**Web Server:** The web server is a program running on the server that waits for incoming requests and responds to those requests. A web server is at the heart of any interaction on the Internet. Web servers perform operations in the background and are always waiting to fulfill any valid incoming request. Apache Web server and Microsoft IIS are the leading web servers.

**Servlet**: A servlet is a server side java program that is platform independent. Servlets , written in java, dynamically extend the functionality of any java enabled web server. Web servers generally cannot talk to databases. Hence a web server alone cannot dynamically create web page content using data held in a database table. Even though servlets are written in java their clients may not necessarily be written in java.

**Why servlets?**

1. Are loaded into memory once and run from memory thereafter.
2. Are spawned as a thread not as a process.
3. Are a powerful object oriented abstraction of HTTP.
4. Are portable across multiple web services and platforms.
5. Are simple to design and implement.
6. Run within the secure and reliable scope of JVM.
7. Are supported by several web servers.
8. Are robust, secure CGI replacement.

**Servlets Vs. CGI**

1. Java Servlets are more efficient, easier to use, more powerful, more portable and cheaper than traditional CGI.
2. With CGI, a process is started for each HTTP request. The initialization process of CGI program takes a longer time than its execution time.

With servlets, the JVM stays up in the memory between the requests and is handled by a light weight java thread not a heavy weight process.

1. If there are N simultaneous requests to the same CGI program then the code for the CGI program is loaded into memory N times.

With servlets however there are N threads but only a single copy of the Servlet class.

1. Servlets can talk directly to the web server whereas CGI program cannot.
2. Servlets are supported directly or via plugins on almost every major Web server.