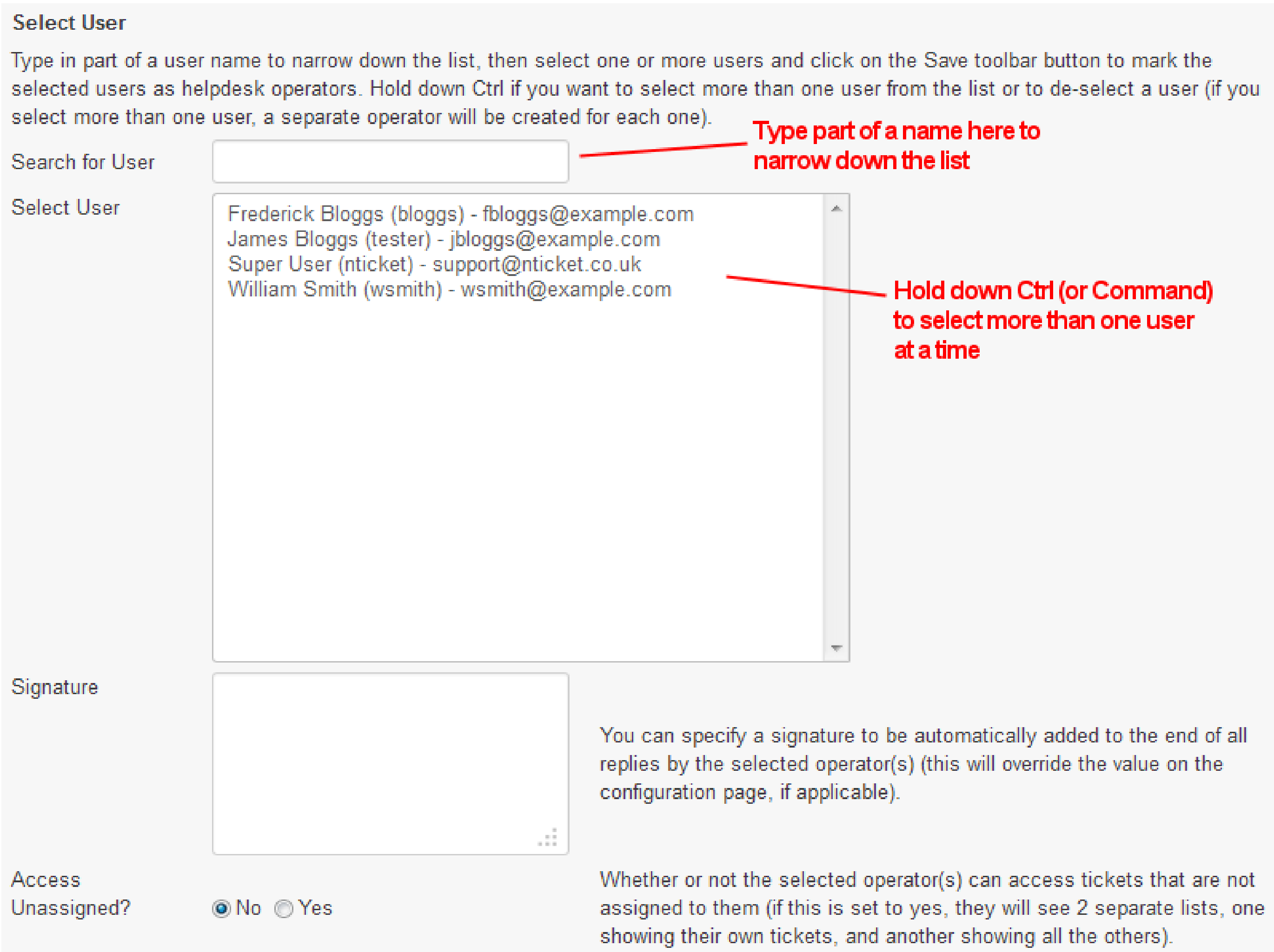
6.0 Operators

If you have more than one person answering support tickets, you can create 'Operator' records for your helpdesk agents. Tickets can be assigned to a particular operator manually by an administrator or another operator (if you give operators permission to do so), or they can be assigned automatically based on the category the ticket is submitted to.

It is important to distinguish between an 'administrator' and an 'operator'. An administrator is someone who has super user privileges in the Joomla! administrator back-end. All administrators can see all tickets, in both the back-end and the front end. An operator is a registered user who does not necessarily have access to Joomla! administrator, but has been assigned as an operator by an administrator. An operator can access tickets that are assigned to them via the website front end.

When a user is assigned as an operator, the administrator can choose whether or not to allow the operator to see tickets that are not assigned to them. If this is allowed, the operator will be shown 2 separate lists of tickets - those assigned to them, and those not assigned to them. An operator can then assign a ticket to themselves or to another operator.

When you click on the 'New' toolbar button with the Operators activity, you are presented with a list of your Joomla! users to choose from:



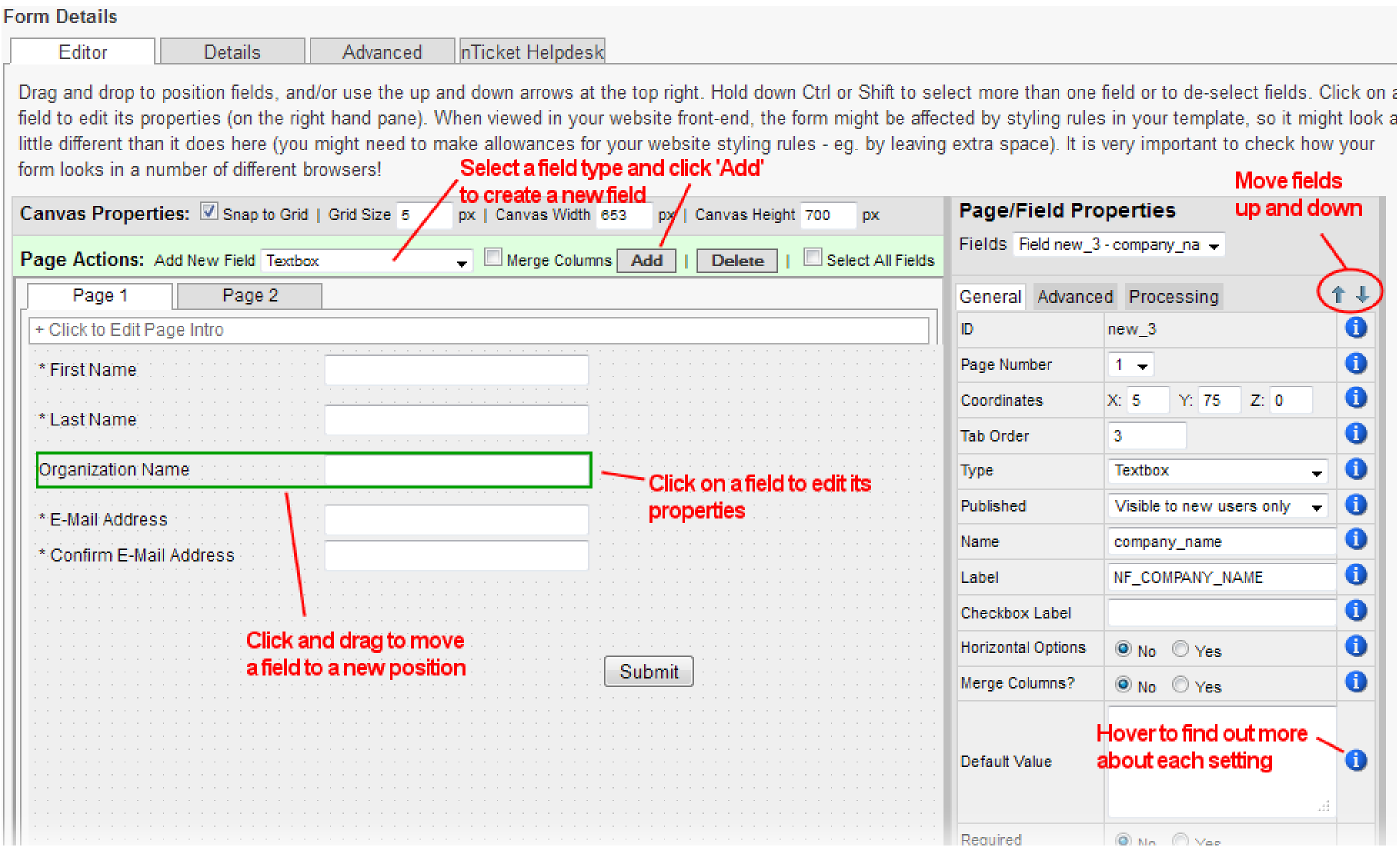
You can add one or more users as an operator by selecting them in the list, and optionally specify a default signature to add to the end of their helpdesk replies, and indicate whether or not to allow access to tickets that are not assigned to them. Once saved, you can edit operator records by clicking on the operator's name in the list on the Operators page.

7.0 Categories

You can allow for tickets to be submitted to different categories depending on the department that needs to deal with that type of enquiry, or just to help you keep your tickets organised. When you click on the Categories button in the action bar, a list of categories is shown. A button is provided that allows you to quickly create a Joomla menu item that links directly to a category.

When a new ticket is submitted, you may want to capture extra data in addition to the client name and e-mail address. Some categories might require different fields to others (for example, if you need access to a user's website to provide technical support, you might need to ask for their website address, a username, and a password - whereas this would not be necessary to answer billing questions). To facilitate this, a drag and drop form editor is provided which allows you to add your own fields to a category and edit the form layout.

A default category is provided, but you can edit it or add as many new categories as you like using the toolbar buttons. When you add or edit a category, you are presented with the form editor. By default, some fields will be added for you. You must keep at least one field mapped to the client's e-mail address (otherwise nTicket will not be able to send your replies to that client). You can easily create a copy of an existing category form by clicking the 'Save Copy' toolbar button.



7.1 Editor Overview

Here is a quick explanation of how this page works to help you get started. For a more detailed explanation of the various features of the form editor, please refer to Appendix A.

Adding new fields

To add a new field, first select the tab for the page you want the field to appear on, then select the type of field you want to add from the dropdown list and click on the 'Add' button. The field will be added underneath any existing fields on the form. There are various field types available, including a Captcha field in case you allow guests to submit tickets but find your helpdesk is being abused by spambots.

Editing field properties

When you click on a field, it is highlighted with a green outline and the properties pane on the right hand side of the page is populated. You can edit the properties on that pane to affect the appearance and behaviour of the field. In most cases, the changes you make are instantly reflected in the left hand pane. Please be aware though that the form might look slightly different in your website front-end, as it will be affected by your website template styling rules. This might mean that you have to allow extra space between fields or make other allowances.

Moving fields and pages

You can re-position a field just by dragging and dropping it wherever you want it to appear. To move a field to another page, click on the field (so it is highlighted in green), then select the page number you want to move it to using the properties pane on the right hand side. You can select multiple fields by holding down shift or ctrl while clicking on the fields (or by checking the 'select all fields' checkbox), and move them all to another page or position in one go.

You can quickly move fields up and down the page using the up and down arrow buttons at the top of the properties pane while a field is selected. This is usually quicker than dragging and dropping if you want to quickly swap fields around.

Page intro and footer

You can click on the bar at the top or bottom of each page to display an HTML editor which will allow you to enter introductory or closing comments that will be displayed on your form. Click on the bar again to hide the editor so you can see your fields more clearly.

Page properties

If you click on the grey area of a page (the canvas - ie. the grey dotted space where there are no fields), the properties pane on the right hand side is populated with the page properties. You can use these to adjust the page width and the label column width among other things. You can even mark a page as not visible to anyone or only visible to logged in users if you wish.

In addition to the form editor, there are 3 other tabs, labelled 'Details', 'Advanced' and 'nTicket Helpdesk'. These each contain additional settings for controlling the behaviour of the category form.

7.2 Details Tab

The Details tab contains general settings for the form, including the form title, and who can access the form. Each setting is accompanied by explanatory text. At the bottom of the Details tab, a link is shown which can be used to link directly to that category (for example, if you want to include a link to the category from one of your content articles).

7.3 Advanced Tab

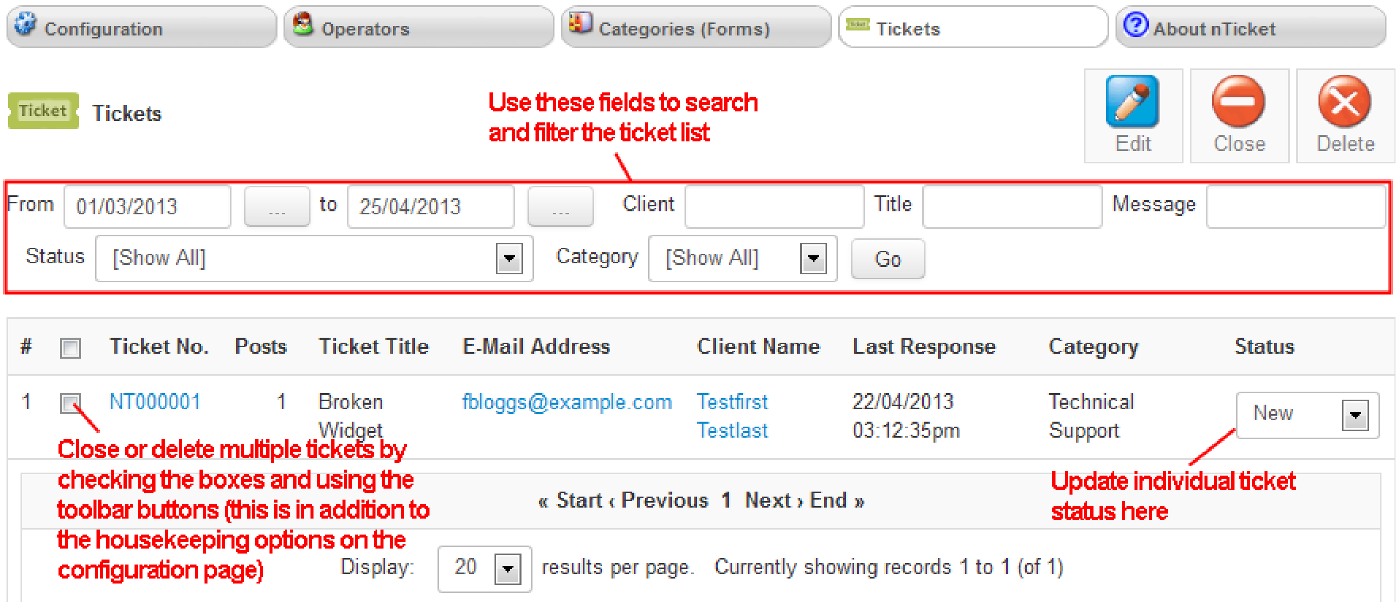
The Advanced tab allows developers to add PHP and Javascript code to a form to customise its behaviour and hook into other scripts when certain events occur (for example, to carry out some additional validation or perform some action when a form is submitted). In nTicket for nBill, you can also specify prerequisite and/or disqualifying products for accessing the form.

7.4 nTicket Helpdesk Tab

As the same form editor is used for other functions in nBill, the nTicket-specific settings are held on this final tab. This includes settings for assigning tickets for this category to a certain operator, controlling which features are enabled in the front-end for this category (eg. BB Code, file uploads), and various others. Again, each setting is accompanied by explanatory text.

8.0 Tickets

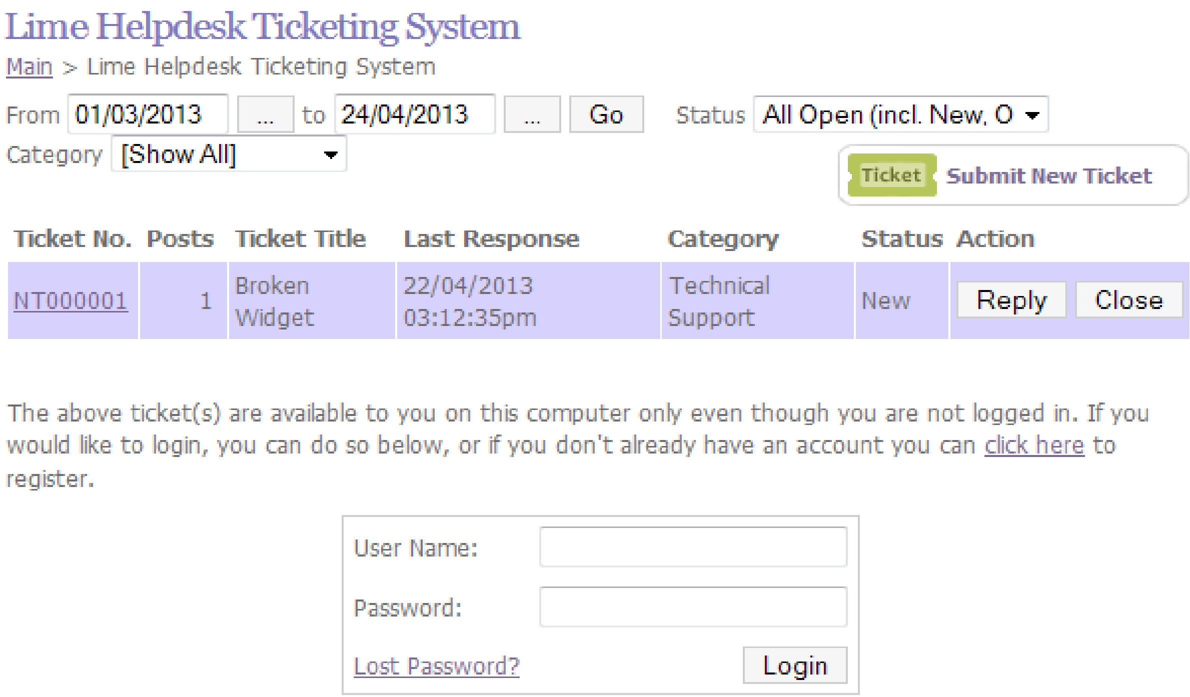
The 'Tickets' activity in the back-end is essentially the same as the ticket list in the front-end (see below), with the exception that all tickets are visible (not just the ones assigned to a particular operator), and the ticket title and message body can be searched. You can use the filtering controls at the top of the page to narrow down the list (for example to just show new tickets that have not had a response yet, or just tickets in a certain category). Editing a ticket will open the ticket editor which behaves in exactly the same way as the front-end.



9.0 The Front-end

Client Access

When a client accesses nTicket via your website front-end, they will be shown a list of the tickets they have raised, and given the option to submit a new ticket. Depending on the configuration options you have set, if the client is not logged in, they might also be offered a login box and/or a registration link.

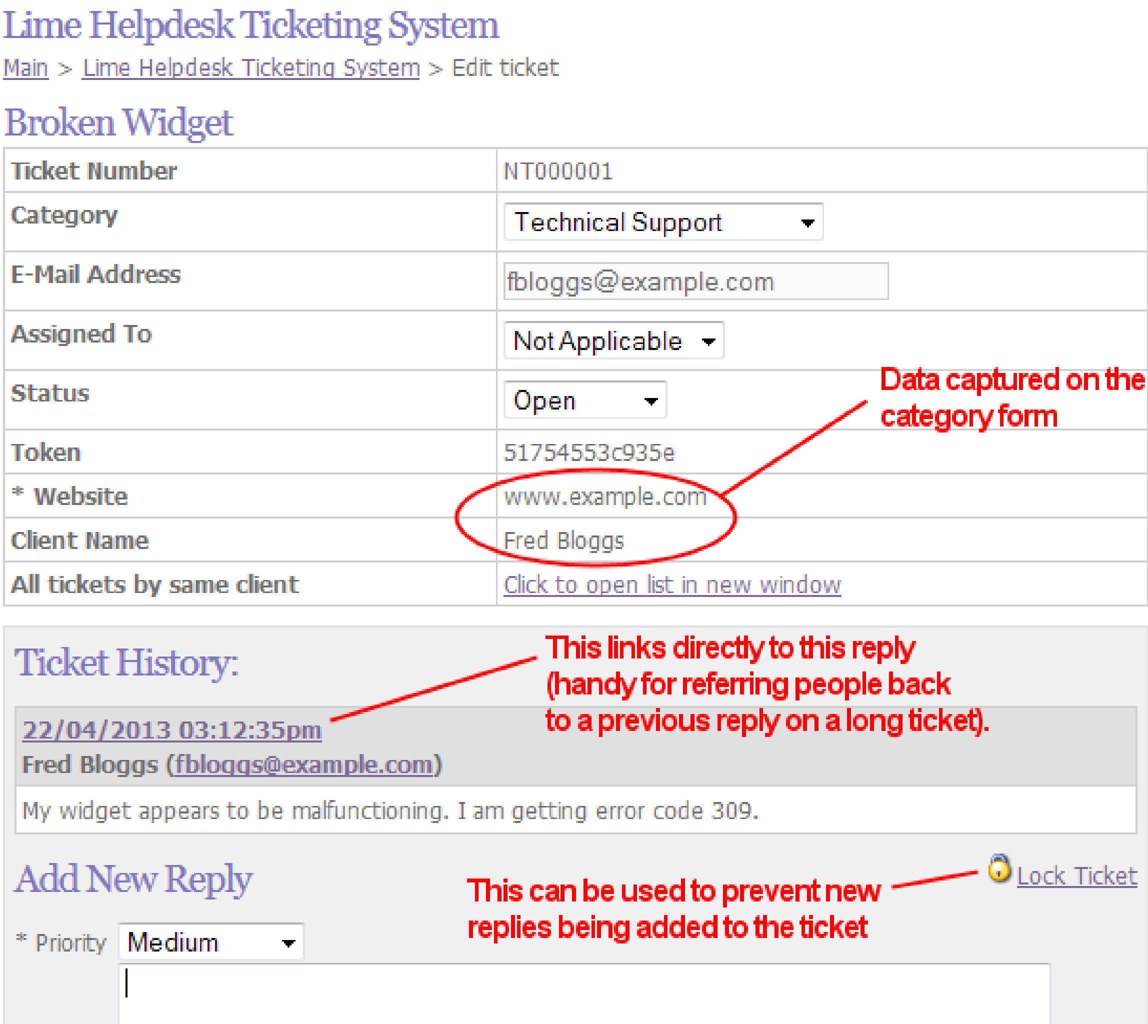


When a client selects to submit a new ticket, if there is more than one category, they will be offered a choice of which category to submit to. The appropriate category form will then be loaded so that the data required for that category can be captured. In addition to any fields defined on the category form, the ticket title and message fields will be output, and if specified by your configuration settings, there will be additional controls for uploading files, and a key to the BBCode settings allowed.

When a client replies to a ticket they have already raised previously, the category fields are not shown, as this data has already been captured, and is visible to operators who access the ticket.

Operator Access

When an operator accesses nTicket via your website front-end, they will be shown a list of tickets assigned to them (and if allowed, an additional list of tickets not assigned to them, so that they can assign them as required). Tickets that are marked as urgent or very urgent are shown in red. Tickets that have not yet had an operator reply are shown in bold type. Operators can change the ticket status or close a ticket from the ticket list without actually editing the ticket. Clicking the ticket number or the 'Reply' button opens the ticket editor.



When editing or replying to a ticket, operators can see the data that was posted in the original submission (the data shown depends on what fields you defined for the category form). An operator can assign a ticket to a different client (by amending the e-mail address), move the ticket to a different category (although in doing so it is too late to capture any different data required by the new category), assign the ticket to a different operator (if allowed), and update the status of the ticket. All of this can be done without necessarily adding a new reply. A link is also provided to show all other tickets submitted by the same client.

Operators can add private notes to a ticket which are not seen by the client (there is a small yellow window for that at the bottom right of the ticket editor). There are also checkboxes to allow an operator to quickly mark the ticket as resolved or closed when submitting a reply (note: when a ticket is closed, any file attachments are deleted - tickets marked as 'resolved' do not have their attachments deleted).

If an operator has a default signature defined, the signature will be shown in the reply box automatically. If the ticket is submitted without entering a reply - even if the signature text is still present - the ticket details will be saved, but no new message will be sent to the client (in other words, if you are just updating the ticket status you don't have to worry about deleting the signature before submitting - it is clever enough to know that the signature is not a message).

Where more than one reply has been added to a ticket, operators are given the option to split the ticket into two. When this happens, all messages from the split message onwards will be added to a new ticket with a new ticket number and the old ticket will be locked automatically (so no new replies can be added to the old ticket). The old ticket will have a message added to it saying that the ticket has been split and giving a link to the new ticket. The new ticket will also show a link back to the old ticket. Operators can also lock tickets without splitting them if they want to prevent new replies being added for any reason.

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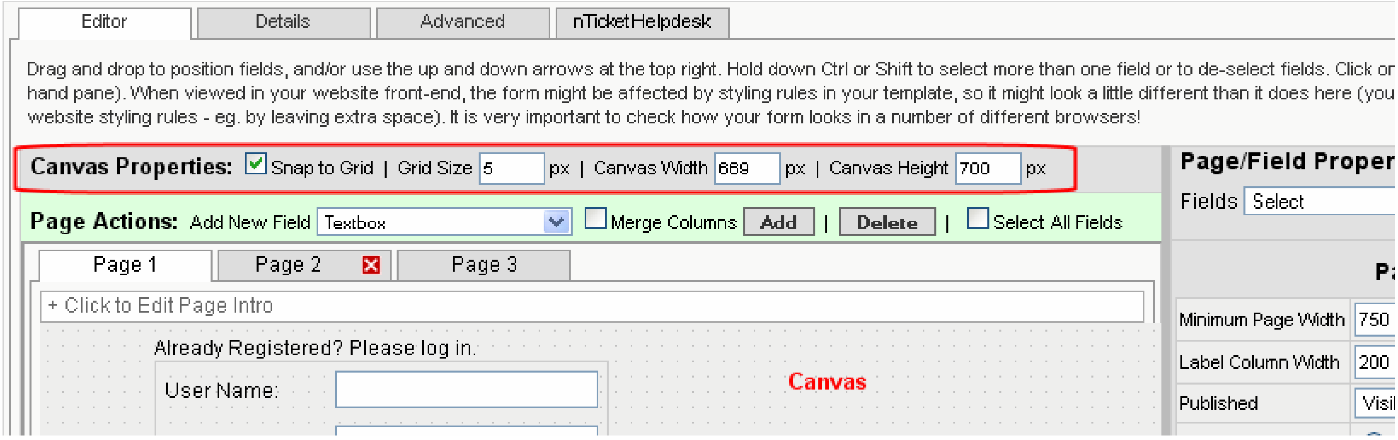
Appendix A - Detailed Explanation of the Form Editor

The following section goes into more detail, describing each setting on the category form editor.

Canvas Properties



The bar along the top of the editor shows the canvas properties. These are settings which affect the grey dotted working area below (the 'canvas'). The values are not saved with the form and do not affect the appearance of the form in the front-end.

Snap to Grid

If this box is checked (which it is by default), you can only move fields in blocks of 5 pixels at a time (you can change the value in the next setting to use more or fewer pixels per block). This allows you to line up your fields more easily, as it is not easy to line things up to the exact pixel. If the box is unchecked, you can move your fields wherever you want, but you might find it difficult to line things up accurately.

Grid Size

The number of pixels to use for the 'Snap to Grid' setting. The higher the number you enter here, the more 'jerky' the movement of fields will be when you drag and drop, but the easier it will be to line them up. If you set the grid size to 1, it has the same effect as unchecking the 'Snap to Grid' checkbox.

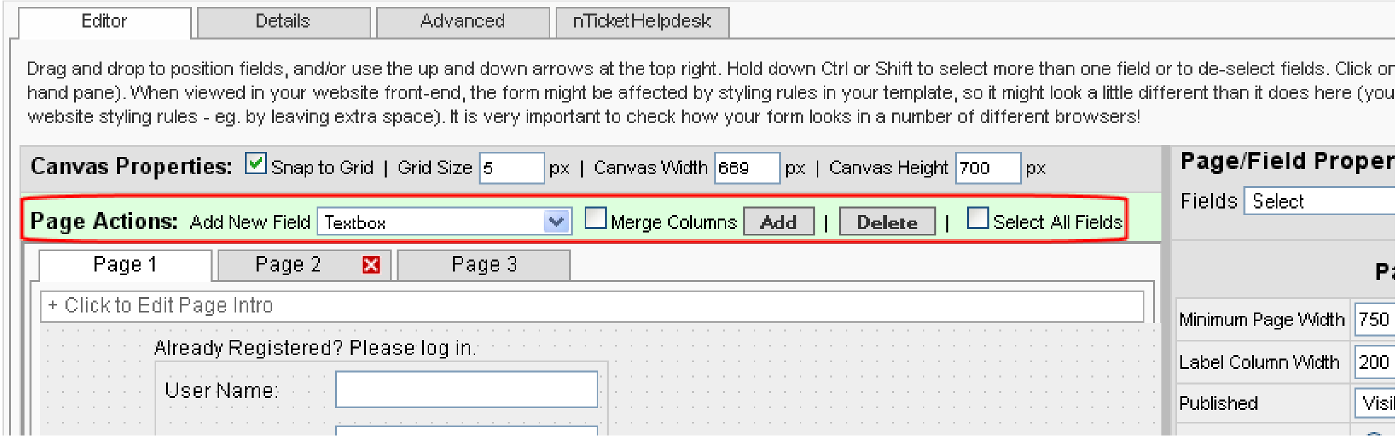
Canvas Width

The width of the canvas in pixels. This generally takes care of itself as the value is adjusted automatically as you resize your browser. You can enter a value yourself if you wish though.

Canvas Height

The height of the canvas in pixels. The value is set automatically as you add new fields, but if you want to increase or decrease the available space you can enter a value yourself.

Page Actions



The green bar underneath the canvas properties enables you to add or delete fields and select all fields.

Add New Field

To create a new field, select the type of field you want from the dropdown list, and click on the 'Add' button. If you check the 'merge columns' checkbox before clicking on the 'Add' button, the control will be output adjacent to the label with no gap in between. The new field will be added at the bottom of the page, but you can move it up either by dragging and dropping or using the arrow buttons at the top right (in the Page/Field Properties pane).

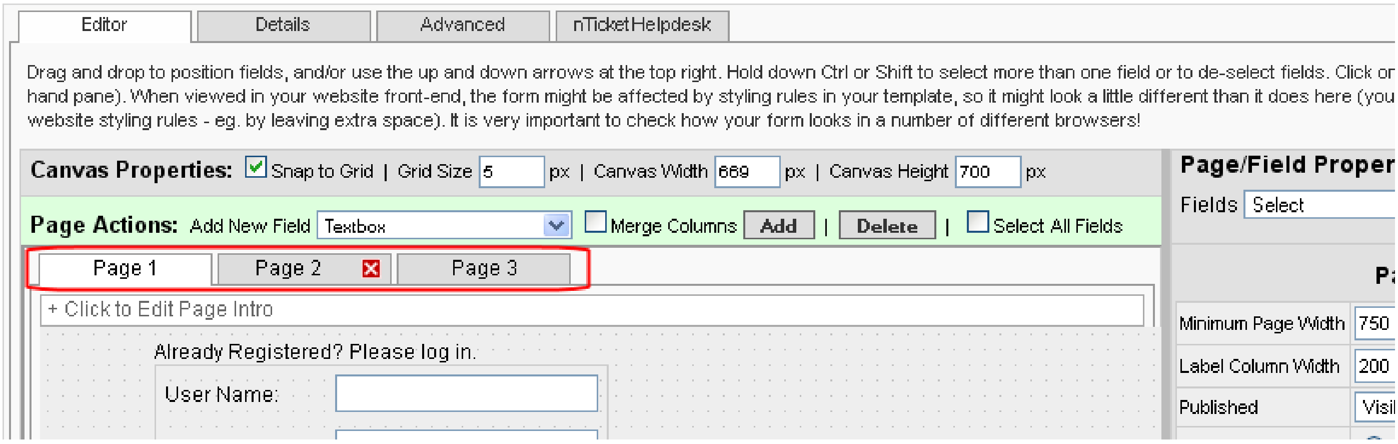
Delete

Click on a field to select it, then either press the delete key on your keyboard, or click this Delete button to delete the field. You can hold down shift while clicking on fields to select more than one field to delete.

Select All Fields

To select all fields on the page in one go, check this box (the next and previous button are excluded).

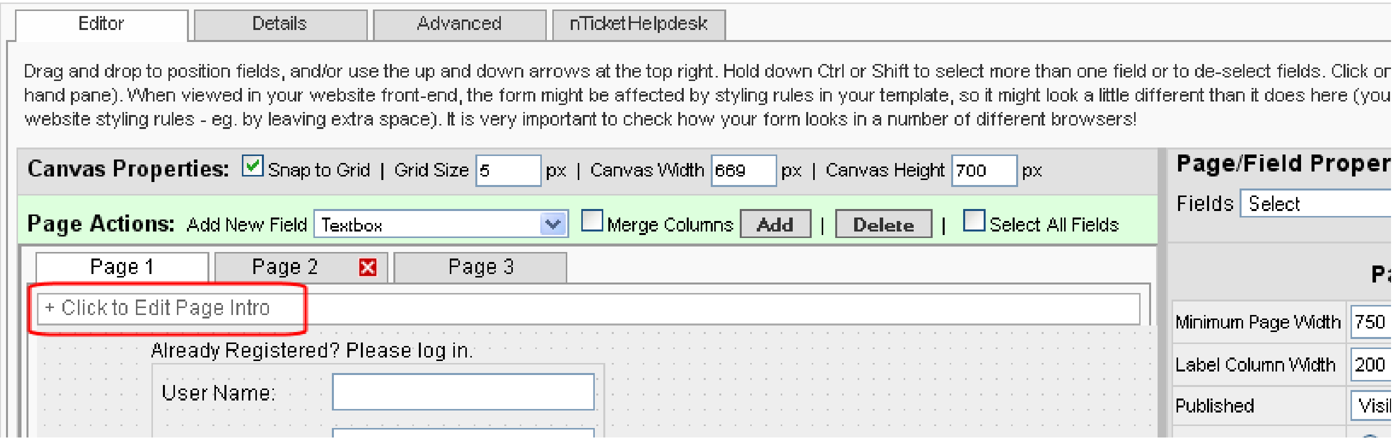
Page Tabs



A tab is shown for each page of the form, along with an extra tab at the end in case you want to add a new page (as soon as you add any fields to the last page of the form, another new tab is created so there is always one extra tab). Click on a tab to see the fields that will appear on the corresponding page of the form. You can have as many pages as you like on a form, but there must be at least one page.

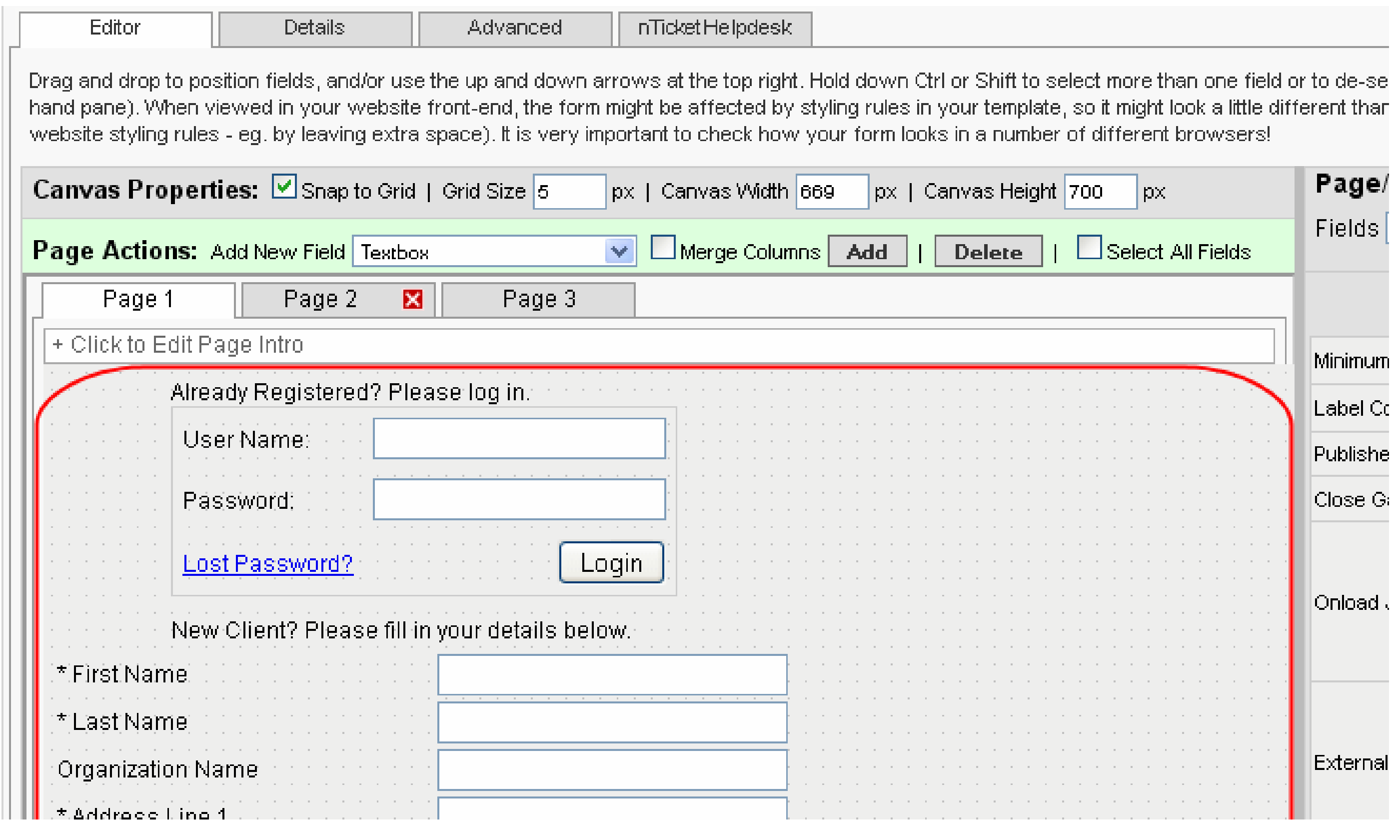
All tabs except for the first and last ones have a red square with a white X on the right hand side. If you click that X, the entire page, along with all the fields it contains is deleted.

Page Intro



If you click on the page intro bar, underneath the page tabs, the area will expand and display an HTML editor that you can use to create a formatted introduction to the page. Click on the bar again to hide the editor.

Canvas



Fields are added to the canvas and you can move them around by dragging and dropping or amend their appearance and behaviour by clicking on them and setting their properties.

When you click on the grey dotted canvas area, the properties for the page are shown in the properties pane on the right hand side. See below for an explanation of each page property.

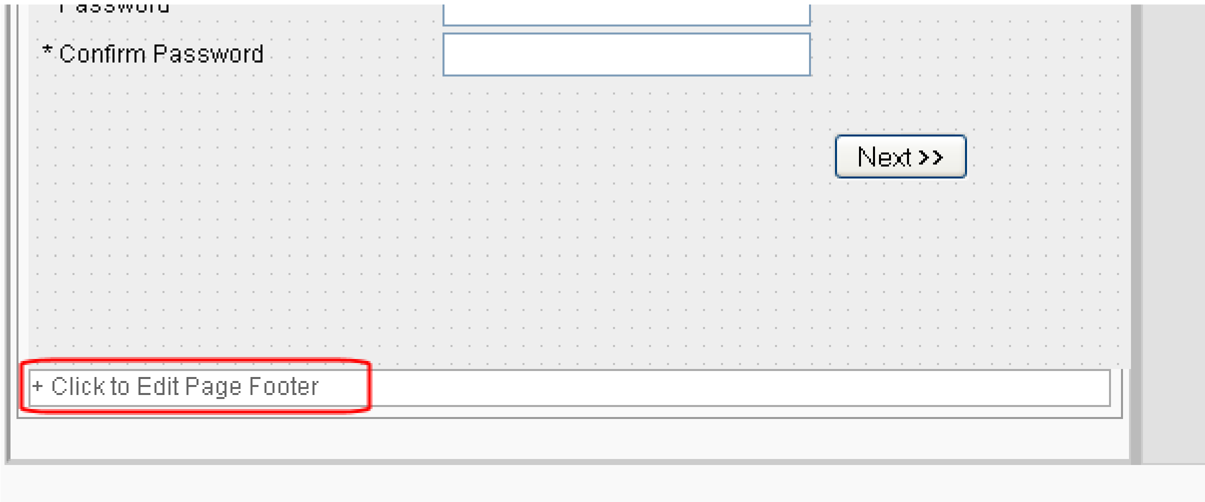
When you click on a field, it is highlighted with a green border and the properties for that field are shown in the properties pane on the right hand side. See below for an explanation of each field property.

If you hold down shift or ctrl while you click on fields, you can select more than one field at a time. This is useful if you want to move several fields together, delete several fields, or move several fields to a new page.

If you click on a field and then press the delete key on your keyboard, the field will be deleted.

If you click on a field twice (or in some cases, click then right-click on the field), depending on the field type, you might be permitted to enter text in the field (eg. in the case of a text box) or select a value (eg. in the case of a dropdown list). If so, the value you enter or select will be used as the default value for the field, and that value will automatically be updated on the default value setting on the field properties pane.

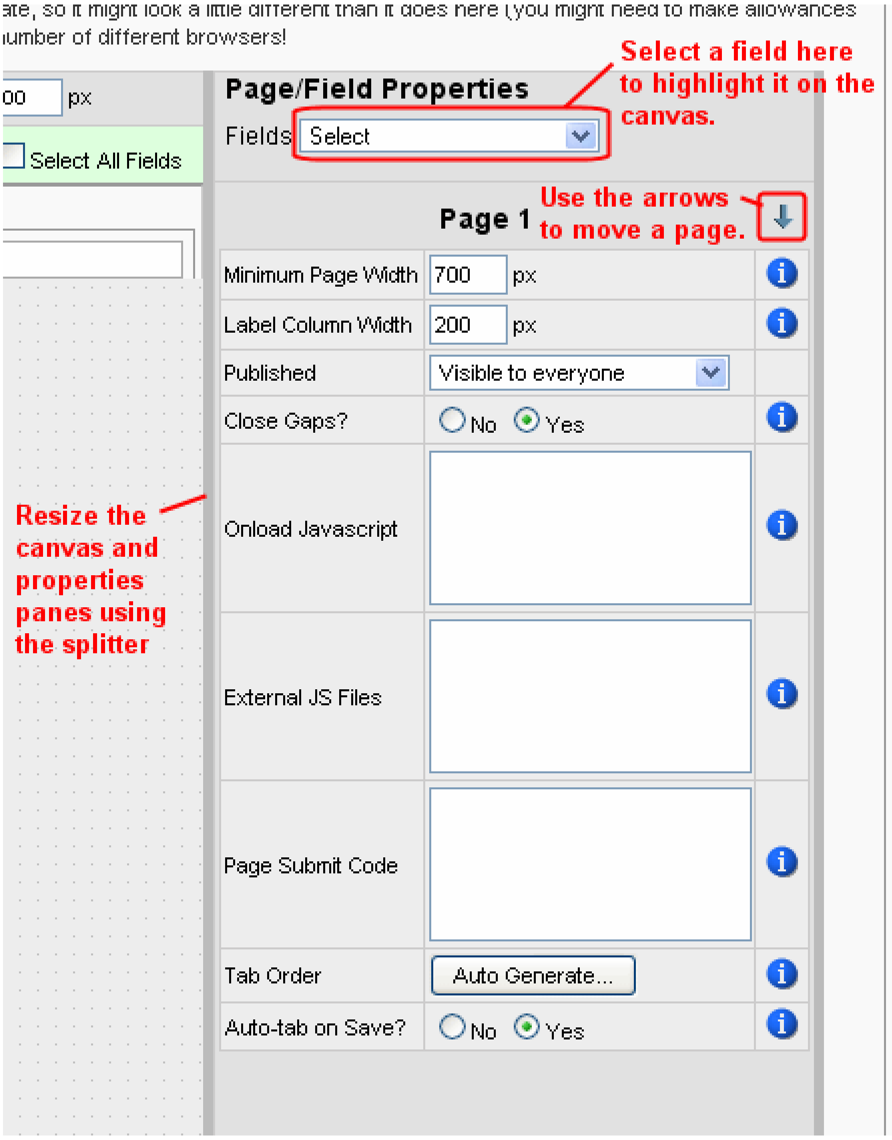
Page Footer



Underneath the canvas, there is a footer bar which you can click to show an HTML editor to allow you to enter formatted text that will appear at the foot of the page. This works in the same way as the page intro - click on the bar again to hide the editor.

Page Properties

When you click on the canvas area, the properties pane on the right hand side is populated with the properties of the page. Note: the contents of the right hand pane change depending on whether you have selected the page (by clicking on the canvas) or a field (by clicking on a field). The following image shows how the right hand pane looks when you select a page.



At the top-right of the pane, up and down arrows allow you to move the page up and down to quickly change the order of the pages.

Minimum Page Width

This setting specifies how many pixels of horizontal space to allow in order to accommodate all of the fields on your form. If there is insufficient width, it could cause your fields to wrap which may look unsightly. If the page is too wide, it could have an adverse effect on your website template, especially if you have any modules published on the right hand side of the page.

Label Column Width

This setting allows you to specify how much horizontal space to allow for the field labels that appear to the left of the field controls. If any fields have their 'merge columns' property set to 'yes', this setting will have no effect for those fields.

Published

Whether or not this page should be visible. You also can choose to make certain pages visible only to existing users or only to new users.

Close Gaps?

If this is set to 'yes', the form renderer will attempt to close any gaps between fields (vertically) where fields are not published (and would therefore otherwise leave gaps). The tab order of the fields on the page is used to determine what order the fields should appear in. In some circumstances, with complicated form layouts, this can cause undesirable effects such as mis-placed fields or even overlapping fields. In that case, just set 'Close Gaps' to 'no'.

Onload Javascript

If you are familiar with Javascript and want to execute some Javascript code when the page first loads, you can enter the code here.

External JS Files

If you want to include any external Javascript files when the page is shown (eg. a postcode lookup script), specify the full URL to the file here - separating each file with a new line.

Page Submit Code

If you want to execute any PHP code when this page is submitted, enter it here (note: the code is only executed when this particular page is submitted - which might happen more than once if the user goes backwards and forwards through the pages - if you want to execute code when the entire form (ie. all pages) has been submitted, use the submit code setting on the advanced tab instead).

Tab Order

A button is provided to automatically assign a tab order value to each field on the page. You only need to use this if the following setting ('Auto-tab on save') is set to 'no'. The tab order controls the order in which fields are rendered on the page, and therefore the order in which the cursor jumps when the user hits the tab key. It is also used by the 'close gaps' feature (see above) to determine what order the fields should appear in. Clicking the 'Auto Generate' button will set the tab order of the fields in the order they appear on the page (top to bottom and left to right).

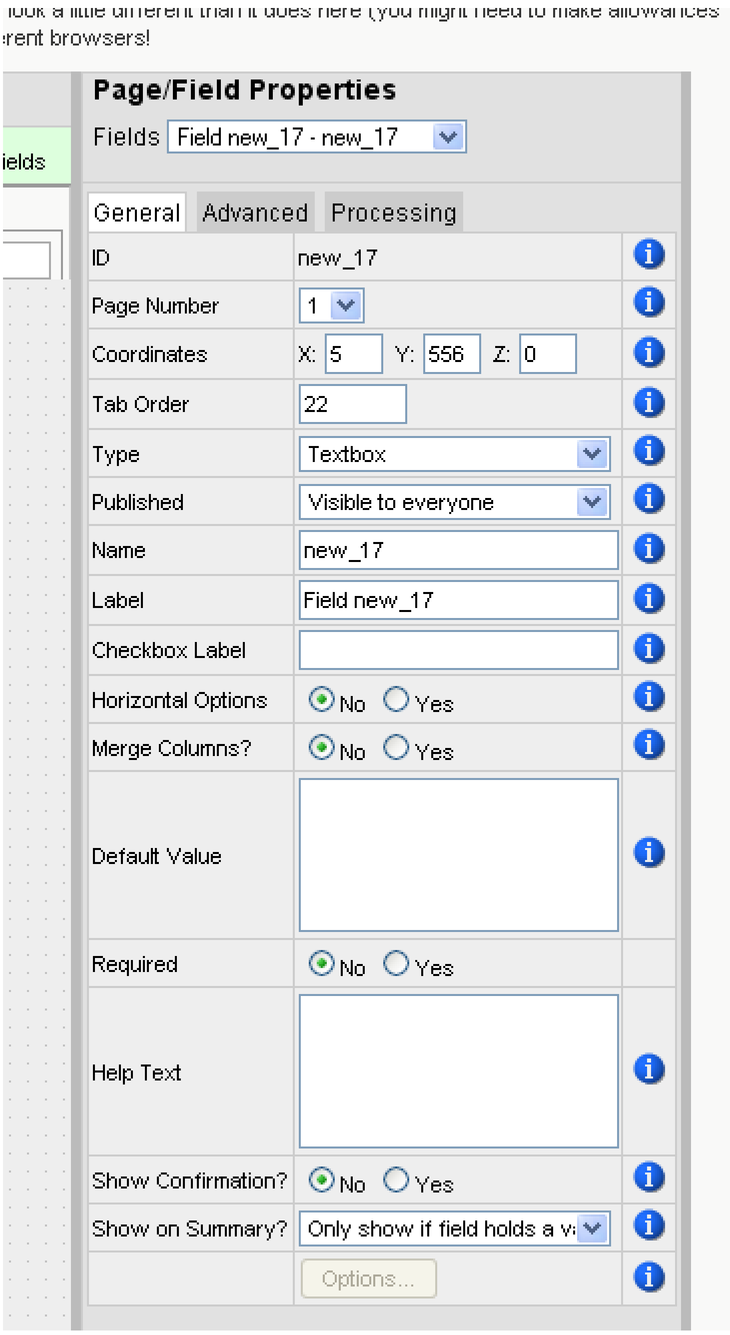
Auto-tab on Save?

Whether or not to automatically set the tab order of all fields on the page whenever the form is saved. This has the same effect as clicking on the 'Auto Generate' button (see above) every time you save the form.

Field Properties

When you click on a field, or select a field from the dropdown at the top of the properties pane, the properties pane is populated with the properties of the selected field. There are 3 tabs on the field properties pane: General, Advanced, and Processing. Each setting on each of the 3 tabs is explained below.

Field Properties - General Tab



ID

The field ID is assigned automatically and you cannot change it. When you create a new field, it is given a temporary ID with the prefix 'new_', as shown in the image above. After the form is saved, any new fields are assigned a permanent ID, which will be a simple integer with no prefix.

Page Number

The page number that this field appears on. If you select a different page number, ALL selected fields will be moved to the new page number. This is different from all other properties on the properties pane because it affects ALL selected fields whereas the other properties only relate to a single field (the last one that was selected if more than one is selected).

Coordinates

If you drag and drop a field, the coordinates will be updated automatically to reflect the position you moved the field to, but you can also manually type in the x, y, and z coordinates and the field will automatically be moved to the location you specify. The z value indicates the position the field will take if it overlaps another field (ie. it allows you to control which one appears on top), but can usually be ignored as you would not normally want your fields to overlap.

Tab Order

The order in which fields are rendered on the page is governed by the tab order specified here (thus governing how the cursor moves from field to field when the user presses the tab key). Typically this is handled automatically, as by default, the tab order is automatically assigned every time you save a page (from top to bottom and left to right), although you can turn off that behaviour using the page properties (see above) in which case you can assign the tab order yourself.

Type

The type of field to display. Even after you have created a field, you can change the field type and the form will be updated automatically. If the selected field type supports options (dropdown list, option list), the 'Options...' button at the end of the properties pane becomes enabled.

Published

Whether or not this field is visible. You can also select to make a field only visible to existing users or only visible to new users.

Name

Each field must be given a name to identify it. The user does not see the name.

Technical Note: The value from this setting is prefixed with 'ctl_' and used as the name attribute on the HTML control when the field is rendered.

Label

This is the text that appears next to the field to prompt the user as to what they should enter. If the value entered here is defined as a constant in a language file, the value from the language file will be picked up and used.

Checkbox Label

This setting is only used if the field type is checkbox. The value is output to the right of the checkbox control when the field is rendered.

Horizontal Options

This setting is primarily for use with option lists. If set to 'yes', the options will be output one after the other horizontally. If set to 'no', a line break will be inserted between each option, thus rendering them vertically.

Merge Columns?

Whether or not to merge the label and field together into a single column (thus allowing the field to take up the entire page width).

Default Value

The initial value to populate the field with. You can execute PHP code and return a value by surrounding the code in double dollar signs: $$. You can even combine a literal value with a value returned by PHP code.

Required

Whether or not the field is mandatory. When this is set to 'yes', an asterisk is automatically added to the start of the label, but you can remove it if you wish.

Help Text

Enter any explanatory notes to help the user fill in the field or to explain what it is for. If a value is entered here, a small 'info' icon will appear next to the field, and the help text will be shown when the user hovers their mouse over it. As with the label setting, the value of this setting can be looked up from a language file.

Show Confirmation?

Whether or not to show a duplicate field immediately below to allow the user to re-type the value to avoid typing mistakes (typically used for email addresses and passwords).

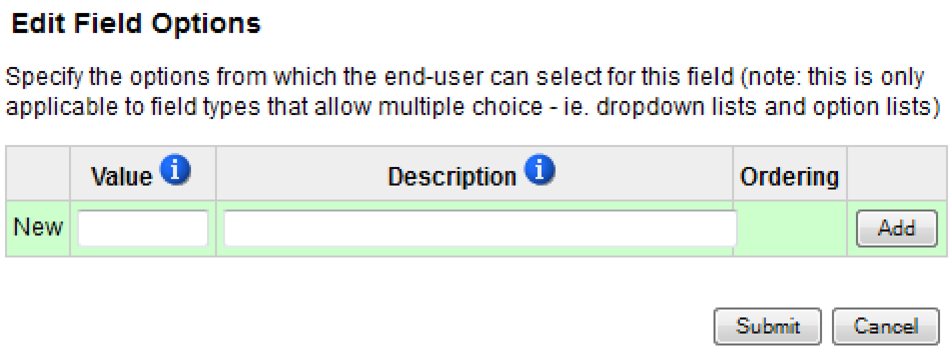
Show on Summary?

Whether or not to show this field on the summary table. You can also select to only show the field on the summary if it holds a value. The summary appears in the ticket notification e-mail, although it is also possible to add a summary table field to your form.

Options...

If the selected field type supports options (dropdown list, option list), the Options... button becomes enabled. Click on this button to define the options that should appear in the control (alternatively, you could look up the values from a database table - see the Advanced tab of the properties pane (below) for more information). When you click on this button, the form field options popup is displayed as shown here:

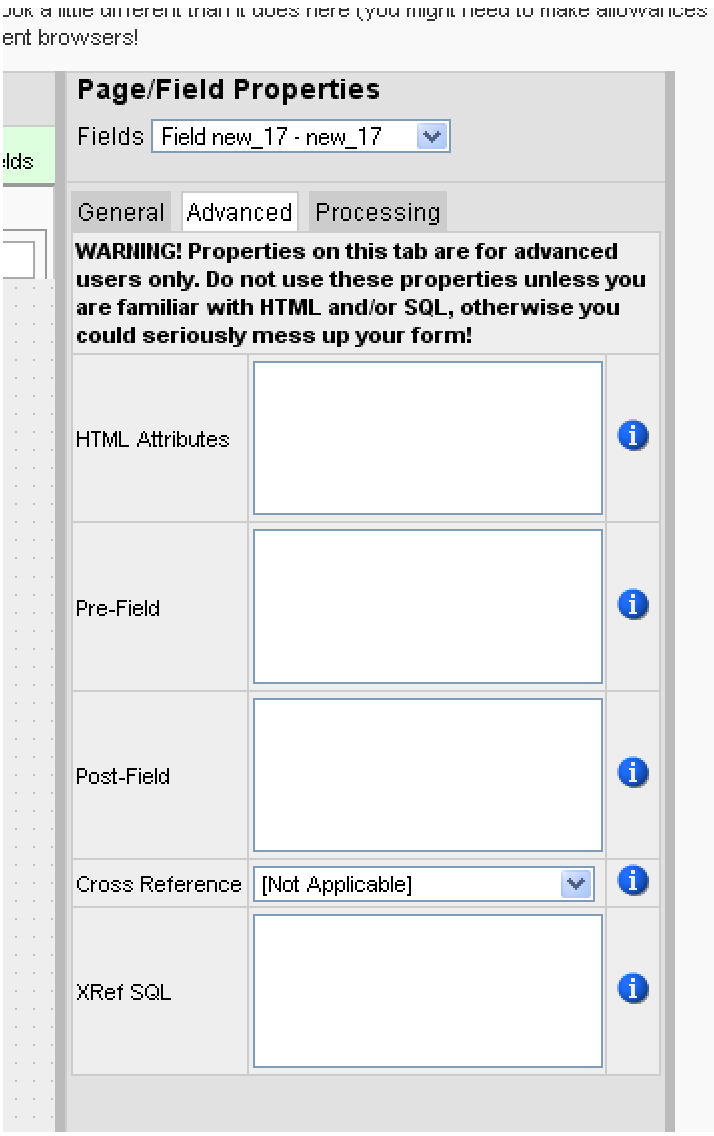
Form Field Options Popup



Enter a value and description for each option you want to display (they can both be the same or you can use a shorter code for the value - only the description appears in the list of options when the field is rendered). The value must be unique for each option. You can leave one option blank to indicate that no value has been selected (ie. if you want to force a selection without providing a default value you can make the first item have a blank value with a description of '--Select--' and make the field mandatory). If 2 options have the same value - even if their descriptions are different - nTicket will not know which option was selected by the user.

Click on Add to create an option, and click on Submit to confirm and close the popup or Cancel to abandon your changes.

Field Properties - Advanced Tab



HTML Attributes

If you know HTML, you can add any HTML attributes you want to apply to the control here. This includes Javascript events. If the field type selected is a dropdown list, you can enter:

multiple="multiple"

...to make it a multi-select list.

Pre-Field

Anything you enter here will be output immediately before the field control. You can use HTML if required but make sure you close all tags etc. to avoid messing up the display of the form.

Post-Field

As for Pre-Field, but the contents are output immediately after the field control.

Cross Reference

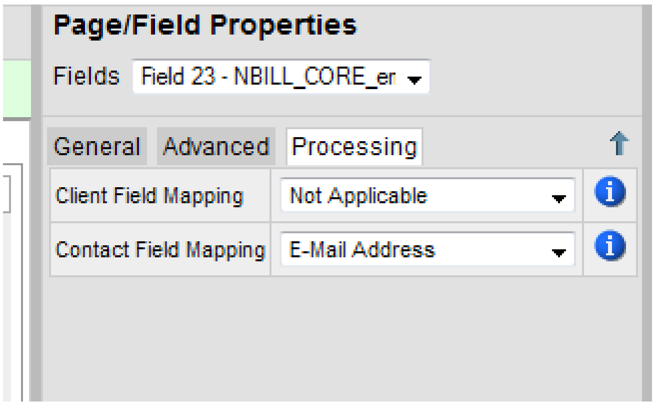
If the field type supports options (eg. dropdown list), you can load the options from a database table rather than defining them all individually. Any table in the database that starts with #__nticket_xref (in the case of nTicket for Joomla!), or #__nbill_xref (in the case of nTicket for nBill) - where #__ is your Joomla or Mambo table prefix - is available to select as the source of the list of options. This makes it easy for example to show a list of countries. By default, several cross reference tables are available, but you can add your own database table directly to the database if you want, and it will be picked up here.

There is a special option: [SQL List]. This can be used to execute an SQL statement to load the list of options rather than just loading them directly from a cross reference table (useful if you need to join multiple tables or specify criteria to extract the list of options). When this value is selected, you can enter the SQL to execute in the XRef SQL setting, below.

XRef SQL

If the field type supports options and the Cross Reference setting has been set to [SQL List] (see above), you can enter the SQL to execute here. The SQL must return a record set containing a column called 'code' and another called 'description', so you might need to use aliases for that, depending on where you are loading the data from. You can also execute PHP code in this setting to enable a dynamic SQL query - just surround the code in double dollar signs $$ and make sure your code returns a value.

Field Properties - Processing Tab



Client Field Mapping

This setting is available in nTicket for nBill only and allows you to select the value on the nBill client record that you want to map this field onto. The value entered by the user on this field will then be used to populate that value on the client record. If you select [Custom Field] for the mapping, a new field will be added to the client record. This allows you to capture extra information beyond the values offered by nBill, and store the information against the client record.

If the logged in user belongs to more than one client record (and has permission to update more than one client profile), their profile will show a series of tabs - one for each client record. Any fields mapped to the client record will appear on each tab so that the data can be stored separately for each client.

Contact Field Mapping

This allows you to select the value on the Joomla! user record (in nTicket for Joomla!), or nBill contact record (in nTicket for nBill) that you want to map this field onto. The value entered by the user on this field will then be used to populate that value on their contact or user record. If you select [Custom Field] for the mapping (nTicket for nBill only), a new field will be added to the contact record. This allows you to capture extra information beyond the values offered by nBill, and store the information against the contact record.