

## 7.1 Setting Response Headers from Servlets

The most general way to specify headers is to use the `setHeader` method of `HttpServletResponse`. This method takes two strings: the header name and the header value. As with setting status codes, you must specify headers *before* returning the actual document.

- `setHeader(String headerName, String headerValue)`

This method sets the response header with the designated name to the given value.

In addition to the general-purpose `setHeader` method, `HttpServletResponse` also has two specialized methods to set headers that contain dates and integers:

- `setDateHeader(String header, long milliseconds)`

This method saves you the trouble of translating a Java date in milliseconds since 1970 (as returned by `System.currentTimeMillis`, `Date.getTime`, or `Calendar.getTimeInMillis`) into a GMT time string.

- `setIntHeader(String header, int headerValue)`

This method spares you the minor inconvenience of converting an `int` to a `String` before inserting it into a header.

HTTP allows multiple occurrences of the same header name, and you sometimes want to add a new header rather than replace any existing header with the same name. For example, it is quite common to have multiple `Accept` and `Set-Cookie` headers that specify different supported MIME types and different cookies, respectively. The methods `setHeader`, `setDateHeader`, and `setIntHeader` *replace* any existing headers of the same name, whereas `addHeader`, `addDateHeader`, and `addIntHeader` *add* a header regardless of whether a header of that name already exists. If it matters to you whether a specific header has already been set, use `containsHeader` to check.

Finally, `HttpServletResponse` also supplies a number of convenience methods for specifying common headers. These methods are summarized as follows.

- `setContentType(String mimeType)`

This method sets the `Content-Type` header and is used by the majority of servlets.

- `setContentLength(int length)`

This method sets the `Content-Length` header, which is useful if the browser supports persistent (keep-alive) HTTP connections.

- `addCookie(Cookie c)`

This method inserts a cookie into the `Set-Cookie` header. There is no corresponding `setCookie` method, since it is normal to have multiple `Set-Cookie` lines. See [Chapter 8](#) (Handling Cookies) for a discussion of cookies.

- `sendRedirect(String address)`

As discussed in the previous chapter, the `sendRedirect` method sets the `Location` header as well as setting the status code to 302. See [Sections 6.3](#) (A Servlet That Redirects Users to Browser-Specific Pages) and [6.4](#) (A Front End to Various Search Engines) for examples.

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