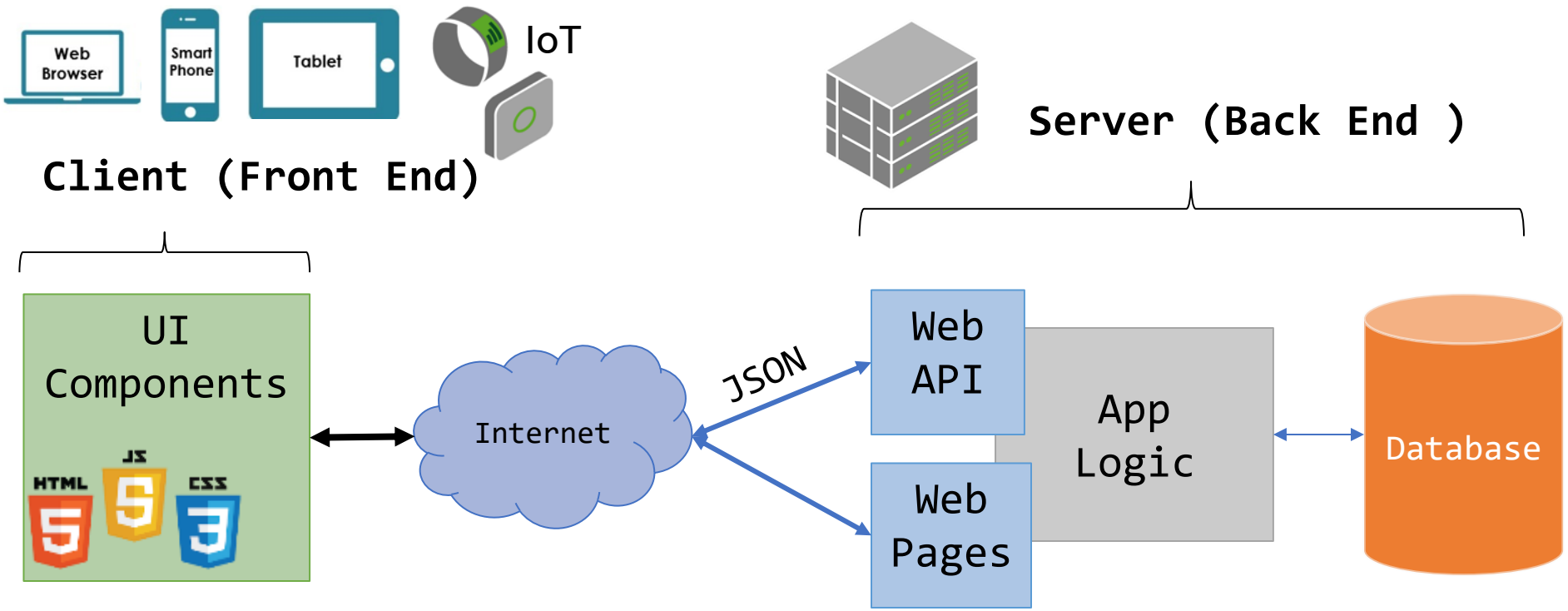
Web Pages using NEXT.JS

Outline

1. UI Components using React
2. Next.js routing
3. Data fetching
4. Server actions

Web App Architecture using Next.js

- Front-end made-up of **multiple UI components loaded** in response to user actions
- Back-end Web API and Web pages

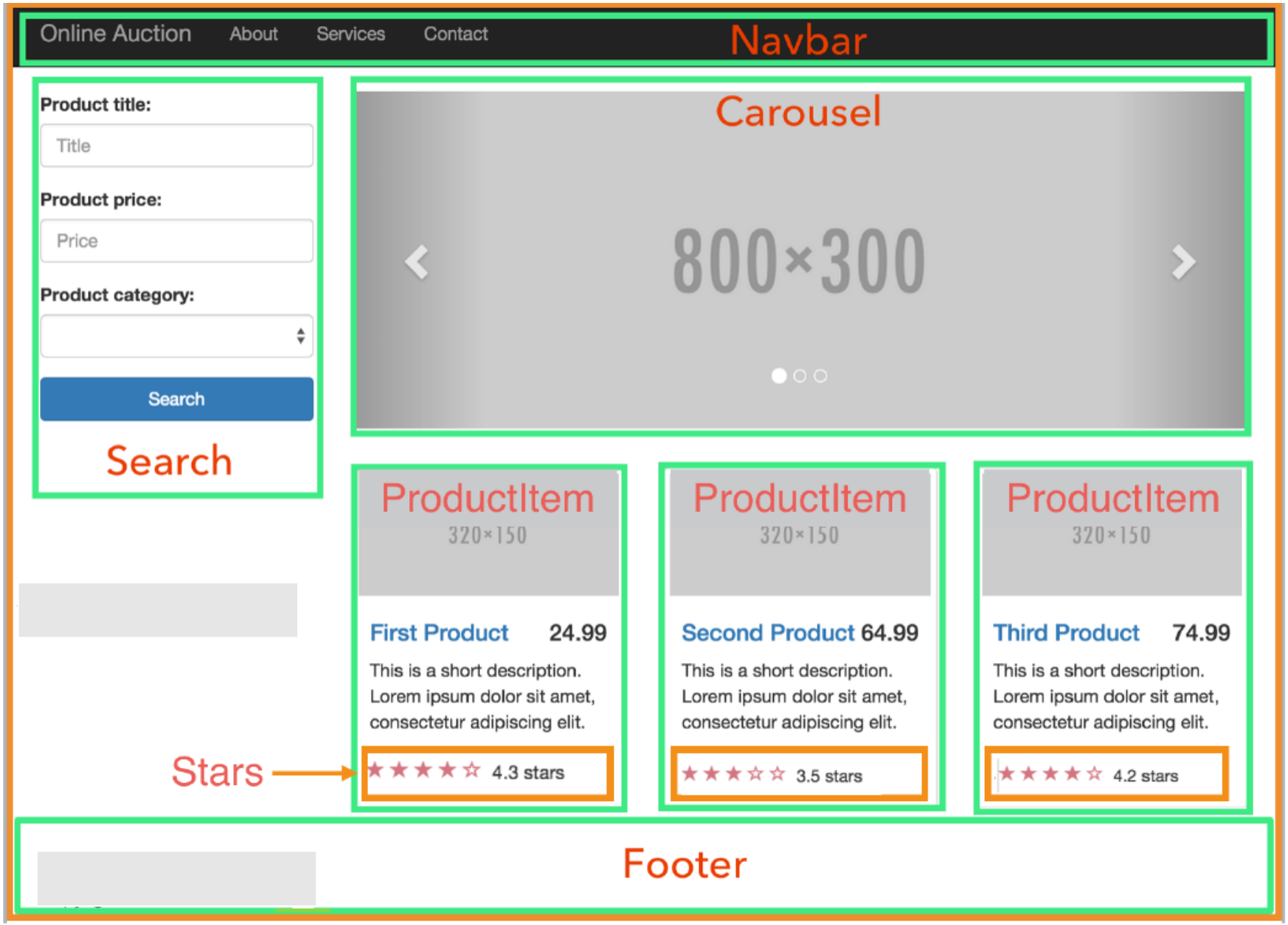


UI Components using React

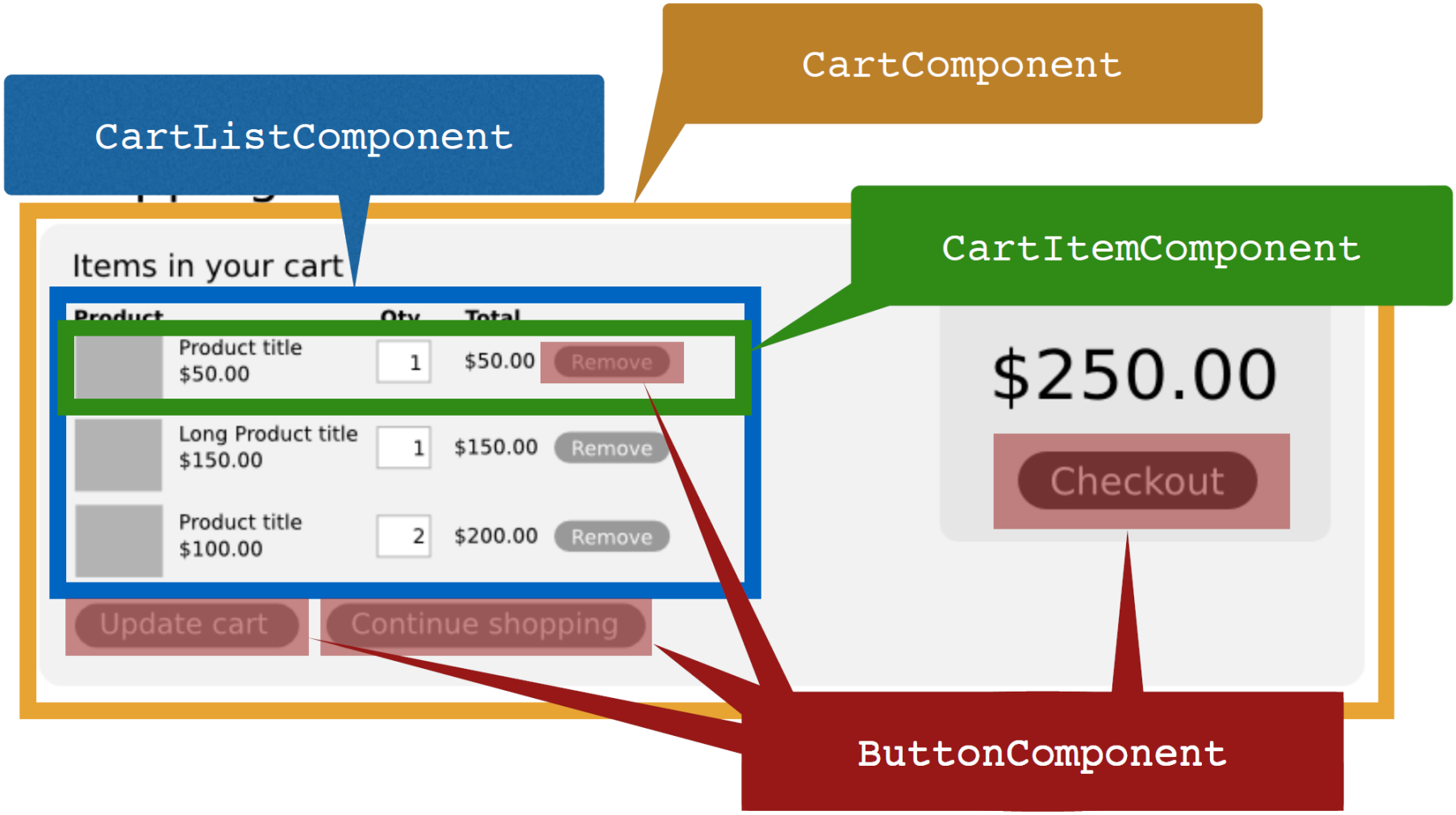
Used by Facebook, Instagram, Netflix, Dropbox, Outlook, Yahoo, Khan Academy, ….

https://intellisoft.io/15-popular-sites-built-with-react-js/

A page = a composition of components



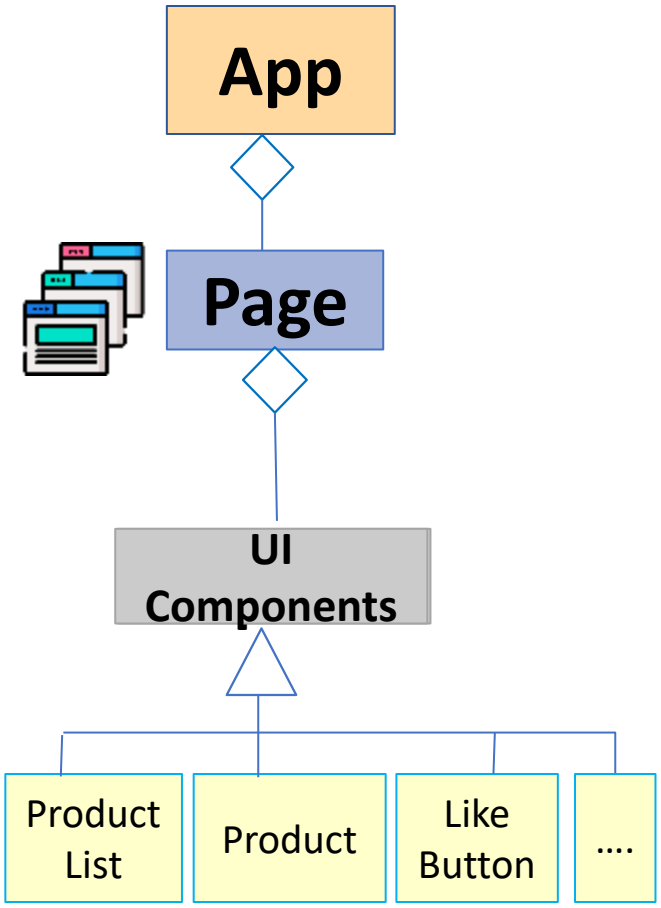
A component = a tree of components



UI Components using React

- React can be used to creation of dynamic and reusable UI components
- React is an open-source JavaScript library for building **modular, components-based user interfaces (UI)**
  - UI is **composed** of small reusable **components**
  - A UI Component encapsulates **UI elements** and their associated **behavior** (i.e., UI logic)
- React enables reusability, and ease of maintenance
- Open-sourced by Facebook mid-2013 - https://react.dev/
- Competing with Angular https://angular.dev/ and Vue.js https://vuejs.org/

UI Programming Model using Next.js



- An app consists of one or multiple **pages**, each representing a distinct route within the app

- A **page** is UI Component composed of multiple smaller UI Components, following a hierarchical structure that promotes modularity, reusability, and maintainability

- A **UI Component** encapsulates UI elements and their associated behavior (i.e., UI logic)

- UI Components could be either **Server Components** (rendered on the server with optional caching) or **Client Components** (execute in the browser and handle client-side events)

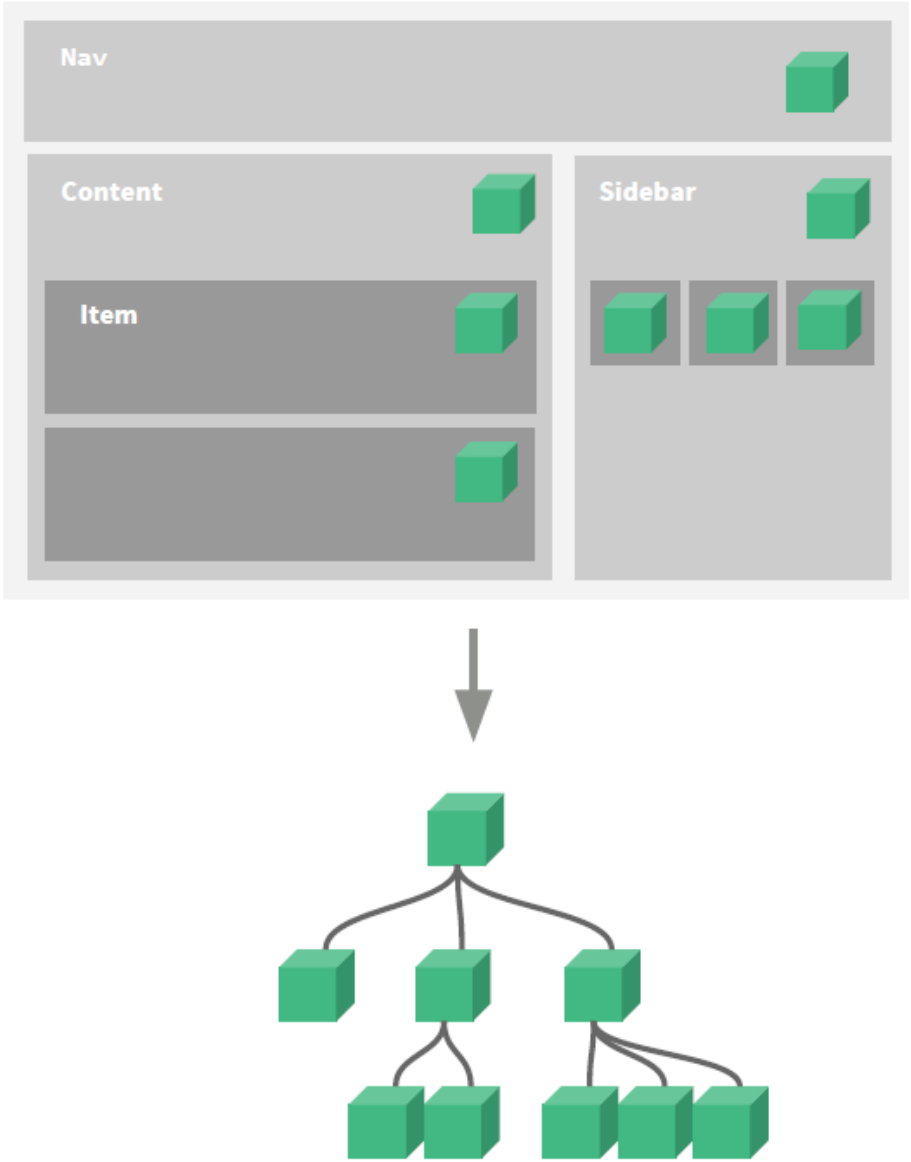
- Client Components manage interactivity through:

(1) State variables, which store and update UI data dynamically, enabling reactive interfaces

(2) **Event Handlers**, which define responses to user interactions, such as button clicks or form submissions

- Pages can be wrapped in a **Layout component**, which acts as a shared container providing consistent UI elements across multiple pages, such as a header, footer, navigation bar, and sidebars.

React Components



Getting started

- Install latest **Node.js** https://nodejs.org/en/
- Download **VS Code** https://code.visualstudio.com/
- Create an empty folder (with no space in the name use **dash -** instead)
- Create a next app

```
npx create-next-app@latest .
```

- Run the app

```
npm run dev
```

React Component

- React App = composition of **components**
- A ***component***:
  - Return **HTML *elements*** to provide the UI
  - Encapsulate **state** (internal component data) and **functions** to ***handle events*** raised from the UI elements
- Component = UI + display logic
- Components allows creating new '**HTML tags**'

React = A declarative component-based programming model

- UI is built using JavaScript functions
  - Each function define a piece the app's UI programmatically
  - As **state** changes the UI automatically updates (Reactive UI)
    - without imperatively mutating DOM
- Declarative = you define the UI content and structure, combined with different states (e.g., "is a modal open or closed?")
    - Then you leave it up to React to figure out the appropriate DOM instructions

How to define a piece of UI?

UI is **composed** of small reusable **components**

UI Component = a **function**:

- Takes some inputs and emits a piece of UI
- Function that converts the state (i.e., app data) into UI

- **UI = f(state) : UI is a visual representation of state**
  (e.g., display a tweet and associated comments)
- **State changes trigger automatic update of the UI**

Component Example

- Create a **Welcome** component
  - Returns **JSX** : an HTML-like syntax to define the component UI
  - Can accept a parameter called ***props***
    - to configure the component with different content / attributes - just like how HTML works (makes the component reusable)
    - **props** are read-only
  - Component name must start with a capital letter

```
function Welcome(props) {
    return (<h1>Welcome to {props.appName}</h1>);
}
export default Welcome;
```

You can embed JavaScript expressions in JSX

- Use the **Welcome** component

```
<Welcome appName='React Demo App' />
```

What is JSX?

- React uses JSX (JavaScript XML) HTML-like markup to describe the component's UI
- Embraces the fact that rendering logic is inherently coupled with other UI logic
- JSX allows us to write HTML like syntax which gets transformed to JavaScript objects

JSX

```jsx
const element = (
  <h1 className="greeting">
    Hello, world!
  </h1>
);
```

JavaScript

```jsx
const element = React.createElement(
  'h1',
  {className: 'greeting'},
  'Hello, world!'
);
```

It's just JavaScript!!

Props destructuring

- In a **react** component you can destructure props into variables

```
function UserInfo(props) {
    return (
        <div>
            First Name: {props.firstName}
            Last Name: {props.lastName}
        </div>
    );
}
```


```
function UserInfo({ firstName, lastName }) {
    return (
        <div>
            First Name: {firstName}
            Last Name: {lastName}
        </div>
    );
}
```

Special "children" Prop

- The children property holds the content you might have provided between the component's opening and closing tags
    - A special children property auto-added by react

```
<Welcome name="Ali Faleh">
  <h2>Welcome to QU</h2>
</Welcome>
```

```
function Welcome({name, children}) {
    return (
        <>
            <h1>Welcome {name}</h1>
            {children}
        </>
    );
}
```

Rendering a List of items (with .map())

Lists are handled using **.map** array function

```
function FriendsList({friends}) {
  return <ul>
           {friends.map( (friend, i) =>
              <li key={i}>{friend}</li>
           )}
         </ul>
}
```

- Fatima
- Mouza
- Sarah

```
▼ <FriendsList>
  ▼ <ul>
      <li key="0">Fatima</li>
      <li key="1">Mouza</li>
      <li key="2">Sarah</li>
    </ul>
</FriendsList>
```

Key helps identify which items have changed, added or removed

- Use the **FriendsList** component

```
<FriendsList friends={['Fatima', 'Mouza', 'Sarah']}/>
```

List of item keys

Keys are very important in lists for the following reasons:

- A key is a unique identifier used to identify which list items have changed, are added, or are deleted from the list
- It also helps to determine which components need to be re-rendered instead of re-rendering all the components every time.
  - Therefore, it increases performance, as only the updated components are re-rendered

Next.js vs React

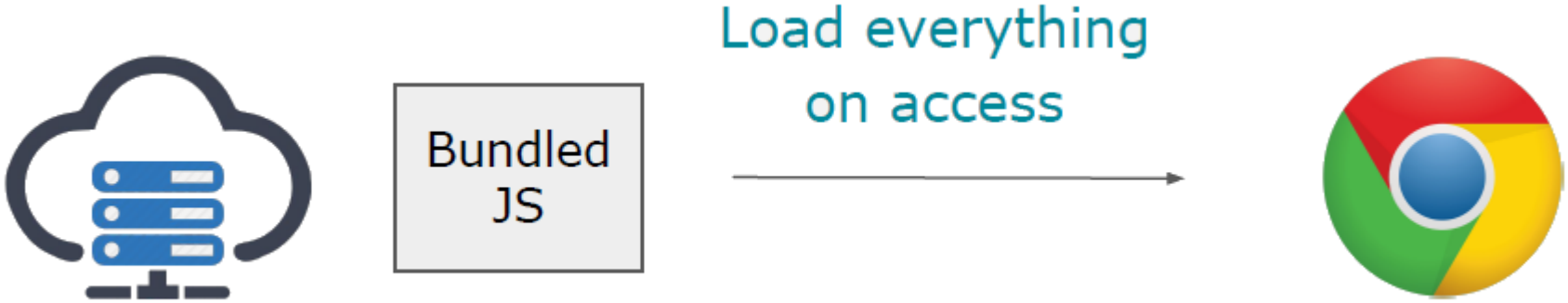
- React is just a **client-side JavaScript** library, Next.js is a framework for building rich and complete Web App **both on the client and server sides**
- React runs on the client side
  - Could negatively affect Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and
  - Slow initial load performance: To display the complete web app, the browser had to download the entire application bundle, parse its content, then execute it and render the result in the browser
    - which could take up to a few seconds for a large application

What is Next.js?

- Next.js = React-based full stack web framework that allows creating user interfaces, static pages, server-side rendered pages, and Web API
- It provides a large set of features out of the box, such as:
  - Automatic code-splitting
  - File system-based routing systems
  - Route prefetching
  - API Routes
  - Automatic image optimization
  - Different rendering strategies: Server-side rendering, Static site generation, Incremental static generation
  - Fast refresh on the development environment

Code splitting

- In Single Page Architecture (SPA), a large bundled file will be loaded as default



- With Next.js , code will be split on per page base as default

Getting started

- Install latest **Node.js** https://nodejs.org/en/
- Download **VS Code** https://code.visualstudio.com/
- Create an empty folder (with no space in the name use **dash -** instead)
- Create a react app

```
npx create-next-app .
```

- Run the app in dev mode: `npm run dev`
- Build the app: `npm run build`
- Run the optimized build: `npm run start`

Project Folder Structure

- Next.js relies heavily on **convention** over configuration
  - Specific folder names (app/, public/) trigger core framework features
- Next.js uses **`app/`** folder for file-based routing
  - Folders = URL Segments (e.g., app/dashboard/ -> /dashboard)
  - **`page.jsx = Route UI`** defines the UI for that specific route segment
- **public/** serve static assets (e.g., images, font) from the app root (/)
  - E.g., `public/my-image.png -> /my-image.png`

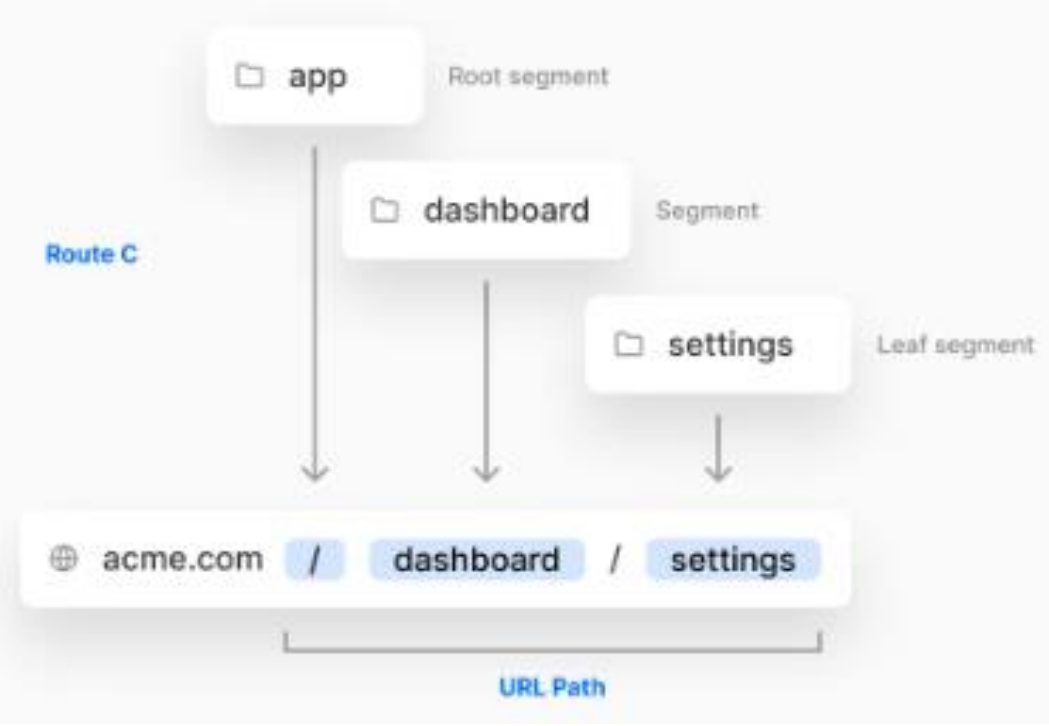
Routing

Routing

- Use folder hierarchy inside the **app** folder to define routes, and files to define UI
  - A route is a single path of nested folders, from the root folder down to a leaf folder
  - Use a special **page.js** file to define the route UI

- Each folder in the subtree represents a route segment in a URL path

- E.g., create `/dashboard/settings` route by nesting two subfolders in the app directory

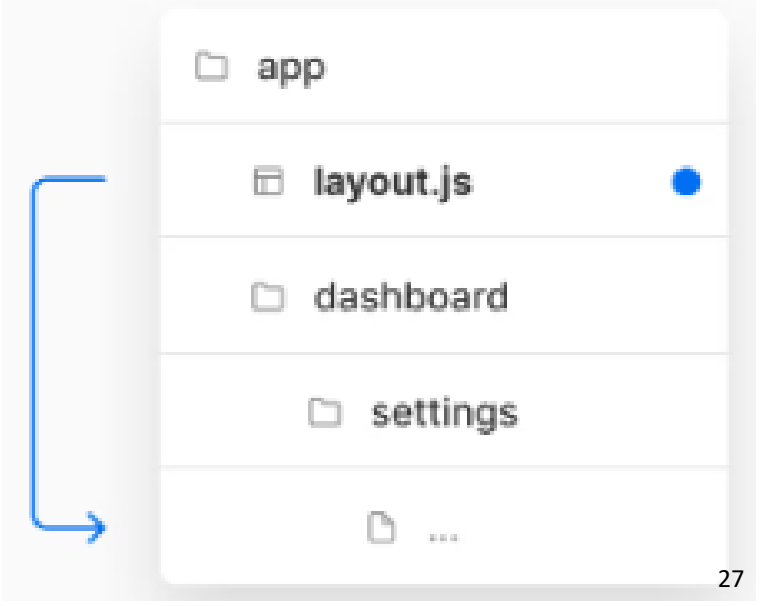


Layouts

- A layout is UI that is shared between route segments
  - Do not re-render (UI state is preserved) when a user navigates between sibling segments
  - Navigating between routes only fetches and renders the segments that change
- A layout can be defined by exporting a React component from a `layout.js` file
  - The component should accept a `children` prop which will be populated with the segments the layout is wrapping

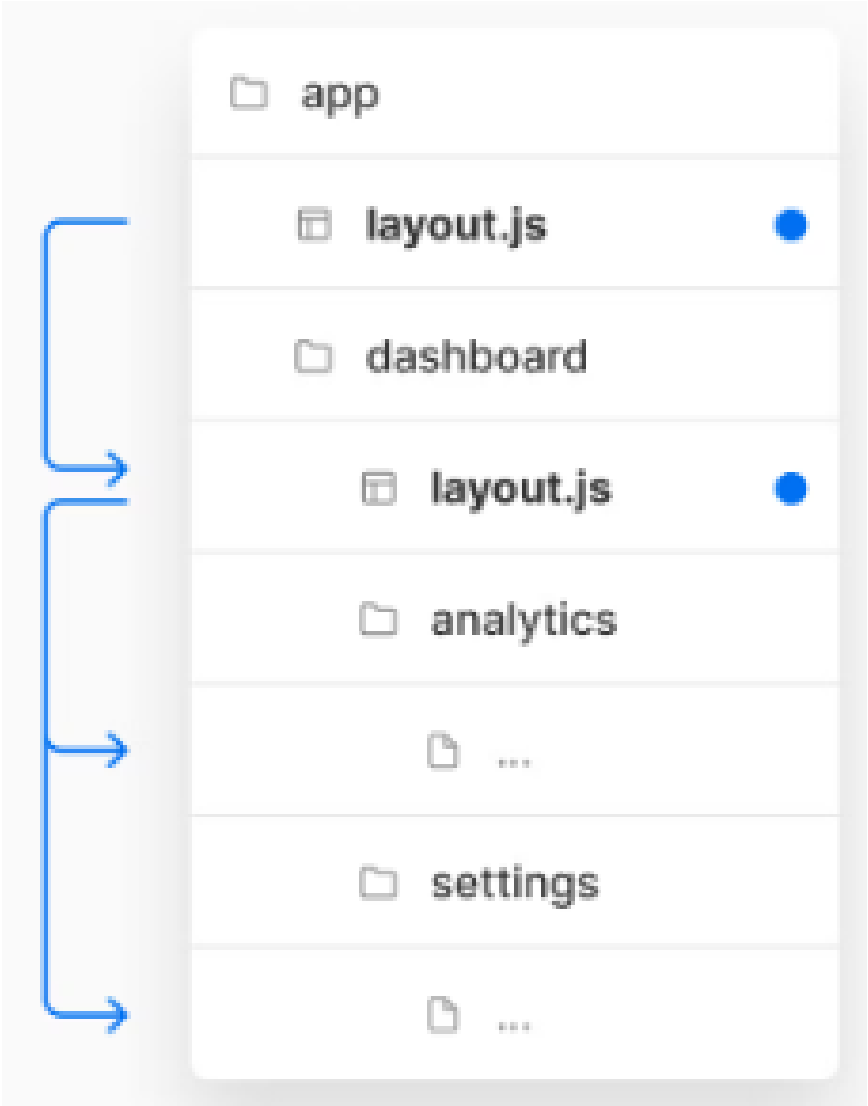
There are 2 types of layouts:

- **Root layout**: in **app** folder and applies to all routes
- **Regular layout**: inside a specific folder and applies to associated route segments

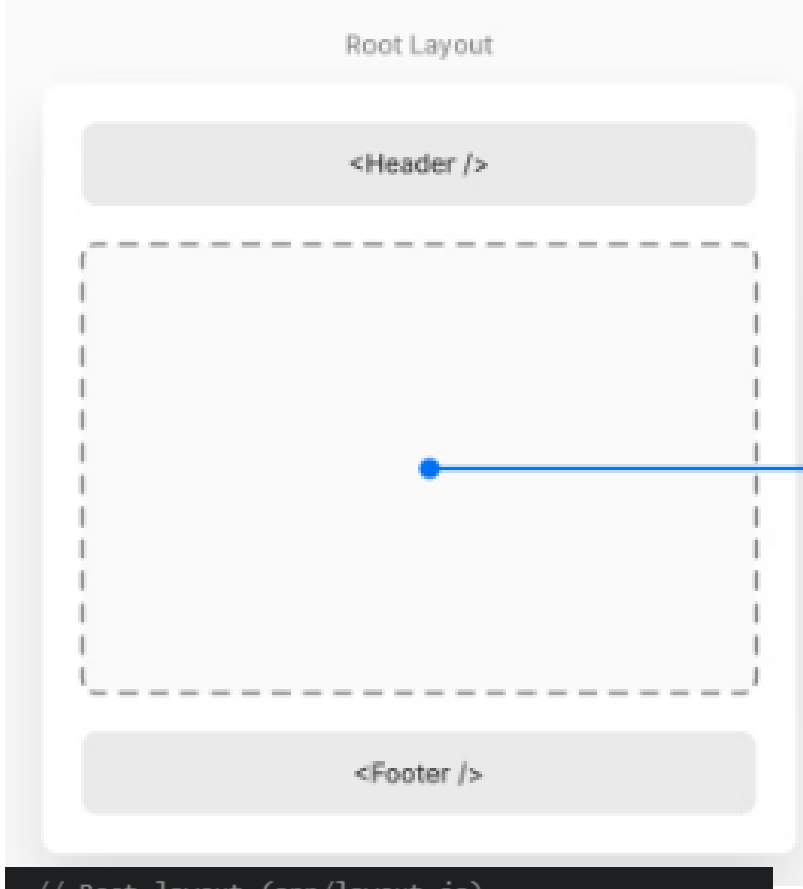


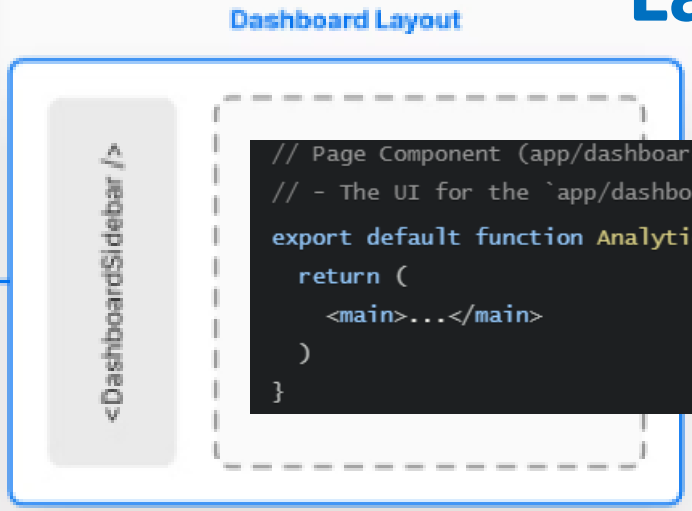
Nesting Layouts

- Layouts that can be nested and shared across routes
- E.g., the root layout (`app/layout.js`) would be applied to the dashboard layout, which would also apply to all route segments inside `dashboard/*`



Nesting Layouts






```tsx
// Page Component (app/dashboard/analytics/page.js)
// - The UI for the `app/dashboard/analytics` segment
export default function AnalyticsPage() {
  return (
    <main>...</main>
  )
}
```

```tsx
// Root layout (app/layout.js)
// - Applies to all routes
export default function RootLayout({ children }) {
  return (
    <html>
      <body>
        <Header />
        {children}
        <Footer />
      </body>
    </html>
  )
}
```

```tsx
// Regular layout (app/dashboard/layout.js)
// - Applies to route segments in app/dashboard/*
export default function DashboardLayout({ children }) {
  return (
    <>
      <DashboardSidebar />
      {children}
    </>
  )
}
```

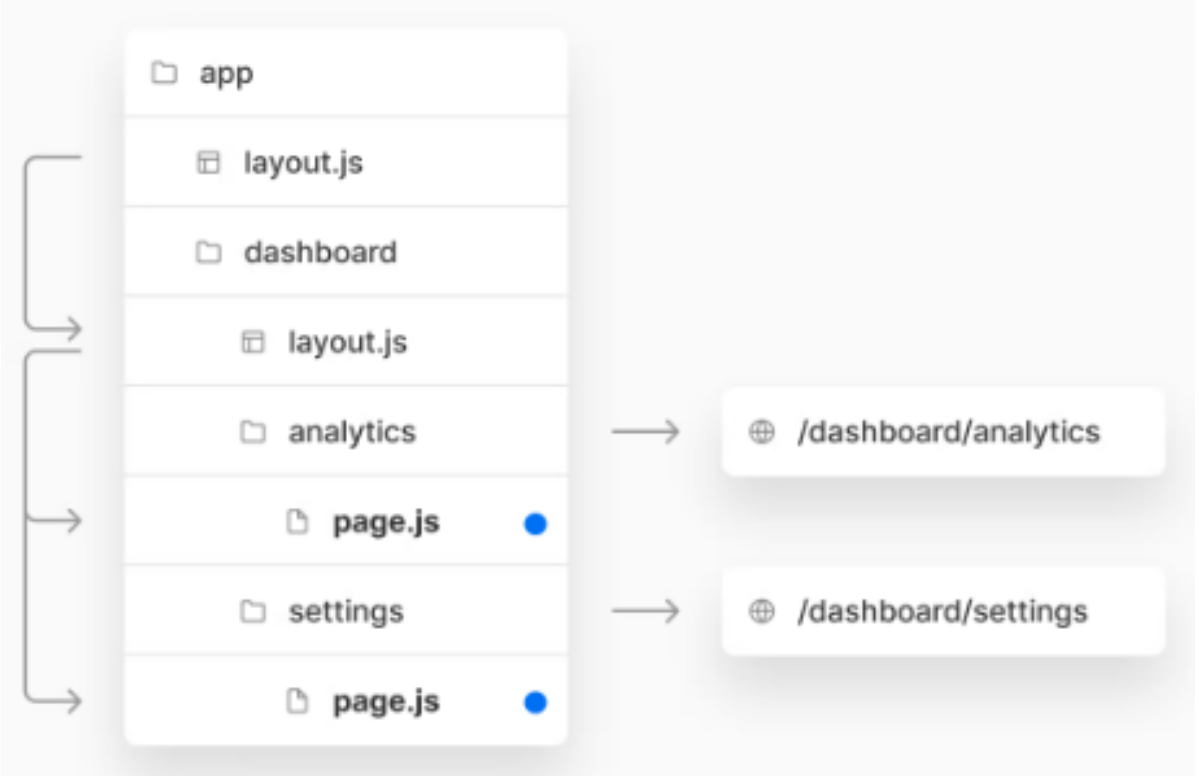
The above combination of layouts and pages would render the following component hierarchy:

```tsx
<RootLayout>
  <Header />
  <DashboardLayout>
    <DashboardSidebar />
    <AnalyticsPage>
      <main>...</main>
    </AnalyticsPage>
  </DashboardLayout>
  <Footer />
</RootLayout>
```

UI Pages

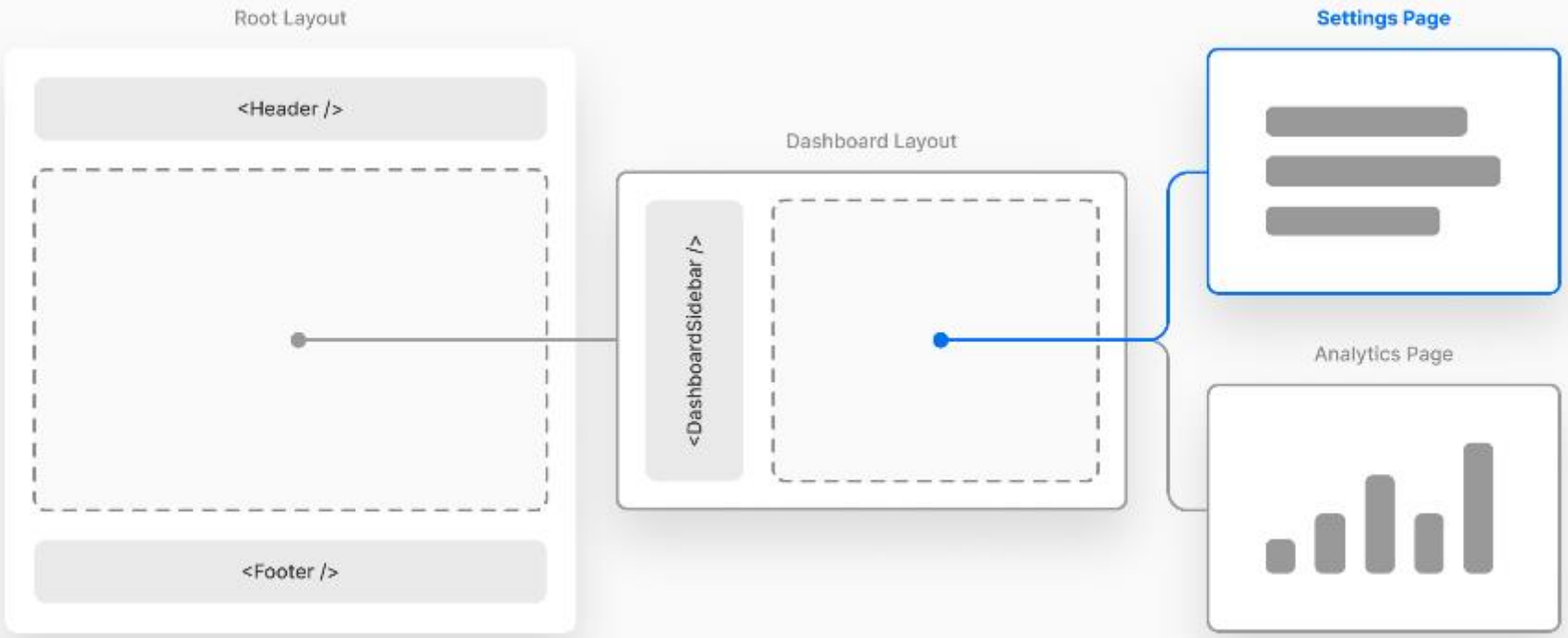
- You can create a page by adding a `page.js` file inside a folder
  - Can colocate your own project files (UI components, styles, images, test files, etc.) inside the app folder & subfolders

When a user visits `/dashboard/settings` Next.js will render the `page.js` file inside the settings folder



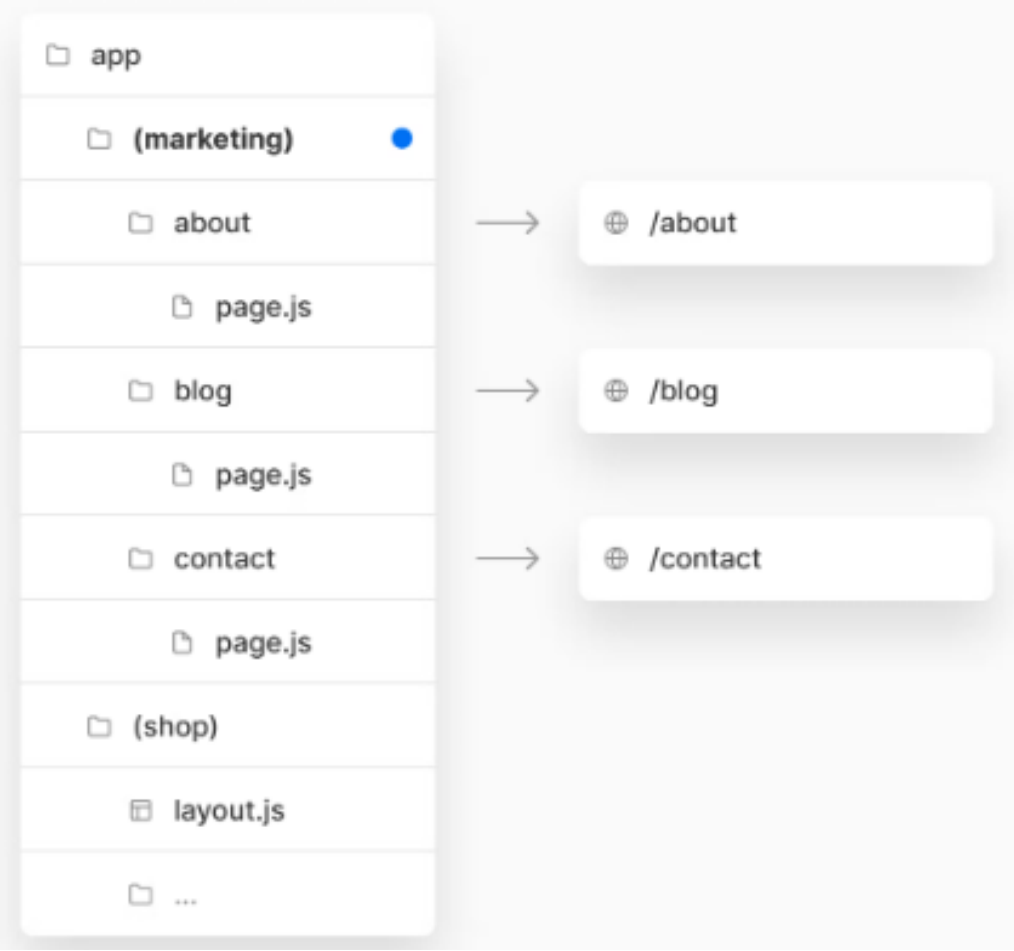
Pages are Wrapped in Layouts

- When a user visits `/dashboard/settings` Next.js will render the `page.js` file inside the settings folder wrapped in any layouts that exist further up the subtree

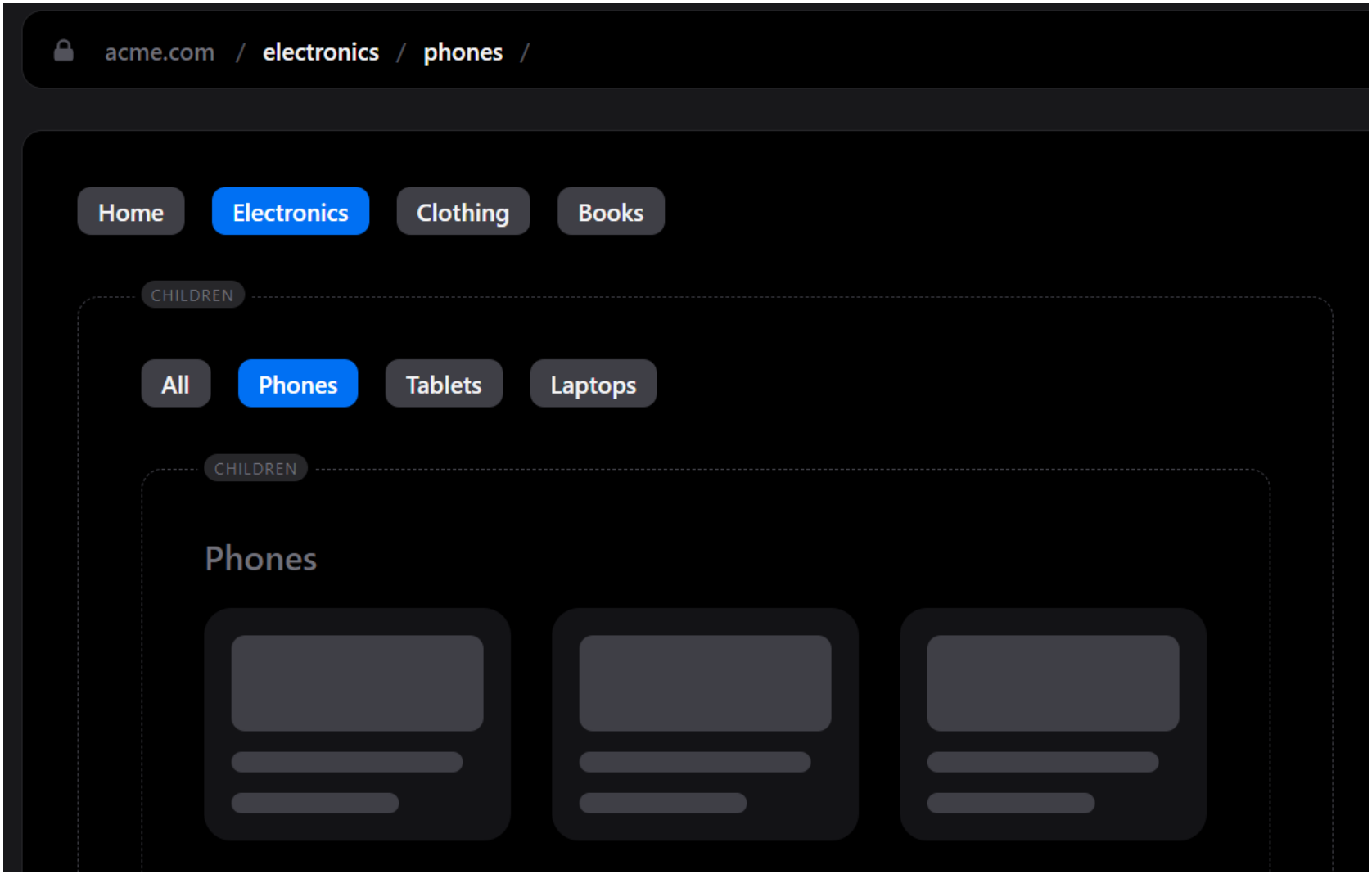


Organizing routes without affecting the URL path

- To organize routes, create a group to keep related routes together. The folders in parenthesis will be omitted from the URL (e.g. (marketing) or (shop))



Nested Layout Example



https://app-dir.vercel.app/layouts/electronics/phones

React Server Components

- By default, files inside **app** folder and its subfolders will be rendered on the server as **React Server Components**
  - resulting in less client-side JavaScript and better performance
- Making the route accessible requires adding **page.js** file

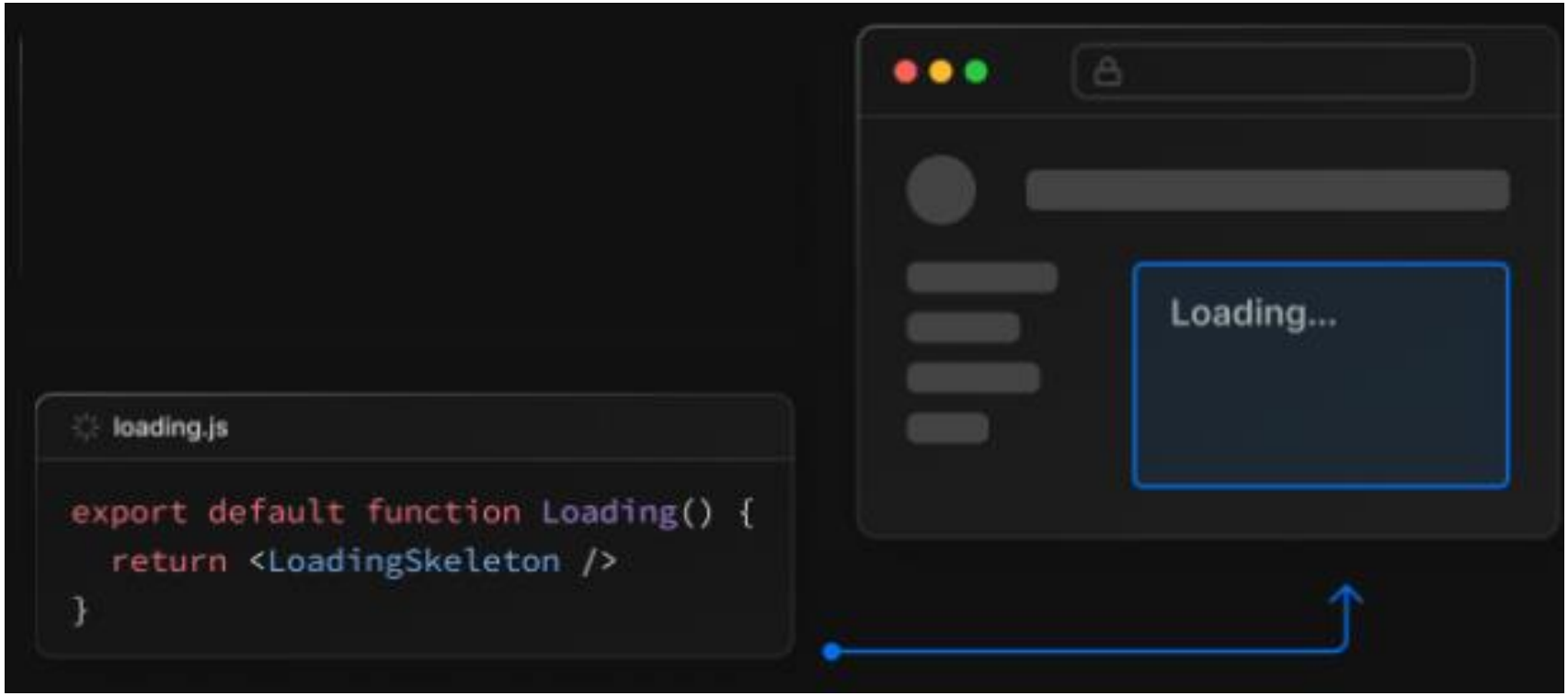
```
// app/page.js
// This file maps to the index route (/)
export default function Page() {
  return <h1>Hello, Next.js!</h1>;
}
```

Special Files (Beyond page.js)

- app/ directory uses several other Special File Conventions to build complex UI:
  - **layout.jsx**: Shared **UI shell** that wraps child layouts or pages. Crucial for persisting state and avoiding re-renders during navigation
    - Every route segment can have a layout. The root layout (`app/layout.jsx`) is mandatory.
  - **error.jsx**: Defines error UI for a specific segment
  - **not-found.jsx**: Defines the UI shown when the notFound() function is thrown or a route doesn't match
  - **loading.jsx**: Defines loading UI (such as a spinner) shown immediately while the content for a route segment loads

Loading UI

- **loading.jsx** return a loading indicator such as a spinner while the content of the route segment loads. The new content is automatically swapped in once rendering on the server is complete
  - This provides a better user experience by indicating that the app is responding



error.jsx

- `error.jsx` defines the error boundary for a route segment and the children below it. It can be used to show specific error information, and functionality to attempt to recover from the error
  - Should return a client-side component

```
'use client'
export default function Error({error}) {
  return (
    <>
      <p>❌ Something went wrong! {error.message}</p>
    </>
  );
}
```

not-found.jsx

- `not-found.jsx`: is used to render UI when the notFound function is thrown within a route segment

```
import { notFound } from 'next/navigation';

async function fetchUsers(id) {
  const res = await fetch('https://...');
  return res.json();
}

export default async function Profile({ params }) {
  const user = await fetchUser(params.id);

  if (!user) {
    notFound();
  }

  // ...
}
```

```
export default function NotFound() {
  return "Couldn't find requested resource"
}
```

redirect()

app/team/[id]/page.js

```
import { redirect } from 'next/navigation';

async function fetchTeam(id) {
  const res = await fetch('https://...');
  return res.json();
}

export default async function Profile({ params }) {
  const team = await fetchTeam(params.id);
  if (!team) {
    redirect('https://...');
  }
  // ...
}
```

The redirect function allows you to redirect the user to another URL

Linking between pages

- The Next.js router **Link** component to do **client-side** navigation between different routes
  - Prevents full page reloads for a faster, SPA-like experience
  - It does **partial page refresh** to display the UI of the target route in the href
  - Unlike a standard HTML <a> tag which causes a full page reload
- Prefetching (default): Pages for any <Link /> in the viewport (visible to the user) are prefetched (including static data), making subsequent navigation feel instantaneous
  - data for server-rendered routes is not prefetched.

```
import Link from 'next/link'
export default function Home() {
return ( <ul>
      <li> <Link href="/"> Home </Link> </li>
      <li> <Link href="/about"> About Us </Link> </li>
    </ul>) }
```

Linking to dynamic paths

- Links can be created for dynamic paths

E.g., creating links to access posts for a list which have been passed to the component as a prop

```
import Link from 'next/link'

function Posts({ posts }) {
  return (
    <ul>
      {posts.map((post) => (
        <li key={post.id}>
          <Link href={`/blogs/${post.id}`}>
            <a>{post.title}</a>
          </Link>
        </li>
      ))}
    </ul>
  )
}
```

next/image

- Lazy loading and optimized files for increased performance with less client-side JavaScript

```
import Image from 'next/image';
import avatar from './lee.png';

function Home() {
  // "alt" is now required for improved accessibility
  // optional: image files can be colocated inside the app/ directory
  return <Image alt="leeerob" src={avatar} placeholder="blur" />;
}
```

Server Actions

Server Actions

- Server Actions are functions that run only **on the server** to perform server-side logic
  - E.g., Handling form submissions, data mutations (creating, updating, deleting)
    - E.g., User fills and submits a form, a server action could be used to create a new blog post, updates their profile, or adds an item to a wishlist
  - They can be called directly from React components (both Server and Client Components) without manually creating separate Web API endpoints
  - '**use server**'; Directive: to mark a function or an entire file as containing Server Actions
  - Security: Execute securely on the server, never exposing sensitive logic or credentials to the client

Standard Form Submissions (CRUD Operations)

- Scenario: User fills out a contact form, creates a new blog post, updates their profile, or adds an item to a wishlist
- Instead of creating a separate API route (/api/contact, /api/posts) just to handle the POST request, you define a Server Action directly
  - It simplifies the code, keeps mutation logic closer to where it's triggered, and handles data submission securely on the server
  - Works seamlessly with <form>

Server Component Example: Adding an Item to Card

- A list of products is displayed on a Server Component
  - Each product has an "Add to Cart" button that should add the item directly using a Server Action
  - This works well for simple actions tied directly to server-rendered data
- The addToCart function is defined within or imported into the Server Component
  - It's marked with 'use server';
  - The <form> uses the action prop to directly bind to this Server Action
  - When submitted, the form data is sent securely to the server, the action executes, interacts with the DB, and then revalidates the /cart path

Quick Actions & Toggles (e.g., Likes, Bookmarks)

- Scenario: A user clicks a "Like" button on a post, toggles a "Mark as Read" status on a notification, or adds/removes an item from favorites without navigating away

- For simple state changes that need persistence, Server Actions are perfect
  - You can trigger them from a simple button click (often within a minimal <form>)
  - They avoid the need for full API routes for very small, specific mutations

Key Considerations

- Mutations Focus: Server Actions excel at changing data (POST, PUT, PATCH, DELETE semantics)
  - For purely fetching data (GET), use async/await in Server Components or Route Handlers
- Client-Side Feedback: When triggering from Client Components, use `useFormState` and `useFormStatus` for loading states, error handling, and success messages
- Data Revalidation: Remember to use `revalidatePath` or `revalidateTag` within your Server Action to ensure the UI reflects the data changes
- Security: Always validate input data within the Server Action, even if you have client-side validation. Never trust client input

Server Actions

- Server Actions are asynchronous functions that are executed on the server. They can be called in Server and Client Components to handle form submissions and data mutations

```
export default function Page() {
  // Server Action
  async function create() {
    'use server'
    // Mutate data
  }

  return '...'
}
```

Data Fetching

Data Fetching

- fetch() is a Web API used to fetch remote resources and returns a promise
- Next.js extends the fetch options object to allow each request to set its own caching and revalidating
- You can fetch data in a component, a page or a layout
  - e.g., a blog layout could fetch categories which can be used to populate a sidebar component

```
async function getData() {
  const res = await fetch('https://api.example.com/...');
  return res.json();
}

export default async function Page() {
  const name = await getData();

  return '...';
}
```

Summary

- Next.js = React-based full stack web framework that allows creating user interfaces, static pages, server-side rendered pages, and Web API
- Next.js has a **file-system based router**: when a file is added to the **app** directory, it's automatically available as a route
  - In Next.js you can add brackets to the file name of a page to create a dynamic route
- To create API Route simply add a handler function to a route.js file under app folder

Resources

- Learn Next.js

http://nextjs.org/learn

- Next.js App Templates

https://vercel.com/templates

- Useful list of resources

https://github.com/unicodeveloper/awesome-nextjs