

# Lookups

Lookup plugins retrieve data from outside sources such as files, databases, key/value stores, APIs, and other services. Like all templating, lookups execute and are evaluated on the Ansible control machine. Ansible makes the data returned by a lookup plugin available using the standard templating system. Before Ansible 2.5, lookups were mostly used indirectly in `with_<lookup>` constructs for looping. Starting with Ansible 2.5, lookups are used more explicitly as part of Jinja2 expressions fed into the `loop` keyword.

## Using lookups in variables

You can populate variables using lookups. Ansible evaluates the value each time it is executed in a task (or template).

```
vars:
  motd_value: "{{ lookup('file', '/etc/motd') }}"
tasks:
  - debug:
      msg: "motd value is {{ motd_value }}"
```

For more details and a list of lookup plugins in `ansible-core`, see [ref:plugins\\_lookup](#). You may also find lookup plugins in collections. You can review a list of lookup plugins installed on your control machine with the command `ansible-doc -l -t lookup`.

**System Message: ERROR/3 (D:\onboarding-resources\sample-onboarding-resources\ansible-devel\docs\docsite\rst\user\_guide\[ansible-devel] [docs] [docsite] [rst] [user\_guide]playbooks\_lookups.rst, line 24); [backlink](#)**

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Unknown directive type "seealso".

```
.. seealso::

   :ref:`working_with_playbooks`
       An introduction to playbooks
   :ref:`playbooks_conditionals`
       Conditional statements in playbooks
   :ref:`playbooks_variables`
       All about variables
   :ref:`playbooks_loops`
       Looping in playbooks
   `User Mailing List <https://groups.google.com/group/ansible-devel>`_
       Have a question? Stop by the google group!
   :ref:`communication_irc`
       How to join Ansible chat channels
```