

# Extending Forrest with Plugins

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## 1. Overview

Forrest provides the core functionality for generating documentation in various output formats from a range of input formats. However, it does not end there. Forrest can be extended through the addition of plugins. This document serves as an introduction to the Forrest plugin mechanism.

### 1.1. What plugins are available?

You can run the command `forrest available-plugins` to get a list of the known plugins for Forrest.

If you would like to have your own plugin added to this list then contact the [developer mailing list](#).

## 2. How is a Plugin Installed?

If a site requires one or more plugins then the site designer will have named them in the `project.required.plugins` property in the projects `forrest.properties` file. When Forrest builds the site it will automatically discover the plugin and install it. In otherwords, the user need do nothing. For example, `project.required.plugins=OpenOffice.org,simplified-docbook` will cause Forrest to load the plugins called "OpenOffice.org" and "simplified-docbook".

By default a new forrest project includes plugins to generate PDF output from your source documents.

### 2.1. Upgrading from a Version of Forrest Without Plugins

The plugin functionality was introduced in version 0.7 of Forrest. At this time some of the functionality previously in Forrest was extracted into a plugin. However, we have not broken backward compatability with earlier versions. In the absence of a `project.required.plugins` property in the projects `forrest.properties` file all plugins that contain functionality previously part of Forrest itself will be loaded automatically. Unless you intend to use new functionality provided by a plugin you will not need to make any changes top your project.

If you do require additional plugin functionality, be sure to include all required plugins in the `project.required.plugins` property in the projects `forrest.properties`. You can view `forrestcore/src/core/context/default.forrest.properties` to see the names of plugins that provide previously core functionality.

It is also worth noting that there is a small performance improvement if you remove plugins that are not in use. Therefore, if you do not use one or more of the plugins named in the `project.required.plugins` property of `forrestcore/src/core/context/default.forrest.properties` it is recommended that you override this value in your projects `forrest.properties` file.

## 3. Avoiding Plugin Conflicts

Clashes between plugins can occur. For example, the `simplified-docbook` and `full docbook` plugins may try and process the same files. In this instance the one that is mounted first will take precedence. Plugins are mounted in the order they appear in the `project.required.plugins` property, therefore the mounting order and therefore processing precedence is under user control.

## 4. Further Reading

- [Plugin Infrastructure](#)
- [How to build a Plugin](#)