

A BDD Approach to Testing a URL Shortener in Go

<https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener>

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URL Shortener Architecture

How Short Codes Are Generated

The Algorithm

Our URL shortener uses a **hash-based approach** to generate short codes:

1. **Input:** Original URL (e.g., `https://example.com/very/long/path`)
2. **Hash Function:** SHA-256 cryptographic hash
3. **Encoding:** Base64 URL-safe encoding
4. **Truncation:** Take first 7 characters

```
// Pseudocode
hash = SHA256(normalized_url + ":" + attempt_number)
encoded = Base64URLEncode(hash)
shortCode = encoded[0:7] // e.g., "dm0a-QD"
```

Why SHA-256 and Base64?

SHA-256 Hash Function

- **Deterministic**: Same input → same output
- **Uniform distribution**: Minimizes collisions
- **One-way**: Cannot reverse to get original URL
- **Fast**: Efficient computation

Base64 URL-Safe Encoding

- **Compact**: 64 characters (A-Z, a-z, 0-9, -, _)
- **URL-safe**: No special characters that need escaping
- **Efficient**: 6 bits per character
- **7 characters**: $\sim 64^7 = 4$ trillion possible combinations

Note that in BDD Testing we don't need this information, It is only provided as extra knowledge.

URL Normalization

Why Normalize URLs?

The Problem

Users might enter the same URL in different ways:

- `HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/mozilla/`
- `https://github.com/mozilla`
- `https://GitHub.com/mozilla/`

Without normalization → **different short codes** for the **same resource!**

Normalization Examples

Before and After

Original URL	Normalized URL
HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/mozilla/	https://github.com/mozilla
https://SRB.IAU.ir/library/fa/page/6151/	https://srb.iau.ir/library/fa/page/6151

Result: All variations → **same short code**

Key: Protocol and domain are case-insensitive, path is case-sensitive

Collision Handling

What is a Hash Collision?

The Problem

Two different URLs → **same short code**

```
URL1: "https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener" → Hash → "abc1234"  
URL2: "https://srb.iau.ir/library/fa/page/6151" → Hash → "abc1234" ❌
```

While rare with SHA-256, collisions are still possible! Also keep in mind We can't test this since We don't have urls that produce the same SHA-256 hash!

Behavior-Driven Development (BDD)

What is BDD?

Definition

Behavior-Driven Development is a software development approach that:

- Uses **plain English** to describe system behavior
- Focuses on **user stories** and scenarios
- Enables **collaboration** between developers, testers, and stakeholders
- Serves as **living documentation**

Key Principle

*“Tests should describe **what** the system does, not **how** it does it”*

Gherkin Syntax

The Language of BDD

Gherkin is a plain-text language with keywords:

- Feature: High-level description
- Background: Steps to be executed within each Scenario
- Scenario Outline: Specific test case
- Given: Initial context/state
- When: Action/event
- Then: Expected outcome
- And: Additional conditions

Gherkin Example

Basic Structure

Feature: URL Shortener

As a user

I want to shorten long URLs

So that I can share them easily

Background:

Given the URL shortener service is running

And I am on the home page

Scenario Outline: Shorten valid URLs

When I enter the URL "https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/blob/main/README.md"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a success message

And I should see a shortened URL

And the shortened URL should be valid

And the shortned URL must redirect me to "https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/blob/main/README.md"

Scenario Outline with Examples

Data-Driven Testing

We will update the previous example!

Scenario Outline: Shorten valid URLs

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a success message

And I should see a shortened URL

And the shortened URL should be valid

And the shortned URL must redirect me to "<url>"

Examples:

url	
https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/blob/main/README.md	
https://cucumber.io/docs/bdd/	

Result: Test runs **twice** with different data

Our Test Scenarios

Based on URL Shortener Features

1. Shortened URL Testing

Scenario Outline: Shorten valid URLs

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a success message

And I should see a shortened URL

And the shortened URL should be valid

And the shortened URL must redirect me to "<url>"

Examples:

url	
https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/blob/main/README.md	
https://cucumber.io/docs/bdd/	

Tests: Tests the generation of a functional shortened url and opens it to verify redirection.

2. Normalization Testing

Scenario Outline: URL normalization - trailing slashes

When I enter the URL "<url_with_slash>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a shortened URL

When I enter the URL "<url_without_slash>"

And I submit the form

Then I should receive the same short code as before

Examples:

url_with_slash	url_without_slash	
https://gorm.io/docs/	https://gorm.io/docs	
https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/	https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener	

Scenario Outline: URL normalization - case insensitivity in protocol and domain

When I enter the URL "<url_variant1>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a shortened URL

When I enter the URL "<url_variant2>"

And I submit the form

Then I should receive the same short code as before

Examples:

url_variant1	url_variant2	
HTTPS://GiThUb.CoM/ItsDobiel/URLShortener	https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener	
httpS://docs.PODMAN.io/en/latest	https://docs.podman.io/en/latest	

Tests: Protocol/domain normalization, duplicate detection

3. Collision Handling Testing

Scenario Outline: Duplicate URL returns same short code

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a shortened URL

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should receive the same short code as before

Examples:

url	
https://www.gnu.org/software/bash/manual/bash.html	
https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/about/manifesto	

Tests: Database lookup, collision avoidance

4. Handling Query Parameters, Fragments and Special Characters

Scenario Outline: Shorten URLs with query parameters, fragments and special characters

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a success message

And I should see a shortened URL

Examples:

url	
https://example.com/search?q=Price%20of%20US%20%24&page=2#results	
https://example.com/post?uuid=c3191902-bbef-4434-b043-e2cceedcc227	

Tests: Shortened url generation

5. Validation Testing

Scenario Outline: Reject invalid URLs

When I enter the URL "<invalid_url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see an error message

Examples:

invalid_url	
not-a-valid-url	
ftp://example.com/file	
javascript:alert('xss')	
file:///etc/passwd	
../../../../etc/passwd	
/invalid@chars!	
/short code with spaces	

Tests: Input validation, security

6. Undefined Short Code Testing

Scenario Outline: Accessing non-existent short code

When I navigate to "<path>"

Then I should see an error page

And the error should indicate the short code was not found

Examples:

path	
/AuEcAowLXq	
/XXXXXXX	

Tests: Handling of undefined short codes

5. Short Code Format Validation

Scenario Outline: Generated short code meets requirements

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a shortened URL

And the short code should be alphanumeric with allowed characters

And the short code length should match the configured length

Examples:

url	
https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener	
https://docs.fedoraproject.org/en-US/containers	

Tests: Base64 encoding, configured length (7 chars)

Testing in Go with Godog

What is Godog?

BDD Framework for Go

Godog is the Go implementation of Cucumber:

- Reads `.feature` files written in Gherkin
- Maps steps to Go functions
- Integrates with Go's `*testing.T`
- Provides detailed test reports

```
import "github.com/cucumber/godog"
```

Project Structure

Test Organization

```
test/  
├─ features/  
│   └─ url_shortener.feature    # Gherkin scenarios  
└─ url_shortener_test.go       # Go test code
```

Separation of concerns: - Feature files → **What** to test (business logic) - Go code → **How** to test (implementation)

Step 1: Define Feature File

Example Scenario

Scenario Outline: Shorten valid URLs

When I enter the URL "<url>"

And I submit the form

Then I should see a success message

And I should see a shortened URL

And the shortened URL should be valid

And the shortned URL must redirect me to "<url>"

Examples:

url	
https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener/blob/main/README.md	
https://cucumber.io/docs/bdd/	

Step 2: Create Test Entry Point

Main Test Function

```
func TestFeatures(t *testing.T) {  
    // Configure godog test suite  
    suite := godog.TestSuite{  
        ScenarioInitializer: initializeScenario,  
        Options: &godog.Options{  
            Format: "pretty",  
            Paths: []string{"features"},  
            TestingT: t, // Integration with Go testing  
        },  
    }  
  
    // Run the suite  
    if suite.Run() != 0 {  
        t.Fatal("tests failed")  
    }  
}
```

Step 3: Register Step Definitions

Mapping Gherkin to Go

```
func initializeScenario(ctx *godog.ScenarioContext) {  
    // Register step definitions  
    ctx.Step(`^I enter the URL "([^"]*)"`, stepEnterURL)  
    ctx.Step(`^I submit the form$`, stepSubmitForm)  
    ctx.Step(`^I should see a success message$`, stepSeeSuccessMessage)  
    ctx.Step(`^I should see a shortened URL$`, stepSeeShortenedURL)  
    ctx.Step(`^the shortened URL should be valid$`, stepShortenedURLValid)  
    ctx.Step(`^the shortned URL must redirect me to "([^"]*)"`, stepNavigateToShortenedURL)  
}
```

Note: Regular expressions capture parameters

Step 4: Implement Step Functions

Example: “I enter the URL”

```
func stepEnterURL(url string) error {
    fmt.Printf("    Entering URL: %s\n", url)

    currentURL, _ := testCtx.webDriver.CurrentURL()
    if !strings.HasSuffix(currentURL, "/") || strings.Contains(currentURL, "error") {
        fmt.Println("    Navigating back to home page...")
        testCtx.webDriver.Get(testCtx.baseURL)
    }

    urlInput, err := testCtx.webDriver.FindElement(selenium.ByID, "url")
    if err != nil {
        return fmt.Errorf("URL input not found: %w", err)
    }

    urlInput.Clear()
    err = urlInput.SendKeys(url)

    return err
}
```

Parameter: `url` is captured from Gherkin step

Complete Example: Reject Invalid URLs

Feature File

Scenario Outline: Reject invalid URLs
When I enter the URL "<invalid_url>"
And I submit the form
Then I should see an error message

Examples:

invalid_url	
not-a-valid-url	
ftp://example.com/file	
javascript:alert('xss')	
file:///etc/passwd	
../../../../etc/passwd	
/invalid@chars!	
/short code with spaces	

Step Implementations

The error handling code is redacted for simplicity.

```
func stepEnterURL(url string) error {
    urlInput, err := testCtx.webDriver.FindElement(selenium.ByID, "url")
    urlInput.Clear()
    return err
}

func stepSubmitForm() error {
    button, _ := testCtx.webDriver.FindElement(selenium.ByID, "submit")
    button.Click()
    return nil
}

func stepSeeSuccessMessage() error {
    pageSource, _ := testCtx.webDriver.PageSource()
    if strings.Contains(pageSource, "Success") || strings.Contains(pageSource, "✨") {
        return nil
    }

    elements, _ := testCtx.webDriver.FindElements(selenium.ByID, "result")
    if len(elements) > 0 {
        text, _ := elements[0].Text()
        if strings.Contains(text, "Success") {
            return nil
        }
    }
}
```

Step Implementation (continued)

```
func stepSeeShortenedURL() error {
    links, _ := testCtx.webDriver.FindElements(selenium.ByID, "shortened")
    for _, link := range links {
        href, _ := link.GetAttribute("href")
        if strings.Contains(href, "http://localhost:8080/") && !strings.HasSuffix(href, "/") {
            parts := strings.Split(href, "/")
            testCtx.lastShortCode = strings.TrimSpace(parts[len(parts)-1])
            return nil
        }
    }

    return fmt.Errorf("shortened URL not found")
}
```

Test Execution Flow

What Happens When You Run `go test ./...`

1. **Build**: Application binary is compiled
2. **Start GeckoDriver**: GeckoDriver runs on port 4444
3. **Start Server**: Application runs on localhost:8080
4. **Parse Features**: Godog reads `.feature` files
5. **For each scenario**:
 - Execute Given steps (setup)
 - Execute When steps (actions)
 - Execute Then steps (assertions)
6. **Cleanup**: Stop GeckoDriver, server. remove test database.
7. **Report**: Display pass/fail results

Test Output Example

Console Output

...
...
...

21 scenarios (21 passed)
135 steps (135 passed)

Benefits of This Approach

Why BDD with Godog?

1. Readable Tests

- Non-technical stakeholders can understand
- Feature files serve as documentation

2. Behavior-Focused

- Tests describe user behavior, not implementation
- Tests remain stable even if code changes

3. Comprehensive Coverage

- Hash function testing
- Normalization verification
- Collision handling
- Input validation

Integration Benefits

4. Real Browser Testing

- Uses actual Firefox browser
- Tests real user interactions
- Catches UI/UX issues

5. Automated Everything

- Server starts automatically
- GeckoDriver managed by test code
- Clean setup and teardown

6. CI/CD Ready

- Runs in GitHub Actions
- Generates coverage reports
- Publishable test results

Test Statistics

Test Coverage

7 Scenario Types, 21 Test Cases

Category	Scenarios	Purpose
Valid URLs	2	Hash generation
Normalization	4	URL normalization
Duplicates	2	Collision handling
Special chars	2	Encoding
Invalid URLs	7	Validation
Non-existent	2	Error handling
Format validation	2	Compliance

Total execution time: ~10-30 seconds

Automate Test Execution

Github Actions

```
...

jobs:
  test:
    runs-on: ubuntu-latest
    steps:
      - uses: actions/checkout@v4
      - name: Install Rust and Cargo
        uses: actions-rs/toolchain@v1
        with:
          toolchain: stable
          override: true
      - name: Install GeckoDriver via Cargo
        run: |
          cargo install geckodriver
      - name: Set up Go
        uses: actions/setup-go@v4
        with:
          go-version: "1.25.4"
      - name: Test
        run: |
          cd test
          go test -v
```


Questions?

Project Repository

GitHub: <https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener>

Documentation:

- `README.md` - Project overview
- `presentation/contents.md` - This presentation

Try it yourself:

```
git clone https://github.com/ItsDobiel/URLShortener.git
cd urlshortener
make test ./...
```

The End!

Resources

Course: Software Testing

Technologies Used for Testing:

- Go
- Godog (BDD framework)
- Selenium
- GeckoDriver

References:

- Godog: <https://github.com/cucumber/godog>
- Gherkin: <https://cucumber.io/docs/gherkin>