Chapter 8

Collect Data with Forms

How to . . .

- Add forms with the form page wizard

- Create a custom form

- Set up the form results destination

- Add and configure form fields

- Add a search form

- Build forms with the form templates: confirmation, feedback, guest book, and user registration

So far, you've learned quite a bit about building a web site. However, all the web pages you've learned to build and the capabilities you have learned to implement have one major limitation: The readers can look, but there is no mechanism for them to provide you with feedback or input. Forms change all that. If you add forms to your web site, your reader can send you information in a format you specify.

If forms are so powerful, why aren't there more of them on the Internet? The short answer is that forms are hard to implement—or they were, until FrontPage came along. Before FrontPage (and the FrontPage server extensions), creating and getting feedback from forms involved writing Common Gateway Interface (CGI) scripts to process the data on the form. In addition to writing the scripts, you had to install the scripts on the web server—something that many hosting companies would not allow.

With FrontPage (and a web server running FrontPage server extensions), you can quickly build and customize forms, specify where you want the results to go, and you're done. No writing scripts and no installing those scripts on a server. Of course, analyzing the data submitted by the readers may be no easy matter—but that is not an issue you can solve with FrontPage!

What Are Forms?

A *form* is a special section of a web page (see Figure 8-1). A form can be a standalone web page, or it can be added to an existing page with other page elements. Within the form, you can place text and fields to collect data from the reader. Forms support many different kinds of fields—text boxes, drop-down lists, radio buttons, and so on. Later in this chapter, you'll see how you can add and customize fields