Servlets

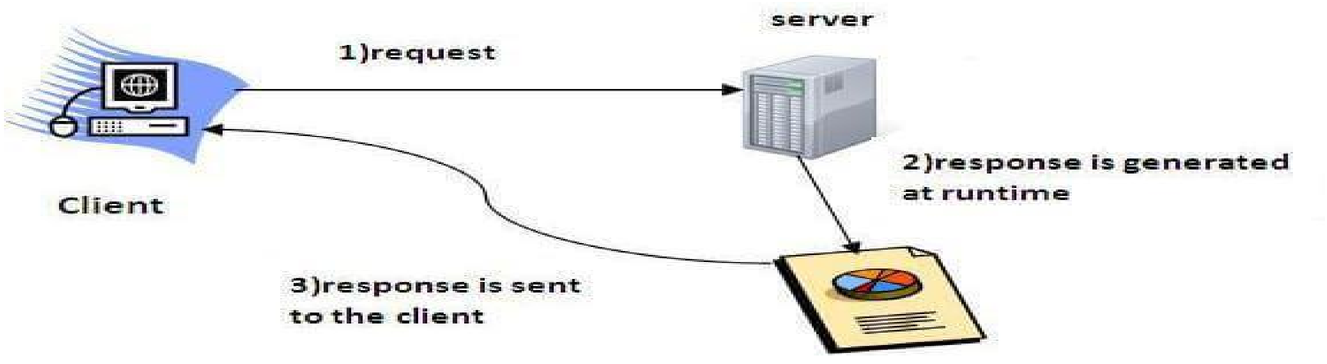
Servlet technology is used to create a web application (resides at server side and generates a dynamic web page). **Servlet** technology is robust and scalable because of java language. Before Servlet, CGI (Common Gateway Interface) scripting language was common as a server-side programming language. 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.

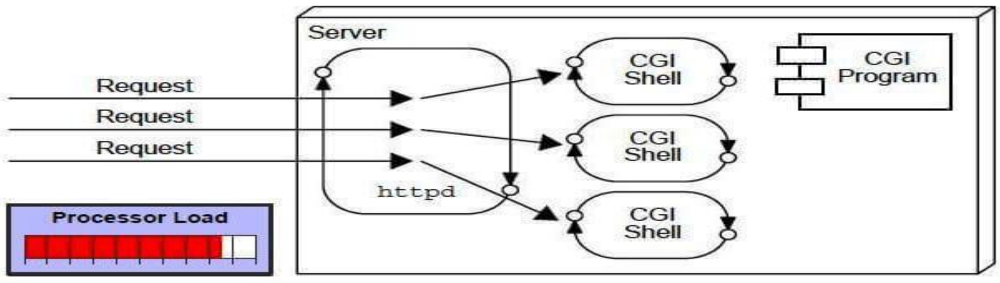
CGI (Common Gateway Interface)

CGI technology enables the web server to call an external program and pass HTTP request information to the external program to process the request. For each request, it starts a new process.

Disadvantages of CGI

There are many problems in CGI technology:

1. If the number of clients increases, it takes more time for sending the response.
2. For each request, it starts a process, and the web server is limited to start processes.
3. It uses platform dependent language e.g. C, C++, perl



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.

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.

Component	Type	Package
Servlet	Interface	javax.servlet.*
ServletRequest	Interface	javax.servlet.*
ServletResponse	Interface	javax.servlet.*
GenericServlet	Class	javax.servlet.*
HttpServlet	Class	javax.servlet.http.*
HttpServletRequest	Interface	javax.servlet.http.*
HttpServletResponse	Interface	javax.servlet.http.*
Filter	Interface	javax.servlet.*
ServletConfig	Interface	javax.servlet.*

Web Terminology

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.**

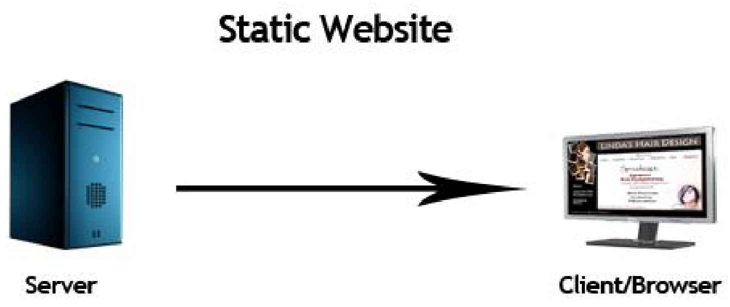
A website can be of two types:

- 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.

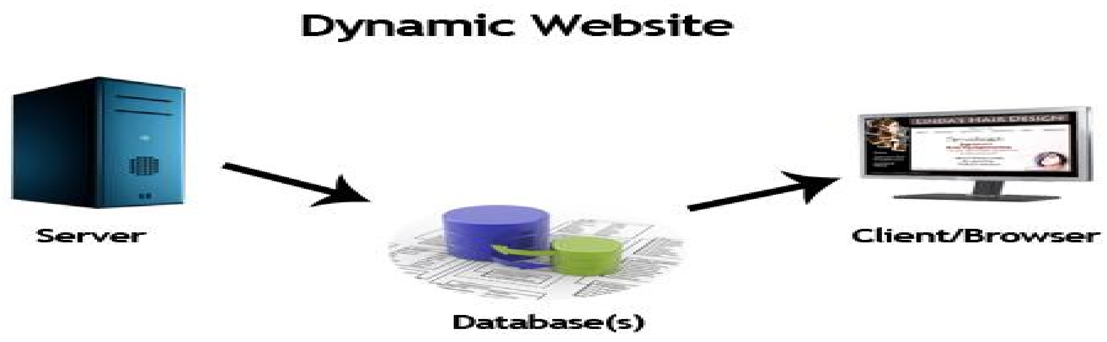
The codes are fixed for each page so the information contained in the page does not change and it looks like a printed page.



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.

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 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 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

Get vs. Post

There are many differences between the Get and Post request. Let's see these differences:

GET	**POST**
1) In case of Get request, only **limited amount of data** can be sent because data is sent in header.	In case of post request, **large amount of data** can be sent because data is sent in body.
2) Get request is **not secured** because data is exposed in URL bar.	Post request is **secured** because data is not exposed in URL bar.
3) Get request **can be bookmarked.**	Post request **cannot be bookmarked.**
4) Get request is **idempotent** . It means second request will be ignored until response of first request is delivered	Post request is **non-idempotent.**

5) Get request is **more efficient** and used more than Post.	Post request is **less efficient** and used less than get.

GET and POST

Two common methods for the request-response between a server and client are:

- **GET**- It requests the data from a specified resource
- **POST**- It submits the processed data to a specified resource

Server: Web vs. Application

Server is a device or a computer program that accepts and responds to the request made by other program, known as client. It is used to manage the network resources and for running the program or software that provides services.

There are two types of servers:

1. Web Server
2. Application Server

Web Server

Web server contains only web or servlet container. It can be used for servlet, jsp, struts, jsf etc. It can't be used for EJB.

It is a computer where the web content can be stored. In general web server can be used to host the web sites but there also used some other web servers also such as FTP, email, storage, gaming etc.

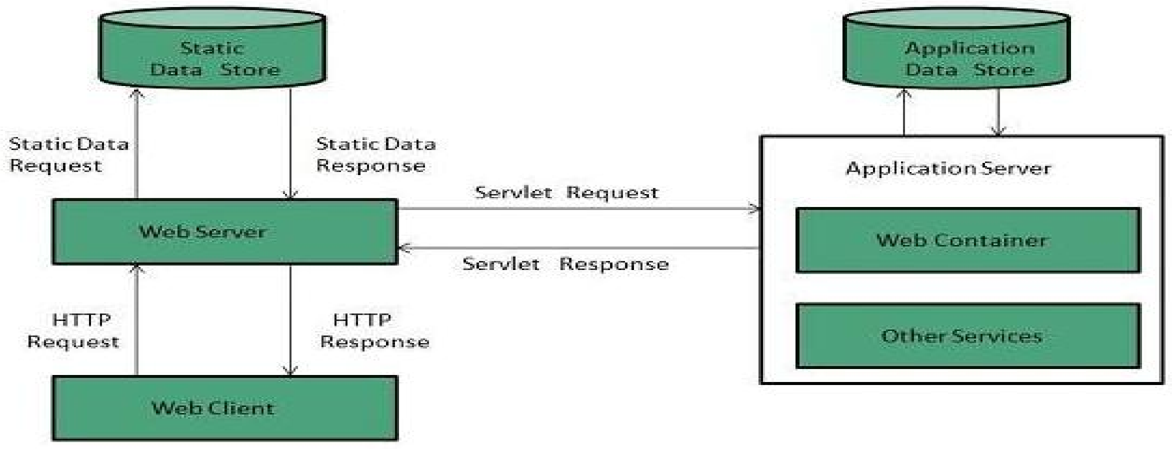
Examples of Web Servers are: **Apache Tomcat** and **Resin**.

Web Server Working

It can respond to the client request in either of the following two possible ways:

- Generating response by using the script and communicating with database.
- Sending file to the client associated with the requested URL.

The block diagram representation of Web Server is shown below:



Important points

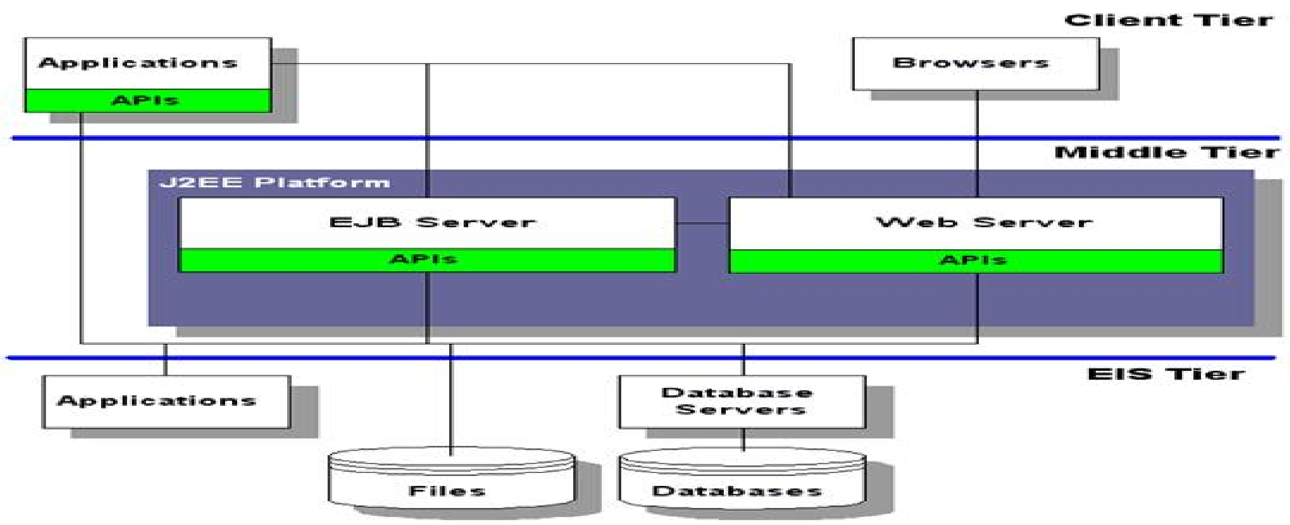
- *If the requested web page at the client side is not found, then web server will sends the HTTP response: Error 404 Not found.*
- *When the web server searching the requested page if requested page is found then it will send to the client with an HTTP response.*
- *If the client requests some other resources then web server will contact to application server and data is store for constructing the HTTP response.*

Application Server

Application server contains Web and EJB containers. It can be used for servlet, jsp, struts, jsf, ejb etc. It is a component based product that lies in the middle-tier of a server centric architecture.

It provides the middleware services for state maintenance and security, along with persistence and data access. It is a type of server designed to install, operate and host associated services and applications for the IT services, end users and organizations.

The block diagram representation of Application Server is shown below:



The Example of Application Servers are:

1. **JBoss:** Open-source server from JBoss community.
2. **Glassfish:** Provided by Sun Microsystem. Now acquired by Oracle.
3. **Weblogic:** Provided by Oracle. It more secured.
4. **Websphere:** Provided by IBM.

Servlet Container

It provides the runtime environment for JavaEE (j2ee) applications. The client/user can request only a static WebPages from the server. If the user wants to read the web pages as per input then the servlet container is used in java.

Servlet Interface

Servlet interface provides commonbehaviorto all the servlets.Servlet interface defines methods that all servlets must implement.

Servlet interface needs to be implemented for creating any servlet (either directly or indirectly). It provides 3 life cycle methods that are used to initialize the servlet, to service the requests, and to destroy the servlet and 2 non-life cycle methods.

Methods of Servlet interface

There are 5 methods in Servlet interface. The init, service and destroy are the life cycle methods of servlet. These are invoked by the web container.

Method	Description
public void init(ServletConfig config)	initializes the servlet. It is the life cycle method of servlet and invoked by the web container only once.
public void service(ServletRequest request,ServletResponse response)	provides response for the incoming request. It is invoked at each request by the web container.
public void destroy()	is invoked only once and indicates that servlet is being destroyed.
public ServletConfig getServletConfig()	returns the object of ServletConfig.
public String getServletInfo()	returns information about servlet such as writer, copyright, version etc.

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 track.

HttpServlet class

The HttpServlet class extends the GenericServlet class and implements Serializable interface. It provides http specific methods such as doGet, doPost, doHead, doTrace etc.

Methods of HttpServlet class

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

1. **public void service(ServletRequest req,ServletResponse res)** dispatches the request to the protected service method by converting the request and response object into http type.

2. **protected void service(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *receives the request from the service method, and dispatches the request to the doXXX() method depending on the incoming http request type.*
3. **protected void doGet(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the GET request. It is invoked by the web container.*
4. **protected void doPost(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the POST request. It is invoked by the web container.*
5. **protected void doHead(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the HEAD request. It is invoked by the web container.*
6. **protected void doOptions(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the OPTIONS request. It is invoked by the web container.*
7. **protected void doPut(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the PUT request. It is invoked by the web container.*
8. **protected void doTrace(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the TRACE request. It is invoked by the web container.*
9. **protected void doDelete(HttpServletRequest req, HttpServletResponse res)** *handles the DELETE request. It is invoked by the web container.*
10. **protected long getLastModified(HttpServletRequest req)** *returns the time when HttpServletRequest was last modified since midnight January 1, 1970 GMT.*

Life Cycle of a Servlet

The entire life cycle of a Servlet is managed by the **Servlet container** which uses the **javax.servlet.Servlet** interface to understand the Servlet object and manage it. So, before creating a Servlet object, let's first understand the life cycle of the Servlet object which is actually understanding how the Servlet container manages the Servlet object.

Stages of the Servlet Life Cycle: The Servlet life cycle mainly goes through four stages,

- Loading a Servlet.
- Initializing the Servlet.
- Request handling.
- Destroying the Servlet.

Let's look at each of these stages in details:

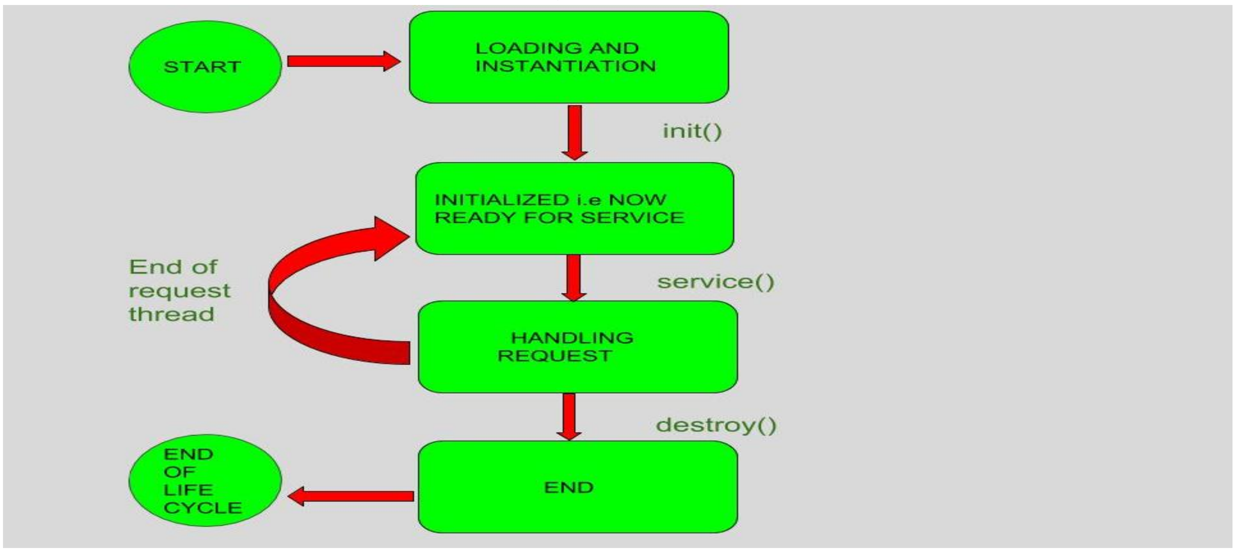
1. **Loading a Servlet**: The first stage of the Servlet lifecycle involves loading and initializing the Servlet by the Servlet container. The Web container or Servlet Container can load the Servlet at either of the following two stages :

- Initializing the context, on configuring the Servlet with a zero or positive integer value.
- If the Servlet is not preceding stage, it may delay the loading process until the Web container determines that this Servlet is needed to service a request.

The Servlet container performs two operations in this stage :

- **Loading** : Loads the Servlet class.

- **Instantiation** : Creates an instance of the Servlet. To create a new instance of the Servlet, the container uses the no-argument constructor.



2. **Initializing a Servlet**: After the Servlet is instantiated successfully, the Servlet container initializes the instantiated Servlet object. The container initializes the Servlet object by invoking the **Servlet.init(ServletConfig)** method which accepts ServletConfig object reference as parameter.

The Servlet container invokes the **Servlet.init(ServletConfig)** method only once, immediately after the **Servlet.init(ServletConfig)** object is instantiated successfully. This method is used to initialize the resources, such as JDBC datasource.

Now, if the Servlet fails to initialize, then it informs the Servlet container by throwing the **ServletException** or **UnavailableException**.

3. **Handling request**: After initialization, the Servlet instance is ready to serve the client requests. The Servlet container performs the following operations when the Servlet instance is located to service a request :

- It creates the **ServletRequest** and **ServletResponse** objects. In this case, if this is a HTTP request, then the Web container creates **HttpServletRequest** and **HttpServletResponse** objects which are subtypes of the **ServletRequest** and **ServletResponse** objects respectively.
- After creating the request and response objects it invokes the Servlet.service(ServletRequest, ServletResponse) method by passing the request and response objects.

The **service()** method while processing the request may throw the **ServletException** or **UnavailableException** or **IOException**.

4. **Destroying a Servlet**: When a Servlet container decides to destroy the Servlet, it performs the following operations,

- It allows all the threads currently running in the service method of the Servlet instance to complete their jobs and get released.
- After currently running threads have completed their jobs, the Servlet container calls the **destroy()** method on the Servlet instance.

After the **destroy()** method is executed, the Servlet container releases all the references of this Servlet instance so that it becomes eligible for garbage collection.

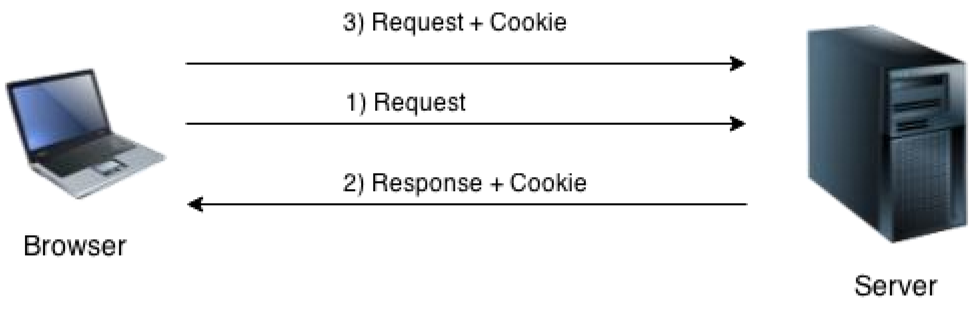
Cookies in Servlet

A **cookie** is a small piece of information that is persisted between the multiple client requests.

A cookie has a name, a single value, and optional attributes such as a comment, path and domain qualifiers, a maximum age, and a version number.

How Cookie works

By default, each request is considered as a new request. In cookies technique, we add cookie with response from the servlet. So cookie is stored in the cache of the browser. After that if request is sent by the user, cookie is added with request by default. Thus, we recognize the user as the old user.



Types of Cookie

There are 2 types of cookies in servlets.

1. Non-persistent cookie
2. Persistent cookie

Non-persistent cookie

It is **valid for single session** only. It is removed each time when user closes the browser.

Persistent cookie

It is **valid for multiple session** . It is not removed each time when user closes the browser. It is removed only if user logout or signout.

Advantage of Cookies

1. Simplest technique of maintaining the state.
2. Cookies are maintained at client side.

Disadvantage of Cookies

1. It will not work if cookie is disabled from the browser.
2. Only textual information can be set in Cookie object.

JSP

JSP technology is used to create web application just like Servlet technology. It can be thought of as an extension to Servlet because it provides more functionality than servlet such as expression language, JSTL, etc.

A JSP page consists of HTML tags and JSP tags. The JSP pages are easier to maintain than Servlet because we can separate designing and development. It provides some additional features such as Expression Language, Custom Tags, etc.

Advantages of JSP over Servlet

There are many advantages of JSP over the Servlet. They are as follows:

1) Extension to Servlet

JSP technology is the extension to Servlet technology. We can use all the features of the Servlet in JSP. In addition to, we can use implicit objects, predefined tags, expression language and Custom tags in JSP, that makes JSP development easy.

2) Easy to maintain

JSP can be easily managed because we can easily separate our business logic with presentation logic. In Servlet technology, we mix our business logic with the presentation logic.

3) Fast Development: No need to recompile and redeploy

If JSP page is modified, we don't need to recompile and redeploy the project. The Servlet code needs to be updated and recompiled if we have to change the look and feel of the application.

4) Less code than Servlet

In JSP, we can use many tags such as action tags, JSTL, custom tags, etc. that reduces the code. Moreover, we can use EL, implicit objects, etc.

The Lifecycle of a JSP Page

The JSP pages follow these phases:

- Translation of JSP Page

- *Compilation of JSP Page*
- *Classloading (the classloader loads class file)*
- *Instantiation (Object of the Generated Servlet is created).*
- *Initialization (the container invokes jspInit() method).*
- *Request processing (the container invokes _jspService() method).*
- *Destroy (the container invokes jspDestroy() method).*