Struts 2 Basics

Sang Shin www.JavaPassion.com "Learning is fun!"

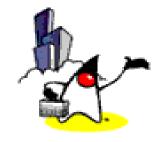


Topics

- Key core features
- Request processing life-cycle
- Improvements made in Struts 2 (over Struts 1)
- Action
- Result & Result type
- Interceptor
- Validation
- Configuration files
- Packages
- Plug-in
- Struts 2 tags



Key Core Features



Key Core Features

- Pluggable framework architecture that allows request lifecycles to be customized for each action.
- Flexible validation framework that allows validation rules to be decoupled from action code.
- Hierarchical approach to internationalization that simplifies localizing applications.

Key Core Features

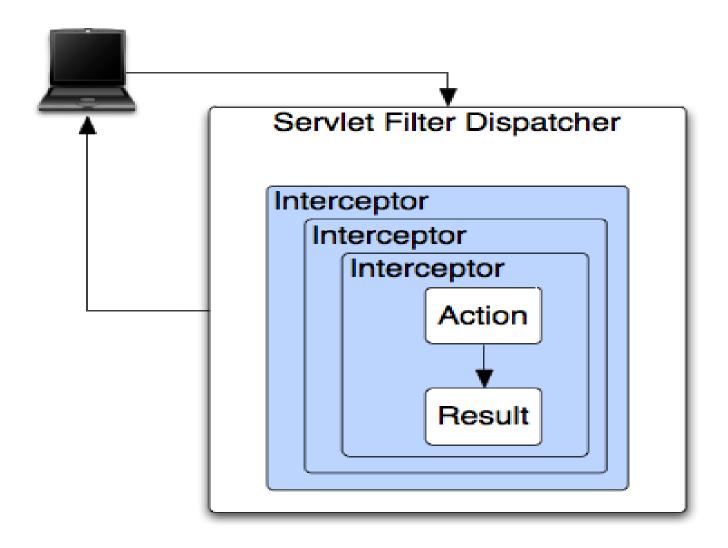
- Integrated dependency injection engine that manages component lifecycle and dependencies.
 - By default, the framework utilizes Spring for dependency injection
- Modular configuration files that use packages and namespaces to simplify managing large projects with hundreds of actions.
- Java 5 annotations that reduce configuration overhead
 - Java 1.4 is the minimum platform



Struts 2 Request Processing Life-Cycle



Struts 2 Architecture



Struts 2 Request Processing

- 1. The web browser requests a resource (/mypage.action, /reports/myreport.pdf, et cetera)
- 2. The Filter Dispatcher looks at the request and determines the appropriate Action
- The Interceptors automatically apply common functionality to the request, like workflow, validation, and file upload handling
- 4. The Action method executes, usually storing and/or retrieving information from a database
- 5. The Result renders the output to the browser, be it HTML, images, PDF, or something else



Improvements made in Struts 2



Simplified Design

- Most of the Struts 2 classes are based on interfaces and most of its core interfaces are HTTP independent.
 - Struts 1 programming model requires implementing the abstract classes while Struts 2 uses interfaces

Intelligent Defaults

- Most configuration elements have a default value which can be set according to the need.
 - "Convention over configuration" philosophy
- There are xml-based default configuration files that can be extended according to the need.

Improved Results

Unlike ActionForwards (of Struts 1), Struts 2
 Results provide flexibility to create multiple
 type of outputs

POJO Action's

Struts 1

 Actions in Struts1 have dependencies on the servlet API since the HttpServletRequest and HttpServletResponse objects are passed to the execute() method

Struts 2

- Any java class with execute() method can be used as an Action class.
- Actions are neutral to the underlying framework

No More ActionForm's

- ActionForms feature (of Struts 1) is no more known to the Struts 2 framework.
- Simple JavaBean flavored actions are used (in Struts 2) to put properties directly

Enhanced Testability

- Struts 2 Actions are HTTP independent and framework neutral.
 - This enables to test struts applications very easily without resorting to mock objects.

Better Tag Features

- Struts 2 tags enables to add style sheetdriven markup capabilities
 - You can create consistent pages with less code
 - Struts 2 tag markup can be altered by changing an underlying stylesheet.
- Struts 2 tags are more capable and result oriented.
- Both JSP and FreeMarker tags are fully supported.

Annotation Support

 Java 5 annotations can be used as an alternative to XML and Java properties configuration

Stateful Checkboxes

 Struts 2 checkboxes do not require special handling for false values

Quick Start

 Many changes can be made on the fly without restarting a web container.

Customizable Controller

- Struts 2 lets to customize the request handling per action, if desired.
 - Struts 1 lets to customize the request processor per module

Easy Spring Integration

- Struts 2 Actions are Spring-aware
 - You just need to add Spring beans

Easy Plug-in's

- Struts 2 extensions can be added by dropping in a JAR.
 - No additional XML or properties files.
 - Metadata is expressed through convention and annotation

Ajax Support

- AJAX client side validation
- Remote form submission support (works with the submit tag as well)
- An advanced div template that provides dynamic reloading of partial HTML
- An advanced template that provides the ability to load and evaluate JavaScript remotely
- An AJAX-only tabbed Panel implementation
- A rich pub-sub event model
- Interactive auto complete tag

Struts 1 vs. Struts 2

- Action
- ActionForm
- ActionForward
- struts-config.xml
- ActionServlet
- RequestProcessor
- validation.xml

- Action
- Action or POJO
- Result
- struts.xml
- FilterDispatcher
- Interceptors
- Action-validation.xml



Action



Action

- Is a basic "unit-of-work"
- POJO class which has execute() method

Action Mapping Configuration

- Maps an identifier to a Action class.
- When a request matches the action's name, the framework uses the mapping to determine how to process the request.
- Also specifies
 - A set of result types
 - A set of exception handlers
 - An interceptor stack

Example: Action Mapping

```
<action name="Logon" class="tutorial.Logon">
    <result type="redirect-action">Menu</result>
    <result name="input">/tutorial/Logon.jsp</result>
    </action>
```

Action Names (name attribute)

- The name attribute is matched a part of the location requested by a browser (or other HTTP client).
- The framework will drop the host and application name and the extension, and match what's in the middle.
- Example:
 - A request for http://www.planetstruts.org/struts2mailreader/Welcome.do will map to the Welcome action.

Action Names

- Within an application, the link to an action is usually generated by a Struts Tag.
- The tag can specify the action by name, and the framework will render the default extension and anything else that is needed.

```
<s:form action="Hello">
    <s:textfield label="Please enter your name" name="name"/>
    <s:submit/>
</s:form>
```

Example: Plain JSP

```
<html>
 <head><title>Add Blog Entry</title></head>
 <body>
   <form action="save.action" method="post">
     Title: <input type="text" name="title" /><br/>
     Entry: <textarea rows="3" cols="25" name="entry"></textarea>
  <br/>br/>
     <input type="submit" value="Add"/>
   </form>
 </body>
</html>
```

Example: Using Struts Tag

```
<%@ taglib prefix="s" uri="/WEB-INF/struts-tags.tld" %>
<html>
 <head><title>Add Blog Entry</title></head>
 <body>
  <s:form action="save" method="post" >
    <s:textfield label="Title" name="title" />
    <s:textarea label="Entry" name="entry" rows="3" cols="25" />
    <s:submit value="Add"/>
 </s:form>
  </body>
</html>
```

Action Interface

 The default entry method to the handler class is defined by the Action interface.

```
public interface Action {
    public String execute() throws Exception;
}
```

- Implementing the Action interface is optional.
 - If Action is not implemented, the framework will use reflection to look for an execute method.

Action Methods

- Sometimes, developers like to create more than one entry point to an Action.
 - For example, in the case of of a data-access Action, a developer might want separate entry-points for create, retrieve, update, and delete. A different entry point can be specified by the method attribute.

```
<action name="delete" class="example.CrudAction"
method="delete">
<action name="create" class="example.CrudAction"
method="create">
```

 If there is no execute method, and no other method, specified in the configuration, the framework will throw an exception.

Wildcard Method

- Many times, a set of action mappings will share a common pattern
- Rather than code a separate mapping for each action class, you can write it once as a wildcard mapping.

Example: Wildcard Method

Example 1

```
<action name="*Crud" class="example.Crud" method="{1}">
```

Here, a reference to "editCrud" will call the edit method on an instance of the Crud Action class. Likewise, a reference to "deleteCrud" will call the delete method instead.

Example 2

```
<action name="Crud_*" class="example.Crud" method="{1}">
```

Action Default

 If you would prefer that an omnibus action handle any unmatched requests, you can specify a default action. If no other action matches, the default action is used instead

```
<package name="Hello" extends="action-default">
    <default-action-ref name="UnderConstruction">
    <action name="UnderConstruction">
        <result>/UnderConstruction.jsp</result>
        </action>
```

Wildcard Default

- Using wildcards is another approach to default actions.
- A wildcard action at the end of the configuration can be used to catch unmatched references.

```
<action name="*" >
  <result>/{1}.jsp</result>
  </action>
```



Result



Result

- When an Action class method completes, it returns a String.
 - The value of the String is used to select a result element.
 - An action mapping will often have a set of results representing different possible outcomes.
- There are predefined result names (tokens)
- Applications can define other result names (tokens) to match specific cases.

Pre-defined result names (tokens)

String SUCCESS = "success";
String NONE = "none";
String ERROR = "error";
String INPUT = "input";
String LOGIN = "login";

Result Element

- Provides a logical name (with name attribute)
 - An Action can pass back a token like "success" or "error" without knowing any other implementation details.
 - If the name attribute is not specified, the framework will give it the name "success".
- Provides a Result Type (with type attribute)
 - Most results simply forward to a server page or template, but other Result Types can be used to do more interesting things.
 - If a type attribute is not specified, the framework will use the dispatcher

Result element

Result element without defaults

```
<result name="success" type="dispatcher">
     cparam name="location">/ThankYou.jsp//result>
```

Result element using some defaults (as as above)

```
<result>
  // ThankYou.jsp//param>
```

Result element using default for the <param>
as well

```
<result>/ThankYou.jsp</result>
```

Example: Multiple Results

```
<action name="Hello">
  <result>/hello/Result.jsp</result> <!-- name="success" -->
  <result name="error">/hello/Error.jsp</result>
  <result name="input">/hello/Input.jsp</result>
  </action>
```



Result Types



Predefined Result Types

- Dispatcher Result
- Redirect Action Result
- Chain Result
- Redirect Result
- FreeMarker Result
- Velocity Result
- PlainText Result
- Tiles Result
- HttpHeader Result
- Stream Result

Setting a default Result Type

- If a *type* attribute is not specified, the framework will use the *dispatcher*.
 - The default Result Type, dispatcher, forwards to another web resource.
- A default Result Type can be set as part of the configuration for each package.

```
<result-types>
<result-type name="dispatcher"
  class="org.apache.struts2.dispatcher.ServletDispatcherResult"
  default="true"/>
</result-types>
```

Global Results

- Most often, results are nested with the action element. But some results apply to multiple actions.
 - Example: In a secure application, a client might try to access a page without being authorized, and many actions may need access to a "logon" result.
- If actions need to share results, a set of global results can be defined for each package.
- The framework will first look for a local result nested in the action. If a local match is not found, then the global results are checked.

Example: Global Results

```
<global-results>
  <result name="error">/Error.jsp</result>
  <result name="invalid.token">/Error.jsp</result>
  <result name="login" type="redirect-action">Logon!input</result>
  </global-results>
```

Dynamic Results

- A result may not be known until execution time.
- Result values may be retrieved from its corresponding Action implementation by using EL expressions that access the Action's properties

Example: Dynamic Results

 Give the following Action fragment private String nextAction; public String getNextAction() { return nextAction; }

You might define a result like following

 action name="fragment" class="FragmentAction">
 result name="next"
 type="redirect-action">\${nextAction}</result>

 </action>

Example: Dynamic Results

 In the code below, if it returns success, then the browser will be forwarded to

/<app-prefix>/myNamespace/otherAction.action?id=<value of id>

Action Chaining

- The framework provides the ability to chain multiple actions into a defined sequence or workflow.
- This feature works by applying a Chain Result to a given Action

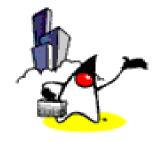
Chain Result

- The Chain Result is a result type that invokes an Action with its own Interceptor Stack and Result.
- This Interceptor allows an Action to forward requests to a target Action, while propagating the state of the source Action.

```
<package name="public" extends="struts-default">
  <!-- Chain creatAccount to login, using the default parameter -->
  <action name="createAccount" class="...">
    <result type="chain">login</result>
  </action>
  <action name="login" class="...">
    <!-- Chain to another namespace -->
    <result type="chain">
       <param name="actionName">dashboard/param>
       <param name="namespace">/secure</param>
    </result>
  </action>
</package>
<package name="secure" extends="struts-default" namespace="/secure">
  <action name="dashboard" class="...">
    <result>dashboard.jsp</result>
  </action>
</package>
```



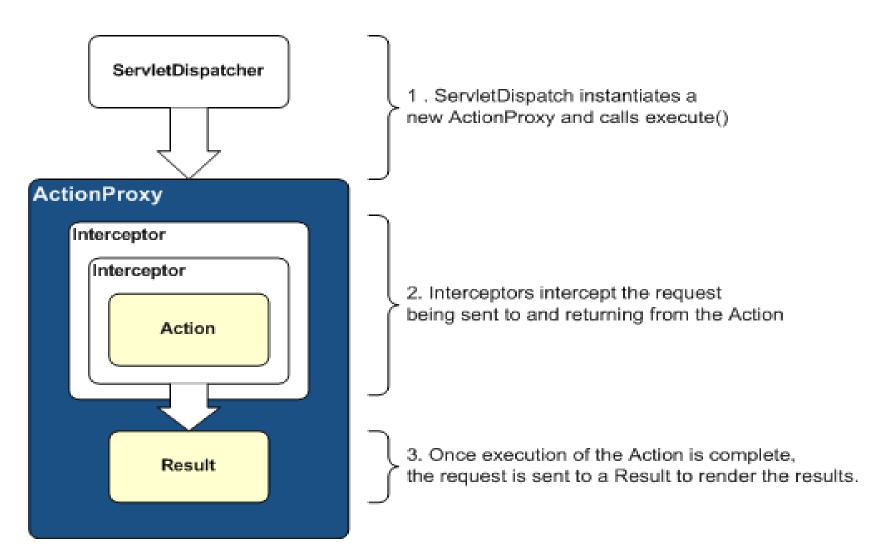
Interceptor



Why Interceptors?

- Many Actions share common concerns.
 - Example: Some Actions need input validated.
 Other Actions may need a file upload to be preprocessed. Another Action might need protection from a double submit. Many Actions need dropdown lists and other controls pre-populated before the page displays.
- The framework makes it easy to share solutions to these concerns using an "Interceptor" strategy.

Interceptor in Action Life-cycle



Interceptors

- Interceptors can execute code before and after an Action is invoked.
- Most of the framework's core functionality is implemented as Interceptors.
 - Features like double-submit guards, type conversion, object population, validation, file upload, page preparation, and more, are all implemented with the help of Interceptors.
- Each and every Interceptor is pluggable

Interceptors & Actions

- In some cases, an Interceptor might keep an Action from firing, because of a double-submit or because validation failed.
- Interceptors can also change the state of an Action before it executes.

Configuration of Interceptors

- Interceptors can be configured on a peraction basis.
- Your own custom Interceptors can be mixedand-matched with the Interceptors bundled with the framework.
- The Interceptors are defined in a stack that specifies the execution order.
 - In some cases, the order of the Interceptors on the stack can be very important.

Configurating Interceptors

```
<package name="default" extends="struts-default">
 <interceptors>
    <interceptor name="timer" class=".."/>
    <interceptor name="logger" class=".."/>
 </interceptors>
 <action name="login" class="tutorial.Login">
     <interceptor-ref name="timer"/>
     <interceptor-ref name="logger"/>
     <result name="input">login.jsp</result>
     <result name="success"
       type="redirect-action">/secure/home</result>
 </action>
</package>
```

Stacking Interceptors

- With most web applications, we find ourselves wanting to apply the same set of Interceptors over and over again.
- Rather than reiterate the same list of Interceptors, we can bundle these Interceptors together using an Interceptor Stack.

Stacking Interceptors

```
<package name="default" extends="struts-default">
 <interceptors>
     <interceptor name="timer" class=".."/>
     <interceptor name="logger" class=".."/>
     <interceptor-stack name="myStack">
      <interceptor-ref name="timer"/>
      <interceptor-ref name="logger"/>
     </interceptor-stack>
  </interceptors>
<action name="login" class="tutuorial.Login">
     <interceptor-ref name="myStack"/>
     <result name="input">login.jsp</result>
     <result name="success"
       type="redirect-action">/secure/home</result>
</action>
</package>
```

Interceptor Interface

- Interceptors must implement the com.opensymphony.xwork2.interceptor.Interceptor interface
- The AbstractInterceptor class provides an empty implementation of init and destroy, and can be used if these methods are not going to be implemented.

Example: Interceptor

```
import com.opensymphony.xwork2.ActionInvocation;
import com.opensymphony.xwork2.interceptor.AbstractInterceptor;
public class SimpleInterceptor extends AbstractInterceptor {
  public String intercept(ActionInvocation invocation) throws
  Exception {
    MyAction action = (MyAction)invocation.getAction();
    action.setDate(new Date());
    return invocation.invoke();
```

Framework Interceptors

- Struts 2 framework provides an extensive set of ready-to-use interceptors
 - Parameter interceptor: Sets the request parameters onto the Action.
 - Scope interceptor: Simple mechanism for storing Action state in the session or application scope.
 - Validation interceptor: Performs validation using the validators defined in action-validation.xml
 - Many more
- Configured in struts-default.xml



View Support



View

- Reusable user interface tags that allow for easy component-oriented development using themes and templates.
- Bundled tags ranges from simple text fields to advanced tags like date pickers and tree views.
- JSTL-compatible expression language (OGNL) that exposes properties on multiple objects as if they were a single JavaBean.
- Pluggable Result Types that support multiple view technologies, including JSP, FreeMarker, Velocity, PDF, and JasperReports.

View

- Optional AJAX theme that simplifes creating interactive web applications.
- Optional Interceptor plugins that can execute long-running queries in the background, prevent multiple form submissions, or handle custom security schemes.

View Technologies

• JSP, Velocity, FreeMaker, PDF, XSLT



Validation



Built-in Validators

```
<validators>
  <validator name="required" class=".."/>
  <validator name="requiredstring" class=".."/>
  <validator name="int" class=".."/>
  <validator name="double" class=".."/>
  <validator name="date" class=".."/>
  <validator name="expression" class=".."/>
  <validator name="fieldexpression" class=".."/>
  <validator name="email" class=".."/>
  <validator name="url" class=".."/>
  <validator name="visitor" class=".."/>
  <validator name="conversion" class="../>
  <validator name="stringlength" class=".."/>
  <validator name="regex" class=".."/>
</validators>
```

Defining Validation Rules

- Per Action class:
 - in a file named <ActionName>-validation.xml
- Per Action alias:
 - in a file named <ActionName-alias>-validation.xml
- Inheritance hierarchy and interfaces implemented by Action class
 - Searches up the inheritance tree of the action to find default validations for parent classes of the Action and interfaces implemented

Example: SimpleAction-validation.xml

```
<validators>
 <field name="bar">
   <field-validator type="required">
      <message>You must enter a value for bar.</message>
   </field-validator>
   <field-validator type="int">
      <param name="min">6</param>
      <param name="max">10</param>
      <message>bar must be between ${min} and ${max}, current
  value is ${bar}.</message>
   </field-validator>
 </field>
 <field name="bar2">
   <field-validator type="regex">
      <param name="regex">[0-9],[0-9]</param>
      <message>The value of bar2 must be in the format "x, y",
  where x and y are between 0 and 9</message>
   </field-validator>
 </field>
                                          source: Apache Struts 2 documentation
```

```
<field name="date">
  <field-validator type="date">
    <param name="min">12/22/2002</param>
    <param name="max">12/25/2002</param>
    <message>The date must be between 12-22-2002 and 12-25-
 2002.</message>
  </field-validator>
</field>
<field name="foo">
  <field-validator type="int">
    <param name="min">0</param>
    <param name="max">100</param>
    <message key="foo.range">Could not find foo.range!</message>
  </field-validator>
</field>
<validator type="expression">
  <param name="expression">foo It bar </param>
  <message>Foo must be greater than Bar. Foo = ${foo}, Bar = $
 {bar}.</message>
</validator>
                                                                 76
```

Client Validation

- JavaScript client validation code is generated by the framework
- Code you write

```
<s:form action="Login" validate="true">
    <s:textfield key="username"/>
        <s:password key="password" />
        <s:submit/>
    </s:form>
```

Client Validation

 JavaScript code that gets generated by framework

```
<form namespace="/example" id="Login" name="Login"</pre>
  onsubmit="return validateForm Login();" action="/struts2-login-
  clientsidevalidation/example/Login.action"
  method="post">
<script type="text/javascript">
  function validateForm Login() {
    form = document.getElementById("Login");
    clearErrorMessages(form);
    clearErrorLabels(form);
```

Example: type="expression"

```
<field name="password">
  <field-validator type="requiredstring">
    <message key="error.password.required"/>
  </field-validator>
</field>
<field name="password2">
  <field-validator type="requiredstring">
    <message key="error.password2.required"/>
  </field-validator>
</field>
<validator type="expression">
  <param name="expression">password eq password2</param>
  <message key="error.password.match"/>
</validator>
```



Configuration Files



struts-default.xml

- Defines all of the default bundled results and interceptors and many interceptor stacks which you can use either as-is or as a basis for your own application-specific interceptor stacks.
- Automatically included into struts.xml file
- Included in the struts2.jar file.
- In order to provide your own version, you can change the struts.configuration.files setting in struts.properties file.

struts-default.xml

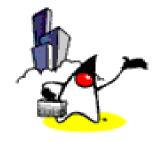
```
<package name="struts-default">
  <result-types>
     <result-type name="chain" class="..."/>
     <result-type name="dispatcher" class="..." default="true"/>
  </result-types>
  <interceptors>
     <interceptor name="alias" class="..."/>
     <interceptor name="autowiring" class="...r"/>
     <!-- Basic stack -->
     <interceptor-stack name="basicStack">
       <interceptor-ref name="..."/>
       <interceptor-ref name="servlet-config"/>
       <interceptor-ref name="prepare"/>
       <interceptor-ref name="checkbox"/>
       <interceptor-ref name="params"/>
       <interceptor-ref name="conversionError"/>
```

struts.xml

- The core configuration file for the framework
- Should reside on the classpath of the webapp (generally /WEB-INF/classes).



Packages



Package

- Packages are a way to group actions, results, result types, interceptors, and interceptorstacks into a logical configuration unit.
- Conceptually, packages are similiar to classes in that they can be extended and have individual parts that can be overridden by "sub" packages.

Example: <package ..>

```
<package name="employee" extends="struts-default"</pre>
         namespace="/employee">
 <default-interceptor-ref name="crudStack"/>
 <action name="list" method="list"
  class="org.apache.struts2.showcase.action.EmployeeAction" >
   <result>/empmanager/listEmployees.jsp</result>
   <interceptor-ref name="basicStack"/>
 </action>
```

Namespace attribute

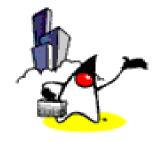
- The namespace attribute subdivides action configurations into logical modules, each with its own identifying prefix.
 - Namespaces avoid conflicts between action names.
 Each namespace can have it's own "menu" or "help" action, each with its own implementation.

Example: Namespace attribute

```
<package name="default">
  <action name="foo" class="mypackage.simpleAction>
    <result name="success" type="dispatcher">greeting.jsp</result>
  </action>
  <action name="bar" class="mypackage.simpleAction">
    <result name="success" type="dispatcher">bar1.jsp</result>
  </action>
</package>
<package name="mypackage1" namespace="/">
  <action name="moo" class="mypackage.simpleAction">
    <result name="success" type="dispatcher">moo.jsp</result>
  </action>
</package>
<package name="mypackage2" namespace="/barspace">
  <action name="bar" class="mypackage.simpleAction">
    <result name="success" type="dispatcher">bar2.jsp</result>
  </action>
</package>
```



Plug-in

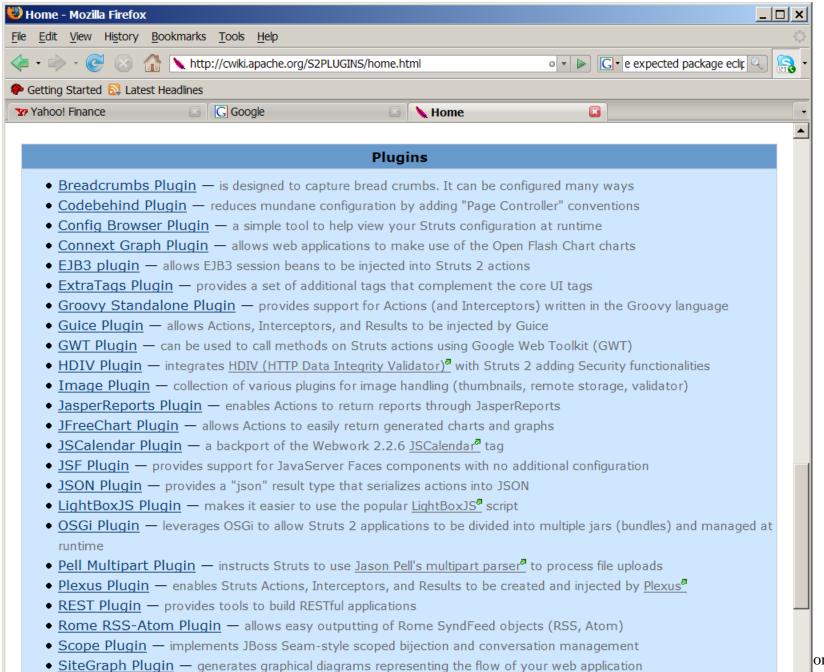


Struts 2 Plug-in Architecture

- Plug-in's are used to extend the framework just by adding a JAR to the application's classpath.
- Since plugins are contained in a JAR, they are easy to share with others.

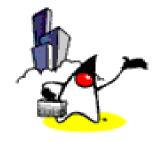
Bundled Plug-in's

- JSF plug-in
- REST plug-in
- Spring plug-in
- Tiles plug-in
- SiteGraph plug-in
- Sitemesh plug-in
- JasperReports plug-in
- JFreeChart plug-in
- Config Browser plug-in
- Struts 1 plug-in





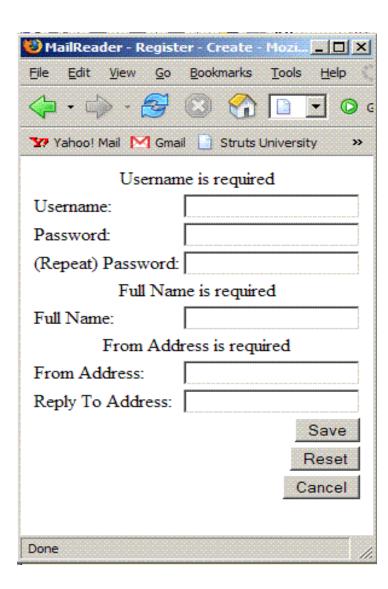
Struts 2 Tags



Struts 2 Tags

• The Struts Tags help you create rich web applications with a minimum of coding.

For example page like following...



Without Struts Tags (a partial form)

```
<% User user = ActionContext.getContext() %>
<form action="Profile update.action" method="post">
 align="right"<label>First name:</label>
  <input type="text" name="user.firstname"
   value="<%=user.getFirstname() %> />
 >
  <input type="radio" name="user.gender" value="0"
  id="user.gender0"
  <% if (user.getGender()==0) { %>
  checked="checked" %> } %> />
  <label for="user.gender0">Female</label>
```

After Struts Tags (a complete form)

```
<s:actionerror/>
<s:form action="Profile update" validate="true">
 <s:textfield label="Username" name="username"/>
 <s:password label="Password" name="password"/>
 <s:password label="(Repeat) Password" name="password2"/>
 <s:textfield label="Full Name" name="fullName"/>
 <s:textfield label="From Address" name="fromAddress"/>
 <s:textfield label="Reply To Address"
            name="replyToAddress"/>
 <s:submit value="Save" name="Save"/>
 <s:submit action="Register_cancel" value="Cancel"
           name="Cancel"
           onclick="form.onsubmit=null"/>
</s:form>
```

Thank you!

Sang Shin www.JavaPassion.com "Learning is fun!"

