

What is AJAX?

AJAX is a fancy name for a simple concept. It's a group of technologies that allow us to call the server asynchronously and update the content of the page.

In contrast to the traditional HTML forms for posting data to the server, when using AJAX, the user stays on the same page, we call the server in the background, and then refresh the content of the page. This gives a faster and smoother experience to the end user. We can even load an entirely new page in the content area and this gives the user the illusion that they're on a new page.

AJAX is one of the technologies heavily used by Single Page Applications (SPAs). As the user clicks on a link, we call the server in the background, get the data for the target page, generate the mark up on the client, and use JavaScript to refresh the content area.

So, AJAX stands for Asynchronous JavaScript and XML. Every browser has a native object called **XMLHttpRequest** (XHR) that allows us to call the server asynchronously (in the background, without posting the page to the server using a form). We can use methods of this object directly, or use jQuery AJAX, which is an abstraction over this object, and makes it easier to make asynchronous calls to the server:

```
$.ajax(url)
  .done(function(result){
    // Do something with the result
  });
```

The result from the server can be anything. It can be XML, HTML markup, or JSON data. These days it's more often to get data from the server and generate HTML markup on the client. That's why AJAX is very common when working with web APIs.

When we get the data, we can use JavaScript to update the Document Object Model (DOM) and refresh the content of the page. That's AJAX!