Servlets | Servlet Tutorial

Servlet technology is used to create a web application (resides at server side and generates a dynamic web page).

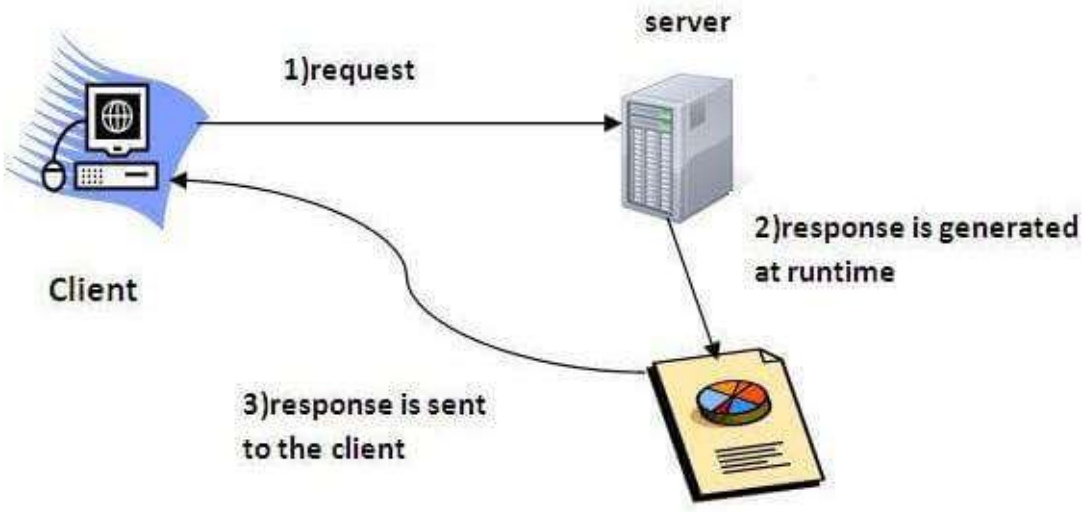
Servlet technology is robust and scalable because of java language. Before Servlet, CGI (Common Gateway Interface) scripting language was common as a server-side programming language. However, there were many disadvantages to this technology. We have discussed these disadvantages below.

There are many interfaces and classes in the Servlet API such as Servlet, GenericServlet, HttpServlet, ServletRequest, ServletResponse, etc.

What is a Servlet?

Servlet can be described in many ways, depending on the context.

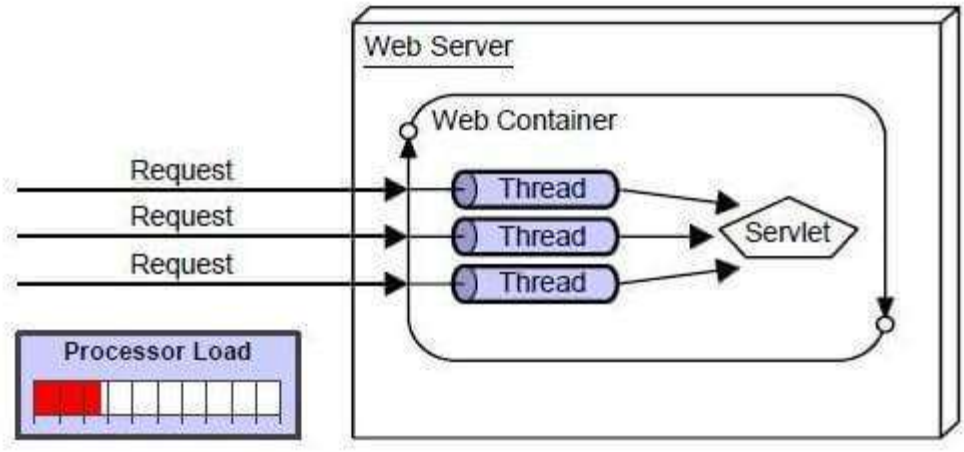
- Servlet is a technology which is used to create a web application.
- Servlet is an API that provides many interfaces and classes including documentation.
- Servlet is an interface that must be implemented for creating any Servlet.
- Servlet is a class that extends the capabilities of the servers and responds to the incoming requests. It can respond to any requests.
- Servlet is a web component that is deployed on the server to create a dynamic web page.



What is a web application?

A web application is an application accessible from the web. A web application is composed of web components like Servlet, JSP, Filter, etc. and other elements such as HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. The web components typically execute in Web Server and respond to the HTTP request.

Advantages of Servlet



There are many advantages of Servlet over CGI. The web container creates threads for handling the multiple requests to the Servlet. Threads have many benefits over the Processes such as they share a common memory area, lightweight, cost of communication between the threads are low. The advantages of Servlet are as follows:

1. **Better performance:** because it creates a thread for each request, not process.
2. **Portability:** because it uses Java language.
3. **Robust:** JVM manages Servlets, so we don't need to worry about the memory leak, garbage collection, etc.
4. **Secure:** because it uses java language.

Web Terminology

Servlet Terminology	Description
Website: static vs dynamic	It is a collection of related web pages that may contain text, images, audio and video.
HTTP	It is the data communication protocol used to establish communication between client and server.
HTTP Requests	It is the request send by the computer to a web server that contains all sorts of potentially interesting information.
Get vs Post	It gives the difference between GET and POST request.
Container	It is used in java for dynamically generating the web pages on the server side.
Server: Web vs Application	It is used to manage the network resources and for running the program or software that provides services.
Content Type	It is HTTP header that provides the description about what are you sending to the browser.

Website

Website is a collection of related web pages that may contain text, images, audio and video. The first page of a website is called home page. Each website has specific internet address (URL) that you need to enter in your browser to access a website.

Website is hosted on one or more servers and can be accessed by visiting its homepage using a computer network. A website is managed by its owner that can be an individual, company or an organization.

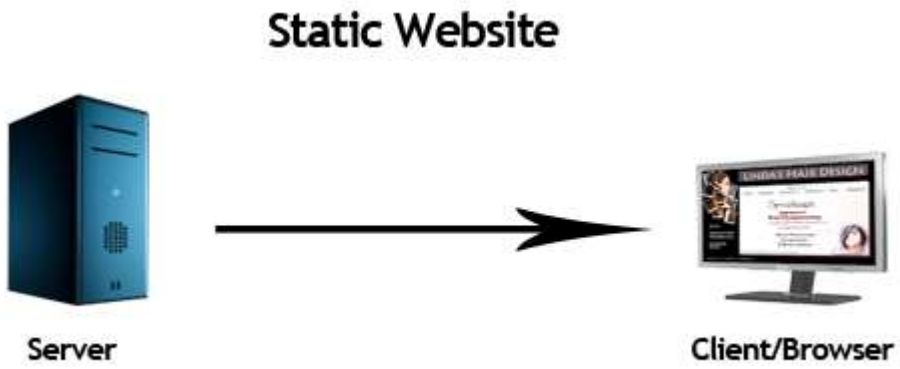
A website can be of two types:

- Static Website
- Dynamic Website

Static website

Static website is the basic type of website that is easy to create. You don't need the knowledge of web programming and database design to create a static website. Its web pages are coded in HTML.

The codes are fixed for each page so the information contained in the page does not change and it looks like a printed page.



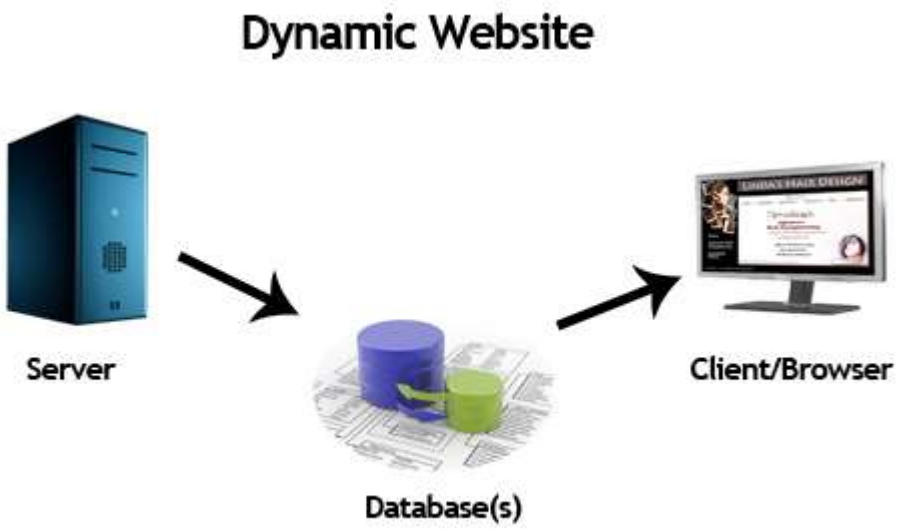
Dynamic website

Dynamic website is a collection of dynamic web pages whose content changes dynamically. It accesses content from a database or Content Management System (CMS). Therefore, when you alter or update the content of the database, the content of the website is also altered or updated.

Dynamic website uses client-side scripting or server-side scripting, or both to generate dynamic content.

Client side scripting generates content at the client computer on the basis of user input. The web browser downloads the web page from the server and processes the code within the page to render information to the user.

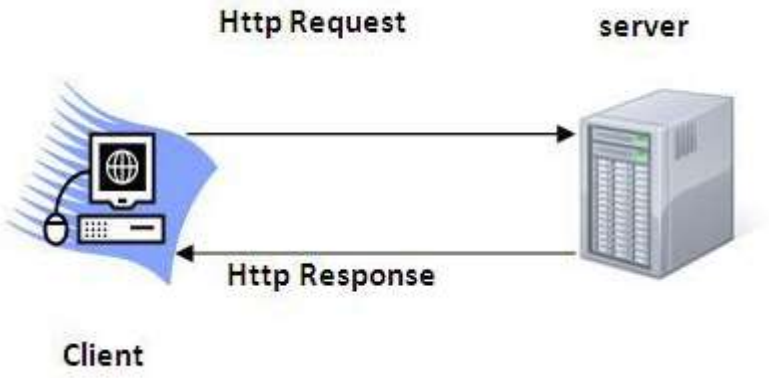
In server side scripting, the software runs on the server and processing is completed in the server then plain pages are sent to the user.



HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol)

The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is application-level protocol for collaborative, distributed, hypermedia information systems. It is the data communication protocol used to establish communication between client and server.

HTTP is TCP/IP based communication protocol, which is used to deliver the data like image files, query results, HTML files etc on the World Wide Web (WWW) with the default port is TCP 80. It provides the standardized way for computers to communicate with each other.



The Basic Characteristics of HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol):

- It is the protocol that allows web servers and browsers to exchange data over the web.
- It is a request response protocol.
- It uses the reliable TCP connections by default on TCP port 80.
- It is stateless means each request is considered as the new request. In other words, server doesn't recognize the user by default.

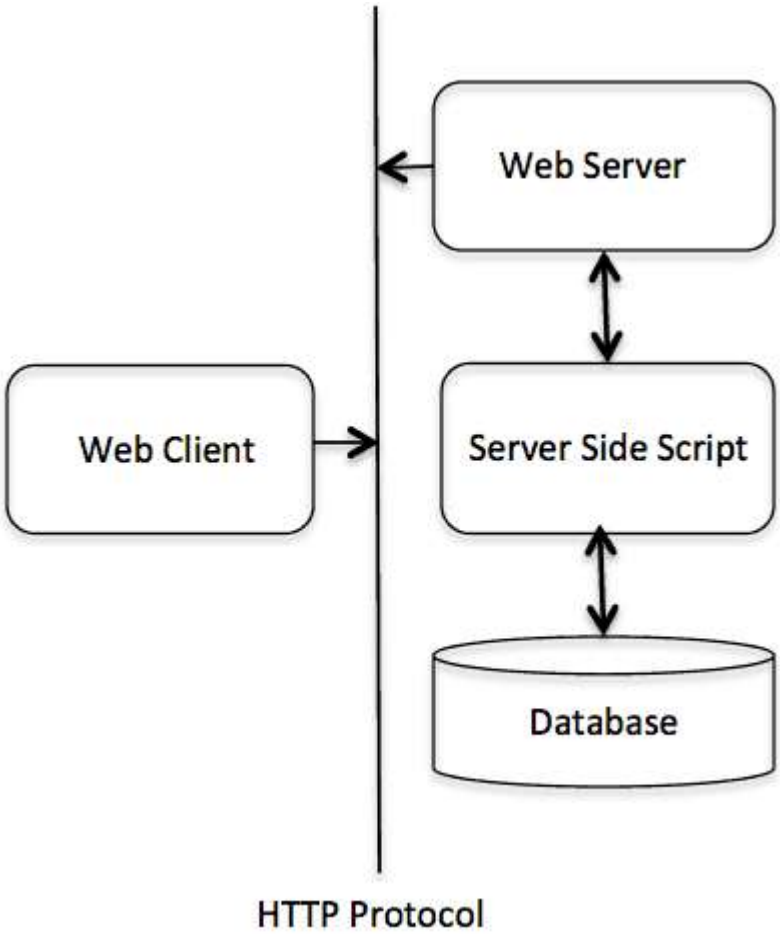
The Basic Features of HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol):

There are three fundamental features that make the HTTP a simple and powerful protocol used for communication:

- **HTTP is media independent:** It specifies that any type of media content can be sent by HTTP as long as both the server and the client can handle the data content.
- **HTTP is connectionless:** It is a connectionless approach in which HTTP client i.e., a browser initiates the HTTP request and after the request is sent the client disconnects from server and waits for the response.
- **HTTP is stateless:** The client and server are aware of each other during a current request only. Afterwards, both of them forget each other. Due to the stateless nature of protocol, neither the client nor the server can retain the information about different request across the web pages.

The Basic Architecture of HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol):

The below diagram represents the basic architecture of web application and depicts where HTTP stands:



HTTP is request/response protocol which is based on client/server based architecture. In this protocol, web browser, search engines, etc. behave as HTTP clients and the Web server like Servlet behaves as a server

HTTP Requests

The request sent by the computer to a web server, contains all sorts of potentially interesting information; it is known as HTTP requests.

The HTTP client sends the request to the server in the form of request message which includes following information:

- The Request-line
- The analysis of source IP address, proxy and port
- The analysis of destination IP address, protocol, port and host
- The Requested URI (Uniform Resource Identifier)
- The Request method and Content
- The User-Agent header
- The Connection control header
- The Cache control header

The HTTP request method indicates the method to be performed on the resource identified by the **Requested URI (Uniform Resource Identifier)**. This method is case-sensitive and should be used in uppercase.

The HTTP request methods are:

HTTP Request	Description
GET	Asks to get the resource at the requested URL.
POST	Asks the server to accept the body info attached. It is like GET request with extra info sent with the request.
HEAD	Asks for only the header part of whatever a GET would return. Just like GET but with no body.
TRACE	Asks for the loopback of the request message, for testing or troubleshooting.
PUT	Says to put the enclosed info (the body) at the requested URL.

DELETE	Says to delete the resource at the requested URL.
OPTIONS	Asks for a list of the HTTP methods to which the thing at the request URL can respond

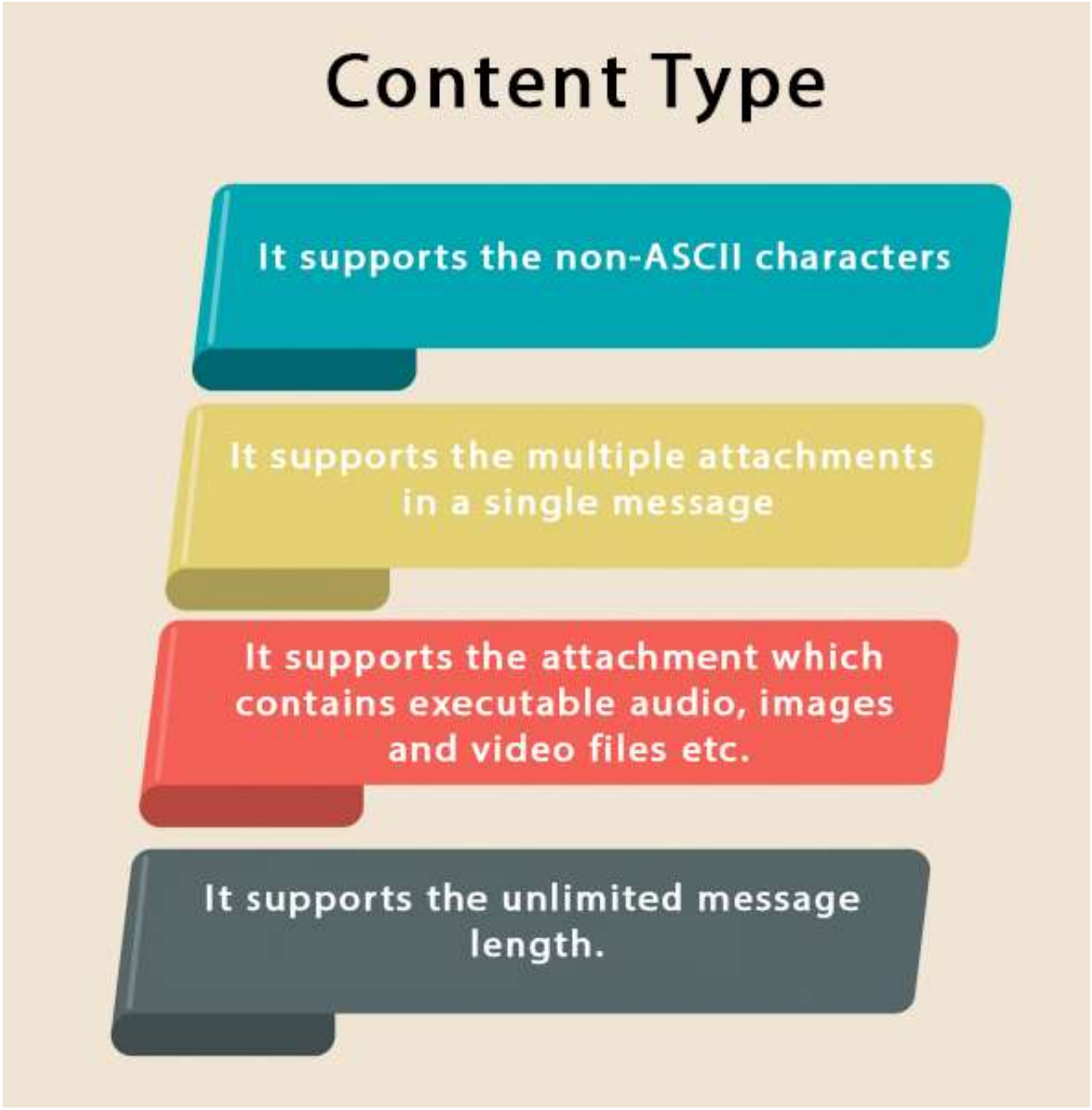
Content Type

Content Type is also known as **MIME (Multipurpose internet Mail Extension)**Type. It is a **HTTP header** that provides the description about what are you sending to the browser.

MIME is an internet standard that is used for extending the limited capabilities of email by allowing the insertion of sounds, images and text in a message.

The features provided by MIME to the email services are as given below:

- It supports the non-ASCII characters
- It supports the multiple attachments in a single message
- It supports the attachment which contains executable audio, images and video files etc.
- It supports the unlimited message length.



List of Content Types

There are many content types. The commonly used content types are given below:

- text/html
- text/plain
- application/msword
- application/vnd.ms-excel
- application/jar
- application/pdf
- application/octet-stream
- application/x-zip
- images/jpeg

- images/png
- images/gif
- audio/mp3
- video/mp4
- video/quicktime etc.

Servlet API

The javax.servlet and javax.servlet.http packages represent interfaces and classes for servlet api.

The **javax.servlet** package contains many interfaces and classes that are used by the servlet or web container. These are not specific to any protocol.

The **javax.servlet.http** package contains interfaces and classes that are responsible for http requests only.

Let's see what are the interfaces of javax.servlet package.

Interfaces in javax.servlet package

There are many interfaces in javax.servlet package. They are as follows:

1. Servlet
2. ServletRequest

3. ServletResponse
4. RequestDispatcher
5. ServletConfig
6. ServletContext
7. SingleThreadModel
8. Filter
9. FilterConfig
10. FilterChain
11. ServletRequestListener
12. ServletRequestAttributeListener
13. ServletContextListener
14. ServletContextAttributeListener

Classes in javax.servlet package

There are many classes in javax.servlet package. They are as follows:

1. GenericServlet
2. ServletInputStream
3. ServletOutputStream
4. ServletRequestWrapper
5. ServletResponseWrapper
6. ServletRequestEvent
7. ServletContextEvent
8. ServletRequestAttributeEvent
9. ServletContextAttributeEvent
10. ServletException
11. UnavailableException

Interfaces in javax.servlet.http package

There are many interfaces in javax.servlet.http package. They are as follows:

1. HttpServletRequest
2. HttpServletResponse
3. HttpSession
4. HttpSessionListener
5. HttpSessionAttributeListener

6. HttpSessionBindingListener
7. HttpSessionActivationListener
8. HttpSessionContext (deprecated now)

Classes in javax.servlet.http package

There are many classes in javax.servlet.http package. They are as follows:

1. HttpServlet
2. Cookie
3. HttpServletRequestWrapper
4. HttpServletResponseWrapper
5. HttpSessionEvent
6. HttpSessionBindingEvent
7. HttpUtils (deprecated now)

GenericServlet class

GenericServlet class implements **Servlet**, **ServletConfig** and **Serializable** interfaces. It provides the implementation of all the methods of these interfaces except the service method.

GenericServlet class can handle any type of request so it is protocol-independent.

You may create a generic servlet by inheriting the GenericServlet class and providing the implementation of the service method.

Methods of GenericServlet class

There are many methods in GenericServlet class. They are as follows:

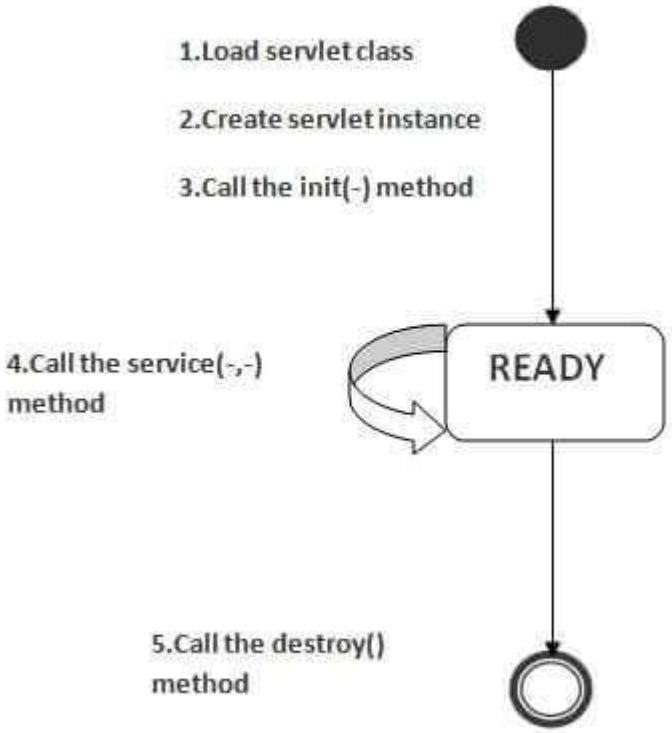
1. **public void init(ServletConfig config)** is used to initialize the servlet.
2. **public abstract void service(ServletRequest request, ServletResponse response)** provides service for the incoming request. It is invoked at each time when user requests for a servlet.

3. **public void destroy()** is invoked only once throughout the life cycle and indicates that servlet is being destroyed.
4. **public ServletConfig getServletConfig()** returns the object of ServletConfig.
5. **public String getServletInfo()** returns information about servlet such as writer, copyright, version etc.
6. **public void init()** it is a convenient method for the servlet programmers, now there is no need to call super.init(config)
7. **public ServletContext getServletContext()** returns the object of ServletContext.
8. **public String getInitParameter(String name)** returns the parameter value for the given parameter name.
9. **public Enumeration getInitParameterNames()** returns all the parameters defined in the web.xml file.
10. **public String getServletName()** returns the name of the servlet object.
11. **public void log(String msg)** writes the given message in the servlet log file.
12. **public void log(String msg,Throwable t)** writes the explanatory message in the servlet log file and a stack trace.

Life Cycle of a Servlet (Servlet Life Cycle)

The web container maintains the life cycle of a servlet instance. Let's see the life cycle of the servlet:

1. Servlet class is loaded.
2. Servlet instance is created.
3. init method is invoked.
4. service method is invoked.
5. destroy method is invoked.



As displayed in the above diagram, there are three states of a servlet: new, ready and end. The servlet is in new state if servlet instance is created. After invoking the init() method, Servlet comes in the ready state. In the ready state, servlet performs all the tasks. When the web container invokes the destroy() method, it shifts to the end state.

1) Servlet class is loaded

The classloader is responsible to load the servlet class. The servlet class is loaded when the first request for the servlet is received by the web container.

2) Servlet instance is created

The web container creates the instance of a servlet after loading the servlet class. The servlet instance is created only once in the servlet life cycle.

3) init method is invoked

The web container calls the init method only once after creating the servlet instance. The init method is u
method of the javax.servlet.Servlet interface. Syntax of the init method is given below:

1. **public void** init(ServletConfig config) **throws** ServletException

4) service method is invoked

The web container calls the service method each time when request for the servlet is received. If servlet is not initialized, it follows the first three steps as described above then calls the service method. If servlet is initialized, it calls the service method. Notice that servlet is initialized only once. The syntax of the service method of the Servlet interface is given below:

```
1. public void service(ServletRequest request, ServletResponse response)
2.    throws ServletException, IOException
```

5) destroy method is invoked

The web container calls the destroy method before removing the servlet instance from the service. It gives the servlet an opportunity to clean up any resource for example memory, thread etc. The syntax of the destroy method of the Servlet interface is given below:

```
1. public void destroy()
```

ServletRequest Interface

An object of ServletRequest is used to provide the client request information to a servlet such as content type, content length, parameter names and values, header informations, attributes etc.

Methods of ServletRequest interface

There are many methods defined in the ServletRequest interface. Some of them are as follows:

Method	Description
public String getParameter(String name)	is used to obtain the value of a parameter by name.
public String[] getParameterValues(String name)	returns an array of String containing all values of given parameter name. It is mainly used to obtain values of a Multi select list box.
java.util.Enumeration getParameterNames()	returns an enumeration of all of the request parameter names.
public int getContentLength()	Returns the size of the request entity data, or -1 if not known.
public String getCharacterEncoding()	Returns the character set encoding for the input of this request.
public String getContentType()	Returns the Internet Media Type of the request entity data, or null if not known.
public ServletInputStream getInputStream() throws IOException	Returns an input stream for reading binary data in the request body.
public abstract String getServerName()	Returns the host name of the server that received the request.

public int getServerPort()	Returns the port number on which this request was received.

RequestDispatcher in Servlet

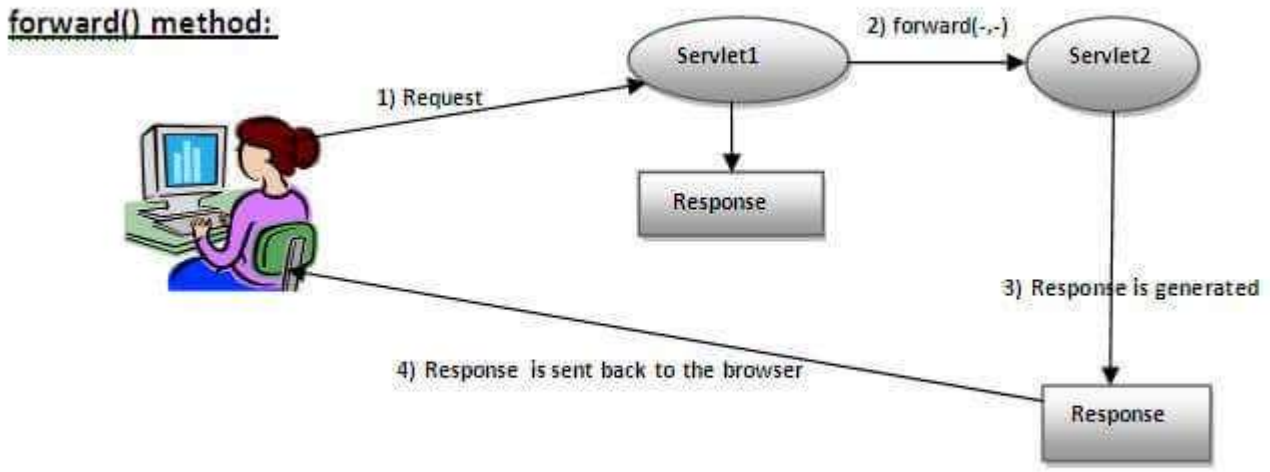
The RequestDispatcher interface provides the facility of dispatching the request to another resource it may be html, servlet or jsp. This interface can also be used to include the content of another resource also. It is one of the way of servlet collaboration.

There are two methods defined in the RequestDispatcher interface.

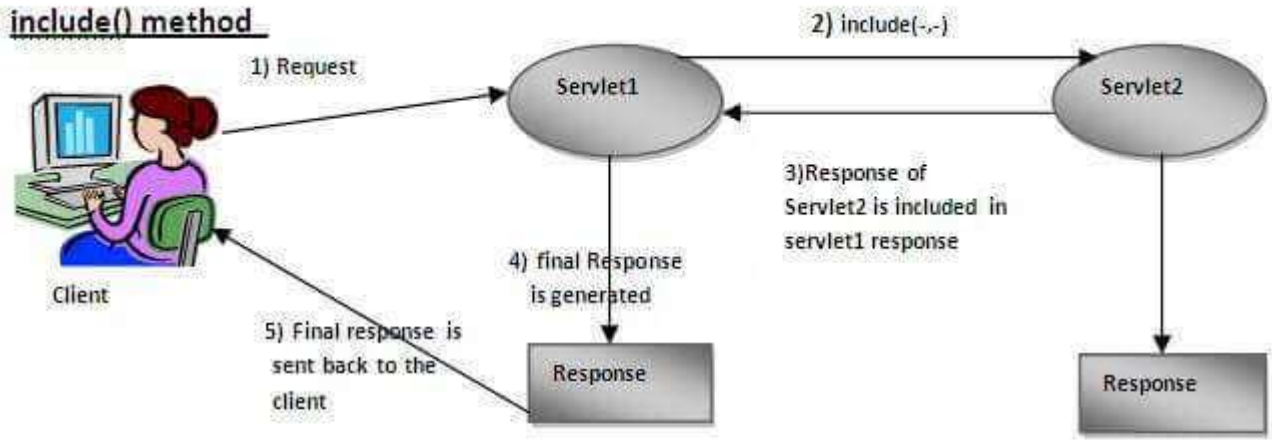
Methods of RequestDispatcher interface

The RequestDispatcher interface provides two methods. They are:

1. public void forward(ServletRequest request,ServletResponse response)throws ServletException,java.io.IOException:Forwards a request from a servlet to another resource (servlet, JSP file, or HTML file) on the server.
2. public void include(ServletRequest request,ServletResponse response)throws ServletException,java.io.IOException:Includes the content of a resource (servlet, JSP page, or HTML file) in the response.



As you see in the above figure, response of second servlet is sent to the client. Response of the first servlet is not displayed to the user.



As you can see in the above figure, response of second servlet is included in the response of the first servlet that is b

How to get the object of RequestDispatcher

The getRequestDispatcher() method of ServletRequest interface returns the object of RequestDispatcher. Syntax:

Syntax of getRequestDispatcher method

```
1. public RequestDispatcher getRequestDispatcher(String resource);
```

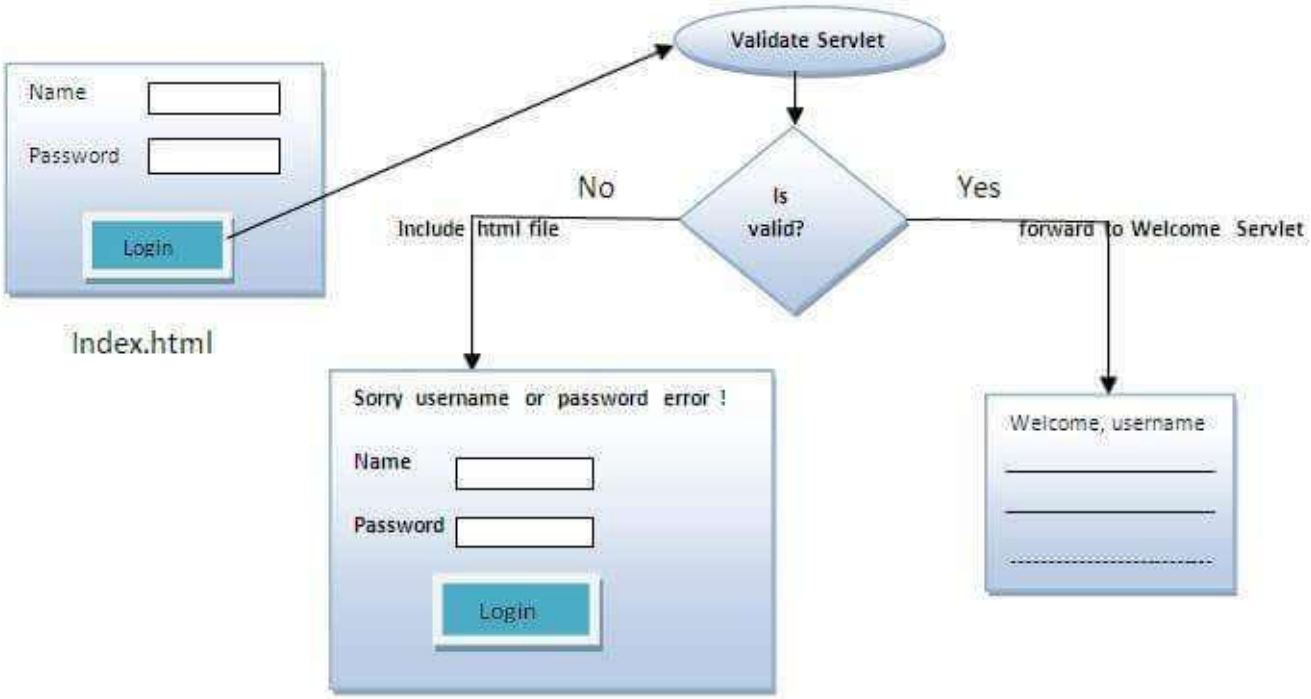
Example of using getRequestDispatcher method

```
1. RequestDispatcher rd=request.getRequestDispatcher("servlet2");
2. //servlet2 is the url-pattern of the second servlet
3.
4. rd.forward(request, response);//method may be include or forward
```

Example of RequestDispatcher interface

In this example, we are validating the password entered by the user. If password is servlet, it will forward the request to the WelcomeServlet, otherwise will show an error message: sorry username or password error!. In this program, we are cheking for hardcoded information. But you can check it to the database also that we will see in the development chapter. In this example, we have created following files:

- index.html file: for getting input from the user.
- Login.java file: a servlet class for processing the response. If password is servet, it will forward the request to the welcome servlet.
- WelcomeServlet.java file: a servlet class for displaying the welcome message.
- web.xml file: a deployment descriptor file that contains the information about the servlet.


Validate Servlet
Name
Password
Login
Index.html
No
Is
valid?
Yes
Include html file
forward to Welcome Servlet
Sorry username or password error !
Name
Password
Login
Welcome, username

SendRedirect in servlet

The **sendRedirect()** method of **HttpServletResponse** interface can be used to redirect response to another resource, it may be servlet, jsp or html file.

It accepts relative as well as absolute URL.

It works at client side because it uses the url bar of the browser to make another request. So, it can work inside and outside the server.

Difference between forward() and sendRedirect() method

There are many differences between the forward() method of RequestDispatcher and sendRedirect() method of HttpServletResponse interface. They are given below:

forward() method	sendRedirect() method
The forward() method works at server side.	The sendRedirect() method wo
It sends the same request and response objects to another servlet.	It always sends a new request.
It can work within the server only.	It can be used within and outsi
Example: request.getRequestDispacher("servlet2").forward(request,response);	Example: response.sendRedire

Syntax of sendRedirect() method

```
1. public void sendRedirect(String URL)throws IOException;
```