is there a difference between absolute and relative paths when pointing to certain files on your html?

Asked 15 years, 9 months ago   Modified 15 years, 4 months ago

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our office just got this new guy with lots of experience and kept insisting that we stop using absolute paths like:

`http://somesite.com/subdir1/images/filename.ext`

when pointing to a path of our image when it resides next to the file that calls it say we could have just used:

`./subdir1/images/filename.ext`

but the reason why we used absolute paths before was to prevent deadlinks when we put another page in another directory, instead of explicitly typing

`"../../"` OR `"./"`

recursively...

so is there really a difference when using them?

he said that each absolute urls is a separate request to

the server.. but i've been using this method ever since and i can safely assure an expected fast response time, can anyone enlighten me?

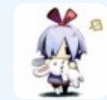`html` `performance`

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6 Answers

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Everything is a separate http request to the server. Relative or absolute it does not matter.

Of course, if the absolute url points to the same website but on a different host, then this *may* speed up things because it breaks the 2 concurrent http requests limit. e.g your site is at **www.example.com** and you serve all your images from **static.example.com**.

Another way to prevent the broken links issue you mention is by virtual URLs: /images/foo.png

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answered Mar 3, 2009 at 8:04

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This thread seems to indicate that there is a difference:stackoverflow.com/questions/8346926/…
– Mark Steudel Nov 5, 2012 at 23:32 ✎

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Using relative paths make it possible for you to move your entire webapplication to another domain and/or folder without fixing every path.

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answered Mar 3, 2009 at 8:15

toxvaerd
3,802 ● 3 ● 25 ● 29

even if its a dynamic website say we got this $siteurl = "somesite.com" and just echo siteurl for every object called
– lock Mar 3, 2009 at 8:40

@lock: you could even dynamically discover the $siteurl value from the http variables. Portability to the maximum :)
– cherouvim Mar 3, 2009 at 9:14

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Relative paths make for smaller HTML, resulting in less bandwidth consumption.

Relative paths are context friendly, meaning both "site.com" and "www.site.com" will work equally well,
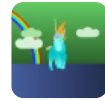
without the need for redirects from "site.com" to "www.site.com".

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Absolute paths would be root absolute and versatile enough that you can later on move the file to another directory and the links would still work. And if you ever change the domain name, no problem, links still work.

```
/foo/monkey-wrench.song
```

Relative paths would be relative to the page you're on, and breaks if you ever move the file outside of its current directory.

```
../foo/everlong.song
```

Slapping on the domain part would make it an absolute URL.

```
http://example.com/foo/this-is-a-call.song
```

Which is good if you have a scraper come along and then they would be able to link back to your own site so that when you check the referrer logs, you know who to go about sending that take down notice to.

Difference between the two would be how much more busy work you want to create for yourself later on.

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answered Mar 3, 2009 at 8:12

random
9,954 ● 10 ● 69 ● 84

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I prefer to parse Request.RawURL manually to avoid collisions with urls

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answered Mar 3, 2009 at 8:15

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There might be a bit of a cargo-cult thing going on there.

Where I work, we were told by the server techs that absolute URLs *did* cause delays, because there was load-balancing involved. An absolute URL would go back to the switch and be relayed to one of four servers, whereas a local one wouldn't.

So it might have been true at his old work place. Whether it's true at your workplace is for you to find out.

But if he can't explain why he's saying it, it's a folk-belief until proven otherwise.

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answered Mar 3, 2009 at 11:22