

Sample Question: Conditional GET (please discuss)

We explored two ways that a web cache can use to check if the cached content is up-to-date: (i) If-Modified-Since and (ii) E-tag.

(Reference: Slides 81-82 in the Week 2 slide set). Can you think of a scenario where one method would be preferred to another ?

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Daniel Hocking (/users/z5184128) [13 days ago \(Thu Aug 09 2018 13:49:09 GMT+1000 \(Australian Eastern Standard Time\)\)](#), last modified [13 days ago \(Thu Aug 09 2018 13:49:27 GMT+1000 \(Australian Eastern Standard Time\)\)](#)

Not that there's anything wrong with Michael's answer, but just to present the other side: the if-modified-since header is simpler and has slightly better performance because it is simply a property of the file, whereas the ETag is usually calculated by generating a hash of the whole files contents. Also what about the situation where you are being served an old version of the file that has stuck around in a web cache (this can happen when logged in users get the actual server, but anonymous users only hit the cache), and the version your browser has cached is actually the newer version that you want.

So there are some fairly convoluted situations where using the last modified date could be better.

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Michael Yoo (/users/z5165635) [16 days ago \(Mon Aug 06 2018 13:28:15 GMT+1000 \(Australian Eastern Standard Time\)\)](#)

If-None-Match should be preferred over If-Modified-Since if there's a possibility of the file being replaced by an older version. If-Modified-Since will not return the older file, but If-None-Match will because the ETag would have changed.

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