Can I pass custom data in the HTTP header?

Asked 15 years, 10 months ago   Modified 3 years, 6 months ago

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26

I have a whole bunch of web services each with several web methods. The consumers of these services are varied and many. I want to augment each of these web methods with an extra optional parameter (Int64 or Int32) but adding new methods with this extra (optional parameter) is a lot of work and getting the clients to use the new methods will be even more time consuming.

So I was wondering if I could allow the clients that wanted to take advantage of the new feature that this param provides could pass this Int in the HTTP header or some other way.

So the first question is can I pass an int in the HTTP header? If so, how would one do that in C#/ASP.NET?

Otherwise, what other suggestions do you have for tackling this problem?

http-headers

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asked Feb 18, 2009 at 22:01

Guy
67.1k ● 101 ● 265 ● 331

8 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default) ⇕

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Its a bit unorthodox and I'm sure some purists would be upset at the idea (the headers should only be used for the transport of the message, and should not contain the semantics of the message).

Practically its doable, but you want to be sure all your clients can add these headers. If your clients are using tools to call the web methods rather than generating the HTTP requests themselves (which I'd hope is the case) then there's a real chance this is a problem.

Why is it so hard to add these additional overloads of the methods?

edited Jan 31, 2019 at 19:21

Prashant Pokhriyal
3,817 ● 4 ● 31 ● 41

answered Feb 18, 2009 at 22:11

Frank Schwieterman
24.5k ● 15 ● 95 ● 132

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9   Yes its unorthodox to WS-*, but I think RESTful type people (RESTafarians?) would be cool with it ;) – Michael Neale Feb 19, 2009 at 1:32

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8   I'm fairly certain RESTful types would expect input parameters to be in the request path or request body.

– Frank Schwieterman Feb 19, 2009 at 5:02

6   I've been bit by this due to mobile networks. At one job, we did some hmac'ing of our custom headers to validate the data at the other end. On some of the UK networks, their proxies did some kind of header strip/reconstruction during which an extra space was removed from our header. Was not a good time solving that one. – Error 454 Feb 21, 2013 at 1:57 ✎
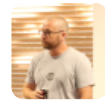
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Yes it is allowed - but note that it may cut off the ability to use proxies and sometimes http aware firewalls (they tend to inspect and rewrite headers).

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answered Feb 18, 2009 at 22:34

Michael Neale
19.5k ● 19 ● 78 ● 111

While proxing doesn't it the actual header get forwarded? – astrosixer Oct 6, 2021 at 13:01

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```
Request.Headers.Add("headername", "headervalue");
Response.Headers.Add("headername", "headervalue");
```

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edited Jul 17, 2015 at 10:17

शेखर
17.6k ● 13 ● 63 ● 120

answered Feb 19, 2009 at 2:38

FROM RFC!

You really can, now it is supported by the new [RFC Standards](#),

Really helps when you want to GET from your API but still want GET pure nativity(no body in GET)

For a simplified read, check out [Mozilla Explanation](#)

5

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answered Jun 17, 2021 at 16:43

[emanuel sanga](#)
925 ● 15 ● 18

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I've used this concept once to handle logout redirect for ajax calls in an intranet web application (nothing related to webservice).

it was my best solution at hand, but as some other have said it depends if you can push the constraint to clients to treat theses headers for your purpose.

Definitely not a thing you would want to do by default.

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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 2:48

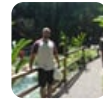[smoothdeveloper](#)
2,022 ● 19 ● 19

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You can, but you have to define a Header, then set its value. Like in the [HttpWebRequest](#) you can add any header, as long as its not one of the reserved ones.

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answered Feb 18, 2009 at 22:05

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Note that while it's fine to consume custom headers in ASP.NET it's not always possible to produce custom headers in ASP.NET. You can only do this if you're running ASP.NET integrated mode (i.e. IIS 7.0).

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answered Feb 18, 2009 at 22:16

You can, but this defeats the whole purpose of using webservices in the first place. Similar to the saying that each formula in a popular science books reduces the audience to a half, each quick hack increasing the complexity of the interface will mean a lot of trouble in the future.

1

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answered Feb 18, 2009 at 22:26

paavo256

181 ● 3