

Spring Security IN ACTION

SECOND EDITION

Laurențiu Spilcă



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Spring Security in Action, Second Edition MEAP V06

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MEAP Edition Manning Early Access Program Spring Security in Action,
Second Edition Version 6

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welcome

Thank you for purchasing the MEAP of *Spring Security in Action, 2nd edition*. With time, technologies evolve quickly. So does the Spring ecosystem and Spring Security together with it. Spring is an ecosystem of projects with a huge active community that continuously works to improve the framework.

More and more developers are aware that security is an essential aspect that needs to be considered from the very start of a software project. Since I wrote the first edition of *Spring Security in Action*, essential things have changed in how you write your Spring Security configurations. Clearly, you should know these changes and apply them properly in apps.

By the end of the book, you will have covered the following topics:

- Implementing authentication in a web app
- Implementing authorization at the endpoint level in a web app
- Implementing authorization at the method level in a web app
- Implementing an OAuth 2 authorization server using the Spring Security authorization server framework
- Implementing OAuth 2 resource server and client.
- Testing your Spring Security implementations

I have used Spring and Spring Security for many years with a great variety of systems, from the technical perspective to the business domain. However, teaching a complex subject such as Spring Security so it can be well understood is not an easy task. This is why your feedback is invaluable and will significantly help in the improvement of this book. Please let me know what comments and suggestions you have in the [liveBook Discussion](#) forum.

Thank you again for your interest and for purchasing the MEAP!

-Perry Lea

In this book

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1 Security today

This chapter covers

- What Spring Security is and what you can solve by using it
- What security is for a software application
- Why software security is essential and why you should care

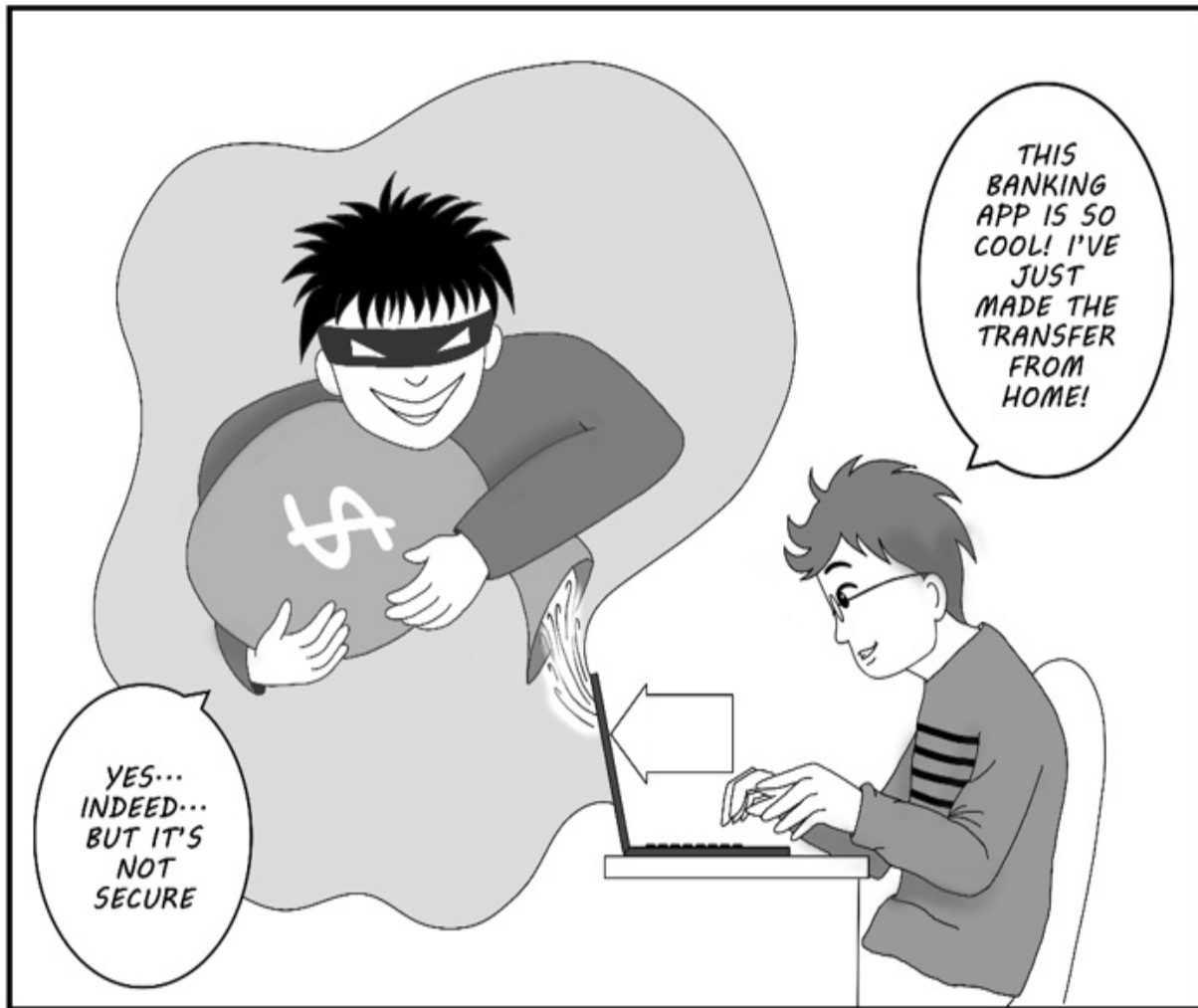
Developers have become increasingly more aware of the need for secure software, and are taking responsibility for security from the beginning of software development.

Generally, as developers, we begin by learning that the purpose of an application is to solve business issues. This purpose refers to something where data could be processed somehow, persisted, and eventually displayed to the user in a specific way as specified by some requirements. This overview of software development, which is somehow imposed from the early stages of learning these techniques, has the unfortunate disadvantage of hiding practices that are also part of the process. While the application works correctly from the user's perspective and, in the end, it does what the user expects in terms of functionality, there are lots of aspects hidden in the final result.

Nonfunctional software qualities such as performance, scalability, availability, and, of course, security, as well as others, can have an impact over time, from short to long term. If not taken into consideration early on, these qualities can dramatically affect the profitability of the application owners. Moreover, the neglect of these considerations can also trigger failures in other systems as well (for example, by the unwilling participation in a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack). The hidden aspects of nonfunctional requirements (the fact that it's much more challenging to see if something's missing or incomplete) makes these, however, more dangerous.

Figure 1.1 A user mainly thinks about functional requirements. Sometimes, you might see them aware of performance, which is nonfunctional, but unfortunately, it's quite unusual that a user cares about security. Nonfunctional requirements tend to be more transparent than functional

ones.



There are multiple nonfunctional aspects to consider when working on a software system. In practice, all of these are important and need to be treated responsibly in the process of software development. In this book, we focus on one of these: security. You'll learn how to protect your application, step by step, using Spring Security.

In this chapter, I want to show you the big picture of security-related concepts. Throughout the book, we work on practical examples, and where appropriate, I'll refer back to the description I give in this chapter. Where applicable, I'll also provide you with more details. Here and there, you'll find references to other materials (books, articles, documentation) on specific

subjects that are useful for further reading.

1.1 Discovering Spring Security

In this section, we discuss the relationship between Spring Security and Spring. It is important, first of all, to understand the link between the two before starting to use those. If we go to the official website, <https://spring.io/projects/spring-security>, we see Spring Security described as a powerful and highly customizable framework for authentication and access control. I would simply say it is a framework that enormously simplifies applying (or “baking”) security for Spring applications.

Spring Security is the primary choice for implementing application-level security in Spring applications. Generally, its purpose is to offer you a highly customizable way of implementing authentication, authorization, and protection against common attacks. Spring Security is an open-source software released under the Apache 2.0 license. You can access its source code on GitHub at <https://github.com/spring-projects/spring-security/>. I highly recommend that you contribute to the project as well.

Note

You can use Spring Security for both standard web servlets and reactive applications as well as non-web apps. In this book, we’ll use Spring Security with the latest Java long-term supported, Spring, and Spring Boot versions (Java 17, Spring 6, and Spring Boot 3).

I can guess that if you opened this book, you work on Spring applications, and you are interested in securing those. Spring Security is most likely the best choice for you. It’s the de facto solution for implementing application-level security for Spring applications. Spring Security, however, doesn’t automatically secure your application. And it’s not some kind of magic panacea that guarantees a vulnerability-free app. Developers need to understand how to configure and customize Spring Security around the needs of their applications. How to do this depends on many factors, from the functional requirements to the architecture.

Technically, applying security with Spring Security in Spring applications is simple. You've already implemented Spring applications, so you know that the framework's philosophy starts with the management of the Spring context. You define beans in the Spring context to allow the framework to manage these based on the configurations you specify.

You use annotations to tell Spring what to do: expose endpoints, wrap methods in transactions, intercept methods in aspects, and so on. The same is true with Spring Security configurations, which is where Spring Security comes into play. What you want is to use annotations, beans, and in general, a Spring-fashioned configuration style comfortably when defining your application-level security. In a Spring application, the behavior that you need to protect is defined by methods.

To think about application-level security, you can consider your home and the way you allow access to it. Do you place the key under the entrance rug? Do you even have a key for your front door? The same concept applies to applications, and Spring Security helps you develop this functionality. It's a puzzle that offers plenty of choices for building the exact image that describes your system. You can choose to leave your house completely unsecured, or you can decide not to allow everyone to enter your home.

The way you configure security can be straightforward like hiding your key under the rug, or it can be more complicated like choosing a variety of alarm systems, video cameras, and locks. In your applications, you have the same options, but as in real life, the more complexity you add, the more expensive it gets. In an application, this cost refers to the way security affects maintainability and performance.

But how do you use Spring Security with Spring applications? Generally, at the application level, one of the most encountered use cases is when you're deciding whether someone is allowed to perform an action or use some piece of data. Based on configurations, you write Spring Security components that intercept the requests and that ensure whoever makes the requests has permission to access protected resources. The developer configures components to do precisely what's desired. If you mount an alarm system, it's you who should make sure it's also set up for the windows as well as for the doors. If you forget to set it up for the windows, it's not the fault of the

alarm system that it doesn't trigger when someone forces a window.

Other responsibilities of Spring Security components relate to data storage as well as data transit between different parts of the systems. By intercepting calls to these different parts, the components can act on the data. For example, when data is stored, these components can apply encryption or hashing algorithms to the data. The data encodings keep the data accessible only to privileged entities. In a Spring application, the developer has to add and configure a component to do this part of the job wherever it's needed. Spring Security provides us with a contract through which we know what the framework requires to be implemented, and we write the implementation according to the design of the application. We can say the same thing about transiting data.

In real-world implementations, you'll find cases in which two communicating components don't trust each other. How can the first know that the second one sent a specific message and it wasn't someone else? Imagine you have a phone call with somebody to whom you have to give private information. How do you make sure that on the other end is indeed a valid individual with the right to get that data, and not somebody else? For your application, this situation applies as well. Spring Security provides components that allow you to solve these issues in several ways, but you have to know which part to configure and then set it up in your system. This way, Spring Security intercepts messages and makes sure to validate communication before the application uses any kind of data sent or received.

Like any framework, one of the primary purposes of Spring is to allow you to write less code to implement the desired functionality. And this is also what Spring Security does. It completes Spring as a framework by helping you write less code to perform one of the most critical aspects of an application—security. Spring Security provides predefined functionality to help you avoid writing boilerplate code or repeatedly writing the same logic from app to app. But it also allows you to configure any of its components, thus providing great flexibility. To briefly recap this discussion:

- You use Spring Security to bake application-level security into your applications in the “Spring” way. By this, I mean, you use annotations, beans, the Spring Expression Language (SpEL), and so on.

- Spring Security is a framework that lets you build application-level security. However, it is up to you, the developer, to understand and use Spring Security properly. Spring Security, by itself, does not secure an application or sensitive data at rest or in flight.
- This book provides you with the information you need to effectively use Spring Security.

Alternatives to Spring Security

This book is about Spring Security, but as with any solution, I always prefer to have a broad overview. Never forget to learn the alternatives that you have for any option. One of the things I've learned over time is that there's no general right or wrong. "Everything is relative" also applies here!

You won't find a lot of alternatives to Spring Security when it comes to securing a Spring application. One alternative you could consider is Apache Shiro (<https://shiro.apache.org>). It offers flexibility in configuration and is easy to integrate with Spring and Spring Boot applications. Apache Shiro sometimes makes a good alternative to the Spring Security approach.

If you've already worked with Spring Security, you'll find using Apache Shiro easy and comfortable to learn. It offers its own annotations and design for web applications based on HTTP filters, which greatly simplify working with web applications. Also, you can secure more than just web applications with Shiro, from smaller command-line and mobile applications to large-scale enterprise applications. And even if simple, it's powerful enough to use for a wide range of things from authentication and authorization to cryptography and session management.

However, Apache Shiro could be too "light" for the needs of your application. Spring Security is not just a hammer, but an entire set of tools. It offers a larger scale of possibilities and is designed specifically for Spring applications. Moreover, it benefits from a larger community of active developers, and it is continuously enhanced.

1.2 What is software security?

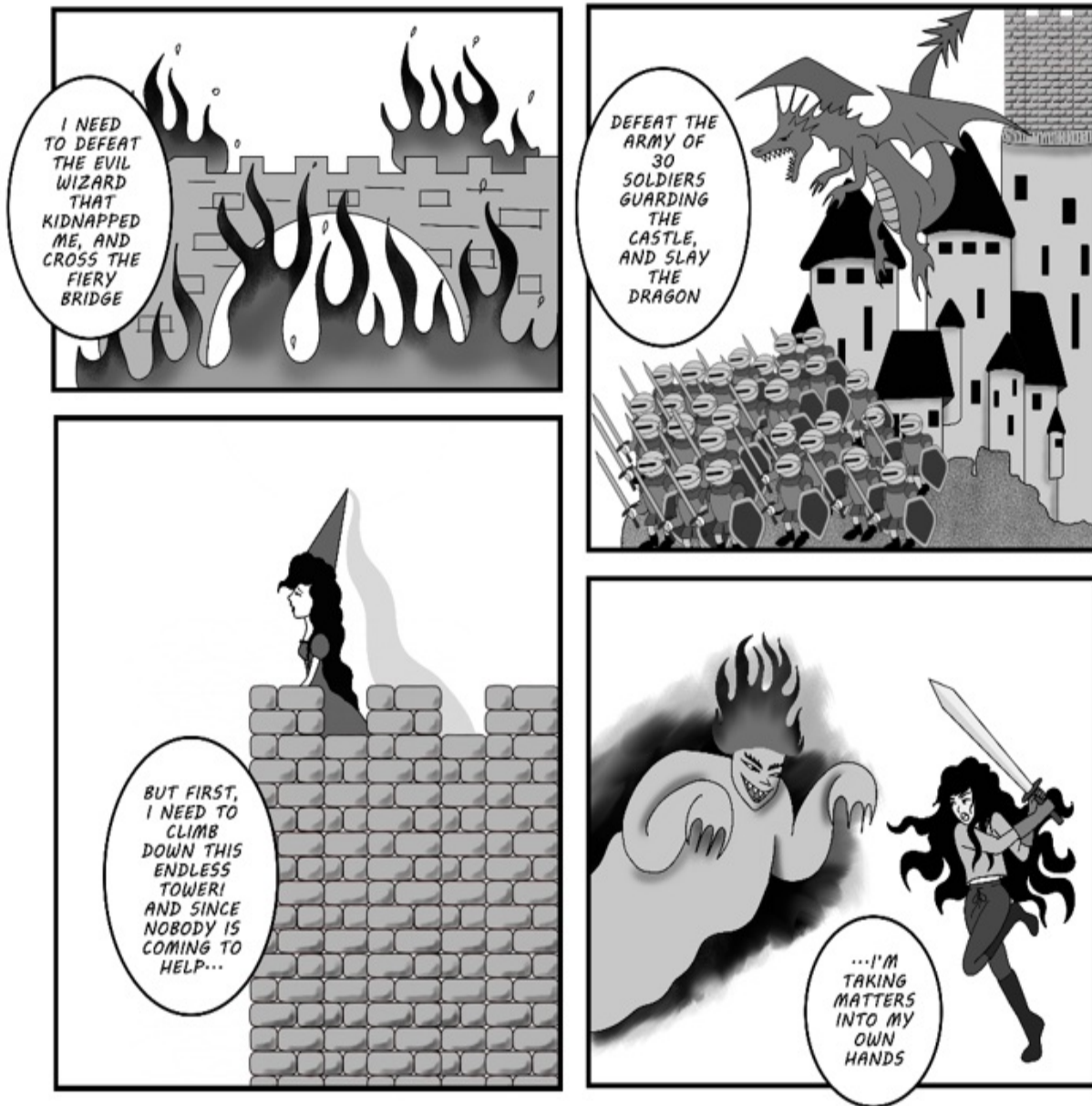
Software systems manage large amounts of data, of which a significant part can be considered sensitive, especially given the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) requirements. Any information that you, as a user, consider private is sensitive for your software application. Sensitive data can include harmless information like a phone number, email address, or identification number; although, we generally think more about data that is riskier to lose, like your credit card details. The application should ensure that there's no chance for that information to be accessed, changed, or intercepted. No parties other than the users for whom this data is intended should be able to interact in any way with it. Broadly expressed, this is the meaning of security.

NOTE

GDPR created a lot of buzz globally after its introduction in 2018. It generally represents a set of European laws that refer to data protection and gives people more control over their private data. GDPR applies to the owners of systems that have users in Europe. The owners of such applications risk significant penalties if they don't respect the regulations imposed.

We apply security in layers, with each layer requiring a different approach. Compare these layers to a protected castle (figure 1.2). A hacker needs to bypass several obstacles to obtain the resources managed by the app. The better you secure each layer, the lower the chance an individual with bad intentions manages to access data or perform unauthorized operations.

Figure 1.2 The Dark Wizard (a hacker) has to bypass multiple obstacles (security layers) to steal the Magic Sword (user resources) from the Princess (your application).

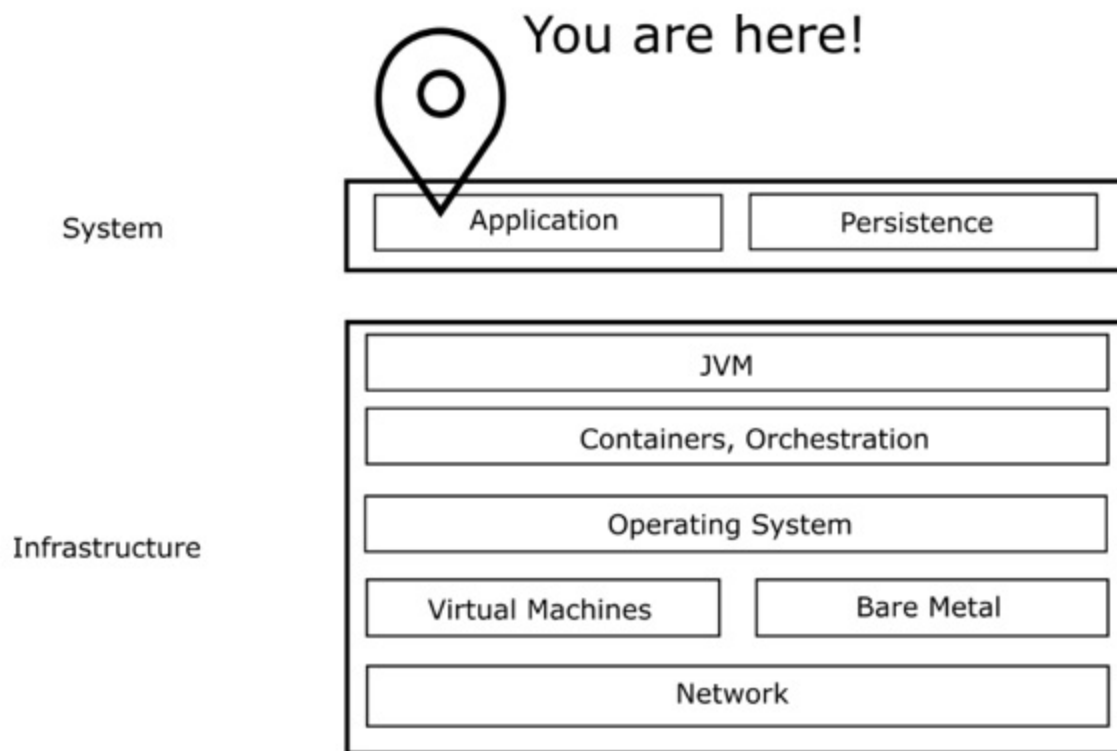


Security is a complex subject. In the case of a software system, security doesn't apply only at the application level. For example, for networking, there are issues to be taken into consideration and specific practices to be used, while for storage, it's another discussion altogether. Similarly, there's a different philosophy in terms of deployment, and so on. Spring Security is a framework that belongs to application-level security. In this section, you'll get a general picture of this security level and its implications.

"charitalics" Application-level security (figure 1.3) refers to everything that an

application should do to protect the environment it executes in, as well as the data it processes and stores. Mind that this isn't only about the data affected and used by the application. An application might contain vulnerabilities that allow a malicious individual to affect the entire system!

Figure 1.3 We apply security in layers, and each layer depends on those below it. In this book, we discuss Spring Security, which is a framework used to implement application-level security at the top-most level.



To be more explicit, let's discuss using some practical cases. We'll consider a situation in which we deploy a system as in figure 1.4. This situation is common for a system designed using a microservices architecture, especially if you deploy it in multiple availability zones in the cloud.

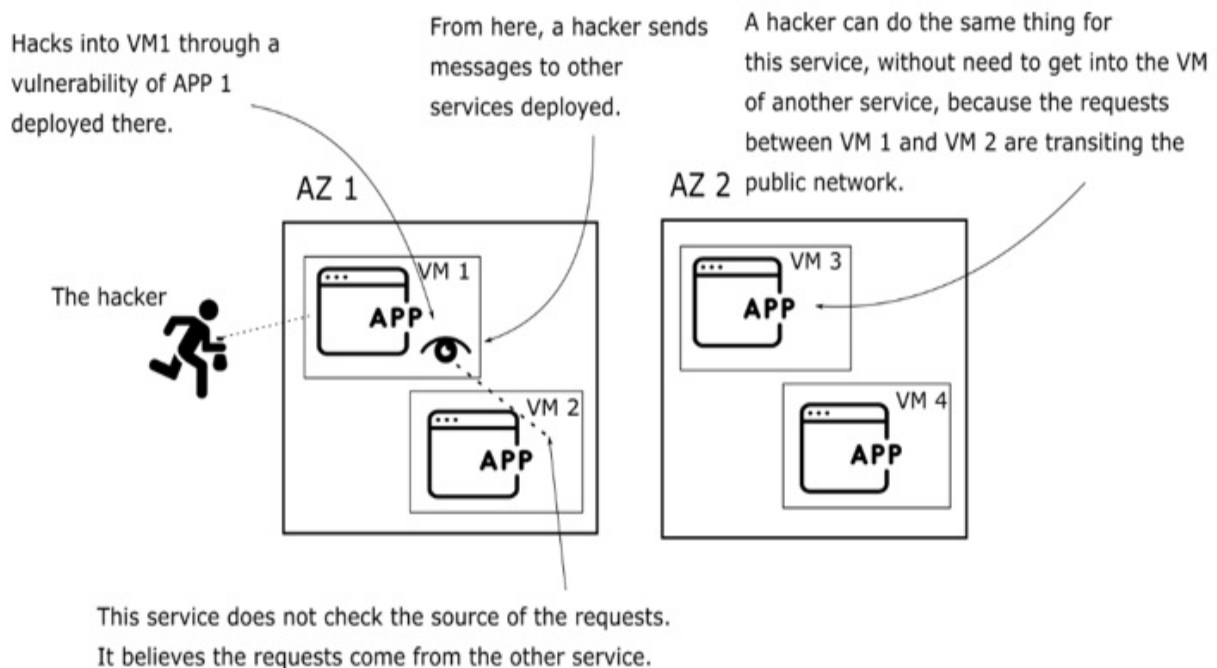
Note

If you're interested in implementing efficient cloud-oriented Spring apps, I strongly recommend you *Cloud Native Spring in Action* by Thomas Vitale (Manning, 2022). In this book, the author focuses on all the needed aspects a professional needs to know for implementing well-done Spring apps for

cloud deployments.

With such microservices architectures, we can encounter various vulnerabilities, so you should exercise caution. As mentioned earlier, security is a cross-cutting concern that we design on multiple layers. It's a best practice when addressing the security concerns of one of the layers to assume as much as possible that the above layer doesn't exist. Think about the analogy with the castle in figure 1.2. If you manage the "layer" with 30 soldiers, you want to prepare them to be as strong as possible. And you do this even knowing that before reaching them, one would need to cross the fiery bridge.

Figure 1.4 If a malicious user manages to get access to the virtual machine (VM) and there's no applied application-level security, a hacker can gain control of the other applications in the system. If communication is done between two different availability zones (AZ), a malicious individual will find it easier to intercept the messages. This vulnerability allows them to steal data or to impersonate users.



With this in mind, let's consider that an individual driven by bad intentions would be able to log in to the virtual machine (VM) that's hosting the first application. Let's also assume that the second application doesn't validate the requests sent by the first application. The attacker can then exploit this

vulnerability and control the second application by impersonating the first one.

Also, consider that we deploy the two services to two different locations. Then the attacker doesn't need to log in to one of the VMs as they can directly act in the middle of communications between the two applications.

NOTE

An *availability zone* (AZ in figure 1.4) in terms of cloud deployment is a separate data center. This data center is situated far enough geographically (and has other dependencies) from other data centers of the same region that, if one availability zone fails, the probability that others are failing too is minimal. In terms of security, an important aspect is that traffic between two different data centers generally goes across a public network.

I referred earlier to authentication and authorization. These are present in most applications. Through authentication, an application identifies a user (a person or another application). The purpose of identifying these is to be able to decide afterward what they should be allowed to do—that's authorization. I provide quite a lot of details on authentication and authorization, starting with chapter 3 and continuing throughout the book.

In an application, you often find the need to implement authorization in different scenarios. Consider another situation: most applications have restrictions regarding the user accessing certain functionality. Achieving this implies first the need to identify who creates an access to request for a specific feature—that's authentication. As well, we need to know their privileges to allow the user to use that part of the system. As the system becomes more complex, you'll find different situations that require a specific implementation related to authentication and authorization.

For example, what if you'd like to authorize a particular component of the system against a subset of data or operations on behalf of the user? Let's say the printer needs access to read the user's documents. Should you simply share the credentials of the user with the printer? But that allows the printer more rights than needed! And it also exposes the credentials of the user. Is there a proper way to do this without impersonating the user? These are

essential questions, and the kind of questions you encounter when developing applications: questions that we not only want to answer, but for which you'll see applications with Spring Security in this book.

Depending on the chosen architecture for the system, you'll find authentication and authorization at the level of the entire system, as well as for any of the components. And as you'll see further along in this book, with Spring Security, you'll sometimes prefer to use authorization even for different tiers of the same component. In chapter 11, we'll discuss more on method security, which refers to this aspect. The design gets even more complicated when you have a predefined set of roles and authorities.

I would also like to bring to your attention data storage. Data at rest adds to the responsibility of the application. Your app shouldn't store all its data in a readable format. The application sometimes needs to keep the data either encrypted with a private key or hashed. Secrets like credentials and private keys can also be considered data at rest. These should be carefully stored, usually in a secrets vault.

NOTE

We classify data as “at rest” or “in transition.” In this context, *data at rest* refers to data in computer storage or, in other words, persisted data. *Data in transition* applies to all the data that's exchanged from one point to another. Different security measures should, therefore, be enforced, depending on the type of data.

Finally, an executing application must manage its internal memory as well. It may sound strange, but data stored in the heap of the application can also present vulnerabilities. Sometimes the class design allows the app to store sensitive data like credentials or private keys for a long time. In such cases, someone who has the privilege to make a heap dump could find these details and then use them maliciously.

With a short description of these cases, I hope I've managed to provide you with an overview of what we mean by application security, as well as the complexity of this subject. Software security is a tangled subject. One who is willing to become an expert in this field would need to understand (as well as

to apply) and then test solutions for all the layers that collaborate within a system. In this book, however, we'll focus only on presenting all the details of what you specifically need to understand in terms of Spring Security. You'll find out where this framework applies and where it doesn't, how it helps, and why you should use it. Of course, we'll do this with practical examples that you should be able to adapt to your own unique use cases.

1.3 Why is security important?

The best way to start thinking about why security is important is from your point of view as a user. Like anyone else, you use applications, and these have access to your data. These can change your data, use it, or expose it. Think about all the apps you use, from your email to your online banking service accounts. How would you evaluate the sensitivity of the data that is managed by all these systems? How about the actions that you can perform using these systems? Similarly to data, some actions are more important than others. You don't care very much about some of those, while others are more significant. Maybe for you, it's not that important if someone would somehow manage to read some of your emails. But I bet you'd care if someone else could empty your bank accounts.

Once you've thought about security from your point of view, try to see a more objective picture. The same data or actions might have another degree of sensitivity to other people. Some might care a lot more than you if their email is accessed and someone could read their messages. Your application should make sure to protect everything to the desired degree of access. Any leak that allows the use of data and functionalities, as well as the application, to affect other systems is considered a vulnerability, and you need to solve it.

Not considering enough security comes with a price that I'm sure you aren't willing to pay. In general, it's about money. But the cost can differ, and there are multiple ways through which you can lose profitability. It isn't only about losing money from a bank account or using a service without paying for it. These things indeed imply cost. The image of a brand or a company is also valuable, and losing a good image can be expensive—sometimes even more costly than the expenses directly resulting from the exploitation of a vulnerability in the system! The trust that users have in your application is

one of its most valuable assets, and it can make the difference between success or failure.

Here are a few fictitious examples. Think about how you would see these as a user. How can these affect the organization responsible for the software?

- A back-office application should manage the internal data of an organization but, somehow, some information leaks out.
- Users of a ride-sharing application observe that money is debited from their accounts on behalf of trips that aren't theirs.
- After an update, users of a mobile banking application are presented with transactions that belong to other users.

In the first situation, the organization using the software, as well as its employees, can be affected. In some instances, the company could be liable and could lose a significant amount of money. In this situation, users don't have the choice to change the application, but the organization can decide to change the provider of their software.

In the second case, users will probably choose to change the service provider. The image of the company developing the application would be dramatically affected. The cost lost in terms of money in this case is much less than the cost in terms of image. Even if payments are returned to the affected users, the application will still lose some customers. This affects profitability and can even lead to bankruptcy. And in the third case, the bank could see dramatic consequences in terms of trust, as well as legal repercussions.

In most of these scenarios, investing in security is safer than what happens if someone exploits a vulnerability in your system. For all of the examples, only a small weakness could cause each outcome. For the first example, it could be a broken authentication or a cross-site request forgery (CSRF). For the second and third examples, it could be a lack of method access control. And for all of these examples, it could be a combination of vulnerabilities.

Of course, from here we can go even further and discuss the security in defense-related systems. If you consider money important, add human lives to the cost! Can you even imagine what could be the result if a health care system was affected? What about systems that control nuclear power? You

can reduce any risk by investing early in the security of your application and by allocating enough time for security professionals to develop and test your security mechanisms.

Note

The lessons learned from those who failed before you are that the cost of an attack is usually higher than the investment cost of avoiding the vulnerability.

In the rest of this book, you'll see examples of ways to apply Spring Security to avoid situations like the ones presented. I guess there will never be enough word written about how important security is. When you have to make a compromise on the security of your system, try to estimate your risks correctly.

1.4 What will you learn in this book?

This book offers a practical approach to learning Spring Security. Throughout the rest of the book, we'll deep dive into Spring Security, step by step, proving concepts with simple to more complex examples. To get the most out of this book, you should be comfortable with Java programming, as well as with the basics of the Spring Framework. If you haven't used the Spring Framework or you don't feel comfortable yet using its basics, I recommend you first read "charitalics"Spring Start Here, another book I wrote (Manning, 2021). After reading that book, you can enhance your Spring knowledge with "charitalics"Spring In Action, 6th edition, by Craig Walls (Manning, 2022) as well as "charitalics"Spring Boot Up & Running by Mark Heckler (O'Reilly Media, 2021).

In this book, you'll learn

- The architecture and basic components of Spring Security and how to use it to secure your application
- Authentication and authorization with Spring Security, including the OAuth 2 and OpenID Connect flows, and how these apply to a production-ready application
- How to implement security with Spring Security in different layers of

- your application
- Different configuration styles and best practices for using those in your project
- Using Spring Security for reactive applications
- Testing your security implementations

To make the learning process smooth for each described concept, we'll work on multiple simple examples.

When we finish, you'll know how to apply Spring Security for the most practical scenarios and understand where to use it and its best practices. I also strongly recommend that you work on all the examples that accompany the explanations.

1.5 Summary

- Spring Security is the leading choice for securing Spring applications. It offers a significant number of alternatives that apply to different styles and architectures.
- You should apply security in layers for your system, and for each layer, you need to use different practices.
- Security is a cross-cutting concern you should consider from the beginning of a software project.
- Usually, the cost of an attack is higher than the cost of investment in avoiding vulnerabilities to begin with.
- Sometimes the smallest mistakes can cause significant harm. For example, exposing sensitive data through logs or error messages is a common way to introduce vulnerabilities in your application.

2 Hello Spring Security

This chapter covers

- Creating your first project with Spring Security
- Designing simple functionalities using the basic components for authentication and authorization
- Underlying concept and how to use it in a given project
- Applying the basic contracts and understanding how they relate to each other
- Writing custom implementations for the primary responsibilities
- Overriding Spring Boot's default configurations for Spring Security

Spring Boot appeared as an evolutionary stage for application development with the Spring Framework. Instead of you needing to write all the configurations, Spring Boot comes with some preconfigured, so you can override only the configurations that don't match your implementations. We also call this approach "convention-over-configuration". Spring Boot is no longer a new concept and today we enjoy writing applications using its third version.

Before Spring Boot, developers used to write dozens of lines of code again and again for all the apps they had to create. This situation was less visible in the past when we developed most architectures monolithically. With a monolithic architecture, you only had to write such configurations once at the beginning, and you rarely needed to touch them afterward. When service-oriented software architectures evolved, we started to feel the pain of boilerplate code that we needed to write for configuring each service. If you find it amusing, you can check out chapter 3 from "Spring in Practice" by Willie Wheeler with Joshua White (Manning, 2013). This chapter of an older book describes writing a web application with Spring 3. In this way, you'll understand how many configurations you had to write for one small one-page web application. Here's the link for the chapter:

<https://livebook.manning.com/book/spring-in-practice/chapter-3/>

For this reason, with the development of recent apps and especially those for microservices, Spring Boot became more and more popular. Spring Boot provides autoconfiguration for your project and shortens the time needed for the setup. I would say it comes with the appropriate philosophy for today's software development.

In this chapter, we'll start with our first application that uses Spring Security. For the apps that you develop with the Spring Framework, Spring Security is an excellent choice for implementing application-level security. We'll use Spring Boot and discuss the defaults that are configured by convention, as well as a brief introduction to overriding these defaults. Considering the default configurations provides an excellent introduction to Spring Security, one that also illustrates the concept of authentication.

Once we get started with the first project, we'll discuss various options for authentication in more detail. In chapters 3 through 6, we'll continue with more specific configurations for each of the different responsibilities that you'll see in this first example. You'll also see different ways to apply those configurations, depending on architectural styles. The steps we'll approach in the current chapter follow:

1. Create a project with only Spring Security and web dependencies to see how it behaves if you don't add any configuration. This way, you'll understand what you should expect from the default configuration for authentication and authorization.
2. Change the project to add functionality for user management by overriding the defaults to define custom users and passwords.
3. After observing that the application authenticates all the endpoints by default, learn that this can be customized as well.
4. Apply different styles for the same configurations to understand best practices.

2.1 Starting your first project

Let's create the first project so that we have something to work on for the first example. This project is a small web application, exposing a REST endpoint. You'll see how, without doing much, Spring Security secures this

endpoint using HTTP Basic authentication. HTTP Basic is a way a web app authenticates a user by means of a set of credentials (username and password) that the app gets in the header of the HTTP request.

Just by creating the project and adding the correct dependencies, Spring Boot applies default configurations, including a username and a password when you start the application.

Note

You have various alternatives to create Spring Boot projects. Some development environments offer the possibility of creating the project directly. If you need help with creating your Spring Boot projects, you can find several ways described in the appendix. For even more details, I recommend Mark Heckler's *Spring Boot Up & Running* (O'Reilly Media, 2021) and *Spring Boot in Practice* (Manning, 2022) by Somnath Musib or even *Spring Start Here* (Manning, 2021), another book I wrote.

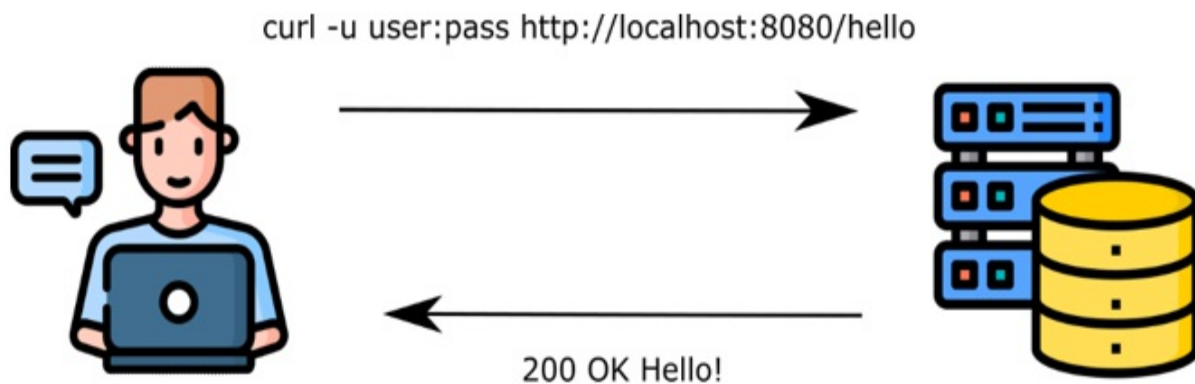
The examples in this book refer to the book's companion source code. With each example, I also specify the dependencies that you need to add to your pom.xml file. You can, and I recommend that you do, download the projects provided with the book and the available source code at <https://www.manning.com/downloads/2105>. The projects will help you if you get stuck with something. You can also use these to validate your final solutions.

Note

The examples in this book are not dependent on the build tool you choose. You can use either Maven or Gradle. But to be consistent, I built all the examples with Maven.

The first project is also the smallest one. As mentioned, it's a simple application exposing a REST endpoint that you can call and then receive a response as described in figure 2.1. This project is enough to learn the first steps when developing an application with Spring Security and Spring Boot. It presents the basics of the Spring Security architecture for authentication and authorization.

Figure 2.1 Our first application uses HTTP Basic to authenticate and authorize the user against an endpoint. The application exposes a REST endpoint at a defined path (/hello). For a successful call, the response returns an HTTP 200 status message and a body. This example demonstrates how the authentication and authorization configured by default with Spring Security works.



We begin learning Spring Security by creating an empty project and naming it `it-ssia-ch2-ex1`. (You'll also find this example with the same name in the projects provided with the book.) The only dependencies you need to write for our first project are `spring-boot-starter-web` and `spring-boot-starter-security`, as shown in listing 2.1. After creating the project, make sure that you add these dependencies to your `pom.xml` file. The primary purpose of working on this project is to see the behavior of a default configured application with Spring Security. We also want to understand which components are part of this default configuration, as well as their purpose.

Listing 2.1 Spring Security dependencies for our first web app

```
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
  <artifactId>spring-boot-starter-web</artifactId>
</dependency>
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
  <artifactId>spring-boot-starter-security</artifactId>
</dependency>
```

We could directly start the application now. Spring Boot applies the default configuration of the Spring context for us based on which dependencies we add to the project. But we wouldn't be able to learn much about security if

we don't have at least one endpoint that's secured. Let's create a simple endpoint and call it to see what happens. For this, we add a class to the empty project, and we name this class `HelloController`. To do that, we add the class in a package called `controllers` somewhere in the main namespace of the Spring Boot project.

NOTE

Spring Boot scans for components only in the package (and its sub-packages) that contains the class annotated with `@SpringBootApplication`. If you annotate classes with any of the stereotype components in Spring, outside of the main package, you must explicitly declare the location using the `@ComponentScan` annotation.

In the following listing, the `HelloController` class defines a REST controller and a REST endpoint for our example.

Listing 2.2 The `HelloController` class and a REST endpoint

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

The `@RestController` annotation registers the bean in the context and tells Spring that the application uses this instance as a web controller. Also, the annotation specifies that the application has to set the response body of the HTTP response from the method's return value. The `@GetMapping` annotation maps the `/hello` path to the implemented method through a GET request. Once you run the application, besides the other lines in the console, you should see something that looks similar to this:

Using generated security password: 93a01cf0-794b-4b98-86ef-54860f

Each time you run the application, it generates a new password and prints this password in the console as presented in the previous code snippet. You must

use this password to call any of the application's endpoints with HTTP Basic authentication. First, let's try to call the endpoint without using the Authorization header:

```
curl http://localhost:8080/hello
```

NOTE

In this book, we use cURL to call the endpoints in all the examples. I consider cURL to be the most readable solution. But if you prefer, you can use a tool of your choice. For example, you might want to have a more comfortable graphical interface. In this case, Postman is an excellent choice. If the operating system you use does not have any of these tools installed, you probably need to install them yourself.

And the response to the call:

```
{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/hello"
}
```

The response status is HTTP 401 Unauthorized. We expected this result as we didn't use the proper credentials for authentication. By default, Spring Security expects the default username (user) with the provided password (in my case, the one starting with 93a01). Let's try it again but now with the proper credentials:

```
curl -u user:93a01cf0-794b-4b98-86ef-54860f36f7f3 http://localhos
```

The response to the call now is

Hello!

NOTE

The HTTP 401 Unauthorized status code is a bit ambiguous. Usually, it's used to represent a failed authentication rather than authorization. Developers

use it in the design of the application for cases like missing or incorrect credentials. For a failed authorization, we'd probably use the 403 Forbidden status. Generally, an HTTP 403 means that the server identified the caller of the request, but they don't have the needed privileges for the call that they are trying to make.

Once we send the correct credentials, you can see in the body of the response precisely what the `HelloController` method we defined earlier returns.

Calling the endpoint with HTTP Basic authentication

With cURL, you can set the HTTP basic username and password with the `-u` flag. Behind the scenes, cURL encodes the string `<username>:<password>` in Base64 and sends it as the value of the `Authorization` header prefixed with the string `Basic`. And with cURL, it's probably easier for you to use the `-u` flag. But it's also essential to know what the real request looks like. So, let's give it a try and manually create the `Authorization` header.

In the first step, take the `<username>:<password>` string and encode it with Base64. When our application sends the call, we need to know how to form the correct value for the `Authorization` header. You do this using the Base64 tool in a Linux console. You could also find a web page that encodes strings in Base64, like <https://www.base64encode.org>. This snippet shows the command in a Linux or a Git Bash console (the `-n` parameter means no trailing new line should be added):

```
echo -n user:93a01cf0-794b-4b98-86ef-54860f36f7f3 | base64
```

Running this command returns this Base64-encoded string:

```
dXNlcjo5M2EwMWNmMC03OTRiLTQ0ODZlZi01NDg2MGYzMjY3ZjM=
```

You can now use the Base64-encoded value as the value of the `Authorization` header for the call. This call should generate the same result as the one using the `-u` option:

```
curl -H "Authorization: Basic dXNlcjo5M2EwMWNmMC03OTRiLTQ0ODZlZi01NDg2MGYzMjY3ZjM=" localhost:8080/hello
```

The result of the call is

Hello!

There're no significant security configurations to discuss with a default project. We mainly use the default configurations to prove that the correct dependencies are in place. It does little for authentication and authorization. This implementation isn't something we want to see in a production-ready application. But the default project is an excellent example that you can use for a start.

With this first example working, at least we know that Spring Security is in place. The next step is to change the configurations such that these apply to the requirements of our project. First, we'll go deeper with what Spring Boot configures in terms of Spring Security, and then we see how we can override the configurations.

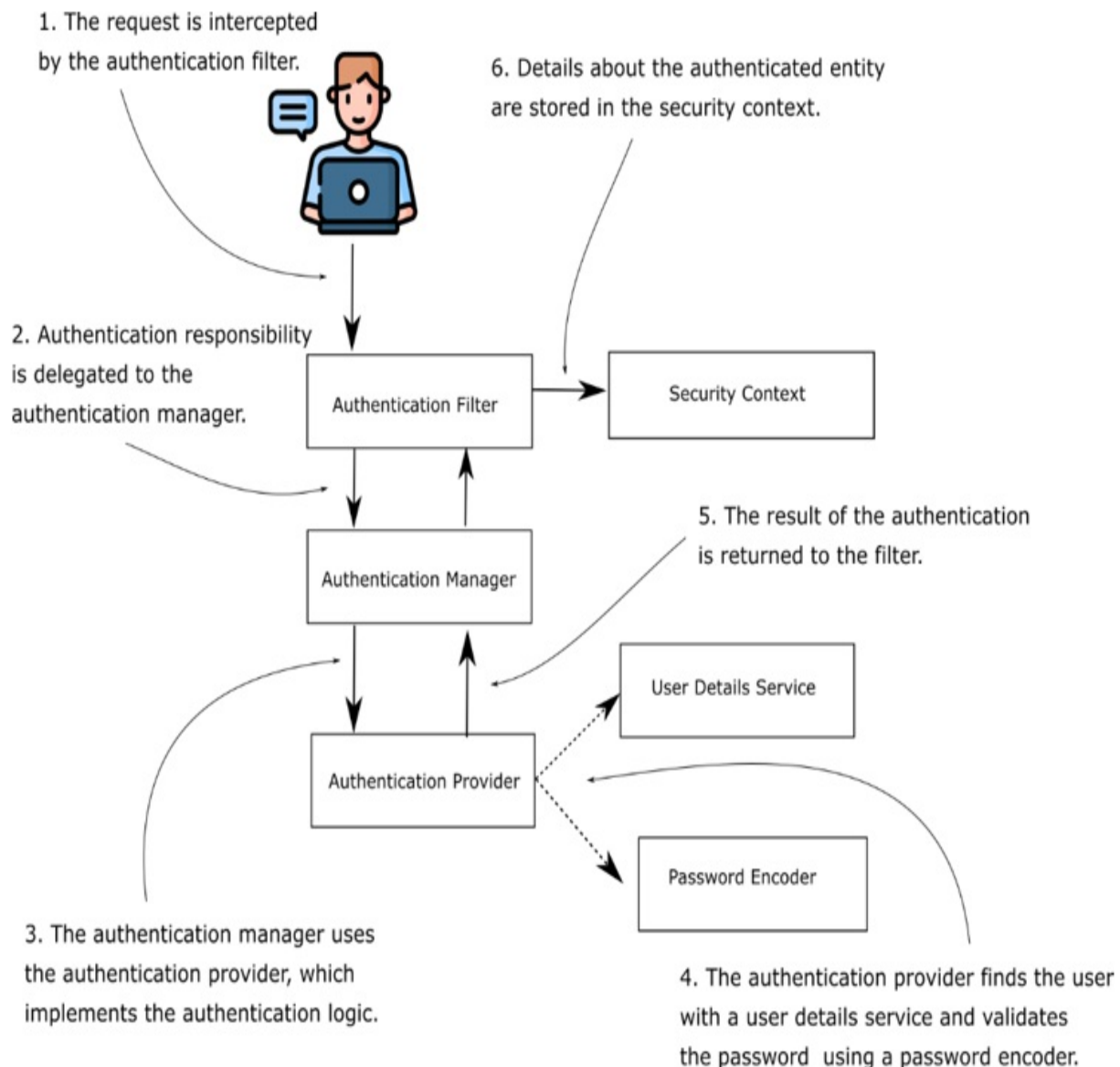
2.2 The big picture of Spring Security class design

In this section, we discuss the main actors in the overall architecture that take part in the process of authentication and authorization. You need to know this aspect because you'll have to override these preconfigured components to fit the needs of your application. I'll start by describing how Spring Security architecture for authentication and authorization works and then we'll apply that to the projects in this chapter. It would be too much to discuss these all at once, so to minimize your learning efforts in this chapter, I'll discuss the high-level picture for each component. You'll learn details about each in the following chapters.

In section 2.1, you saw some logic executing for authentication and authorization. We had a default user, and we got a random password each time we started the application. We were able to use this default user and password to call an endpoint. But where is all of this logic implemented? As you probably know already, Spring Boot sets up some components for you, depending on what dependencies you use (the convention-over-configuration that we were discussing at the beginning of this chapter).

In figure 2.2, you can see the big picture of the main actors (components) in the Spring Security architecture and the relationships among these. These components have a preconfigured implementation in the first project. In this chapter, I make you aware of what Spring Boot configures in your application in terms of Spring Security. We'll also discuss the relationships among the entities that are part of the authentication flow presented.

Figure 2.2 The main components acting in the authentication process for Spring Security and the relationships among these. This architecture represents the backbone of implementing authentication with Spring Security. We'll refer to it often throughout the book when discussing different implementations for authentication and authorization.



In figure 2.2, you can see that

1. The authentication filter delegates the authentication request to the authentication manager and, based on the response, configures the security context.
2. The authentication manager uses the authentication provider to process authentication.
3. The authentication provider implements the authentication logic.
4. The user details service implements user management responsibility, which the authentication provider uses in the authentication logic.
5. The password encoder implements password management, which the authentication provider uses in the authentication logic.
6. The security context keeps the authentication data after the authentication process.

In the following paragraphs, I'll discuss these autoconfigured beans:

- `UserDetailsService`
- `PasswordEncoder`

You can see these in figure 2.2 as well. The authentication provider uses these beans to find users and to check their passwords. Let's start with the way you provide the needed credentials for authentication.

An object that implements a `UserDetailsService` interface with Spring Security manages the details about users. Until now, we used the default implementation provided by Spring Boot. This implementation only registers the default credentials in the internal memory of the application. These default credentials are “user” with a default password that's a universally unique identifier (UUID). This default password is randomly generated when the Spring context is loaded (at the app startup). At this time, the application writes the password to the console where you can see it. Thus, you can use it in the example we just worked on in this chapter.

This default implementation serves only as a proof of concept and allows us to see that the dependency is in place. The implementation stores the credentials in-memory—the application doesn't persist the credentials. This approach is suitable for examples or proof of concepts, but you should avoid

it in a production-ready application.

And then we have the `PasswordEncoder`. The `PasswordEncoder` does two things:

- Encodes a password (usually using an encryption or a hashing algorithm)
- Verifies if the password matches an existing encoding

Even if it's not as obvious as the `UserDetailsService` object, the `PasswordEncoder` is mandatory for the Basic authentication flow. The simplest implementation manages the passwords in plain text and doesn't encode these. We'll discuss more details about the implementation of this object in chapter 4. For now, you should be aware that a `PasswordEncoder` exists together with the default `UserDetailsService`. When we replace the default implementation of the `UserDetailsService`, we must also specify a `PasswordEncoder`.

Spring Boot also chooses an authentication method when configuring the defaults, HTTP Basic access authentication. It's the most straightforward access authentication method. Basic authentication only requires the client to send a username and a password through the HTTP Authorization header. In the value of the header, the client attaches the prefix `Basic`, followed by the Base64 encoding of the string that contains the username and password, separated by a colon (:).

NOTE

HTTP Basic authentication doesn't offer confidentiality of the credentials. Base64 is only an encoding method for the convenience of the transfer; it's not an encryption or hashing method. While in transit, if intercepted, anyone can see the credentials. Generally, we don't use HTTP Basic authentication without at least HTTPS for confidentiality. You can read the detailed definition of HTTP Basic in RFC 7617 (<https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc7617>).

The `AuthenticationProvider` defines the authentication logic, delegating the user and password management. A default implementation of the `AuthenticationProvider` uses the default implementations provided for the

UserDetailsService and the PasswordEncoder. Implicitly, your application secures all the endpoints. Therefore, the only thing that we need to do for our example is to add the endpoint. Also, there's only one user who can access any of the endpoints, so we can say that there's not much to do about authorization in this case.

HTTP vs. HTTPS

You might have observed that in the examples I presented, I only use HTTP. In practice, however, your applications communicate only over HTTPS. For the examples we discuss in this book, the configurations related to Spring Security aren't different, whether we use HTTP or HTTPS. So that you can focus on the examples related to Spring Security, I won't configure HTTPS for the endpoints in the examples. But, if you want, you can enable HTTPS for any of the endpoints as presented in this sidebar.

There are several patterns to configure HTTPS in a system. In some cases, developers configure HTTPS at the application level; in others, they might use a service mesh or they could choose to set HTTPS at the infrastructure level. With Spring Boot, you can easily enable HTTPS at the application level, as you'll learn in the next example in this sidebar.

In any of these configuration scenarios, you need a certificate signed by a certification authority (CA). Using this certificate, the client that calls the endpoint knows whether the response comes from the authentication server and that nobody intercepted the communication. You can buy such a certificate, if you need it. If you only need to configure HTTPS to test your application, you can generate a self-signed certificate using a tool like OpenSSL (<https://www.openssl.org/>). Let's generate our self-signed certificate and then configure it in the project:

```
openssl req -newkey rsa:2048 -x509 -keyout key.pem -out cert.pem
```

After running the openssl command in a terminal, you'll be asked for a password and details about your CA. Because it is only a self-signed certificate for a test, you can input any data there; just make sure to remember the password. The command outputs two files: key.pem (the private key) and cert.pem (a public certificate). We'll use these files further to generate our

self-signed certificate for enabling HTTPS. In most cases, the certificate is the Public Key Cryptography Standards #12 (PKCS12). Less frequently, we use a Java KeyStore (JKS) format. Let's continue our example with a PKCS12 format. For an excellent discussion on cryptography, I recommend *Real-World Cryptography* by David Wong (Manning, 2020).

```
openssl pkcs12 -export -in cert.pem -inkey key.pem -out certifica
```

The second command we use receives as input the two files generated by the first command and outputs the self-signed certificate.

Mind that if you run these commands in a Bash shell on a Windows system, you might need to add `winpty` before it, as shown in the next code snippet:

```
winpty openssl req -newkey rsa:2048 -x509 -keyout key.pem -out ce
winpty openssl pkcs12 -export -in cert.pem -inkey key.pem -out ce
```

Finally, having the self-signed certificate, you can configure HTTPS for your endpoints. Copy the `certificate.p12` file into the resources folder of the Spring Boot project and add the following lines to your `application.properties` file:

```
server.ssl.key-store-type=PKCS12
server.ssl.key-store=classpath:certificate.p12
server.ssl.key-store-password=12345          #A
```

The password (in my case, "12345") was requested in the prompt after running the command for generating the certificate. This is the reason why you don't see it in the command. Now, let's add a test endpoint to our application and then call it using HTTPS:

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

If you use a self-signed certificate, you should configure the tool you use to make the endpoint call so that it skips testing the authenticity of the

certificate. If the tool tests the authenticity of the certificate, it won't recognize it as being authentic, and the call won't work. With cURL, you can use the `-k` option to skip testing the authenticity of the certificate:

```
curl -k -u user:93a01cf0-794b-4b98-86ef-54860f36f7f3 https://loc
```

The response to the call is

Hello!

Remember that even if you use HTTPS, the communication between components of your system isn't bulletproof. Many times, I've heard people say, "I'm not encrypting this anymore, I use HTTPS!" While helpful in protecting communication, HTTPS is just one of the bricks of the security wall of a system. Always treat the security of your system with responsibility and take care of all the layers involved in it.

2.3 Overriding default configurations

Now that you know the defaults of your first project, it's time to see how you can replace these. You need to understand the options you have for overriding the default components because this is the way you plug in your custom implementations and apply security as it fits your application. And, as you'll learn in this section, the development process is also about how you write configurations to keep your applications highly maintainable. With the projects we'll work on, you'll often find multiple ways to override a configuration. This flexibility can create confusion. I frequently see a mix of different styles of configuring different parts of Spring Security in the same application, which is undesirable. So this flexibility comes with a caution. You need to learn how to choose from these, so this section is also about knowing what your options are.

In some cases, developers choose to use beans in the Spring context for the configuration. In other cases, they override various methods for the same purpose. The speed with which the Spring ecosystem evolved is probably one of the main factors that generated these multiple approaches. Configuring a project with a mix of styles is not desirable as it makes the code difficult to understand and affects the maintainability of the application. Knowing your

options and how to use them is a valuable skill, and it helps you better understand how you should configure application-level security in a project.

In this section, you'll learn how to configure a `UserDetailsService` and a `PasswordEncoder`. These two components usually take part in authentication, and most applications customize them depending on their requirements. While we'll discuss details about customizing them in chapters 3 and 4, it's essential to see how to plug in a custom implementation. The implementations we use in this chapter are all provided by Spring Security.

2.3.1 Customizing user details management

The first component we talked about in this chapter was `UserDetailsService`. As you saw, the application uses this component in the process of authentication. In this section, you'll learn to define a custom bean of type `UserDetailsService`. We'll do this to override the default one configured by Spring Boot. As you'll see in more detail in chapter 3, you have the option to create your own implementation or to use a predefined one provided by Spring Security. In this chapter, we aren't going to detail the implementations provided by Spring Security or create our own implementation just yet. I'll use an implementation provided by Spring Security, named `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`. With this example, you'll learn how to plug this kind of object into your architecture.

NOTE

Interfaces in Java define contracts between objects. In the class design of the application, we use interfaces to decouple objects that use one another. To enforce this interface characteristic when discussing those in this book, I mainly refer to them as *contracts*.

To show you the way to override this component with an implementation that we choose, we'll change what we did in the first example. Doing so allows us to have our own managed credentials for authentication. For this example, we don't implement our class, but we use an implementation provided by Spring Security.

In this example, we use the `InMemoryUserDetailsManager` implementation. Even if this implementation is a bit more than just a `UserDetailsService`, for now, we only refer to it from the perspective of a `UserDetailsService`. This implementation stores credentials in memory, which can then be used by Spring Security to authenticate a request.

NOTE

An `InMemoryUserDetailsManager` implementation isn't meant for production-ready applications, but it's an excellent tool for examples or proof of concepts. In some cases, all you need is users. You don't need to spend the time implementing this part of the functionality. In our case, we use it to understand how to override the default `UserDetailsService` implementation.

We start by defining a configuration class. Generally, we declare configuration classes in a separate package named `config`. Listing 2.3 shows the definition for the configuration class. You can also find the example in the project `ssia-ch2-ex2`.

NOTE

The examples in this book are designed for Java 17, which is the latest long-term supported Java version. For this reason, I expect more and more applications in production to use Java 17. So it makes a lot of sense to use this version for the examples in this book. If your app uses Java 8, or Java 11 I recommend you read as well the first edition of this book which was designed for earlier Java, Spring Boot, and Spring Security versions.

Listing 2.3 The configuration class for the `UserDetailsService` bean

```
@Configuration          #A
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean                #B
    UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        return new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();
    }
}
```

We annotate the class with `@Configuration`. The `@Bean` annotation instructs Spring to add the instance returned by the method to the Spring context. If you execute the code exactly as it is now, you'll no longer see the autogenerated password in the console. The application now uses the instance of type `UserDetailsService` you added to the context instead of the default autoconfigured one. But, at the same time, you won't be able to access the endpoint anymore for two reasons:

- You don't have any users.
- You don't have a `PasswordEncoder`.

In figure 2.2, you can see that authentication depends on a `PasswordEncoder` as well. Let's solve these two issues step by step. We need to

1. Create at least one user who has a set of credentials (username and password)
2. Add the user to be managed by our implementation of `UserDetailsService`
3. Define a bean of the type `PasswordEncoder` that our application can use to verify a given password with the one stored and managed by `UserDetailsService`

First, we declare and add a set of credentials that we can use for authentication to the instance of `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`. In chapter 3, we'll discuss more about users and how to manage them. For the moment, let's use a predefined builder to create an object of the type `UserDetails`.

Note

You'll sometimes see that I use `var` in the code. Java 10 introduced the reserved type name `var`, and you can only use it for local declarations. In this book, I use it to make the syntax shorter, as well as to hide the variable type. We'll discuss the types hidden by `var` in later chapters, so you don't have to worry about that type until it's time to analyze it properly. But using `var` helps me take out details that are unnecessary for the moment to allow you focus on the discussed topic.

When building the instance, we have to provide the username, the password,

and at least one authority. The "charitalics" authority is an action allowed for that user, and we can use any string for this. In listing 2.4, I name the authority read, but because we won't use this authority for the moment, this name doesn't really matter.

Listing 2.4 Creating a user with the User builder class for UserDetailsService

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var user = User.withUsername("john")    #A
                        .password("12345")      #A
                        .authorities("read")     #A
                        .build();               #A

        return new InMemoryUserDetailsManager(user);    #B
    }
}
```

Note

You'll find the class User in the org.springframework.security.core.userdetails package. It's the builder implementation we use to create the object to represent the user. Also, as a general rule in this book, if I don't present how to write a class in a code listing, it means Spring Security provides it.

As presented in listing 2.4, we have to provide a value for the username, one for the password, and at least one authority. But this is still not enough to allow us to call the endpoint. We also need to declare a PasswordEncoder.

When using the default UserDetailsService, a PasswordEncoder is also auto-configured. Because we overrode UserDetailsService, we also have to declare a PasswordEncoder. Trying the example now, you'll see an exception when you call the endpoint. When trying to do the authentication, Spring Security realizes it doesn't know how to manage the password and fails. The exception looks like that in the next code snippet, and you should see it in your application's console. The client gets back an HTTP 401

Unauthorized message and an empty response body:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The result of the call in the app's console is

```
java.lang.IllegalArgumentException:
There is no PasswordEncoder mapped for the id "null"
    at
org.springframework.security.crypto.password
[CA].DelegatingPasswordEncoder$
[CA]UnmappedIdPasswordEncoder.matches(DelegatingPasswordEncoder.j
    at org.springframework.security.crypto.password
[CA].DelegatingPasswordEncoder.matches(DelegatingPasswordEncoder.
```

To solve this problem, we can add a PasswordEncoder bean in the context, the same as we did with the UserDetailsService. For this bean, we use an existing implementation of PasswordEncoder:

```
@Bean
public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
    return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
}
```

NOTE

The NoOpPasswordEncoder instance treats passwords as plain text. It doesn't encrypt or hash them. For matching, NoOpPasswordEncoder only compares the strings using the underlying equals(Object o) method of the String class. You shouldn't use this type of PasswordEncoder in a production-ready app. NoOpPasswordEncoder is a good option for examples where you don't want to focus on the hashing algorithm of the password. Therefore, the developers of the class marked it as @Deprecated, and your development environment will show its name with a strikethrough.

You can see the full code of the configuration class in the following listing.

Listing 2.5 The full definition of the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {
```

```

@Bean
UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
    var user = User.withUsername("john")
        .password("12345")
        .authorities("read")
        .build();

    return new InMemoryUserDetailsManager(user);
}

@Bean    #A
PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
    return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
}
}

```

Let's try the endpoint with the new user having the username John and the password 12345:

```

curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
Hello!

```

NOTE

Knowing the importance of unit and integration tests, some of you might already wonder why we don't also write tests for our examples. You will actually find the related Spring Security integration tests with all the examples provided with this book. However, to help you focus on the presented topics for each chapter, I have separated the discussion about testing Spring Security integrations and detail this in chapter 18.

2.3.2 Applying authorization at the endpoint level

With new management for the users in place, as described in section 2.3.1, we can now discuss the authentication method and configuration for endpoints. You'll learn plenty of things regarding authorization configuration in chapters 7 through 12. But before diving into details, you must understand the big picture. And the best way to achieve this is with our first example. With default configuration, all the endpoints assume you have a valid user managed by the application. Also, by default, your app uses HTTP Basic

authentication, but you can easily override this configuration.

As you'll learn in the next chapters, HTTP Basic authentication doesn't fit into most application architectures. Sometimes we'd like to change it to match our application. Similarly, not all endpoints of an application need to be secured, and for those that do, we might need to choose different authentication methods and authorization rules. To customize authentication and authorization, we'll need to define a bean of type `SecurityFilterChain`. For this example, I'll continue writing the code in the project `ssia-ch2-ex3`.

Listing 2.6 Defining a `SecurityFilterChain` bean

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        return http.build();
    }

    // Omitted code
}
```

We can then alter the configuration using different methods of the `HttpSecurity` object as shown in the next listing.

Listing 2.7 Using the `HttpSecurity` parameter to alter the configuration

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());    #A

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()    #B
        );
    }
}
```

```

        );
        return http.build();
    }

    // Omitted code
}

```

The code in listing 2.7 configures endpoint authorization with the same behavior as the default one. You can call the endpoint again to see that it behaves the same as in the previous test from section 2.3.1. With a slight change, you can make all the endpoints accessible without the need for credentials. You'll see how to do this in the following listing.

Listing 2.8 Using `permitAll()` to change the authorization configuration

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().permitAll()    #A
        );

        return http.build();
    }

    // Omitted code
}

```

Now, we can call the `/hello` endpoint without the need for credentials. The `permitAll()` call in the configuration, together with the `anyRequest()` method, makes all the endpoints accessible without the need for credentials:

```
curl http://localhost:8080/hello
```

And the response body of the call is

Hello!

In this example you used two configuration methods:

1. `httpBasic()` – which helped you configure the authentication approach. Calling this method you instructed your app to accept HTTP Basic as an authentication method.
2. `authorizeHttpRequests()` – which helped you configure the authorization rules at the endpoint level. Calling this method you instructed the app how it should authorize the requests received on specific endpoints.

For both methods you had to use a `Customizer` object as a parameter. `Customizer` is a contract you implement to define the customization for either Spring Security element you configure: the authentication, the authorization, or particular protection mechanisms such as CSRF or CORS (which will discuss in chapters 9 and 10). The following snippet shows you the definition of the `Customizer` interface. Observe that `Customizer` is a functional interface (so we can use lambda expressions to implement it) and the `withDefaults()` method I used in listing 2.8 is in fact just a `Customizer` implementation that does nothing.

```
@FunctionalInterface
public interface Customizer<T> {
    void customize(T t);

    static <T> Customizer<T> withDefaults() {
        return (t) -> {
        };
    }
}
```

In earlier Spring Security versions you could apply configurations without a `Customizer` object by using a chaining syntax, as shows in the following code snippet. Observe that instead of providing a `Customizer` object to the `authorizeHttpRequests()` method, the configuration just follows the method's call.

```
http.authorizeHttpRequests()
    .anyRequest().authenticated()
```

The reason this approach has been left behind is because a Customizer object allows you more flexibility in moving the configuration elsewhere where that's needed. Sure, with simple examples, using lambda expressions is comfortable. But in real-world apps the configurations can grow a lot. In such cases, the ability to move these configurations in separate classes helps you keep these configurations easier to maintain and test.

The purpose of this example is to give you a feeling for how to override default configurations. We'll get into the details about authorization in chapters 7 through 10.

Note

In earlier versions of Spring Security, a security configuration class needed to extend a class named `WebSecurityConfigurerAdapter`. We don't use this practice anymore today. In case your app uses an older codebase or you need to upgrade an older codebase, I recommend you read also the first edition of *Spring Security in Action*.

2.3.3 Configuring in different ways

One of the confusing aspects of creating configurations with Spring Security is having multiple ways to configure the same thing. In this section, you'll learn alternatives for configuring `UserService` and `PasswordEncoder`. It's essential to know the options you have so that you can recognize these in the examples that you find in this book or other sources like blogs and articles. It's also important that you understand how and when to use these in your application. In further chapters, you'll see different examples that extend the information in this section.

Let's take the first project. After we created a default application, we managed to override `UserService` and `PasswordEncoder` by adding new implementations as beans in the Spring context. Let's find another way of doing the same configurations for `UserService` and `PasswordEncoder`.

We can directly use the `SecurityFilterChain` bean to set both the

UserDetailsService and the PasswordEncoder as shown in the following listing. You can find this example in the project ssia-ch2-ex3.

Listing 2.9 Setting UserDetailsService with the SecurityFilterChain bean

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()
        );

        var user = User.withUsername("john")      #A
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build();

        var userDetailsService =      #B
            new InMemoryUserDetailsManager(user);

        http.userDetailsService(userDetailsService);    #C

        return http.build();
    }

    // Omitted code

}
```

In listing 2.9, you can observe that we declare the UserDetailsService in the same way as in listing 2.5. The difference is that now this is done locally inside the bean method creating the SecurityFilterChain. We also call the userDetailsService() method from the HttpSecurity to register the UserDetailsService instance. Listing 2.10 shows the full contents of the configuration class.

Listing 2.10 Full definition of the configuration class

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()
        );

        var user = User.withUsername("john")    #A
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build();

        var userDetailsService =    #B
            new InMemoryUserDetailsManager(user);

        http.userDetailsService(userDetailsService);    #C

        return http.build();
    }

    @Bean
    PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }
}

```

Any of these configuration options are correct. The first option, where we add the beans to the context, lets you inject the values in another class where you might potentially need them. But if you don't need that for your case, the second option would be equally good.

2.3.4 Defining custom authentication logic

As you've already observed, Spring Security components provide a lot of flexibility, which offers us a lot of options when adapting these to the architecture of our applications. Up to now, you've learned the purpose of `UserDetailsService` and `PasswordEncoder` in the Spring Security architecture. And you saw a few ways to configure them. It's time to learn

that you can also customize the component that delegates to these, the `AuthenticationProvider`.

Figure 2.3 The `AuthenticationProvider` implements the authentication logic. It receives the request from the `AuthenticationManager` and delegates finding the user to a `UserDetailsService`, and verifying the password to a `PasswordEncoder`.

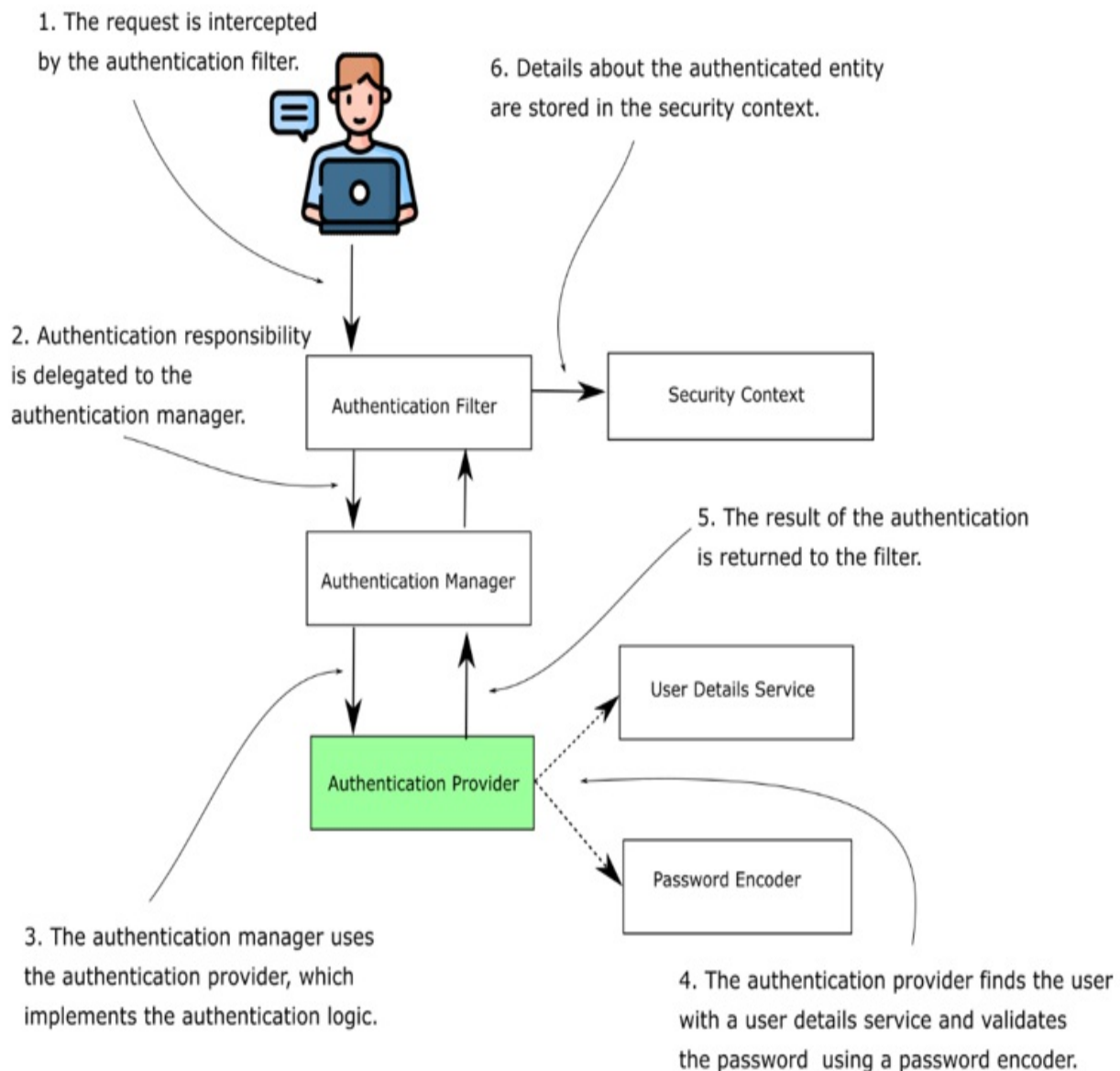


Figure 2.3 shows the `AuthenticationProvider`, which implements the authentication logic and delegates to the `UserDetailsService` and `PasswordEncoder` for user and password management. So we could say that with this section, we go one step deeper in the authentication architecture to

learn how to implement custom authentication logic with `AuthenticationProvider`.

Because this is a first example, I only show you the brief picture so that you better understand the relationship between the components in the architecture. But we'll detail more in chapters 3 through 6.

I recommend that you consider the responsibilities as designed in the Spring Security architecture. This architecture is loosely coupled with fine-grained responsibilities. That design is one of the things that makes Spring Security flexible and easy to integrate in your applications. But depending on how you make use of its flexibility, you could change the design as well. You have to be careful with these approaches as they can complicate your solution. For example, you could choose to override the default `AuthenticationProvider` in a way in which you no longer need a `UserDetailsService` or `PasswordEncoder`. With that in mind, the following listing shows how to create a custom authentication provider. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch2-ex4`.

Listing 2.11 Implementing the `AuthenticationProvider` interface

```
@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationProvider
    implements AuthenticationProvider {

    @Override
    public Authentication authenticate
        [CA](Authentication authentication) throws AuthenticationExcept

        // authentication logic here
    }

    @Override
    public boolean supports(Class<?> authenticationType) {

        // type of the Authentication implementation here
    }
}
```

The `authenticate(Authentication authentication)` method represents all the logic for authentication, so we'll add an implementation like that in listing

2.12. I'll explain the usage of the `supports()` method in detail in chapter 6. For the moment, I recommend you take its implementation for granted. It's not essential for the current example.

Listing 2.12 Implementing the authentication logic

```
@Override
public Authentication authenticate(
    Authentication authentication)
    throws AuthenticationException {

    String username = authentication.getName();    #A
    String password = String.valueOf(
        authentication.getCredentials());

    if ("john".equals(username) &&                #B
        "12345".equals(password)) {
        return new UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken(
            username,
            password,
            Arrays.asList());
    } else {
        throw new AuthenticationCredentialsNotFoundException("Error!")
    }
}
```

As you can see, here the condition of the `if-else` clause is replacing the responsibilities of `UserDetailsService` and `PasswordEncoder`. You are not required to use the two beans, but if you work with users and passwords for authentication, I strongly suggest you separate the logic of their management. Apply it as the Spring Security architecture designed it, even when you override the authentication implementation.

You might find it useful to replace the authentication logic by implementing your own `AuthenticationProvider`. If the default implementation doesn't fit entirely into your application's requirements, you can decide to implement custom authentication logic. The full `AuthenticationProvider` implementation looks like the one in the next listing.

Listing 2.13 The full implementation of the authentication provider

```

@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationProvider
    implements AuthenticationProvider {

    @Override
    public Authentication authenticate(
        Authentication authentication)
        throws AuthenticationException {

        String username = authentication.getName();
        String password = String.valueOf(authentication.getCredenti

        if ("john".equals(username) &&
            "12345".equals(password)) {
            return new UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken(
                username, password, Arrays.asList());
        } else {
            throw new AuthenticationCredentialsNotFoundException("Err
        }
    }

    @Override
    public boolean supports(Class<?> authenticationType) {
        return UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken
            .class
            .isAssignableFrom(authenticationType);
    }
}

```

In the configuration class, you can register the AuthenticationProvider in the `configure(AuthenticationManagerBuilder auth)` method shown in the following -listing.

Listing 2.14 Registering the new implementation of AuthenticationProvider

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    private final CustomAuthenticationProvider authenticationProvid

    public ProjectConfig(
        CustomAuthenticationProvider authenticationProvider) {

        this.authenticationProvider = authenticationProvider;
    }
}

```

```

@Bean
SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http) throws Excepti
    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    http.authenticationProvider(authenticationProvider);

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()
    );

    return http.build();
}
}

```

You can now call the endpoint, which is accessible by the only user recognized, as defined by the authentication logic—John, with the password 12345:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

```
Hello!
```

In chapter 6, you’ll learn more details about the `AuthenticationProvider` and how to override its behavior in the authentication process. In that chapter, we’ll also discuss the `Authentication` interface and its implementations, such as the `UserPasswordAuthenticationToken`.

2.3.5 Using multiple configuration classes

In the previously implemented examples, we only used a configuration class. It is, however, good practice to separate the responsibilities even for the configuration classes. We need this separation because the configuration starts to become more complex. In a production-ready application, you probably have more declarations than in our first examples. You also might find it useful to have more than one configuration class to make the project readable.

It’s always a good practice to have only one class per each responsibility. For this example, we can separate user management configuration from

authorization configuration. We do that by defining two configuration classes: `UserManagementConfig` (defined in listing 2.15) and `WebAuthorizationConfig` (defined in listing 2.16). You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch2-ex5`.

Listing 2.15 Defining the configuration class for user and password management

```
@Configuration
public class UserManagementConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var userDetailsService = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        var user = User.withUsername("john")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build();

        userDetailsService.createUser(user);
        return userDetailsService;
    }

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }
}
```

In this case, the `UserManagementConfig` class only contains the two beans that are responsible for user management: `UserDetailsService` and `PasswordEncoder`. The next listing shows this definition.

Listing 2.16 Defining the configuration class for authorization management

```
@Configuration
public class WebAuthorizationConfig {

    @Bean
    SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());
    }
}
```

```

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()
    );

    return http.build();
}
}

```

Here the `WebAuthorizationConfig` class needs define a bean of type `SecurityFilterChain` to configure the authentication and authorization rules.

2.4 Summary

- Spring Boot provides some default configurations when you add Spring Security to the dependencies of the application.
- You implement the basic components for authentication and authorization: `UserDetailsService`, `PasswordEncoder`, and `AuthenticationProvider`.
- You can define users with the `User` class. A user should at least have a username, a password, and an authority. Authorities are actions that you allow a user to do in the context of the application.
- A simple implementation of a `UserDetailsService` that Spring Security provides is `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`. You can add users to such an instance of `UserDetailsService` to manage the user in the application's memory.
- The `NoOpPasswordEncoder` is an implementation of the `PasswordEncoder` contract that uses passwords in cleartext. This implementation is good for learning examples and (maybe) proof of concepts, but not for production-ready applications.
- You can use the `AuthenticationProvider` contract to implement custom authentication logic in the application.
- There are multiple ways to write configurations, but in a single application, you should choose and stick to one approach. This helps to make your code cleaner and easier to understand.

3 Managing users

This chapter covers

- Describing a user with the `UserDetails` interface
- Using the `UserDetailsService` in the authentication flow
- Creating a custom implementation of `UserDetailsService`
- Creating a custom implementation of `UserDetailsManager`
- Using the `JdbcUserDetailsManager` in the authentication flow

One of my colleagues from the university cooks pretty well. He's not a chef in a fancy restaurant, but he's quite passionate about cooking. One day, when sharing thoughts in a discussion, I asked him about how he manages to remember so many recipes. He told me that's easy. "You don't have to remember the whole recipe, but the way basic ingredients match with each other. It's like some real-world contracts that tell you what you can mix or should not mix. Then for each recipe, you only remember some tricks."

This analogy is similar to the way architectures work. With any robust framework, we use contracts to decouple the implementations of the framework from the application built upon it. With Java, we use interfaces to define the contracts. A programmer is similar to a chef, knowing how the ingredients "work" together to choose just the right "implementation." The programmer knows the framework's abstractions and uses those to integrate with it.

This chapter is about understanding in detail one of the fundamental roles you encountered in the first example we worked on in chapter 2—the `UserDetailsService`. Along with the `UserDetailsService`, we'll discuss the following interfaces (contracts):

- `UserDetails`, which describes the user for Spring Security.
- `GrantedAuthority`, which allows us to define actions that the user can execute.
- `UserDetailsManager`, which extends the `UserDetailsService` contract.

Beyond the inherited behavior, it also describes actions like creating a user and modifying or deleting a user's password.

From chapter 2, you already have an idea of the roles of the `UserDetailsService` and the `PasswordEncoder` in the authentication process. But we only discussed how to plug in an instance defined by you instead of using the default one configured by Spring Boot. We have more details to discuss:

- What implementations are provided by Spring Security and how to use them
- How to define a custom implementation for contracts and when to do so
- Ways to implement interfaces that you find in real-world applications
- Best practices for using these interfaces

The plan is to start with how Spring Security understands the user definition. For this, we'll discuss the `UserDetails` and `GrantedAuthority` contracts. Then we'll detail the `UserDetailsService` and how `UserDetailsManager` extends this contract. You'll apply implementations for these interfaces (like `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`, `JdbcUserDetailsManager`, and `LdapUserDetailsManager`). When these implementations aren't a good fit for your system, you'll write a custom implementation.

3.1 Implementing authentication in Spring Security

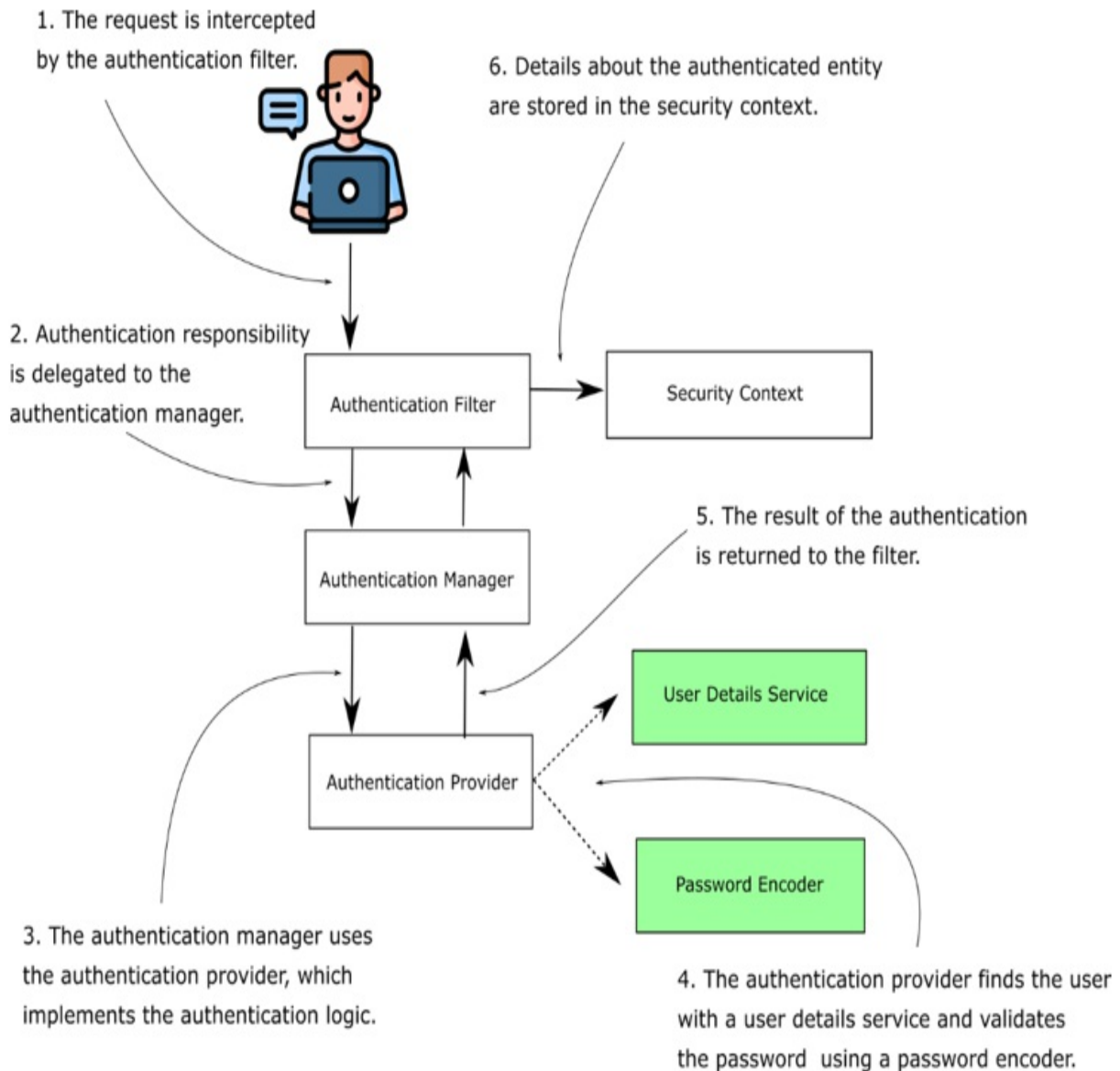
In the previous chapter, we got started with Spring Security. In the first example, we discussed how Spring Boot defines some defaults that define how a new application initially works. You have also learned how to override these defaults using various alternatives that we often find in apps. But we only considered the surface of these so that you have an idea of what we'll be doing. In this chapter, and chapters 4 and 5, we'll discuss these interfaces in more detail, together with different implementations and where you might find them in real-world applications.

Figure 3.1 presents the authentication flow in Spring Security. This architecture is the backbone of the authentication process as implemented by Spring Security. It's really important to understand it because you'll rely on it

in any Spring Security implementation. You'll observe that we discuss parts of this architecture in almost all the chapters of this book. You'll see it so often that you'll probably learn it by heart, which is good. If you know this architecture, you're like a chef who knows their ingredients and can put together any recipe.

In figure 3.1, the shaded boxes represent the components that we start with: the `UserDetailsService` and the `PasswordEncoder`. These two components focus on the part of the flow that I often refer to as “the user management part.” In this chapter, the `UserDetailsService` and the `PasswordEncoder` are the components that deal directly with user details and their credentials. We'll discuss the `PasswordEncoder` in detail in chapter 4.

Figure 3.1 Spring Security's authentication flow. The `AuthenticationFilter` intercepts the request and delegates the authentication responsibility to the `AuthenticationManager`. To implement the authentication logic, the `AuthenticationManager` uses an authentication provider. To check the username and the password, the `AuthenticationProvider` uses a `UserDetailsService` and a `PasswordEncoder`.

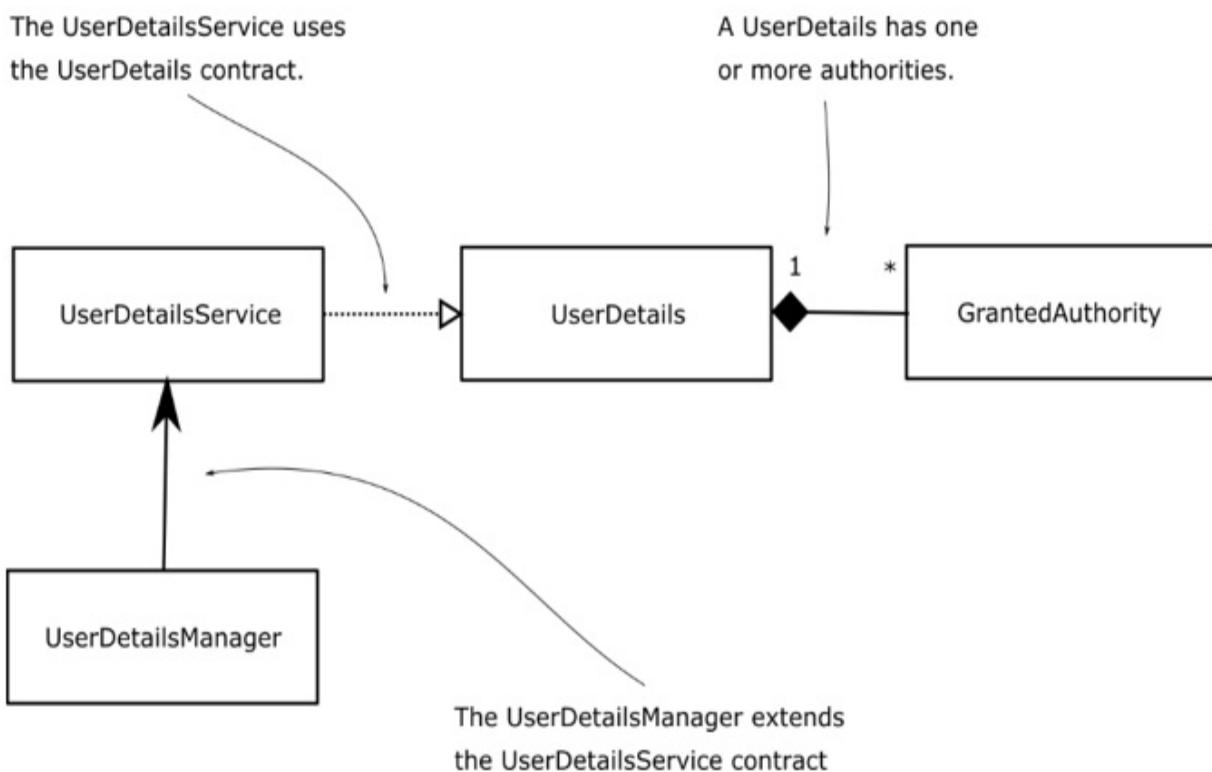


As part of user management, we use the `UserDetailsService` and `UserDetailsManager` interfaces. The `UserDetailsService` is only responsible for retrieving the user by username. This action is the only one needed by the framework to complete authentication. The `UserDetailsManager` adds behavior that refers to adding, modifying, or deleting the user, which is a required functionality in most applications. The separation between the two contracts is an excellent example of the "charitalics" interface segregation principle. Separating the interfaces allows for better flexibility because the framework doesn't force you to implement behavior if your app doesn't need it. If the app only needs to authenticate the

users, then implementing the `UserDetailsService` contract is enough to cover the desired functionality. To manage the users, `UserDetailsService` and the `UserDetailsManager` components need a way to represent them.

Spring Security offers the `UserDetails` contract, which you have to implement to describe a user in the way the framework understands. As you'll learn in this chapter, in Spring Security a user has a set of privileges, which are the actions the user is allowed to do. We'll work a lot with these privileges in chapters 7 through 12 when discussing authorization. But for now, Spring Security represents the actions that a user can do with the `GrantedAuthority` interface. We often call these "characteristics" authorities, and a user has one or more authorities. In figure 3.2, you find a representation of the relationship between the components of the user management part of the authentication flow.

Figure 3.2 Dependencies between the components involved in user management. The `UserDetailsService` returns the details of a user, finding the user by its name. The `UserDetails` contract describes the user. A user has one or more authorities, represented by the `GrantedAuthority` interface. To add operations such as create, delete, or change password to the user, the `UserDetailsManager` contract extends `UserDetailsService` to add operations.



Understanding the links between these objects in the Spring Security architecture and ways to implement them gives you a wide range of options to choose from when working on applications. Any of these options could be the right puzzle piece in the app that you are working on, and you need to make your choice wisely. But to be able to choose, you first need to know what you can choose from.

3.2 Describing the user

In this section, you'll learn how to describe the users of your application such that Spring Security understands them. Learning how to represent users and make the framework aware of them is an essential step in building an authentication flow. Based on the user, the application makes a decision—a call to a certain functionality is or isn't allowed. To work with users, you first need to understand how to define the prototype of the user in your application. In this section, I describe by example how to establish a blueprint for your users in a Spring Security application.

For Spring Security, a user definition should respect the `UserDetails` contract. The `UserDetails` contract represents the user as understood by Spring Security. The class of your application that describes the user has to implement this interface, and in this way, the framework understands it.

3.2.1 Describing users with the `UserDetails` contract

In this section, you'll learn how to implement the `UserDetails` interface to describe the users in your application. We'll discuss the methods declared by the `UserDetails` contract to understand how and why we implement each of them. Let's start first by looking at the interface as presented in the following listing.

Listing 3.1 The `UserDetails` interface

```
public interface UserDetails extends Serializable {  
    String getUsername();           #A  
    String getPassword();  
    Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority>  
    [CA]getAuthorities();           #B  
}
```

```
    boolean isAccountNonExpired();      #C
    boolean isAccountNonLocked();
    boolean isCredentialsNonExpired();
    boolean isEnabled();
}
```

The `getUsername()` and `getPassword()` methods return, as you'd expect, the username and the password. The app uses these values in the process of authentication, and these are the only details related to authentication from this contract. The other five methods all relate to authorizing the user for accessing the application's resources.

Generally, the app should allow a user to do some actions that are meaningful in the application's context. For example, the user should be able to read data, write data, or delete data. We say a user has or hasn't the privilege to perform an action, and an authority represents the privilege a user has. We implement the `getAuthorities()` method to return the group of authorities granted for a user.

NOTE

As you'll learn in chapter 6, Spring Security uses authorities to refer either to fine-grained privileges or to roles, which are groups of privileges. To make your reading more effortless, in this book, I refer to the fine-grained privileges as authorities.

Furthermore, as seen in the `UserDetails` contract, a user can

- Let the account expire
- Lock the account
- Let the credentials expire
- Disable the account

If you choose to implement these user restrictions in your application's logic, you need to override the following methods: `isAccountNonExpired()`, `isAccountNonLocked()`, `isCredentialsNonExpired()`, `isEnabled()`, such that those needing to be enabled return true. Not all applications have accounts that expire or get locked with certain conditions. If you do not need to implement these functionalities in your application, you can simply make

these four methods return true.

NOTE

The names of the last four methods in the `UserDetails` interface may sound strange. One could argue that these are not wisely chosen in terms of clean coding and maintainability. For example, the name `isAccountNonExpired()` looks like a double negation, and at first sight, might create confusion. But analyze all four method names with attention. These are named such that they all return false for the case in which the authorization should fail and true otherwise. This is the right approach because the human mind tends to associate the word “false” with negativity and the word “true” with positive scenarios.

3.2.2 Detailing on the `GrantedAuthority` contract

As you observed in the definition of the `UserDetails` interface in section 3.2.1, the actions granted for a user are called authorities. In chapters 7 through 12, we’ll write authorization configurations based on these user authorities. So it’s essential to know how to define them.

The authorities represent what the user can do in your application. Without authorities, all users would be equal. While there are simple applications in which the users are equal, in most practical scenarios, an application defines multiple kinds of users. An application might have users that can only read specific information, while others also can modify the data. And you need to make your application differentiate between them, depending on the functional requirements of the application, which are the authorities a user needs. To describe the authorities in Spring Security, you use the `GrantedAuthority` interface.

Before we discuss implementing `UserDetails`, let’s understand the `GrantedAuthority` interface. We use this interface in the definition of the user details. It represents a privilege granted to the user. A user must have at least one authority. Here’s the implementation of the `GrantedAuthority` definition:

```
public interface GrantedAuthority extends Serializable {
```

```
        String getAuthority();  
    }
```

To create an authority, you only need to find a name for that privilege so you can refer to it later when writing the authorization rules. For example, a user can read the records managed by the application or delete them. You write the authorization rules based on the names you give to these actions.

In this chapter, we'll implement the `getAuthority()` method to return the authority's name as a `String`. The `GrantedAuthority` interface has only one abstract method, and in this book, you often find examples in which we use a lambda expression for its implementation. Another possibility is to use the `SimpleGrantedAuthority` class to create authority instances. The `SimpleGrantedAuthority` class offers a way to create immutable instances of the type `GrantedAuthority`. You provide the authority name when building the instance. In the next code snippet, you'll find two examples of implementing a `GrantedAuthority`. Here we make use of a lambda expression and then use the `SimpleGrantedAuthority` class:

```
GrantedAuthority g1 = () -> "READ";  
GrantedAuthority g2 = new SimpleGrantedAuthority("READ");
```

3.2.3 Writing a minimal implementation of UserDetails

In this section, you'll write your first implementation of the `UserDetails` contract. We start with a basic implementation in which each method returns a static value. Then we change it to a version that you'll more likely find in a practical scenario, and one that allows you to have multiple and different instances of users. Now that you know how to implement the `UserDetails` and `GrantedAuthority` interfaces, we can write the simplest definition of a user for an application.

With a class named `DummyUser`, let's implement a minimal description of a user as in listing 3.2. I use this class mainly to demonstrate implementing the methods for the `UserDetails` contract. Instances of this class always refer to only one user, "bill", who has the password "12345" and an authority named "READ".

Listing 3.2 The DummyUser class

```
public class DummyUser implements UserDetails {

    @Override
    public String getUsername() {
        return "bill";
    }

    @Override
    public String getPassword() {
        return "12345";
    }

    // Omitted code

}
```

The class in the listing 3.2 implements the `UserDetails` interface and needs to implement all its methods. You find here the implementation of `getUsername()` and `getPassword()`. In this example, these methods only return a fixed value for each of the properties.

Next, we add a definition for the list of authorities. Listing 3.3 shows the implementation of the `getAuthorities()` method. This method returns a collection with only one implementation of the `GrantedAuthority` interface.

Listing 3.3 Implementation of the `getAuthorities()` method

```
public class DummyUser implements UserDetails {

    // Omitted code

    @Override
    public Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities()
        return List.of(() -> "READ");
    }

    // Omitted code

}
```

Finally, you have to add an implementation for the last four methods of the `UserDetails` interface. For the `DummyUser` class, these always return true,

which means that the user is forever active and usable. You find the examples in the following listing.

Listing 3.4 Implementation of the last four UserDetails interface methods

```
public class DummyUser implements UserDetails {  
  
    // Omitted code  
  
    @Override  
    public boolean isAccountNonExpired() {  
        return true;  
    }  
  
    @Override  
    public boolean isAccountNonLocked() {  
        return true;  
    }  
  
    @Override  
    public boolean isCredentialsNonExpired() {  
        return true;  
    }  
  
    @Override  
    public boolean isEnabled() {  
        return true;  
    }  
  
    // Omitted code  
  
}
```

Of course, this minimal implementation means that all instances of the class represent the same user. It's a good start to understanding the contract, but not something you would do in a real application. For a real application, you should create a class that you can use to generate instances that can represent different users. In this case, your definition would at least have the username and the password as attributes in the class, as shown in the next listing.

Listing 3.5 A more practical implementation of the UserDetails interface

```
public class SimpleUser implements UserDetails {
```

```

private final String username;
private final String password;

public SimpleUser(String username, String password) {
    this.username = username;
    this.password = password;
}

@Override
public String getUsername() {
    return this.username;
}

@Override
public String getPassword() {
    return this.password;
}

// Omitted code
}

```

3.2.4 Using a builder to create instances of the UserDetails type

Some applications are simple and don't need a custom implementation of the UserDetails interface. In this section, we take a look at using a builder class provided by Spring Security to create simple user instances. Instead of declaring one more class in your application, you quickly obtain an instance representing your user with the user builder class.

The User class from the org.springframework.security.core.userdetails package is a simple way to build instances of the UserDetails type. Using this class, you can create immutable instances of UserDetails. You need to provide at least a username and a password, and the username shouldn't be an empty string. Listing 3.6 demonstrates how to use this builder. Building the user in this way, you don't need to have a custom implementation of the UserDetails contract.

Listing 3.6 Constructing a user with the user builder class

```

UserDetails u = User.withUsername("bill")
    .password("12345")

```

```

        .authorities("read", "write")
        .accountExpired(false)
        .disabled(true)
        .build();

```

With the previous listing as an example, let's go deeper into the anatomy of the `User` builder class. The `User.withUsername(String username)` method returns an instance of the builder class `UserBuilder` nested in the `User` class. Another way to create the builder is by starting from another instance of `UserDetails`. In listing 3.7, the first line constructs a `UserBuilder`, starting with the username given as a string. Afterward, we demonstrate how to create a builder beginning with an already existing instance of `UserDetails`.

Listing 3.7 Creating the `User.UserBuilder` instance

```

User.UserBuilder builder1 =
[CA]User.withUsername("bill");           #A

UserDetails u1 = builder1
    .password("12345")
    .authorities("read", "write")
    .passwordEncoder(p -> encode(p))      #B
    .accountExpired(false)
    .disabled(true)
    .build();                             #C

User.UserBuilder builder2 = User.withUserDetails(u);    #D

UserDetails u2 = builder2.build();

```

You can see with any of the builders defined in listing 3.7 that you can use the builder to obtain a user represented by the `UserDetails` contract. At the end of the build pipeline, you call the `build()` method. It applies the function defined to encode the password if you provide one, constructs the instance of `UserDetails`, and returns it.

NOTE

Mind that the password encoder is given here as a `Function<String, String>` and not in the shape of the `PasswordEncoder` interface provided by Spring Security. This function's only responsibility is to transform a

password in a given encoding. In the next section, we'll discuss in detail the PasswordEncoder contract from Spring Security that we used in chapter 2. We'll discuss the PasswordEncoder contract in more detail in chapter 4.

3.2.5 Combining multiple responsibilities related to the user

In the previous section, you learned how to implement the UserDetails interface. In real-world scenarios, it's often more complicated. In most cases, you find multiple responsibilities to which a user relates. And if you store users in a database, and then in the application, you would need a class to represent the persistence entity as well. Or, if you retrieve users through a web service from another system, then you would probably need a data transfer object to represent the user instances. Assuming the first, a simple but also typical case, let's consider we have a table in an SQL database in which we store the users. To make the example shorter, we give each user only one authority. The following listing shows the entity class that maps the table.

Listing 3.8 Defining the JPA user entity class

```
@Entity
public class User {

    @Id
    private Long id;
    private String username;
    private String password;
    private String authority;

    // Omitted getters and setters

}
```

If you make the same class also implement the Spring Security contract for user details, the class becomes more complicated. What do you think about how the code looks in the next listing? From my point of view, it is a mess. I would get lost in it.

Listing 3.9 The user class has two responsibilities

```

@Entity
public class User implements UserDetails {

    @Id
    private int id;
    private String username;
    private String password;
    private String authority;

    @Override
    public String getUsername() {
        return this.username;
    }

    @Override
    public String getPassword() {
        return this.password;
    }

    public String getAuthority() {
        return this.authority;
    }

    @Override
    public Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities()
        return List.of(() -> authority);
    }

    // Omitted code

}

```

The class contains JPA annotations, getters, and setters, of which both `getUsername()` and `getPassword()` override the methods in the `UserDetails` contract. It has a `getAuthority()` method that returns a `String`, as well as a `getAuthorities()` method that returns a `Collection`. The `getAuthority()` method is just a getter in the class, while `getAuthorities()` implements the method in the `UserDetails` interface. And things get even more complicated when adding relationships to other entities. Again, this code isn't friendly at all!

How can we write this code to be cleaner? The root of the muddy aspect of the previous code example is a mix of two responsibilities. While it's true that you need both in the application, in this case, nobody says that you have

to put these into the same class. Let's try to separate those by defining a separate class called `SecurityUser`, which decorates the `User` class. As listing 3.11 shows, the `SecurityUser` class implements the `UserDetails` contract and uses that to plug our user into the Spring Security architecture. The `User` class has only its JPA entity responsibility remaining.

Listing 3.10 Implementing the user class only as a JPA entity

```
@Entity
public class User {

    @Id
    private int id;
    private String username;
    private String password;
    private String authority;

    // Omitted getters and setters

}
```

The `User` class in listing 3.10 has only its JPA entity responsibility remaining, and, thus, becomes more readable. If you read this code, you can now focus exclusively on details related to persistence, which are not important from the Spring Security perspective. In the next listing, we implement the `SecurityUser` class to wrap the `User` entity.

Listing 3.11 The `SecurityUser` class implements the `UserDetails` contract

```
public class SecurityUser implements UserDetails {

    private final User user;

    public SecurityUser(User user) {
        this.user = user;
    }

    @Override
    public String getUsername() {
        return user.getUsername();
    }

    @Override
```

```

    public String getPassword() {
        return user.getPassword();
    }

    @Override
    public Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities()
        return List.of(() -> user.getAuthority());
    }

    // Omitted code

}

```

As you can observe, we use the `SecurityUser` class only to map the user details in the system to the `UserDetails` contract understood by Spring Security. To mark the fact that the `SecurityUser` makes no sense without a `User` entity, we make the field final. You have to provide the user through the constructor. The `SecurityUser` class decorates the `User` entity class and adds the needed code related to the Spring Security contract without mixing the code into a JPA entity, thereby implementing multiple different tasks.

NOTE

You can find different approaches to separate the two responsibilities. I don't want to say that the approach I present in this section is the best or the only one. Usually, the way you choose to implement the class design varies a lot from one case to another. But the main idea is the same: avoid mixing responsibilities and try to write your code as decoupled as possible to increase the maintainability of your app.

3.3 Instructing Spring Security on how to manage users

In the previous section, you implemented the `UserDetails` contract to describe users such that Spring Security understands them. But how does Spring Security manage users? Where are they taken from when comparing credentials, and how do you add new users or change existing ones? In chapter 2, you learned that the framework defines a specific component to which the authentication process delegates user management: the

UserDetailsService instance. We even defined a UserDetailsService to override the default implementation provided by Spring Boot.

In this section, we experiment with various ways of implementing the UserDetailsService class. You'll understand how user management works by implementing the responsibility described by the UserDetailsService contract in our example. After that, you'll find out how the UserDetailsManager interface adds more behavior to the contract defined by the UserDetailsService. At the end of this section, we'll use the provided implementations of the UserDetailsManager interface offered by Spring Security. We'll write an example project where we'll use one of the best known implementations provided by Spring Security, the JdbcUserDetailsManager class. Learning this, you'll know how to tell Spring Security where to find users, which is essential in the authentication flow.

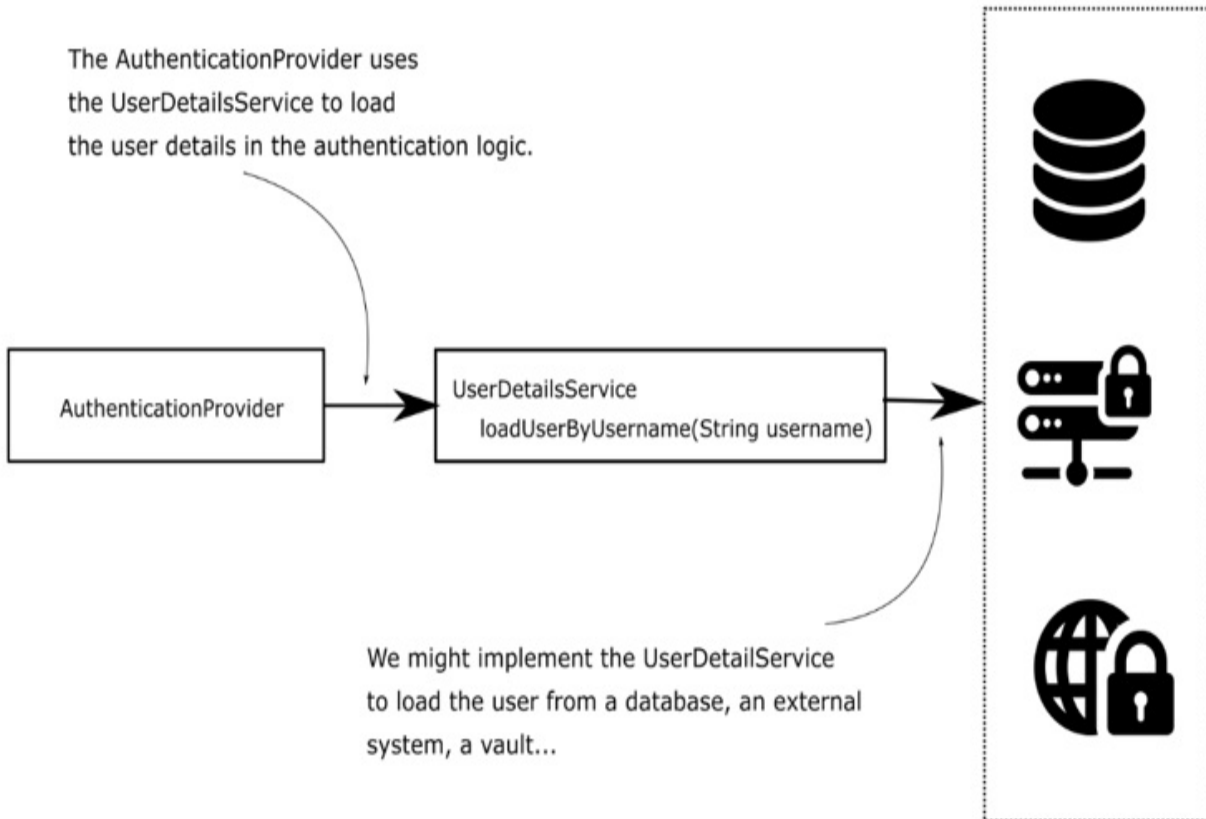
3.3.1 Understanding the UserDetailsService contract

In this section, you'll learn about the UserDetailsService interface definition. Before understanding how and why to implement it, you must first understand the contract. It is time to detail more on UserDetailsService and how to work with implementations of this component. The UserDetailsService interface contains only one method, as follows:

```
public interface UserDetailsService {  
    UserDetails loadUserByUsername(String username)  
        throws UsernameNotFoundException;  
}
```

The authentication implementation calls the loadUserByUsername(String username) method to obtain the details of a user with a given username (figure 3.3). The username is, of course, considered unique. The user returned by this method is an implementation of the UserDetails contract. If the username doesn't exist, the method throws a UsernameNotFoundException.

Figure 3.3 The AuthenticationProvider is the component that implements the authentication logic and uses the UserDetailsService to load details about the user. To find the user by username, it calls the loadUserByUsername(String username) method.



NOTE

The `UsernameNotFoundException` is a `RuntimeException`. The throws clause in the `UserDetailsService` interface is only for documentation purposes. The `UsernameNotFoundException` inherits directly from the type `AuthenticationException`, which is the parent of all the exceptions related to the process of authentication. `AuthenticationException` inherits further the `RuntimeException` class.

3.3.2 Implementing the `UserDetailsService` contract

In this section, we work on a practical example to demonstrate the implementation of the `UserDetailsService`. Your application manages details about credentials and other user aspects. It could be that these are stored in a database or handled by another system that you access through a web service or by other means (figure 3.3). Regardless of how this happens in your system, the only thing Spring Security needs from you is an

implementation to retrieve the user by username.

In the next example, we write a `UserDetailsService` that has an in-memory list of users. In chapter 2, you used a provided implementation that does the same thing, the `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`. Because you are already familiar with how this implementation works, I have chosen a similar functionality, but this time to implement on our own. We provide a list of users when we create an instance of our `UserDetailsService` class. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch3-ex1`. In the package named `model`, we define the `UserDetails` as presented by the following listing.

Listing 3.12 The implementation of the `UserDetails` interface

```
public class User implements UserDetails {

    private final String username;          #A
    private final String password;
    private final String authority;        #B

    public User(String username, String password, String authority) {
        this.username = username;
        this.password = password;
        this.authority = authority;
    }

    @Override
    public Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities() {
        return List.of(() -> authority);    #C
    }

    @Override
    public String getPassword() {
        return password;
    }

    @Override
    public String getUsername() {
        return username;
    }

    @Override
    public boolean isAccountNonExpired() {    #D
        return true;
    }
}
```

```

@Override
public boolean isAccountNonLocked() {
    return true;
}

@Override
public boolean isCredentialsNonExpired() {
    return true;
}

@Override
public boolean isEnabled() {
    return true;
}
}

```

In the package named services, we create a class called `InMemoryUserDetailsService`. The following listing shows how we implement this class.

Listing 3.13 The implementation of the `UserDetailsService` interface

```

public class InMemoryUserDetailsService implements UserDetailsService {

    private final List<UserDetails> users;      #A

    public InMemoryUserDetailsService(List<UserDetails> users) {
        this.users = users;
    }

    @Override
    public UserDetails loadUserByUsername(String username)
        throws UsernameNotFoundException {

        return users.stream()
            .filter(      #B
                u -> u.getUsername().equals(username)
            )
            .findFirst()   #C
            .orElseThrow(  #D
                () -> new UsernameNotFoundException("User not found")
            );
    }
}

```

The `loadUserByUsername(String username)` method searches the list of users for the given username and returns the desired `UserDetails` instance. If there is no instance with that username, it throws a `UsernameNotFoundException`. We can now use this implementation as our `UserDetailsService`. The next listing shows how we add it as a bean in the configuration class and register one user within it.

Listing 3.14 `UserDetailsService` registered as a bean in the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        UserDetails u = new User("john", "12345", "read");
        List<UserDetails> users = List.of(u);
        return new InMemoryUserDetailsService(users);
    }

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }
}
```

Finally, we create a simple endpoint and test the implementation. The following listing defines the endpoint.

Listing 3.15 The definition of the endpoint used for testing the implementation

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

When calling the endpoint using cURL, we observe that for user John with password 12345, we get back an HTTP 200 OK. If we use something else, the application returns 401 Unauthorized.

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

Hello!

3.3.3 Implementing the UserDetailsManager contract

In this section, we discuss using and implementing the UserDetailsManager interface. This interface extends and adds more methods to the UserDetailsService contract. Spring Security needs the UserDetailsService contract to do the authentication. But generally, in applications, there is also a need for managing users. Most of the time, an app should be able to add new users or delete existing ones. In this case, we implement a more particular interface defined by Spring Security, UserDetailsManager. It extends UserDetailsService and adds more operations that we need to implement.

```
public interface UserDetailsManager extends UserDetailsService {  
    void createUser(UserDetails user);  
    void updateUser(UserDetails user);  
    void deleteUser(String username);  
    void changePassword(String oldPassword, String newPassword);  
    boolean userExists(String username);  
}
```

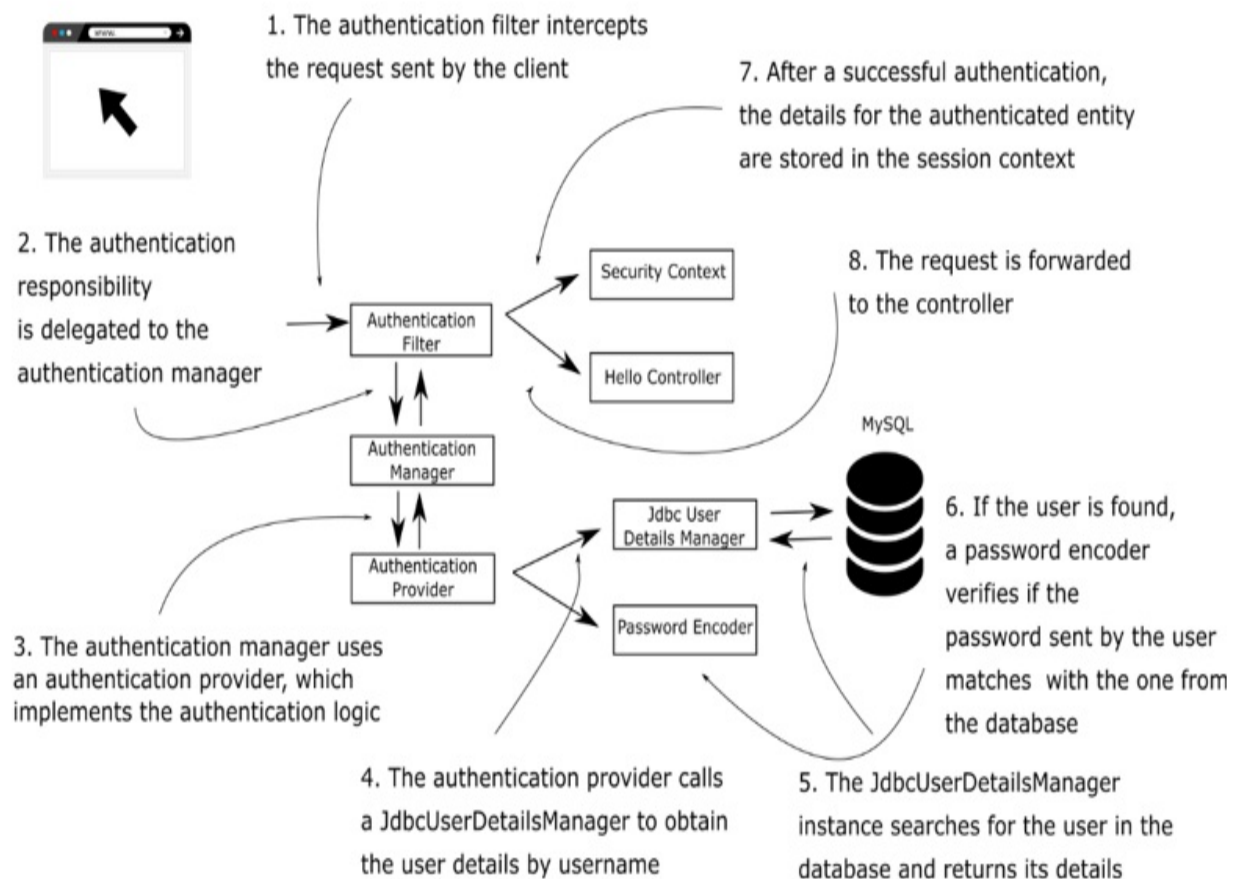
The InMemoryUserDetailsManager object that we used in chapter 2 is actually a UserDetailsManager. At that time, we only considered its UserDetailsService characteristics. Project ssia-ch3-ex2 accompanies the example in this section.

Using a JdbcUserDetailsManager for user management

Beside the InMemoryUserDetailsManager, we often use another UserDetailsManager implementation, JdbcUserDetailsManager. The JdbcUserDetailsManager class manages users in an SQL database. It connects to the database directly through JDBC. This way, the JdbcUserDetailsManager is independent of any other framework or specification related to database connectivity.

To understand how the `JdbcUserDetailsService` works, it's best if you put it into action with an example. In the following example, you implement an application that manages the users in a MySQL database using the `JdbcUserDetailsService`. Figure 3.4 provides an overview of the place the `JdbcUserDetailsService` implementation takes in the authentication flow.

Figure 3.4 The Spring Security authentication flow. Here we use a `JdbcUserDetailsService` as our `UserDetailsService` component. The `JdbcUserDetailsService` uses a database to manage users.



You'll start working on our demo application about how to use the `JdbcUserDetailsService` by creating a database and two tables. In our case, we name the database `spring`, and we name one of the tables `users` and the other `authorities`. These names are the default table names known by the `JdbcUserDetailsService`. As you'll learn at the end of this section, the `JdbcUserDetailsService` implementation is flexible and lets you override

these default names if you want to do so. The purpose of the users table is to keep user records. The `JdbcUserDetailsManager` implementation expects three columns in the users table: a username, a password, and enabled, which you can use to deactivate the user.

You can choose to create the database and its structure yourself either by using the command-line tool for your database management system (DBMS) or a client application. For example, for MySQL, you can choose to use MySQL Workbench to do this. But the easiest would be to let Spring Boot itself run the scripts for you. To do this, just add two more files to your project in the resources folder: `schema.sql` and `data.sql`. In the `schema.sql` file, you add the queries related to the structure of the database, like creating, altering, or dropping tables. In the `data.sql` file, you add the queries that work with the data inside the tables, like `INSERT`, `UPDATE`, or `DELETE`. Spring Boot automatically runs these files for you when you start the application. A simpler solution for building examples that need databases is using an H2 in-memory database. This way, you don't need to install a separate DBMS solution.

Note

If you prefer, you could go with H2 as well (as I do in the `ssia-ch3-ex2` project) when developing the applications presented in this book. But in most example of this book, I chose to implement the examples with an external DBMS to make it clear it's an external component of the system and, in this way, avoid confusion.

You use the code in the next listing to create the users table with a MySQL server. You can add this script to the `schema.sql` file in your Spring Boot project.

Listing 3.16 The SQL query for creating the users table

```
CREATE TABLE IF NOT EXISTS `spring`.`users` (  
  `id` INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT,  
  `username` VARCHAR(45) NOT NULL,  
  `password` VARCHAR(45) NOT NULL,  
  `enabled` INT NOT NULL,  
  PRIMARY KEY (`id`));
```


The authorities table stores authorities per user. Each record stores a username and an authority granted for the user with that username.

Listing 3.17 The SQL query for creating the authorities table

```
CREATE TABLE IF NOT EXISTS `spring`.`authorities` (  
  `id` INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT,  
  `username` VARCHAR(45) NOT NULL,  
  `authority` VARCHAR(45) NOT NULL,  
  PRIMARY KEY (`id`));
```

NOTE

For simplicity, and to allow you focus on the Spring Security configurations we discuss, in the examples provided with this book, I skip the definitions of indexes or foreign keys.

To make sure you have a user for testing, insert a record in each of the tables. You can add these queries in the data.sql file in the resources folder of the Spring Boot project:

```
INSERT INTO `spring`.`authorities`  
(username, authority)  
VALUES  
('john', 'write');
```

```
INSERT INTO `spring`.`users`  
(username, password, enabled)  
VALUES  
('john', '12345', '1');
```

For your project, you need to add at least the dependencies stated in the following listing. Check your pom.xml file to make sure you added these dependencies.

Listing 3.18 Dependencies needed to develop the example project

```
<dependency>  
  <groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>  
  <artifactId>spring-boot-starter-security</artifactId>  
</dependency>  
<dependency>
```

```
<groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
<artifactId>spring-boot-starter-web</artifactId>
</dependency>
<dependency>
<groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
<artifactId>spring-boot-starter-jdbc</artifactId>
</dependency>
<dependency>
<groupId>com.h2database</groupId>
<artifactId>h2</artifactId>
</dependency>
```

NOTE

In your examples, you can use any SQL database technology as long as you add the correct JDBC driver to the dependencies.

Remember, you need to add the JDBC driver according to the database technology you use. For example, if you'd use MySQL, you need to add the MySQL driver dependency as presented in the next snippet.

```
<dependency>
<groupId>mysql</groupId>
<artifactId>mysql-connector-java</artifactId>
<scope>runtime</scope>
</dependency>
```

You can configure a data source in the application.properties file of the project or as a separate bean. If you choose to use the application.properties file, you need to add the following lines to that file:

```
spring.datasource.url=jdbc:h2:mem:ssia
spring.datasource.username=sa
spring.datasource.password=
spring.sql.init.mode=always
```

In the configuration class of the project, you define the UserDetailsService and the PasswordEncoder. The JdbcUserDetailsManager needs the DataSource to connect to the database. The data source can be autowired through a parameter of the method (as presented in the next listing) or through an attribute of the class.

Listing 3.19 Registering the JdbcUserDetailsManager in the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService(DataSource dataSource) {
        return new JdbcUserDetailsManager(dataSource);
    }

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }
}
```

To access any endpoint of the application, you now need to use HTTP Basic authentication with one of the users stored in the database. To prove this, we create a new endpoint as shown in the following listing and then call it with cURL.

Listing 3.20 The test endpoint to check the implementation

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

In the next code snippet, you find the result when calling the endpoint with the correct username and password:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response to the call is

Hello!

The JdbcUserDetailsManager also allows you to configure the queries used. In the previous example, we made sure we used the exact names for the

tables and columns, as the `JdbcUserDetailsManager` implementation expects those. But it could be that for your application, these names are not the best choice. The next listing shows how to override the queries for the `JdbcUserDetailsManager`.

Listing 3.21 Changing `JdbcUserDetailsManager`'s queries to find the user

```
@Bean
public UserDetailsService userDetailsService(DataSource dataSource) {
    String usersByUsernameQuery =
        "select username, password, enabled
        [CA]from users where username = ?";
    String authsByUsernameQuery =
        "select username, authority
        [CA]from spring.authorities where username = ?";

    var userDetailsManager = new JdbcUserDetailsManager(dataSource)
    userDetailsManager.setUsersByUsernameQuery(usersByUsernameQuery)
    userDetailsManager.setAuthoritiesByUsernameQuery(authsByUsernameQuery)
    return userDetailsManager;
}
```

In the same way, we can change all the queries used by the `JdbcUserDetailsManager` implementation.

Exercise

Write a similar application for which you name the tables and the columns differently in the database. Override the queries for the `JdbcUserDetailsManager` implementation (for example, the authentication works with a new table structure). The project `ssia-ch3-ex2` features a possible solution.

Using an `LdapUserDetailsManager` for user management

Spring Security also offers an implementation of `UserDetailsService` for LDAP. Even if it is less popular than the `JdbcUserDetailsManager`, you can count on it if you need to integrate with an LDAP system for user management. In the project `ssia-ch3-ex3`, you can find a simple demonstration of using the `LdapUserDetailsManager`. Because I can't use a

real LDAP server for this demonstration, I have set up an embedded one in my Spring Boot application. To set up the embedded LDAP server, I defined a simple LDAP Data Interchange Format (LDIF) file. The following listing shows the content of my LDIF file.

Listing 3.22 The definition of the LDIF file

```
dn: dc=springframework,dc=org          #A
objectclass: top
objectclass: domain
objectclass: extensibleObject
dc: springframework

dn: ou=groups,dc=springframework,dc=org  #B
objectclass: top
objectclass: organizationalUnit
ou: groups

dn: uid=john,ou=groups,dc=springframework,dc=org  #C
objectclass: top
objectclass: person
objectclass: organizationalPerson
objectclass: inetOrgPerson
cn: John
sn: John
uid: john
userPassword: 12345
```

In the LDIF file, I add only one user for which we need to test the app's behavior at the end of this example. We can add the LDIF file directly to the resources folder. This way, it's automatically in the classpath, so we can easily refer to it later. I named the LDIF file `server.ldif`. To work with LDAP and to allow Spring Boot to start an embedded LDAP server, you need to add `pom.xml` to the dependencies as in the following code snippet:

```
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.springframework.security</groupId>
  <artifactId>spring-security-ldap</artifactId>
</dependency>
<dependency>
  <groupId>com.unboundid</groupId>
  <artifactId>unboundid-ldapsdk</artifactId>
</dependency>
```

In the `application.properties` file, you also need to add the configurations for the embedded LDAP server as presented in the following code snippet. The values the app needs to boot the embedded LDAP server include the location of the LDIF file, a port for the LDAP server, and the base domain component (DN) label values:

```
spring.ldap.embedded.ldif=classpath:server.ldif
spring.ldap.embedded.base-dn=dc=springframework,dc=org
spring.ldap.embedded.port=33389
```

Once you have an LDAP server for authentication, you can configure your application to use it. The next listing shows you how to configure the `LdapUserDetailsService` to enable your app to authenticate users through the LDAP server.

Listing 3.23 The definition of the `LdapUserDetailsService` in the configuration file

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean      #A
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var cs = new DefaultSpringSecurityContextSource(      #B
            [CA]"ldap://127.0.0.1:33389/dc=springframework,dc=org");
        cs.afterPropertiesSet();

        var manager = new LdapUserDetailsService(cs);          #C

        manager.setUsernameMapper(      #D
            [CA]new DefaultLdapUsernameToDnMapper("ou=groups", "uid"));

        manager.setGroupSearchBase("ou=groups");              #E

        return manager;
    }

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }
}
```

Let's also create a simple endpoint to test the security configuration. I added

a controller class as presented in the next code snippet:

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

Now start the app and call the /hello endpoint. You need to authenticate with user John if you want the app to allow you to call the endpoint. The next code snippet shows you the result of calling the endpoint with cURL:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response to the call is

Hello!

3.4 Summary

- The UserDetails interface is the contract you use to describe a user in Spring Security.
- The UserDetailsService interface is the contract that Spring Security expects you to implement in the authentication architecture to describe the way the application obtains user details.
- The UserDetailsManager interface extends UserDetailsService and adds the behavior related to creating, changing, or deleting a user.
- Spring Security provides a few implementations of the UserDetailsManager contract. Among these are InMemoryUserDetailsManager, JdbcUserDetailsManager, and LdapUserDetailsManager.
- The JdbcUserDetailsManager class has the advantage of directly using JDBC and does not lock the application in to other frameworks.

4 Managing passwords

This chapter covers

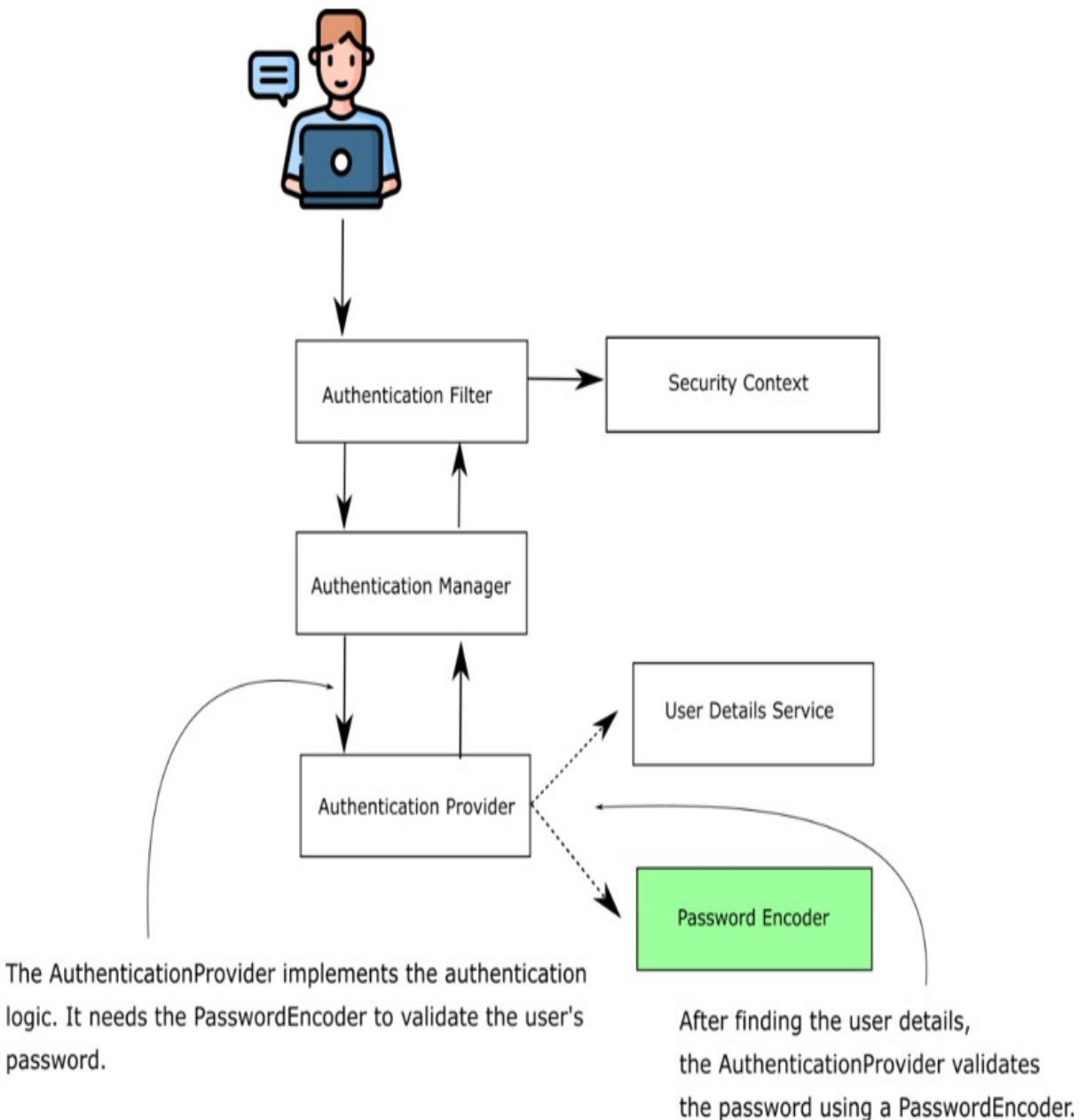
- Implementing and working with the `PasswordEncoder`
- Using the tools offered by the Spring Security Crypto module

In chapter 3, we discussed managing users in an application implemented with Spring Security. But what about passwords? They're certainly an essential piece in the authentication flow. In this chapter, you'll learn how to manage passwords and secrets in an application implemented with Spring Security. We'll discuss the `PasswordEncoder` contract and the tools offered by the Spring Security Crypto module (SSCM) for the management of passwords.

4.1 Using password encoders

From chapter 3, you should now have a clear image of what the `UserDetailsService` interface is as well as multiple ways to use its implementation. But as you learned in chapter 2, different actors manage user representation during the authentication and authorization processes. You also learned that some of these have defaults, like `UserDetailsService` and `PasswordEncoder`. You now know that you can override the defaults. We continue with a deep understanding of these beans and ways to implement them, so in this section, we analyze the `PasswordEncoder`. Figure 4.1 reminds you of where the `PasswordEncoder` fits into the authentication process.

Figure 4.1 The Spring Security authentication process. The `AuthenticationProvider` uses the `PasswordEncoder` to validate the user's password in the authentication process.



Because, in general, a system doesn't manage passwords in plain text, these usually undergo a sort of transformation that makes it more challenging to read and steal them. For this responsibility, Spring Security defines a separate contract. To explain it easily in this section, I provide plenty of code examples related to the `PasswordEncoder` implementation. We'll start with understanding the contract, and then we'll write our implementation within a project. Then in section 4.1.3, I'll provide you with a list of the most well-known and widely used implementations of `PasswordEncoder` provided by

Spring Security.

4.1.1 The PasswordEncoder contract

In this section, we discuss the definition of the PasswordEncoder contract. You implement this contract to tell Spring Security how to validate a user's password. In the authentication process, the PasswordEncoder decides if a password is valid or not. Every system stores passwords encoded in some way. You preferably store them hashed so that there's no chance someone can read the passwords. The PasswordEncoder can also encode passwords. The methods `encode()` and `matches()`, which the contract declares, are actually the definition of its responsibility. Both of these are parts of the same contract because these are strongly linked, one to the other. The way the application encodes a password is related to the way the password is validated. Let's first review the content of the PasswordEncoder interface:

```
public interface PasswordEncoder {  
  
    String encode(CharSequence rawPassword);  
    boolean matches(CharSequence rawPassword, String encodedPassword)  
  
    default boolean upgradeEncoding(String encodedPassword) {  
        return false;  
    }  
}
```

The interface defines two abstract methods and one with a default

The purpose of the `encode(CharSequence rawPassword)` method is to return a transformation of a provided string. In terms of Spring Security functionality, it's used to provide encryption or a hash for a given password. You can use the `matches(CharSequence rawPassword, String encodedPassword)` method afterward to check if an encoded string matches a raw password. You use the `matches()` method in the authentication process to test a provided password against a set of known credentials. The third method, called `upgradeEncoding(CharSequence encodedPassword)`, defaults to false in the contract. If you override it to return true, then the encoded password is encoded again for better security.

In some cases, encoding the encoded password can make it more challenging to obtain the cleartext password from the result. In general, this is some kind

of obscurity that I, personally, don't like. But the framework offers you this possibility if you think it applies to your case.

4.1.2 Implementing your PasswordEncoder

As you observed, the two methods `matches()` and `encode()` have a strong relationship. If you override them, they should always correspond in terms of functionality: a string returned by the `encode()` method should always be verifiable with the `matches()` method of the same `PasswordEncoder`. In this section, you'll implement the `PasswordEncoder` contract and define the two abstract methods declared by the interface. Knowing how to implement the `PasswordEncoder`, you can choose how the application manages passwords for the authentication process. The most straightforward implementation is a password encoder that considers passwords in plain text: that is, it doesn't do any encoding on the password.

Managing passwords in cleartext is what the instance of `NoOpPasswordEncoder` does precisely. We used this class in our first example in chapter 2. If you were to write your own, it would look something like the following listing.

Listing 4.1 The simplest implementation of a `PasswordEncoder`

```
public class PlainTextPasswordEncoder
    implements PasswordEncoder {

    @Override
    public String encode(CharSequence rawPassword) {
        return rawPassword.toString();    #A
    }

    @Override
    public boolean matches(
        CharSequence rawPassword, String encodedPassword) {
        return rawPassword.equals(encodedPassword);    #B
    }
}
```

The result of the encoding is always the same as the password. So to check if these match, you only need to compare the strings with `equals()`. A simple

implementation of PasswordEncoder that uses the hashing algorithm SHA-512 looks like the next listing.

Listing 4.2 Implementing a PasswordEncoder that uses SHA-512

```
public class Sha512PasswordEncoder
    implements PasswordEncoder {

    @Override
    public String encode(CharSequence rawPassword) {
        return hashWithSHA512(rawPassword.toString());
    }

    @Override
    public boolean matches(
        CharSequence rawPassword, String encodedPassword) {
        String hashedPassword = encode(rawPassword);
        return encodedPassword.equals(hashedPassword);
    }

    // Omitted code

}
```

In listing 4.2, we use a method to hash the string value provided with SHA-512. I omit the implementation of this method in listing 4.2, but you can find it in listing 4.3. We call this method from the `encode()` method, which now returns the hash value for its input. To validate a hash against an input, the `matches()` method hashes the raw password in its input and compares it for equality with the hash against which it does the validation.

Listing 4.3 The implementation of the method to hash the input with SHA-512

```
private String hashWithSHA512(String input) {
    StringBuilder result = new StringBuilder();
    try {
        MessageDigest md = MessageDigest.getInstance("SHA-512");
        byte [] digested = md.digest(input.getBytes());
        for (int i = 0; i < digested.length; i++) {
            result.append(Integer.toHexString(0xFF & digested[i]));
        }
    } catch (NoSuchAlgorithmException e) {
        throw new RuntimeException("Bad algorithm");
    }
}
```

```
    return result.toString();  
}
```

You'll learn better options to do this in the next section, so don't bother too much with this code for now.

4.1.3 Choosing from the provided PasswordEncoder implementations

While knowing how to implement your PasswordEncoder is powerful, you must also be aware that Spring Security already provides you with some advantageous implementations. If one of these matches your application, you don't need to rewrite it. In this section, we discuss the PasswordEncoder implementation options that Spring Security provides. These are

- NoOpPasswordEncoder—Doesn't encode the password but keeps it in clear-text. We use this implementation only for examples. Because it doesn't hash the password, "charitalics"you should never use it in a real-world scenario.
- StandardPasswordEncoder—Uses SHA-256 to hash the password. This implementation is now deprecated, and "charitalics"you shouldn't use it for your new implementations. The reason why it's deprecated is that it uses a hashing algorithm that we don't consider strong enough anymore, but you might still find this implementation used in existing applications. Preferably, if you find it in existing apps, you should change it with some other, more powerful password encoder.
- Pbkdf2PasswordEncoder—Uses the password-based key derivation function 2 (PBKDF2).
- BCryptPasswordEncoder—Uses a bcrypt strong hashing function to encode the password.
- SCryptPasswordEncoder—Uses an scrypt hashing function to encode the password.

For more about hashing and these algorithms, you can find a good discussion in chapter 2 of "charitalics"Real-World Cryptography by David Wong (Manning, 2021). Here's the link: <https://livebook.manning.com/book/real-world-cryptography/chapter-2/>.

Let's take a look at some examples of how to create instances of these types of PasswordEncoder implementations. The NoOpPasswordEncoder doesn't encode the password. It has an implementation similar to the PlainTextPasswordEncoder from our example in listing 4.1. For this reason, we only use this password encoder with theoretical examples. Also, the NoOpPasswordEncoder class is designed as a singleton. You can't call its constructor directly from outside the class, but you can use the NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance() method to obtain the instance of the class like this:

```
PasswordEncoder p = NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
```

The StandardPasswordEncoder implementation provided by Spring Security uses SHA-256 to hash the password. For the StandardPasswordEncoder, you can provide a secret used in the hashing process. You set the value of this secret by the constructor's parameter. If you choose to call the no-arguments constructor, the implementation uses the empty string as a value for the key. However, the StandardPasswordEncoder is deprecated now, and I don't recommend that you use it with your new implementations. You could find older applications or legacy code that still uses it, so this is why you should be aware of it. The next code snippet shows you how to create instances of this password encoder:

```
PasswordEncoder p = new StandardPasswordEncoder();  
PasswordEncoder p = new StandardPasswordEncoder("secret");
```

Another option offered by Spring Security is the Pbkdf2PasswordEncoder implementation that uses the PBKDF2 for password encoding. To create instances of the Pbkdf2PasswordEncoder, you have the following option:

```
PasswordEncoder p =  
    new Pbkdf2PasswordEncoder("secret", 16, 310000,  
        [CA]Pbkdf2PasswordEncoder.  
        [CA]SecretKeyFactoryAlgorithm.PBKDF2WithHmacSHA256);
```

The PBKDF2 is a pretty easy, slow-hashing function that performs an HMAC as many times as specified by an iterations argument. The first three parameters received by the last call are the value of a key used for the encoding process, the number of iterations used to encode the password, and

the size of the hash. The second and third parameters can influence the strength of the result. The fourth parameter gives the hash width. You can choose out of the following options:

- PBKDF2WithHmacSHA1
- PBKDF2WithHmacSHA256
- PBKDF2WithHmacSHA512

You can choose more or fewer iterations, as well as the length of the result. The longer the hash, the more powerful the password (same for the hash width). However, be aware that performance is affected by these values: the more iterations, the more resources your application consumes. You should make a wise compromise between the resources consumed for generating the hash and the needed strength of the encoding.

Note

In this book, I refer to several cryptography concepts that you might like to know more about. For relevant information on HMACs and other cryptography details, I recommend *Real-World Cryptography* by David Wong (Manning, 2020). Chapter 3 of that book provides detailed information about HMAC. You can find the book at <https://livebook.manning.com/book/real-world-cryptography/chapter-3/>.

Another excellent option offered by Spring Security is the `BCryptPasswordEncoder`, which uses a bcrypt strong hashing function to encode the password. You can instantiate the `BCryptPasswordEncoder` by calling the no-arguments constructor. But you also have the option to specify a strength coefficient representing the log rounds (logarithmic rounds) used in the encoding process. Moreover, you can also alter the `SecureRandom` instance used for encoding:

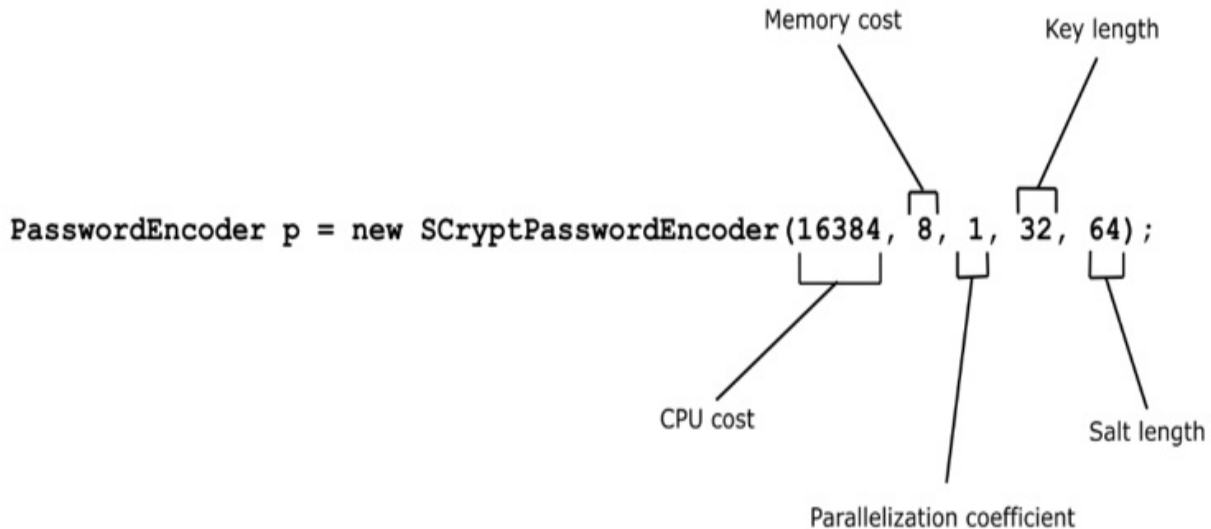
```
PasswordEncoder p = new BCryptPasswordEncoder();  
PasswordEncoder p = new BCryptPasswordEncoder(4);  
  
SecureRandom s = SecureRandom.getInstanceStrong();  
PasswordEncoder p = new BCryptPasswordEncoder(4, s);
```

The log rounds value that you provide affects the number of iterations the

hashing operation uses. The number of iterations used is $2^{\log \text{ rounds}}$. For the iteration number computation, the value for the log rounds can only be between 4 and 31. You can specify this by calling one of the second or third overloaded constructors, as shown in the previous code snippet.

The last option I present to you is `SCryptPasswordEncoder` (figure 4.2). This password encoder uses an scrypt hashing function. For the `SCryptPasswordEncoder`, you have the following option to create its instances as presented in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 The `SCryptPasswordEncoder` constructor takes five parameters and allows you to configure CPU cost, memory cost, key length, and salt length.



4.1.4 Multiple encoding strategies with `DelegatingPasswordEncoder`

In this section, we discuss the cases in which an authentication flow must apply various implementations for matching the passwords. You'll also learn how to apply a useful tool that acts as a `PasswordEncoder` in your application. Instead of having its own implementation, this tool delegates to other objects that implement the `PasswordEncoder` interface.

In some applications, you might find it useful to have various password encoders and choose from these depending on some specific configuration. A

common scenario in which I find the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` in production applications is when the encoding algorithm is changed, starting with a particular version of the application. Imagine somebody finds a vulnerability in the currently used algorithm, and you want to change it for newly registered users, but you do not want to change it for existing credentials. So you end up having multiple kinds of hashes. How do you manage this case? While it isn't the only approach for this scenario, a good choice is to use a `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` object.

The `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` is an implementation of the `PasswordEncoder` interface that, instead of implementing its encoding algorithm, delegates to another instance of an implementation of the same contract. The hash starts with a prefix naming the algorithm used to define that hash. The `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` delegates to the correct implementation of the `PasswordEncoder` based on the prefix of the password.

It sounds complicated, but with an example, you can observe that it is pretty easy. Figure 4.3 presents the relationship among the `PasswordEncoder` instances. The `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` has a list of `PasswordEncoder` implementations to which it delegates. The `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` stores each of the instances in a map. The `NoOpPasswordEncoder` is assigned to the key `noop`, while the `BCryptPasswordEncoder` implementation is assigned the key `bcrypt`. When the password has the prefix `{noop}`, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` delegates the operation to the `NoOpPasswordEncoder` implementation. If the prefix is `{bcrypt}`, then the action is delegated to the `BCryptPasswordEncoder` implementation as presented in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3 In this case, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` registers a `NoOpPasswordEncoder` for the prefix `{noop}`, a `BCryptPasswordEncoder` for the prefix `{bcrypt}`, and an `SCryptPasswordEncoder` for the prefix `{scrypt}`. If the password has the prefix `{noop}`, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` forwards the operation to the `NoOpPasswordEncoder` implementation.

When you call the matches() method with a password with the prefix {noop} the call is delegated to the NoOpPasswordEncoder.

The NoOpPasswordEncoder is registered for the prefix {noop}.

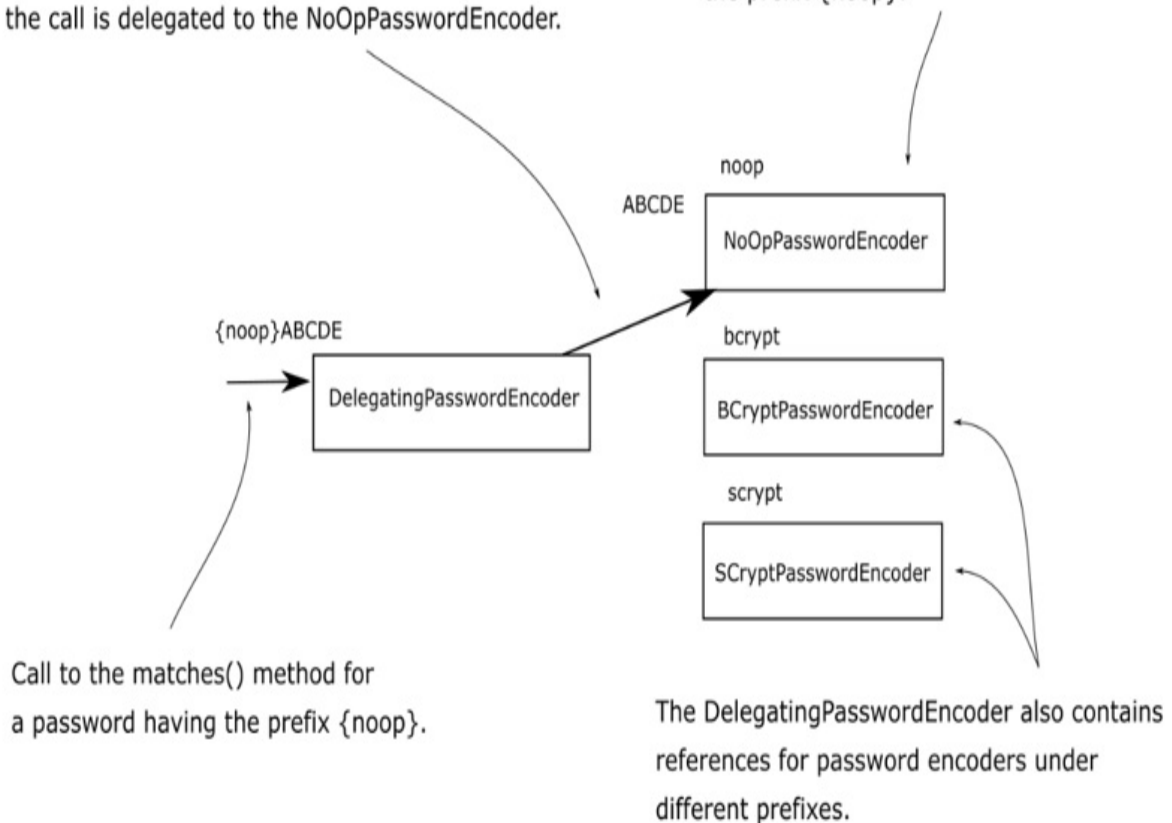
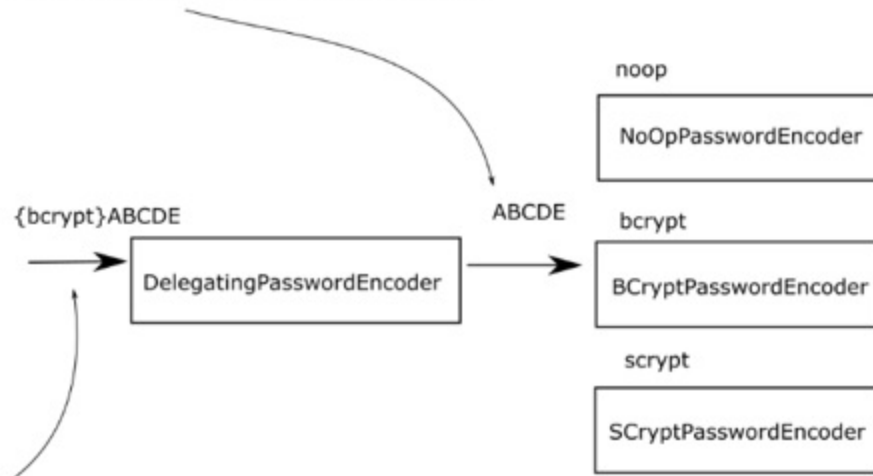


Figure 4.4 In this case, the DelegatingPasswordEncoder registers a NoOpPasswordEncoder for the prefix {noop}, a BCryptPasswordEncoder for the prefix {bcrypt}, and an SCryptPasswordEncoder for the prefix {scrypt}. When the password has the prefix {bcrypt}, the DelegatingPasswordEncoder forwards the operation to the BCryptPasswordEncoder implementation.

When you call the `matches()` method with a password with the prefix `{bcrypt}` the call is delegated to the `BCryptPasswordEncoder`



Call to the `matches()` method for a password having the prefix `{bcrypt}`

Next, let's find out how to define a `DelegatingPasswordEncoder`. You start by creating a collection of instances of your desired `PasswordEncoder` implementations, and you put these together in a `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` as in the following listing.

Listing 4.4 Creating an instance of `DelegatingPasswordEncoder`

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        Map<String, PasswordEncoder> encoders = new HashMap<>();

        encoders.put("noop", NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance());
        encoders.put("bcrypt", new BCryptPasswordEncoder());
        encoders.put("scrypt", new SCryptPasswordEncoder());

        return new DelegatingPasswordEncoder("bcrypt", encoders);
    }
}
```

The `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` is just a tool that acts as a `PasswordEncoder` so you can use it when you have to choose from a collection of implementations. In listing 4.4, the declared instance of `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` contains references to a `NoOpPasswordEncoder`, a `BCryptPasswordEncoder`, and an `SCryptPasswordEncoder`, and delegates the default to the `BCryptPasswordEncoder` implementation. Based on the prefix of the hash, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` uses the right `PasswordEncoder` implementation for matching the password. This prefix has the key that identifies the password encoder to be used from the map of encoders. If there is no prefix, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` uses the default encoder. The default `PasswordEncoder` is the one given as the first parameter when constructing the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` instance. For the code in listing 4.4, the default `PasswordEncoder` is `bcrypt`.

NOTE

The curly braces are part of the hash prefix, and those should surround the name of the key. For example, if the provided hash is `{noop}12345`, the `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` delegates to the `NoOpPasswordEncoder` that we registered for the prefix `noop`. Again, remember that the curly braces are mandatory in the prefix.

If the hash looks like the next code snippet, the password encoder is the one we assign to the prefix `{bcrypt}`, which is the `BCryptPasswordEncoder`. This is also the one to which the application will delegate if there is no prefix at all because we defined it as the default implementation:

```
{bcrypt}$2a$10$xn3LI/AjqicFYZFruSwve.681477XaVNaUQbr1gioaWPn4t1Ks
```

For convenience, Spring Security offers a way to create a `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` that has a map to all the standard provided implementations of `PasswordEncoder`. The `PasswordEncoderFactories` class provides a `createDelegatingPasswordEncoder()` static method that returns an implementation of `DelegatingPasswordEncoder` with a full set of `PasswordEncoder` mappings and `bcrypt` as a default encoder:

```
PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder = PasswordEncoderFactories.create
```

Encoding vs. encrypting vs. hashing

In the previous sections, I often used the terms encoding, encrypting, and hashing. I want to briefly clarify these terms and the way we use them throughout the book.

Encoding refers to any transformation of a given input. For example, if we have a function x that reverses a string, function $x \rightarrow y$ applied to ABCD produces DCBA.

Encryption is a particular type of encoding where, to obtain the output, you provide both the input value and a key. The key makes it possible for choosing afterward who should be able to reverse the function (obtain the input from the output). The simplest form of representing encryption as a function looks like this:

$$(x, k) \rightarrow y$$

where x is the input, k is the key, and y is the result of the encryption. This way, an individual who knows the key can use a known function to obtain the input from the output $(y, k) \rightarrow x$. We call this *reverse function decryption*. If the key used for encryption is the same as the one used for decryption, we usually call it a *symmetric* key.

If we have two different keys for encryption $((x, k_1) \rightarrow y)$ and decryption $((y, k_2) \rightarrow x)$, then we say that the encryption is done with *asymmetric* keys. Then (k_1, k_2) is called a *key pair*. The key used for encryption, k_1 , is also referred to as the *public* key, while k_2 is known as the *private* one. This way, only the owner of the private key can decrypt the data.

Hashing is a particular type of encoding, except the function is only one way. That is, from an output y of the hashing function, you cannot get back the input x . However, there should always be a way to check if an output y corresponds to an input x , so we can understand the hashing as a pair of functions for encoding and matching. If hashing is $x \rightarrow y$, then we should also have a matching function $(x, y) \rightarrow \text{boolean}$.

Sometimes the hashing function could also use a random value added to the

input: $(x, k) \rightarrow y$. We refer to this value as the *salt*. The salt makes the function stronger, enforcing the difficulty of applying a reverse function to obtain the input from the result.

To summarize the contracts we have discussed and applied up to now in this book, table 4.1 briefly describes each of the components.

Table 4.1 The interfaces that represent the main contracts for authentication flow in Spring Security

Contract	Description
UserDetails	Represents the user as seen by Spring Security.
GrantedAuthority	Defines an action within the purpose of the application that is allowable to the user (for example, read, write, delete, etc.).
UserDetailsService	Represents the object used to retrieve user details by username.
UserDetailsManager	A more particular contract for UserDetailsService. Besides retrieving the user by username, it can also be used to mutate a collection of users or a specific user.
PasswordEncoder	Specifies how the password is encrypted or hashed and how to check if a given encoded string matches a plaintext password.

4.2 Take advantage of the Spring Security Crypto

module

In this section, we discuss the Spring Security Crypto module (SSCM), which is the part of Spring Security that deals with cryptography. Using encryption and decryption functions and generating keys isn't offered out of the box with the Java language. And this constrains developers when adding dependencies that provide a more accessible approach to these features.

To make our lives easier, Spring Security also provides its own solution, which enables you to reduce the dependencies of your projects by eliminating the need to use a separate library. The password encoders are also part of the SSCM, even if we have treated them separately in previous sections. In this section, we discuss what other options the SSCM offers that are related to cryptography. You'll see examples of how to use two essential features from the SSCM:

- "charitalics"Key generators—Objects used to generate keys for hashing and encryption algorithms
- "charitalics"Encryptors—Objects used to encrypt and decrypt data

4.2.1 Using key generators

In this section, we discuss key generators. A "charitalics"key generator is an object used to generate a specific kind of key, generally needed for an encryption or hashing algorithm. The implementations of key generators that Spring Security offers are great utility tools. You'll prefer to use these implementations rather than adding another dependency for your application, and this is why I recommend that you become aware of them. Let's see some code examples of how to create and apply the key generators.

Two interfaces represent the two main types of key generators: `BytesKeyGenerator` and `StringKeyGenerator`. We can build them directly by making use of the factory class `KeyGenerators`. You can use a string key generator, represented by the `StringKeyGenerator` contract, to obtain a key as a string. Usually, we use this key as a salt value for a hashing or encryption algorithm. You can find the definition of the `StringKeyGenerator` contract in this code snippet:

```
public interface StringKeyGenerator {  
    String generateKey();  
}
```

The generator has only a `generateKey()` method that returns a string representing the key value. The next code snippet presents an example of how to obtain a `StringKeyGenerator` instance and how to use it to get a salt value:

```
StringKeyGenerator keyGenerator = KeyGenerators.string();  
String salt = keyGenerator.generateKey();
```

The generator creates an 8-byte key, and it encodes that as a hexadecimal string. The method returns the result of these operations as a string. The second interface describing a key generator is the `BytesKeyGenerator`, which is defined as follows:

```
public interface BytesKeyGenerator {  
    int getKeyLength();  
    byte[] generateKey();  
}
```

In addition to the `generateKey()` method that returns the key as a `byte[]`, the interface defines another method that returns the key length in number of bytes. A default `ByteKeyGenerator` generates keys of 8-byte length:

```
BytesKeyGenerator keyGenerator = KeyGenerators.secureRandom();  
byte [] key = keyGenerator.generateKey();  
int keyLength = keyGenerator.getKeyLength();
```

In the previous code snippet, the key generator generates keys of 8-byte length. If you want to specify a different key length, you can do this when obtaining the key generator instance by providing the desired value to the `KeyGenerators.secureRandom()` method:

```
BytesKeyGenerator keyGenerator = KeyGenerators.secureRandom(16);
```

The keys generated by the `BytesKeyGenerator` created with the

`KeyGenerators.secureRandom()` method are unique for each call of the `generateKey()` method. In some cases, we prefer an implementation that returns the same key value for each call of the same key generator. In this case, we can create a `BytesKeyGenerator` with the `KeyGenerators.shared(int length)` method. In this code snippet, `key1` and `key2` have the same value:

```
BytesKeyGenerator keyGenerator = KeyGenerators.shared(16);  
byte [] key1 = keyGenerator.generateKey();  
byte [] key2 = keyGenerator.generateKey();
```

4.2.2 Encrypt and decrypt secrets using encryptors

In this section, we apply the implementations of encryptors that Spring Security offers with code examples. An "charitalics"encryptor is an object that implements an encryption algorithm. When talking about security, encryption and decryption are common operations, so expect to need these within your application.

We often need to encrypt data either when sending it between components of the system or when persisting it. The operations provided by an encryptor are encryption and decryption. There are two types of encryptors defined by the SSCM: `BytesEncryptor` and `TextEncryptor`. While they have similar responsibilities, they treat different data types. `TextEncryptor` manages data as a string. Its methods receive strings as inputs and return strings as outputs, as you can see from the definition of its interface:

```
public interface TextEncryptor {  
  
    String encrypt(String text);  
    String decrypt(String encryptedText);  
  
}
```

The `BytesEncryptor` is more generic. You provide its input data as a byte array:

```
public interface BytesEncryptor {  
  
    byte[] encrypt(byte[] byteArray);
```

```
byte[] decrypt(byte[] encryptedByteArray);  
}
```

Let's find out what options we have to build and use an encryptor. The factory class `Encryptors` offers us multiple possibilities. For `BytesEncryptor`, we could use the `Encryptors.standard()` or the `Encryptors.stronger()` methods like this:

```
String salt = KeyGenerators.string().generateKey();  
String password = "secret";  
String valueToEncrypt = "HELLO";  
  
BytesEncryptor e = Encryptors.standard(password, salt);  
byte [] encrypted = e.encrypt(valueToEncrypt.getBytes());  
byte [] decrypted = e.decrypt(encrypted);
```

Behind the scenes, the standard byte encryptor uses 256-byte AES encryption to encrypt input. To build a stronger instance of the byte encryptor, you can call the `Encryptors.stronger()` method:

```
BytesEncryptor e = Encryptors.stronger(password, salt);
```

The difference is small and happens behind the scenes, where the AES encryption on 256-bit uses Galois/Counter Mode (GCM) as the mode of operation. The standard mode uses cipher block chaining (CBC), which is considered a weaker method.

`TextEncryptors` come in three main types. You create these three types by calling the `Encryptors.text()`, `Encryptors.delux()`, or `Encryptors.queryableText()` methods. Besides these methods to create encryptors, there is also a method that returns a dummy `TextEncryptor`, which doesn't encrypt the value. You can use the dummy `TextEncryptor` for demo examples or cases in which you want to test the performance of your application without spending time spent on encryption. The method that returns this no-op encryptor is `Encryptors.noOpText()`. In the following code snippet, you'll find an example of using a `TextEncryptor`. Even if it is a call to an encryptor, in the example, `encrypted` and `valueToEncrypt` are the same:

```
String valueToEncrypt = "HELLO";
```

```
TextEncryptor e = Encryptors.noOpText();
String encrypted = e.encrypt(valueToEncrypt);
```

The `Encryptors.text()` encryptor uses the `Encryptors.standard()` method to manage the encryption operation, while the `Encryptors.delux()` method uses an `Encryptors.stronger()` instance like this:

```
String salt = KeyGenerators.string().generateKey();
String password = "secret";
String valueToEncrypt = "HELLO";

TextEncryptor e = Encryptors.text(password, salt);      #A
String encrypted = e.encrypt(valueToEncrypt);
String decrypted = e.decrypt(encrypted);
```

4.3 Summary

- The `PasswordEncoder` has one of the most critical responsibilities in authentication logic—dealing with passwords.
- Spring Security offers several alternatives in terms of hashing algorithms, which makes the implementation only a matter of choice.
- Spring Security Crypto module (SSCM) offers various alternatives for implementations of key generators and encryptors.
- Key generators are utility objects that help you generate keys used with cryptographic algorithms.
- Encryptors are utility objects that help you apply encryption and decryption of data.

5 A web app's security begins with filters

This chapter covers

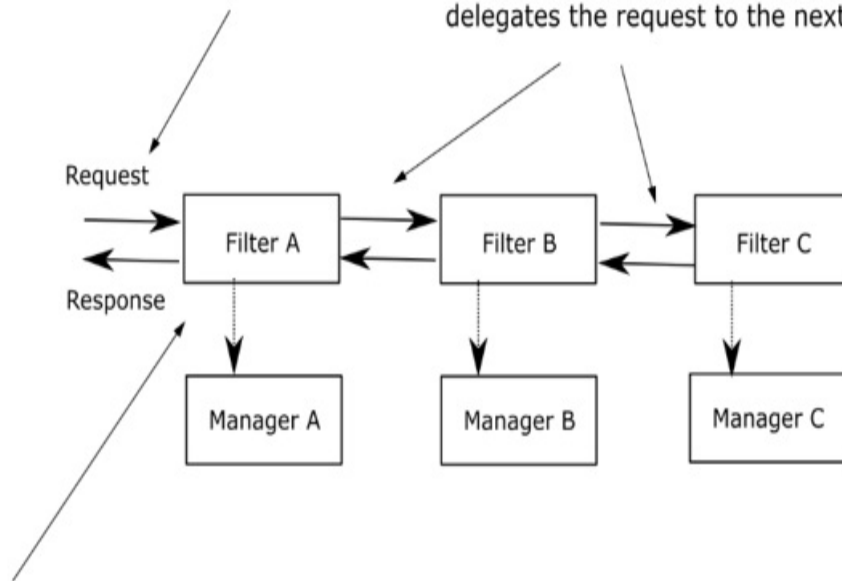
- Working with the filter chain
- Defining custom filters
- Using Spring Security classes that implement the `Filter` interface

In Spring Security, HTTP filters delegate the different responsibilities that apply to an HTTP request. In Spring Security, in general, HTTP filters manage each responsibility that must be applied to the request. The filters form a chain of responsibilities. A filter receives a request, executes its logic, and eventually delegates the request to the next filter in the chain (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 The filter chain receives the request. Each filter uses a manager to apply specific logic to the request and, eventually, delegates the request further along the chain to the next filter.

The filter chain intercepts the requests.

Each filter, after applying its responsibility, delegates the request to the next filter in the chain.



A filter, generally, delegates the responsibility to a manager object.

Figure 5.2 At the airport, you go through a filter chain to eventually board the aircraft. In the same way, Spring Security has a filter chain that acts on the HTTP requests received by the application.



FILTER 1



FILTER 2



FILTER 3

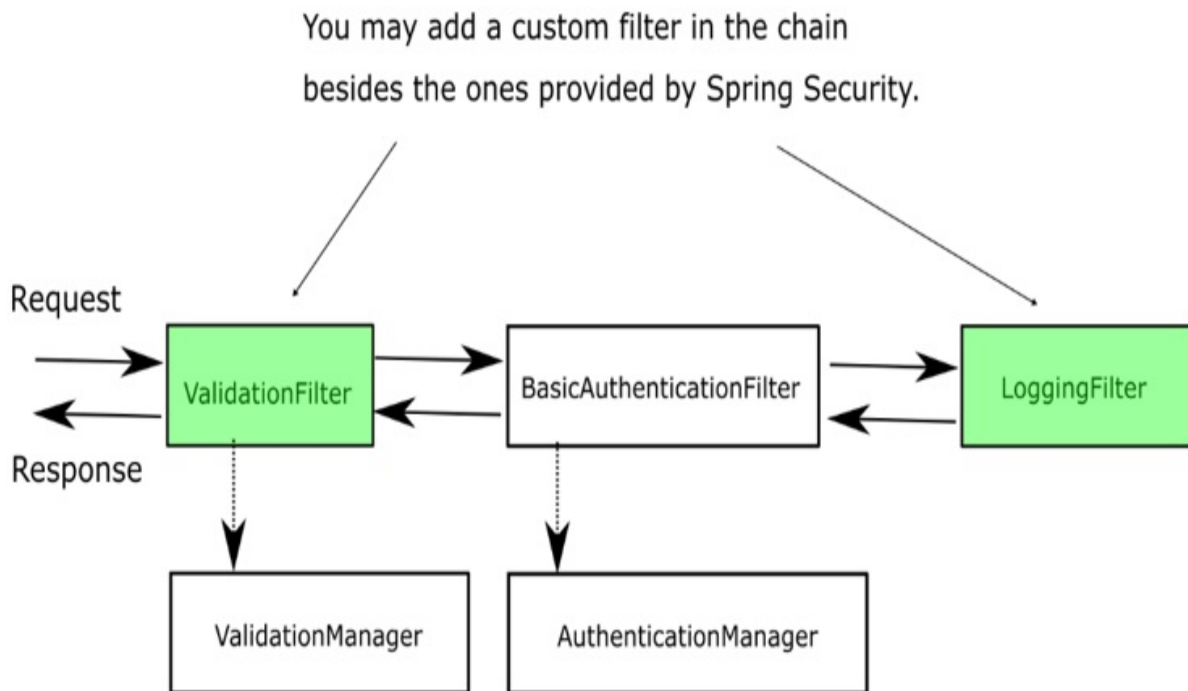
Let's take an analogy as an example. When you go to the airport, from entering the terminal to boarding the aircraft, you go through multiple filters (figure 5.2). You first present your ticket, then your passport is verified, and afterward, you go through security. At the airport gate, more "filters" might be applied. For example, in some cases, right before boarding, your passport and visa are validated once more. This is an excellent analogy to the filter

chain in Spring Security. In the same way, you customize filters in a filter chain with Spring Security that act on HTTP requests. Spring Security provides filter implementations that you add to the filter chain through customization, but you can also define custom filters.

In this chapter, we'll discuss how you can customize filters that are part of the authentication and authorization architecture in Spring Security of a web app. For example, you might want to augment authentication by adding one more step for the user, like checking their email address or using a one-time password. You can, as well, add functionality referring to auditing authentication events. You'll find various scenarios where applications use auditing authentication: from debugging purposes to identifying a user's behavior. Using today's technology and machine learning algorithms can improve applications, for example, by learning the user's behavior and knowing if somebody hacked their account or impersonated the user.

Knowing how to customize the HTTP filter chain of responsibilities is a valuable skill. In practice, applications come with various requirements, where using default configurations doesn't work anymore. You'll need to add or replace existing components of the chain. With the default implementation, you use the HTTP Basic authentication method, which allows you to rely on a username and password. But in practical scenarios, there are plenty of situations in which you'll need more than this. Maybe you need to implement a different strategy for authentication, notify an external system about an authorization event, or simply log a successful or failed authentication that's later used in tracing and auditing (figure 5.3). Whatever your scenario is, Spring Security offers you the flexibility of modeling the filter chain precisely as you need it.

Figure 5.3 You can customize the filter chain by adding new filters before, after, or at the position of existing ones. This way, you can customize authentication as well as the entire process applied to request and response.



5.1 Implementing filters in the Spring Security architecture

In this section, we discuss the way filters and the filter chain work in Spring Security architecture. You need this general overview first to understand the implementation examples we work on in the next sections of this chapter. You learned in chapters 2 and 3 that the authentication filter intercepts the request and delegates authentication responsibility further to the authorization manager. If we want to execute certain logic before authentication, we do this by inserting a filter before the authentication filter.

The filters in Spring Security architecture are typical HTTP filters. We can create filters by implementing the `Filter` interface from the `jakarta.servlet` package. As for any other HTTP filter, you need to override the `doFilter()` method to implement its logic. This method receives as parameters the `ServletRequest`, `ServletResponse`, and `FilterChain`:

- `ServletRequest`—Represents the HTTP request. We use the `ServletRequest` object to retrieve details about the request.

- `ServletResponse`—Represents the HTTP response. We use the `ServletResponse` object to alter the response before sending it back to the client or further along the filter chain.
- `FilterChain`—Represents the chain of filters. We use the `FilterChain` object to forward the request to the next filter in the chain.

Note

Starting with Spring Boot 3, Jakarta EE replaces the old Java EE specification. Due to this change, you'll observe that some packages changed their prefix from "javax" to "jakarta". For example, types such as `Filter`, `ServletRequest`, and `ServletResponse` were previously in the `javax.servlet` package, but you now find them in the `jakarta.servlet` package.

The "charitalics"filter chain represents a collection of filters with a defined order in which they act. Spring Security provides some filter implementations and their order for us. Among the provided filters

- `BasicAuthenticationFilter` takes care of HTTP Basic authentication, if present.
- `CsrfFilter` takes care of cross-site request forgery (CSRF) protection, which we'll discuss in chapter 9.
- `CorsFilter` takes care of cross-origin resource sharing (CORS) authorization rules, which we'll also discuss in chapter 10.

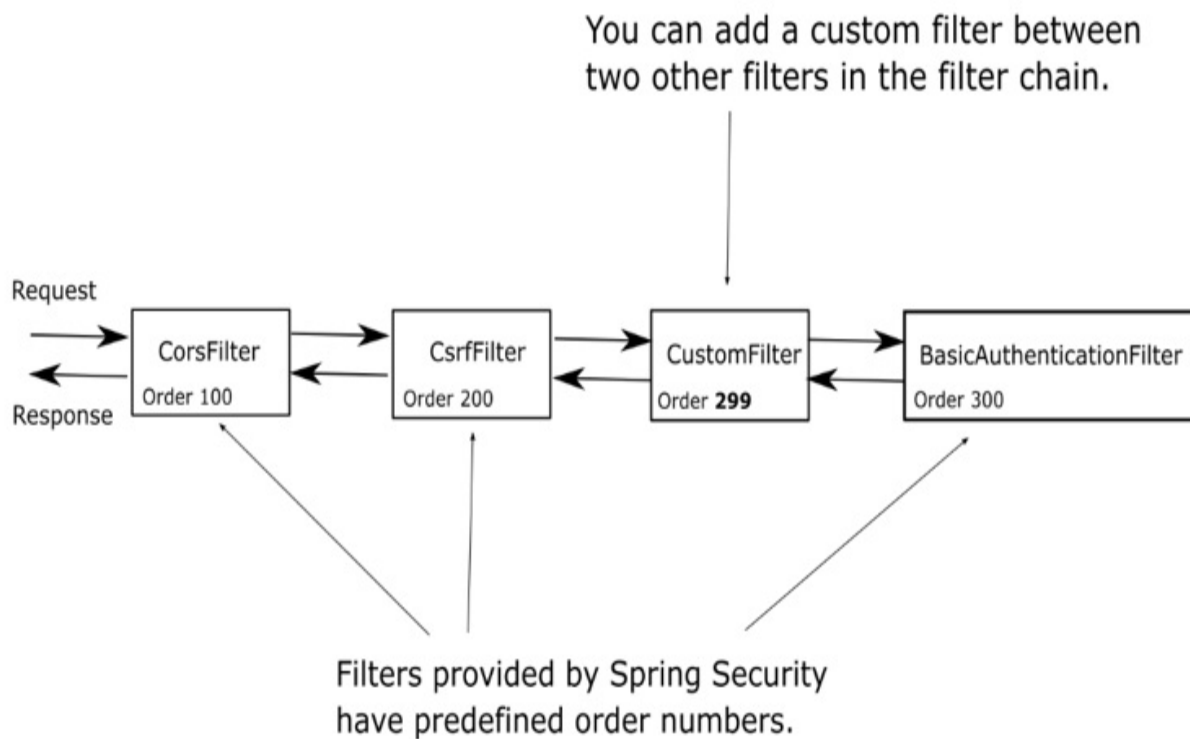
You don't need to know all of the filters as you probably won't touch these directly from your code, but you do need to understand how the filter chain works and to be aware of a few implementations. In this book, I only explain those filters that are essential to the various topics we discuss.

It is important to understand that an application doesn't necessarily have instances of all these filters in the chain. The chain is longer or shorter depending on how you configure the application. For example, in chapters 2 and 3, you learned that you need to call the `httpBasic()` method of the `HttpSecurity` class if you want to use the HTTP Basic authentication method. What happens is that if you call the `httpBasic()` method, an instance of `BasicAuthenticationFilter` is added to the chain. Similarly, depending on the configurations you write, the definition of the filter chain is

affected.

You add a new filter to the chain relative to another one (figure 5.4). Or, you can add a filter either before, after, or at the position of a known one. Each position is, in fact, an index (a number), and you might find it also referred to as “the order.”

Figure 5.4 Each filter has an order number. This determines the order in which filters are applied to a request. You can add custom filters along with the filters provided by Spring Security.



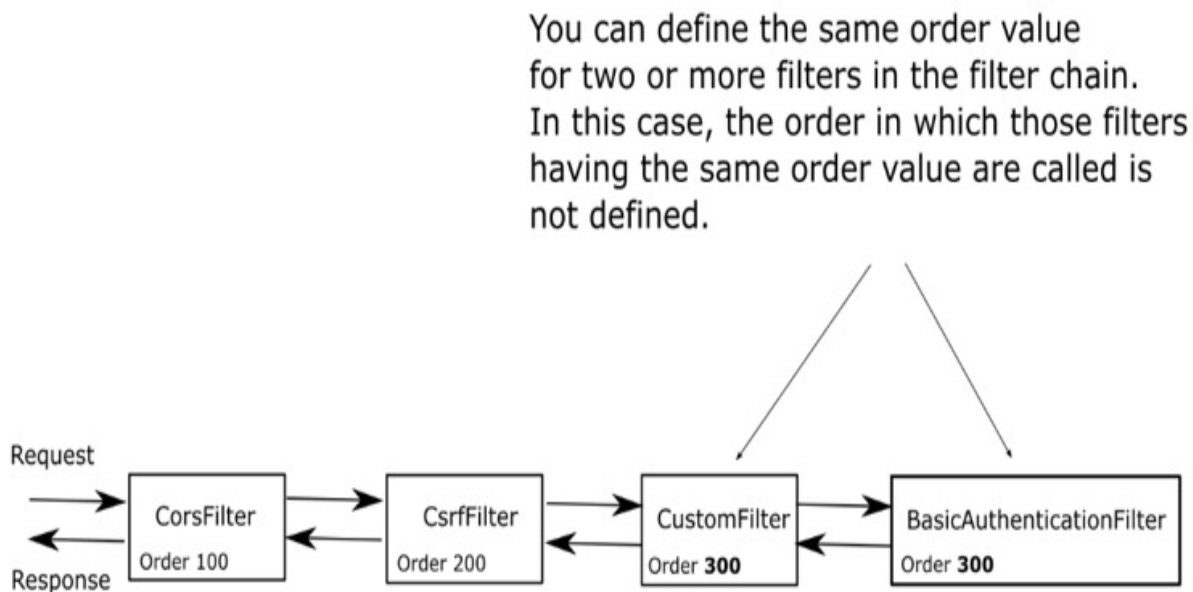
If you want to learn more details about which filters Spring Security provides and what is the order in which these are configured, you can take a look in the `FilterOrderRegistration` from `org.springframework.security.config.annotation.web.builders` package.

You can add two or more filters in the same position (figure 5.5). In section 5.4, we’ll encounter a common case in which this might occur, one which usually creates confusion among developers.

NOTE

If multiple filters have the same position, the order in which they are called is not defined.

Figure 5.5 You might have multiple filters with the same order value in the chain. In this case, Spring Security doesn't guarantee the order in which they are called.



5.2 Adding a filter before an existing one in the chain

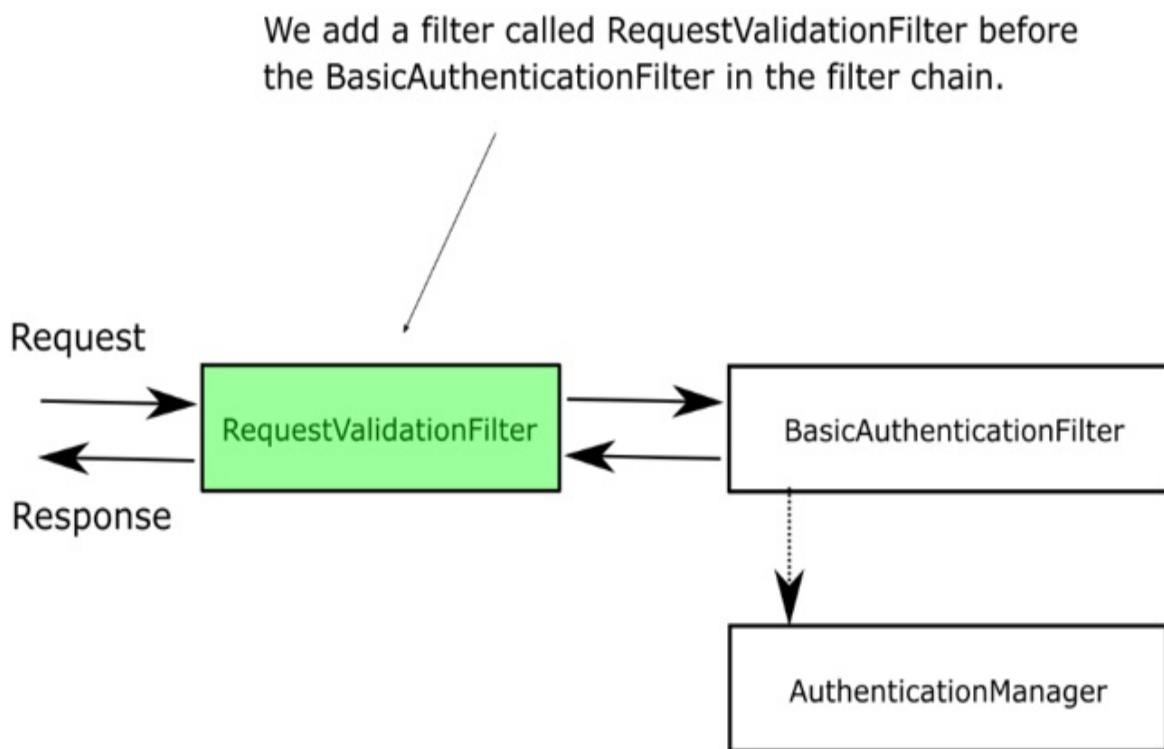
In this section, we discuss applying custom HTTP filters before an existing one in the filter chain. You might find scenarios in which this is useful. To approach this in a practical way, we'll work on a project for our example. With this example, you'll easily learn to implement a custom filter and apply it before an existing one in the filter chain. You can then adapt this example to any similar requirement you might find in a production application.

For our first custom filter implementation, let's consider a trivial scenario. We want to make sure that any request has a header called Request-Id (see project ssia-ch5-ex1). We assume that our application uses this header for

tracking requests and that this header is mandatory. At the same time, we want to validate these assumptions before the application performs authentication. The authentication process might involve querying the database or other resource-consuming actions that we don't want the application to execute if the format of the request isn't valid. How do we do this? To solve the current requirement only takes two steps, and in the end, the filter chain looks like the one in figure 5.6:

1. *Implement the filter.* Create a `RequestValidationFilter` class that checks that the needed header exists in the request.
2. *Add the filter to the filter chain.* Do this in the configuration class, overriding the `configure()` method.

Figure 5.6 For our example, we add a `RequestValidationFilter`, which acts before the authentication filter. The `RequestValidationFilter` ensures that authentication doesn't happen if the validation of the request fails. In our case, the request must have a mandatory header named `Request-Id`.



To accomplish step 1, implementing the filter, we define a custom filter. The

next listing shows the implementation.

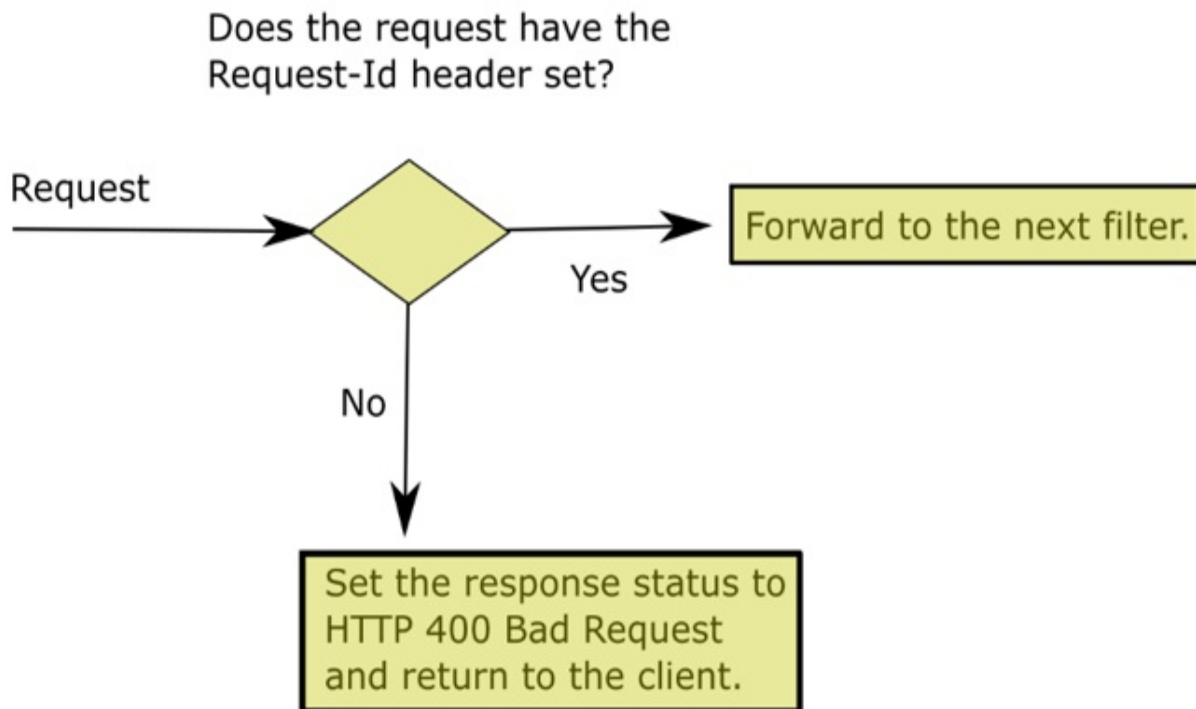
Listing 5.1 Implementing a custom filter

```
public class RequestValidationFilter
    implements Filter {          #A

    @Override
    public void doFilter(
        ServletRequest servletRequest,
        ServletResponse servletResponse,
        FilterChain filterChain)
        throws IOException, ServletException {
        // ...
    }
}
```

Inside the `doFilter()` method, we write the logic of the filter. In our example, we check if the `Request-Id` header exists. If it does, we forward the request to the next filter in the chain by calling the `doFilter()` method. If the header doesn't exist, we set an HTTP status 400 Bad Request on the response without forwarding it to the next filter in the chain (figure 5.7). Listing 5.2 presents the logic.

Figure 5.7 The custom filter we add before authentication checks whether the `Request-Id` header exists. If the header exists on the request, the application forwards the request to be authenticated. If the header doesn't exist, the application sets the HTTP status 400 Bad Request and returns to the client.



Listing 5.2 Implementing the logic in the `doFilter()` method

```
@Override
public void doFilter(
    ServletRequest request,
    ServletResponse response,
    FilterChain filterChain)
    throws IOException,
        ServletException {

    var httpRequest = (HttpServletRequest) request;
    var httpResponse = (HttpServletResponse) response;

    String requestId = httpRequest.getHeader("Request-Id");

    if (requestId == null || requestId.isBlank()) {
        httpResponse.setStatus(HttpServletResponse.SC_BAD_REQUEST);
        return;      #A
    }

    filterChain.doFilter(request, response);    #B
}
```

To implement step 2, applying the filter within the configuration class, we use the `addFilterBefore()` method of the `HttpSecurity` object because we want the application to execute this custom filter before authentication. This method receives two parameters:

- "charitalics"An instance of the custom filter we want to add to the chain—In our example, this is an instance of the `RequestValidationFilter` class presented in listing 5.1.
- "charitalics"The type of filter before which we add the new instance—For this example, because the requirement is to execute the filter logic before authentication, we need to add our custom filter instance before the authentication filter. The class `BasicAuthenticationFilter` defines the default type of the authentication filter.

Until now, we have referred to the filter dealing with authentication generally as the "charitalics"authentication filter. You'll find out in the next chapters that Spring Security also configures other filters. In chapter 9, we'll discuss cross-site request forgery (CSRF) protection, and in chapter 10, we'll discuss cross-origin resource sharing (CORS). Both capabilities also rely on filters.

Listing 5.3 shows how to add the custom filter before the authentication filter in the configuration class. To make the example simpler, I use the `permitAll()` method to allow all unauthenticated requests.

Listing 5.3 Configuring the custom filter before authentication

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.addFilterBefore(        #A
            new RequestValidationFilter(), BasicAuthenticationFilter.c
            .authorizeRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().permitAll()));

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

We also need a controller class and an endpoint to test the functionality. The next listing defines the controller class.

Listing 5.4 The controller class

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

You can now run and test the application. Calling the endpoint without the header generates a response with HTTP status 400 Bad Request. If you add the header to the request, the response status becomes HTTP 200 OK, and you'll also see the response body, `Hello!` To call the endpoint without the `Request-Id` header, we use this cURL command:

```
curl -v http://localhost:8080/hello
```

This call generates the following (truncated) response:

```
...
< HTTP/1.1 400
...
```

To call the endpoint and provide the `Request-Id` header, we use this cURL command:

```
curl -H "Request-Id:12345" http://localhost:8080/hello
```

This call generates the following (truncated) response:

```
Hello!
```

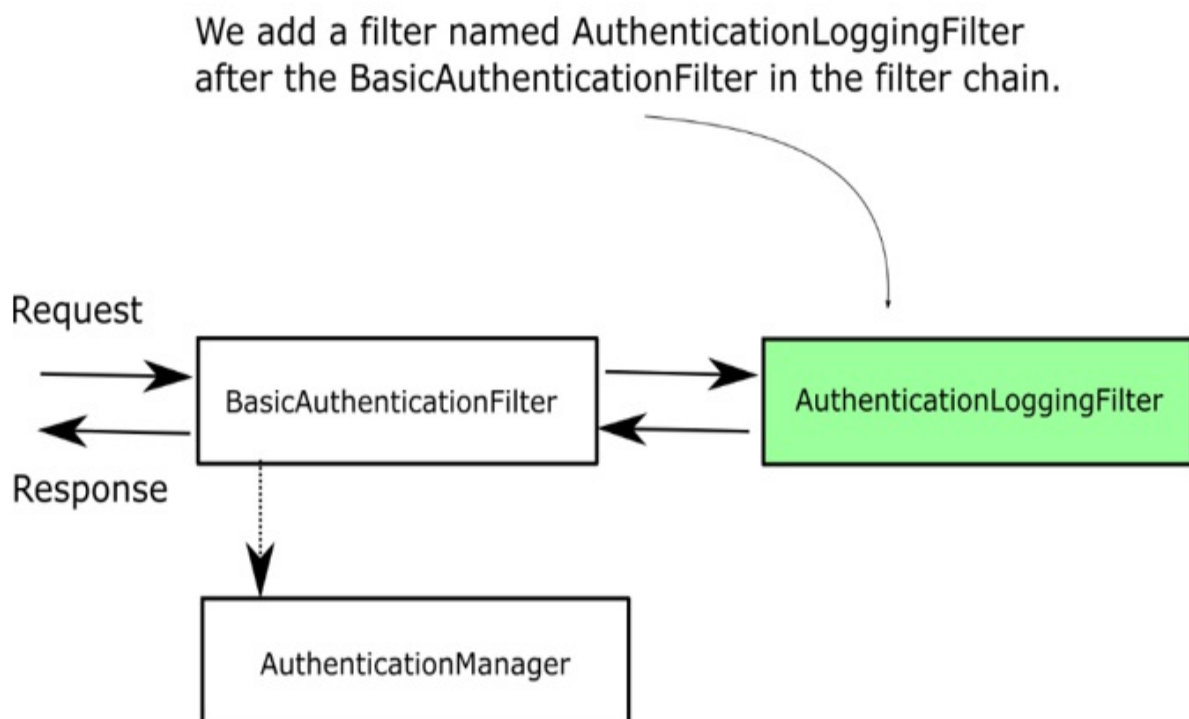
5.3 Adding a filter after an existing one in the chain

In this section, we discuss adding a filter after an existing one in the filter chain. You use this approach when you want to execute some logic after

something already existing in the filter chain. Let's assume that you have to execute some logic after the authentication process. Examples for this could be notifying a different system after certain authentication events or simply for logging and tracing purposes (figure 5.8). As in section 5.1, we implement an example to show you how to do this. You can adapt it to your needs for a real-world scenario.

For our example, we log all successful authentication events by adding a filter after the authentication filter (figure 5.8). We consider that what bypasses the authentication filter represents a successfully authenticated event and we want to log it. Continuing the example from section 5.1, we also log the request ID received through the HTTP header.

Figure 5.8 We add the `AuthenticationLoggingFilter` after the `BasicAuthenticationFilter` to log the requests that the application authenticates.



The following listing presents the definition of a filter that logs requests that pass the authentication filter.

Listing 5.5 Defining a filter to log requests

```

public class AuthenticationLoggingFilter implements Filter {

    private final Logger logger =
        Logger.getLogger(
            AuthenticationLoggingFilter.class.getName());

    @Override
    public void doFilter(
        ServletRequest request,
        ServletResponse response,
        FilterChain filterChain)
        throws IOException, ServletException {

        var httpRequest = (HttpServletRequest) request;

        var requestId =
            httpRequest.getHeader("Request-Id");      #A

        logger.info("Successfully authenticated      #B
                    request with id " + requestId);    #B

        filterChain.doFilter(request, response);      #C
    }
}

```

To add the custom filter in the chain after the authentication filter, you call the `addFilterAfter()` method of `HttpSecurity`. The next listing shows the implementation.

Listing 5.6 Adding a custom filter after an existing one in the filter chain

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.addFilterBefore(
            new RequestValidationFilter(),
            BasicAuthenticationFilter.class)
            .addFilterAfter(      #A
                new AuthenticationLoggingFilter(),
                BasicAuthenticationFilter.class)
            .authorizeRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().permitAll());
    }
}

```

```
        return http.build();  
    }  
}
```

Running the application and calling the endpoint, we observe that for every successful call to the endpoint, the application prints a log line in the console. For the call

```
curl -H "Request-Id:12345" http://localhost:8080/hello
```

the response body is

Hello!

In the console, you can see a line similar to this:

```
INFO 5876 --- [nio-8080-exec-2] c.l.s.f.AuthenticationLoggingFilt
```

5.4 Adding a filter at the location of another in the chain

In this section, we discuss adding a filter at the location of another one in the filter chain. You use this approach especially when providing a different implementation for a responsibility that is already assumed by one of the filters known by Spring Security. A typical scenario is authentication.

Let's assume that instead of the HTTP Basic authentication flow, you want to implement something different. Instead of using a username and a password as input credentials based on which the application authenticates the user, you need to apply another approach. Some examples of scenarios that you could encounter are

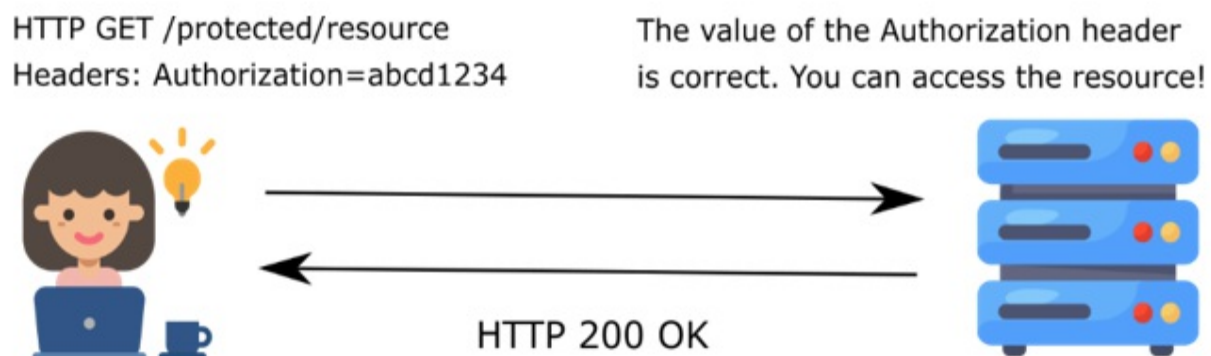
- Identification based on a static header value for authentication
- Using a symmetric key to sign the request for authentication
- Using a one-time password (OTP) in the authentication process

In our first scenario, identification based on a static key for authentication, the client sends a string to the app in the header of HTTP request, which is

always the same. The application stores these values somewhere, most probably in a database or a secrets vault. Based on this static value, the application identifies the client.

This approach (figure 5.9) offers weak security related to authentication, but architects and developers often choose it in calls between backend applications for its simplicity. The implementations also execute fast because these don't need to do complex calculations, as in the case of applying a cryptographic signature. This way, static keys used for authentication represent a compromise where developers rely more on the infrastructure level in terms of security and also don't leave the endpoints wholly unprotected.

Figure 5.9 The request contains a header with the value of the static key. If this value matches the one known by the application, it accepts the request.

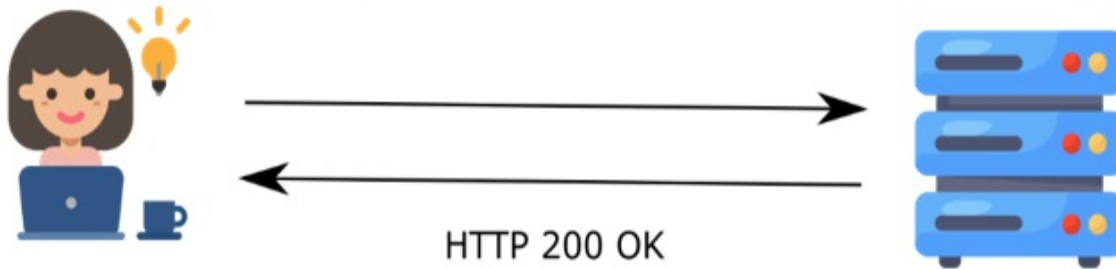


In our second scenario, using symmetric keys to sign and validate requests, both client and server know the value of a key (client and server share the key). The client uses this key to sign a part of the request (for example, to sign the value of specific headers), and the server checks if the signature is valid using the same key (figure 5.10). The server can store individual keys for each client in a database or a secrets vault. Similarly, you can use a pair of asymmetric keys.

Figure 5.10 The Authorization header contains a value signed with a key known by both client and server (or a private key for which the server has the public key). The application checks the signature and, if correct, allows the request.

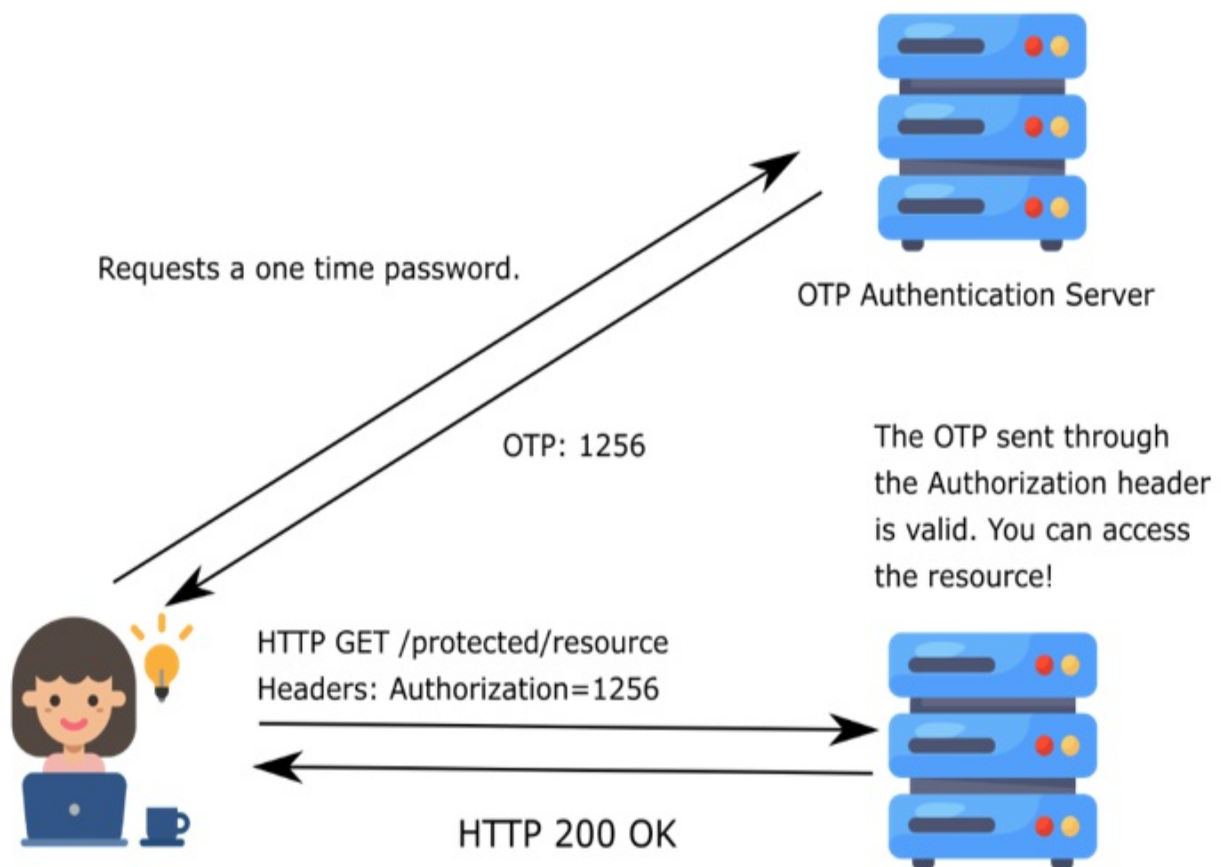
HTTP GET /protected/resource
Headers: Authorization=eyJhbGciOiJI...

The signature of the Authorization header is valid. You can access the resource!



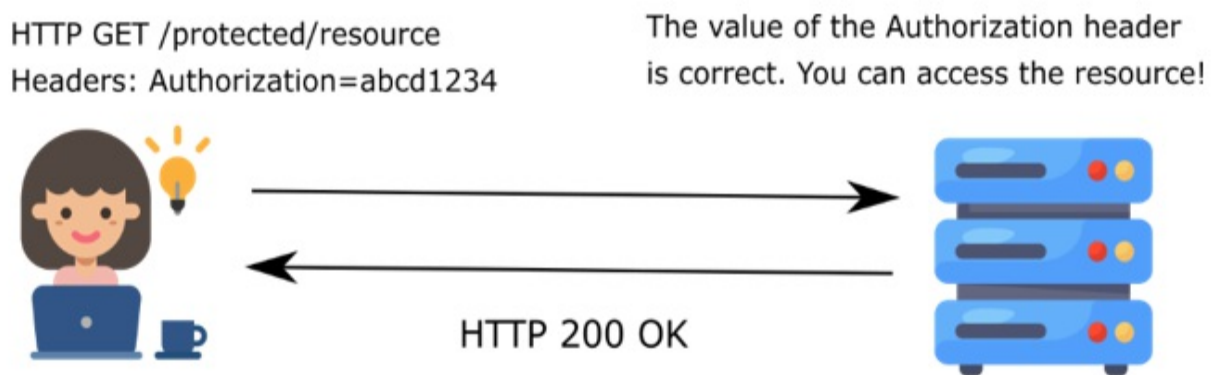
And finally, for our third scenario, using an OTP in the authentication process, the user receives the OTP via a message or by using an authentication provider app like Google Authenticator (figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11 To access the resource, the client has to use a one-time password (OTP). The client obtains the OTP from a third-party authentication server. Generally, applications use this approach during login when multifactor authentication is required.



Let's implement an example to demonstrate how to apply a custom filter. To keep the case relevant but straightforward, we focus on configuration and consider a simple logic for authentication. In our scenario, we have the value of a static key, which is the same for all requests. To be authenticated, the user must add the correct value of the static key in the Authorization header as presented in figure 5.12. You can find the code for this example in the project ssia-ch5-ex2.

Figure 5.12 The client adds a static key in the Authorization header of the HTTP request. The server checks if it knows the key before authorizing the requests.



We start with implementing the filter class, named `StaticKeyAuthenticationFilter`. This class reads the value of the static key from the properties file and verifies if the value of the Authorization header is equal to it. If the values are the same, the filter forwards the request to the next component in the filter chain. If not, the filter sets the value 401 Unauthorized to the HTTP status of the response without forwarding the request in the filter chain. Listing 5.7 defines the `StaticKeyAuthenticationFilter` class.

Listing 5.7 The definition of the `StaticKeyAuthenticationFilter` class

```
@Component          #A
public class StaticKeyAuthenticationFilter
    implements Filter {          #B

    @Value("${authorization.key}")    #C
    private String authorizationKey;
```

```

@Override
public void doFilter(ServletRequest request,
                    ServletResponse response,
                    FilterChain filterChain)
    throws IOException, ServletException {

    var httpRequest = (HttpServletRequest) request;
    var httpResponse = (HttpServletResponse) response;

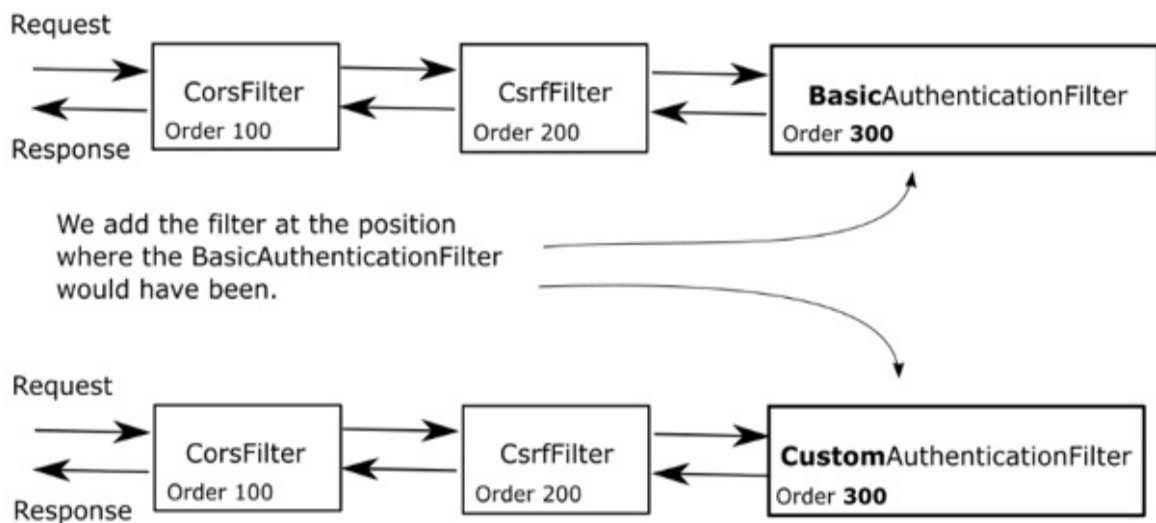
    String authentication = #D
        httpRequest.getHeader("Authorization");

    if (authorizationKey.equals(authentication)) {
        filterChain.doFilter(request, response);
    } else {
        httpResponse.setStatus(
            HttpServletResponse.SC_UNAUTHORIZED);
    }
}
}

```

Once we define the filter, we add it to the filter chain at the position of the class `BasicAuthenticationFilter` by using the `addFilterAt()` method (figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13 We add our custom authentication filter at the location where the class `BasicAuthenticationFilter` would have been if we were using HTTP Basic as an authentication method. This means our custom filter has the same ordering value.



But remember what we discussed in section 5.1. When adding a filter at a specific position, Spring Security does not assume it is the only one at that position. You might add more filters at the same location in the chain. In this case, Spring Security doesn't guarantee in which order these will act. I tell you this again because I've seen many people confused by how this works. Some developers think that when you apply a filter at a position of a known one, it will be replaced. This is not the case! We must make sure not to add filters that we don't need to the chain.

NOTE

I do advise you not to add multiple filters at the same position in the chain. When you add more filters in the same location, the order in which they are used is not defined. It makes sense to have a definite order in which filters are called. Having a known order makes your application easier to understand and maintain.

In listing 5.8, you can find the definition of the configuration class that adds the filter. Observe that we don't call the `httpBasic()` method from the `HttpSecurity` class here because we don't want the `BasicAuthenticationFilter` instance to be added to the filter chain.

Listing 5.8 Adding the filter in the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    private final StaticKeyAuthenticationFilter filter;      #A

    // omitted constructor

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {
        http.addFilterAt(filter,      #B
            BasicAuthenticationFilter.class)
            .authorizeRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().permitAll());

        return http.build();
    }
}
```



```
}
```

To test the application, we also need an endpoint. For that, we define a controller, as given in listing 5.4. You should add a value for the static key on the server in the `application.properties` file, as shown in this code snippet:

```
authorization.key=SD9cICj11e
```

NOTE

Storing passwords, keys, or any other data that is not meant to be seen by everybody in the properties file is never a good idea for a production application. In our examples, we use this approach for simplicity and to allow you to focus on the Spring Security configurations we make. But in real-world scenarios, make sure to use a secrets vault to store such kinds of details.

We can now test the application. We expect that the app allows requests having the correct value for the `Authorization` header and rejects others, returning an HTTP 401 Unauthorized status on the response. The next code snippets present the `curl` calls used to test the application. If you use the same value you set on the server side for the `Authorization` header, the call is successful, and you'll see the response body, `Hello!` The call

```
curl -H "Authorization:SD9cICj11e" http://localhost:8080/hello
```

returns this response body:

```
Hello!
```

With the following call, if the `Authorization` header is missing or is incorrect, the response status is HTTP 401 Unauthorized:

```
curl -v http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response status is

```
...  
< HTTP/1.1 401  
...
```

In this case, because we don't configure a `UserDetailsService`, Spring Boot automatically configures one, as you learned in chapter 2. But in our scenario, you don't need a `UserDetailsService` at all because the concept of the user doesn't exist. We only validate that the user requesting to call an endpoint on the server knows a given value. Application scenarios are not usually this simple and often require a `UserDetailsService`. But, if you anticipate or have such a case where this component is not needed, you can disable autoconfiguration. To disable the configuration of the default `UserDetailsService`, you can use the `exclude` attribute of the `@SpringBootApplication` annotation on the main class like this:

```
@SpringBootApplication(exclude =  
    {UserDetailsServiceAutoConfiguration.class })
```

5.5 Filter implementations provided by Spring Security

In this section, we discuss classes provided by Spring Security, which implement the `Filter` interface. In the examples in this chapter, we define the filter by implementing this interface directly.

Spring Security offers a few abstract classes that implement the `Filter` interface and for which you can extend your filter definitions. These classes also add functionality your implementations could benefit from when you extend them. For example, you could extend the `GenericFilterBean` class, which allows you to use initialization parameters that you would define in a `web.xml` descriptor file where applicable. A more useful class that extends the `GenericFilterBean` is `OncePerRequestFilter`. When adding a filter to the chain, the framework doesn't guarantee it will be called only once per request. `OncePerRequestFilter`, as the name suggests, implements logic to make sure that the filter's `doFilter()` method is executed only one time per request.

If you need such functionality in your application, use the classes that Spring provides. But if you don't need them, I'd always recommend you to go as simple as possible with your implementations. Too often, I've seen developers extending the `GenericFilterBean` class instead of implementing

the `Filter` interface in functionalities that don't require the custom logic added by the `GenericFilterBean` class. When asked why, it seems they don't know. They probably copied the implementation as they found it in examples on the web.

To make it crystal clear how to use such a class, let's write an example. The logging functionality we implemented in section 5.3 makes a great candidate for using `OncePerRequestFilter`. We want to avoid logging the same requests multiple times. Spring Security doesn't guarantee the filter won't be called more than once, so we have to take care of this ourselves. The easiest way is to implement the filter using the `OncePerRequestFilter` class. I wrote this in a separate project called `ssia-ch5-ex3`.

In listing 5.9, you find the change I made for the `AuthenticationLoggingFilter` class. Instead of implementing the `Filter` interface directly, as was the case in the example in section 5.3, now it extends the `OncePerRequestFilter` class. The method we override here is `doFilterInternal()`. You find this code in project `ssia-ch5-ex3`.

Listing 5.9 Extending the `OncePerRequestFilter` class

```
public class AuthenticationLoggingFilter
    extends OncePerRequestFilter {           #A

    private final Logger logger =
        Logger.getLogger(
            AuthenticationLoggingFilter.class.getName());

    @Override
    protected void doFilterInternal(         #B
        HttpServletRequest request,         #C
        HttpServletResponse response,       #C
        FilterChain filterChain) throws
        ServletException, IOException {

        String requestId = request.getHeader("Request-Id");

        logger.info("Successfully authenticated request with id " +
            requestId);

        filterChain.doFilter(request, response);
    }
}
```

```
}
```

A few short observations about the `OncePerRequestFilter` class that you might find useful:

- "charitalics" It supports only HTTP requests, but that's actually what we always use. The advantage is that it casts the types, and we directly receive the requests as `HttpServletRequest` and `HttpServletResponse`. Remember, with the `Filter` interface, we had to cast the request and the response.
- "charitalics" You can implement logic to decide if the filter is applied or not. Even if you added the filter to the chain, you might decide it doesn't apply for certain requests. You set this by overriding the `shouldNotFilter(HttpServletRequest)` method. By default, the filter applies to all requests.
- "charitalics" By default, a `OncePerRequestFilter` "charitalics" doesn't apply to asynchronous requests or error dispatch requests. You can change this behavior by overriding the methods `shouldNotFilterAsyncDispatch()` and `shouldNotFilterErrorDispatch()`.

If you find any of these characteristics of the `OncePerRequestFilter` useful in your implementation, I recommend you use this class to define your filters.

5.6 Summary

- The first layer of the web application architecture, which intercepts HTTP requests, is a filter chain. As for other components in Spring Security architecture, you can customize them to match your requirements.
- You can customize the filter chain by adding new filters before an existing one, after an existing one, or at the position of an existing filter.
- You can have multiple filters at the same position of an existing filter. In this case, the order in which the filters are executed is not defined.
- Changing the filter chain helps you customize authentication and authorization to match precisely the requirements of your application.

6 Implementing authentication

This chapter covers

- Implementing authentication logic using a custom `AuthenticationProvider`
- Using the HTTP Basic and form-based login authentication methods
- Understanding and managing the `SecurityContext` component

In chapters 3 and 4, we covered a few of the components acting in the authentication flow. We discussed `UserDetails` and how to define the prototype to describe a user in Spring Security. We then used `UserDetails` in examples where you learned how the `UserDetailsService` and `UserDetailsManager` contracts work and how you can implement these. We discussed and used the leading implementations of these interfaces in examples as well. Finally, you learned how a `PasswordEncoder` manages passwords and how to use one, as well as the Spring Security crypto module (SSCM) with its encryptors and key generators.

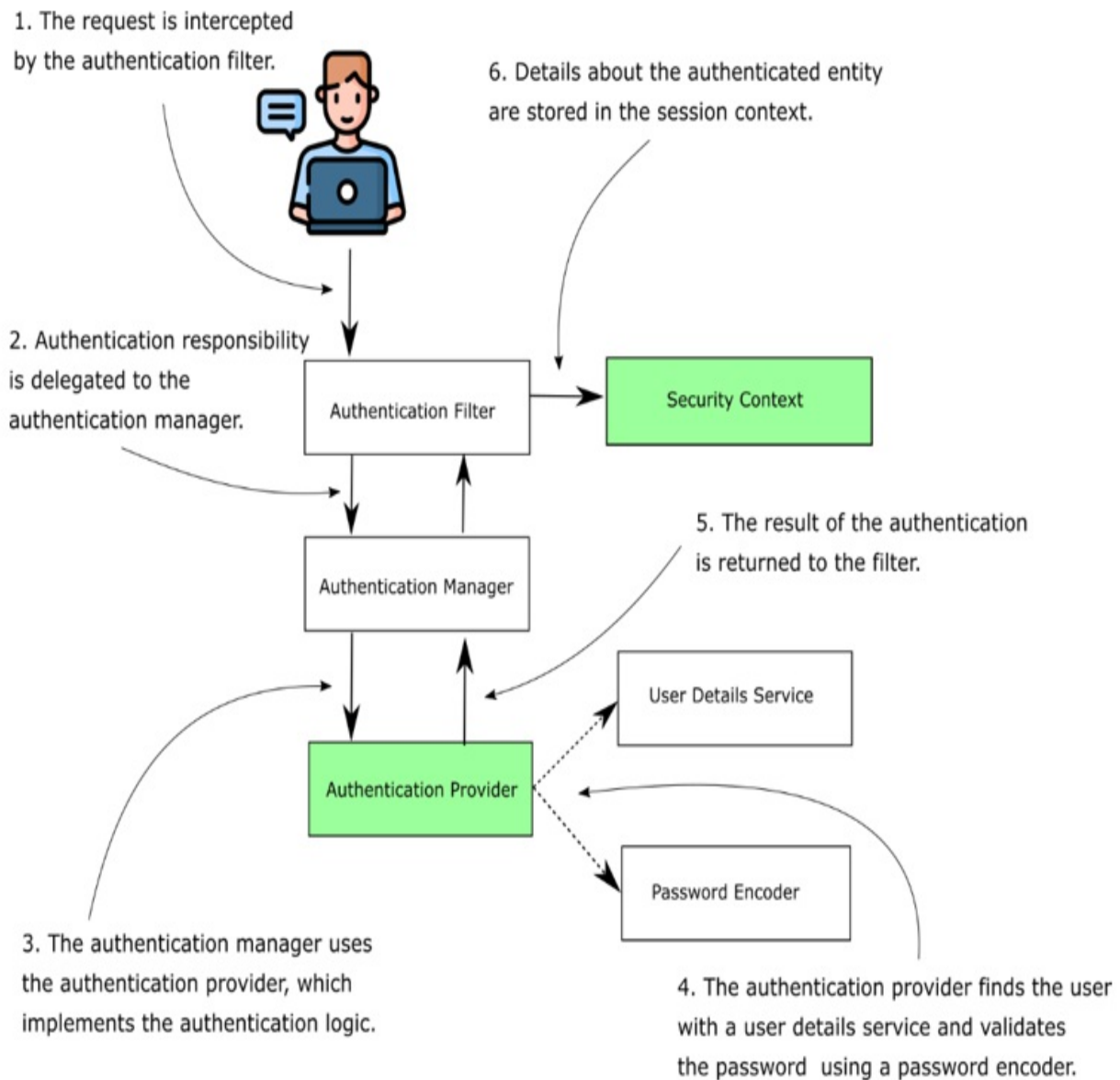
The `AuthenticationProvider` layer, however, is the one responsible for the logic of authentication. The `AuthenticationProvider` is where you find the conditions and instructions that decide whether to authenticate a request or not. The component that delegates this responsibility to the `AuthenticationProvider` is the `AuthenticationManager`, which receives the request from the HTTP filter layer, which we discussed in chapter 5. In this chapter, let's look at the authentication process, which has only two possible results:

- "charitalics"The entity making the request is not authenticated. The user is not recognized, and the application rejects the request without delegating to the authorization process. Usually, in this case, the response status sent back to the client is HTTP 401 Unauthorized.
- "charitalics"The entity making the request is authenticated. The details about the requester are stored such that the application can use these for authorization. As you'll find out in this chapter, `SecurityContext` is

responsible for the details about the current authenticated request.

To remind you of the actors and the links between them, figure 6.1 provides the diagram that you also saw in chapter 2.

Figure 6.1 The authentication flow in Spring Security. This process defines how the application identifies someone making a request. In the figure, the components discussed in this chapter are shaded. Here, the `AuthenticationProvider` implements the authentication logic in this process, while the `SecurityContext` stores the details about the authenticated request.



This chapter covers the remaining parts of the authentication flow (the shaded

boxes in figure 6.1). Then, in chapters 7 and 8, you'll learn how authorization works, which is the process that follows authentication in the HTTP request. First, we need to discuss how to implement the `AuthenticationProvider` interface. You need to know how Spring Security understands a request in the authentication process.

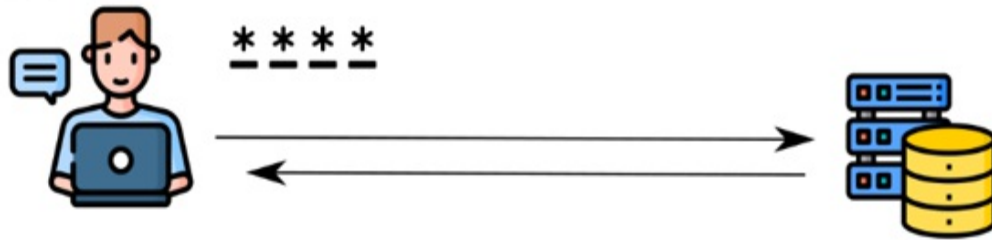
To give you a clear description of how to represent an authentication request, we'll start with the `Authentication` interface. Once we discuss this, we can go further and observe what happens with the details of a request after successful authentication. After successful authentication, we can then discuss the `SecurityContext` interface and the way Spring Security manages it. Near the end of the chapter, you'll learn how to customize the HTTP Basic authentication method. We'll also discuss another option for authentication that we can use in our applications—the form-based login.

6.1 Understanding the `AuthenticationProvider`

In enterprise applications, you might find yourself in a situation in which the default implementation of authentication based on username and password does not apply. Additionally, when it comes to authentication, your application may require the implementation of several scenarios (figure 6.2). For example, you might want the user to be able to prove who they are by using a code received in an SMS message or displayed by a specific application. Or, you might need to implement authentication scenarios where the user has to provide a certain kind of key stored in a file. You might even need to use a representation of the user's fingerprint to implement the authentication logic. A framework's purpose is to be flexible enough to allow you to implement any of these required scenarios.

Figure 6.2 For an application, you might need to implement authentication in different ways. While in most cases a username and a password are enough, in some cases, the user-authentication scenario might be more complicated.

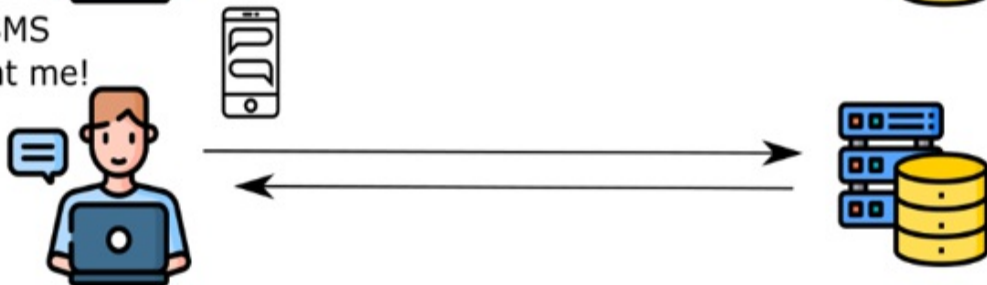
I am John.
Here is my password!



I am John.
Here is my fingerprint!



I am John.
Here is the SMS
code you sent me!



A framework usually provides a set of the most commonly used implementations, but it cannot, of course, cover all the possible options. In terms of Spring Security, you can use the `AuthenticationProvider` contract to define any custom authentication logic. In this section, you learn to represent the authentication event by implementing the `Authentication` interface and then creating your custom authentication logic with an `AuthenticationProvider`. To achieve our goal

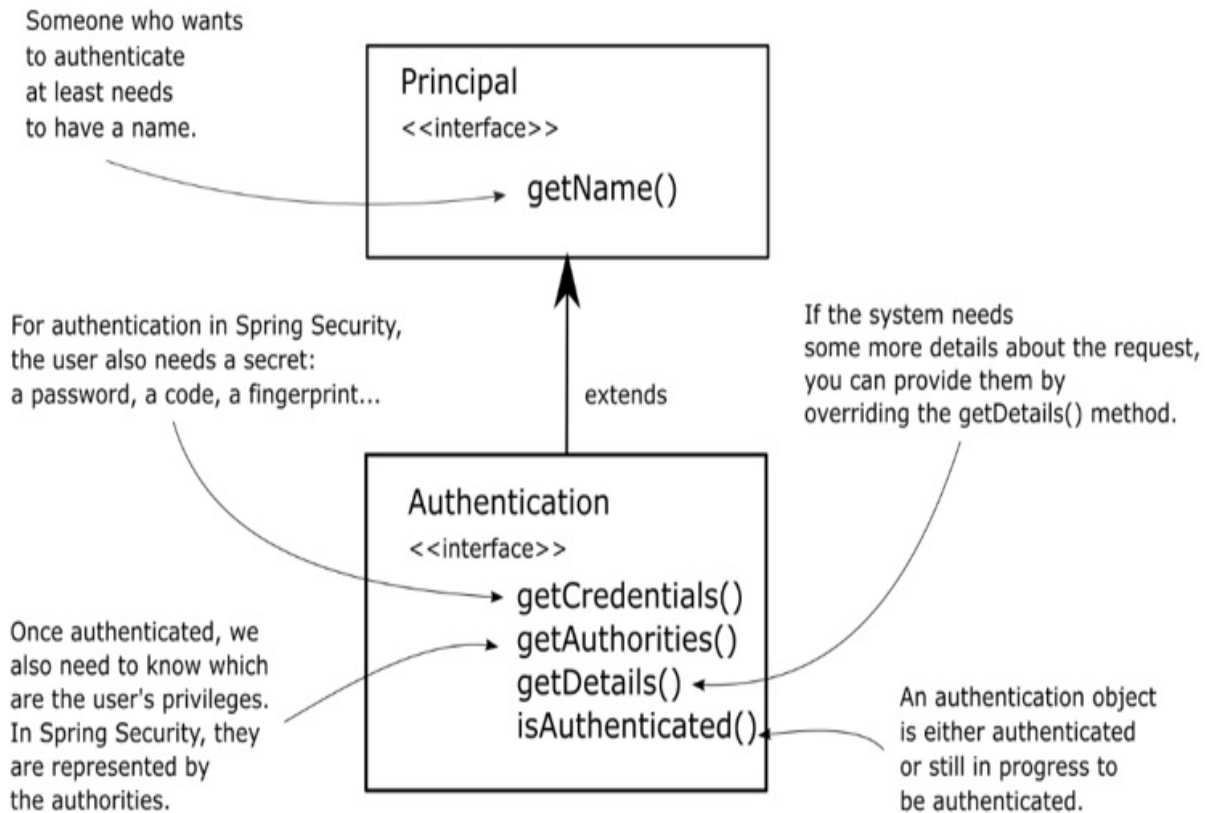
- In section 6.1.1, we analyze how Spring Security represents the authentication event.
- In section 6.1.2, we discuss the `AuthenticationProvider` contract, which is responsible for the authentication logic.
- In section 6.1.3, you write custom authentication logic by implementing the `AuthenticationProvider` contract in an example.

6.1.1 Representing the request during authentication

In this section, we discuss how Spring Security understands a request during the authentication process. It is important to touch on this before diving into implementing custom authentication logic. As you'll learn in section 6.1.2, to implement a custom `AuthenticationProvider`, you first need to understand how to describe the authentication event itself. In this section, we take a look at the contract representing authentication and discuss the methods you need to know.

`Authentication` is one of the essential interfaces involved in the process with the same name. The `Authentication` interface represents the authentication request event and holds the details of the entity that requests access to the application. You can use the information related to the authentication request event during and after the authentication process. The user requesting access to the application is called a "charitalics"principal. If you've ever used Java Security in any app, you learned that in Java Security, an interface named `Principal` represents the same concept. The `Authentication` interface of Spring Security extends this contract (figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 The `Authentication` contract inherits from the `Principal` contract. `Authentication` adds requirements such as the need for a password or the possibility to specify more details about the authentication request. Some of these details, like the list of authorities, are Spring Security-specific.



The Authentication contract in Spring Security not only represents a principal, it also adds information on whether the authentication process finishes, as well as a collection of authorities. The fact that this contract was designed to extend the Principal contract from Java Security is a plus in terms of compatibility with implementations of other frameworks and applications. This flexibility allows for more facile migrations to Spring Security from applications that implement authentication in another fashion.

Let's find out more about the design of the Authentication interface, in the following listing.

Listing 6.1 The Authentication interface as declared in Spring Security

```
public interface Authentication extends Principal, Serializable {  
  
    Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities();  
    Object getCredentials();  
    Object getDetails();  
    boolean isAuthenticated();  
}
```

```

Object getPrincipal();
boolean isAuthenticated();
void setAuthenticated(boolean isAuthenticated)
    throws IllegalArgumentException;
}

```

For the moment, the only methods of this contract that you need to learn are these:

- `isAuthenticated()`—Returns true if the authentication process ends or false if the authentication process is still in progress.
- `getCredentials()`—Returns a password or any secret used in the process of authentication.
- `getAuthorities()`—Returns a collection of granted authorities for the authenticated request.

We'll discuss the other methods for the Authentication contract in later chapters, where appropriate to the implementations we look at then.

6.1.2 Implementing custom authentication logic

In this section, we discuss implementing custom authentication logic. We analyze the Spring Security contract related to this responsibility to understand its definition. With these details, you implement custom authentication logic with a code example in section 6.1.3.

The `AuthenticationProvider` in Spring Security takes care of the authentication logic. The default implementation of the `AuthenticationProvider` interface delegates the responsibility of finding the system's user to a `UserDetailsService`. It uses the `PasswordEncoder` as well for password management in the process of authentication. The following listing gives the definition of the `AuthenticationProvider`, which you need to implement to define a custom authentication provider for your application.

Listing 6.2 The `AuthenticationProvider` interface

```

public interface AuthenticationProvider {

    Authentication authenticate(Authentication authentication)

```

```
        throws AuthenticationException;

    boolean supports(Class<?> authentication);
}
```

The `AuthenticationProvider` responsibility is strongly coupled with the `Authentication` contract. The `authenticate()` method receives an `Authentication` object as a parameter and returns an `Authentication` object. We implement the `authenticate()` method to define the authentication logic. We can quickly summarize the way you should implement the `authenticate()` method with three bullets:

- The method should throw an `AuthenticationException` if the authentication fails.
- If the method receives an authentication object that is not supported by your implementation of `AuthenticationProvider`, then the method should return null. This way, we have the possibility of using multiple `Authentication` types separated at the HTTP-filter level.
- The method should return an `Authentication` instance representing a fully authenticated object. For this instance, the `isAuthenticated()` method returns true, and it contains all the necessary details about the authenticated entity. Usually, the application also removes sensitive data like a password from this instance. After a successful authentication, the password is no longer required and keeping these details can potentially expose them to unwanted eyes.

The second method in the `AuthenticationProvider` interface is `supports(Class<?> authentication)`. You can implement this method to return true if the current `AuthenticationProvider` supports the type provided as an `Authentication` object. Observe that even if this method returns true for an object, there is still a chance that the `authenticate()` method rejects the request by returning null. Spring Security is designed like this to be more flexible and to allow you to implement an `AuthenticationProvider` that can reject an authentication request based on the request's details, not only by its type.

An analogy of how the authentication manager and authentication provider work together to validate or invalidate an authentication request is having a

more complex lock for your door. You can open this lock either by using a card or an old fashioned physical key (figure 6.4). The lock itself is the authentication manager that decides whether to open the door. To make that decision, it delegates to the two authentication providers: one that knows how to validate the card or the other that knows how to verify the physical key. If you present a card to open the door, the authentication provider that works only with physical keys complains that it doesn't know this kind of authentication. But the other provider supports this kind of authentication and verifies whether the card is valid for the door. This is actually the purpose of the `-supports()` methods.

Besides testing the authentication type, Spring Security adds one more layer for flexibility. The door's lock can recognize multiple kinds of cards. In this case, when you present a card, one of the authentication providers could say, "I understand this as being a card. But it isn't the type of card I can validate!" This happens when `supports()` returns true but `authenticate()` returns null.

Figure 6.4 The AuthenticationManager delegates to one of the available authentication providers. The AuthenticationProvider might not support the provided type of authentication. On the other hand, if it does support the object type, it might not know how to authenticate that specific object. The authentication is evaluated, and an AuthenticationProvider that can say if the request is correct or not responds to the AuthenticationManager.

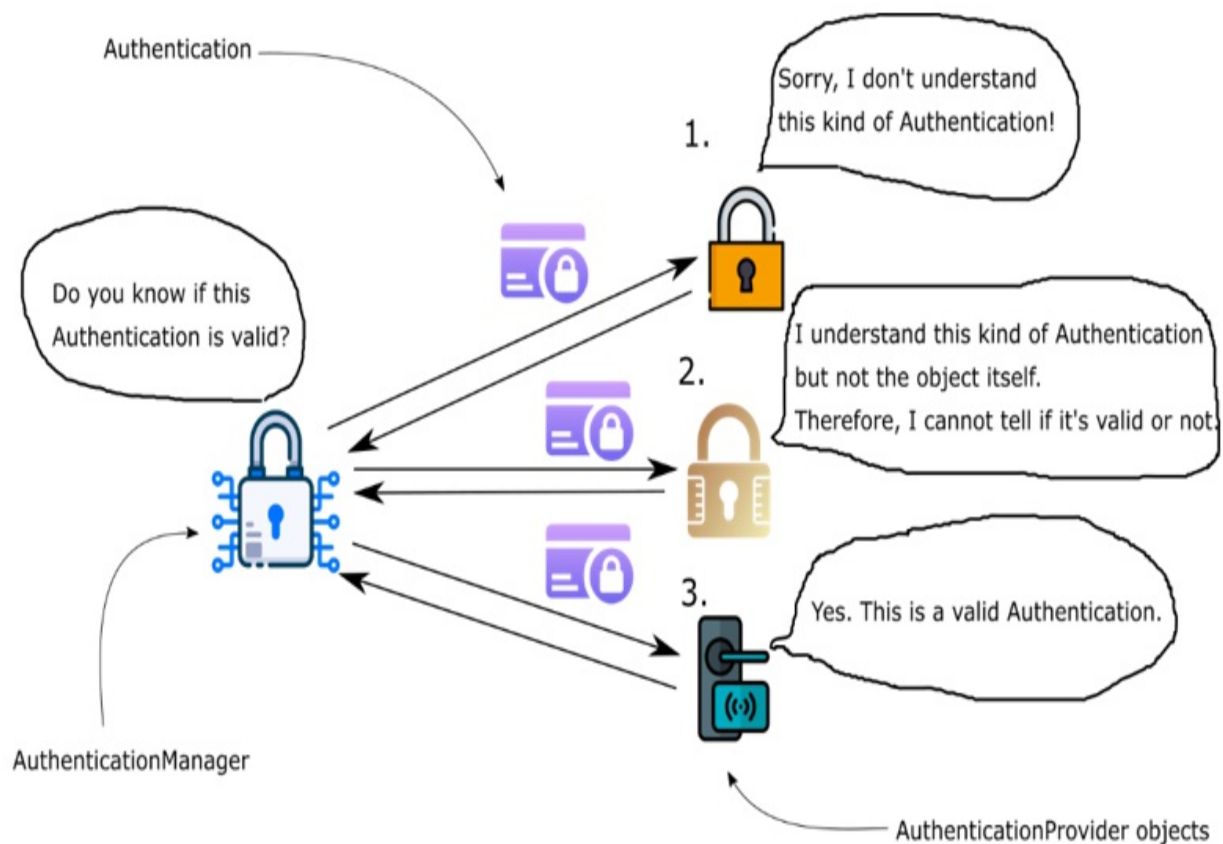
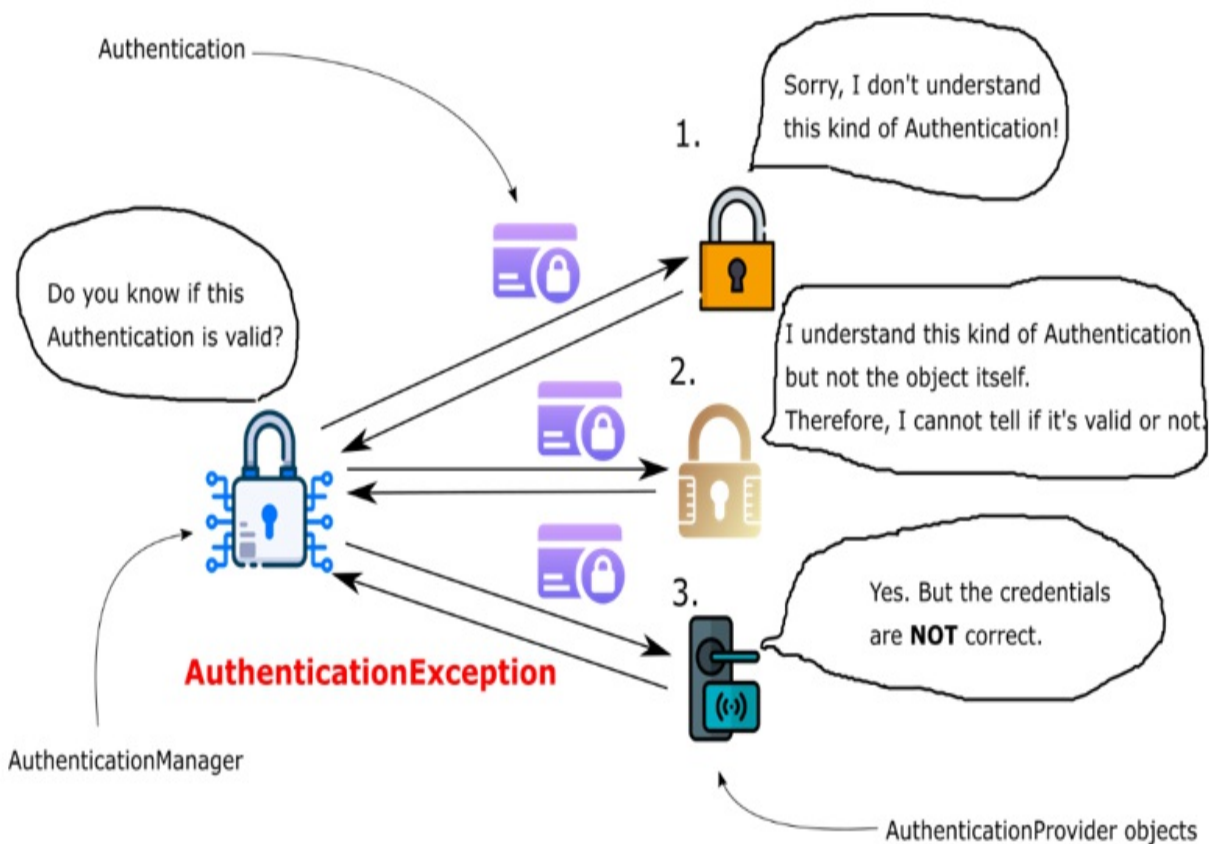


Figure 6.5 shows the alternative scenario where one of the **AuthenticationProvider** objects recognizes the **Authentication** but decides it's not valid. The result in this case will be an **AuthenticationException** which ends up as a 401 Unauthorized HTTP status in the HTTP response in a web app.

Figure 6.5 If none of the **AuthenticationProvider** objects recognize the **Authentication** or any of them rejects it, the result is an **AuthenticationException**.



6.1.3 Applying custom authentication logic

In this section, we implement custom authentication logic. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch6-ex1`. With this example, you apply what you've learned about the `Authentication` and `AuthenticationProvider` interfaces in sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. In listings 6.3 and 6.4, we build, step by step, an example of how to implement a custom `AuthenticationProvider`. These steps, also presented in figure 6.5, follow:

1. Declare a class that implements the `AuthenticationProvider` contract.
2. Decide which kinds of `Authentication` objects the new `AuthenticationProvider` supports:
3. Implement the `supports(Class<?> c)` method to specify which type of authentication is supported by the `AuthenticationProvider` that we define.
4. Implement the `authenticate(Authentication a)` method to implement the authentication logic.

5. Register an instance of the new `AuthenticationProvider` implementation with Spring Security.

Listing 6.3 Overriding the `supports()` method of the `AuthenticationProvider`

```
@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationProvider
    implements AuthenticationProvider {

    // Omitted code

    @Override
    public boolean supports(Class<?> authenticationType) {
        return authenticationType
            .equals(UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken.class);
    }
}
```

In listing 6.3, we define a new class that implements the `AuthenticationProvider` interface. We mark the class with `@Component` to have an instance of its type in the context managed by Spring. Then, we have to decide what kind of `Authentication` interface implementation this `AuthenticationProvider` supports. That depends on what type we expect to be provided as a parameter to the `authenticate()` method. If we don't customize anything at the authentication filter level (as discussed in chapter 5), then the class `UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken` defines the type. This class is an implementation of the `Authentication` interface and represents a standard authentication request with username and password.

With this definition, we made the `AuthenticationProvider` support a specific kind of key. Once we have specified the scope of our `AuthenticationProvider`, we implement the authentication logic by overriding the `authenticate()` method as shown in following listing.

Listing 6.4 Implementing the authentication logic

```
@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationProvider
    implements AuthenticationProvider {

    private final UserDetailsService userDetailsService;
```



```

private final PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder;

// Omitted constructor

@Override
public Authentication authenticate(Authentication authentication) {
    String username = authentication.getName();
    String password = authentication.getCredentials().toString();

    UserDetails u = userDetailsService.loadUserByUsername(username);

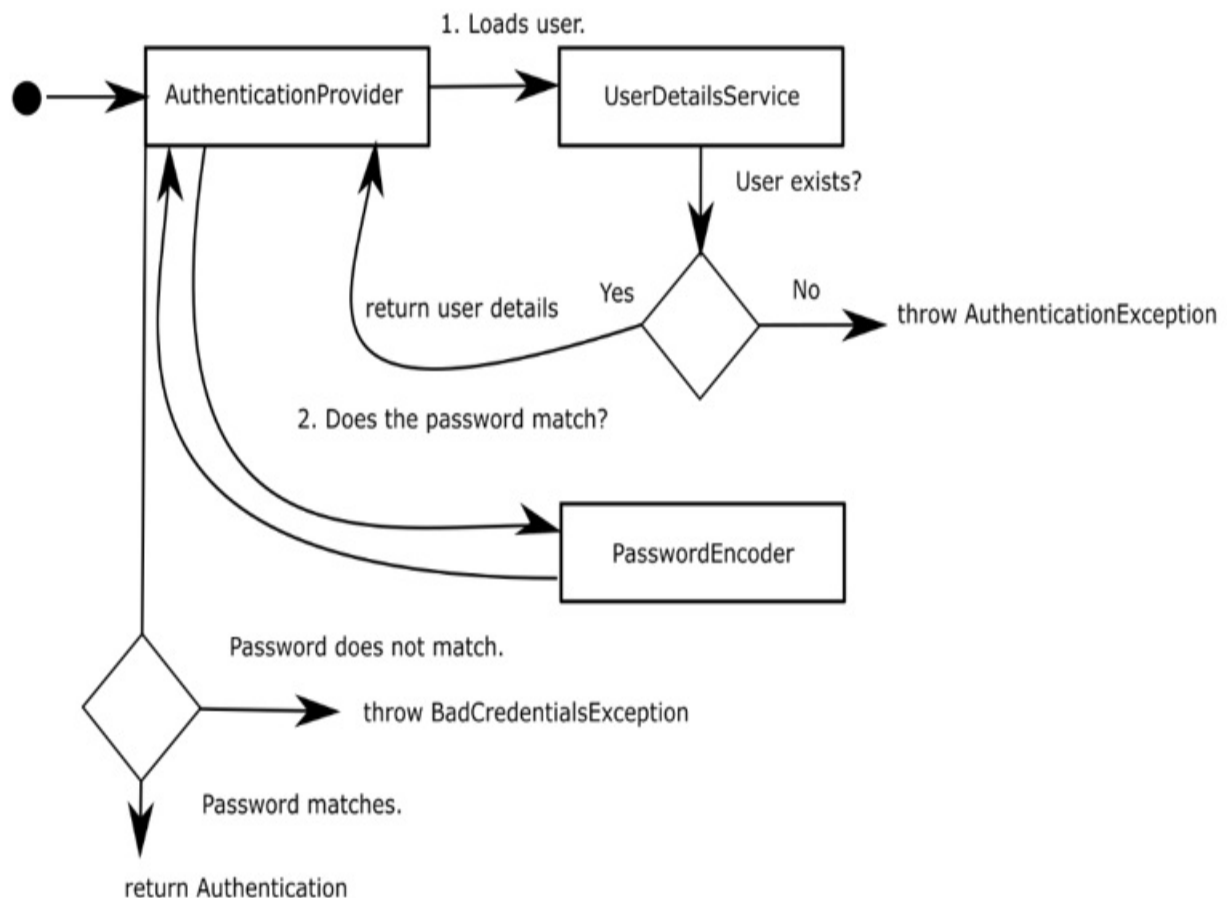
    if (passwordEncoder.matches(password, u.getPassword())) {
        return new UsernamePasswordAuthenticationToken(
            username,
            password,
            u.getAuthorities());    #A
    } else {
        throw new BadCredentialsException
            ("Something went wrong!");    #B
    }
}

// Omitted code
}

```

The logic in listing 6.4 is simple, and figure 6.6 shows this logic visually. We make use of the `UserDetailsService` implementation to get the `UserDetails`. If the user doesn't exist, the `loadUserByUsername()` method should throw an `AuthenticationException`. In this case, the authentication process stops, and the HTTP filter sets the response status to HTTP 401 Unauthorized. If the username exists, we can check further the user's password with the `matches()` method of the `PasswordEncoder` from the context. If the password does not match, then again, an `AuthenticationException` should be thrown. If the password is correct, the `AuthenticationProvider` returns an instance of `Authentication` marked as "authenticated," which contains the details about the request.

Figure 6.6 The custom authentication flow implemented by the `AuthenticationProvider`. To validate the authentication request, the `AuthenticationProvider` loads the user details with a provided implementation of `UserDetailsService`, and if the password matches, validates the password with a `PasswordEncoder`. If either the user does not exist or the password is incorrect, the `AuthenticationProvider` throws an `AuthenticationException`.



To plug in the new implementation of the `AuthenticationProvider`, we define a `SecurityFilterChain` bean. This is demonstrated in the following listing.

Listing 6.5 Registering the `AuthenticationProvider` in the configuration class

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    private final AuthenticationProvider authenticationProvider;

    // Omitted constructor

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());
    }
}

```

```
    http.authenticationProvider(authenticationProvider);  
    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()  
        return http.build();  
    }  
    // Omitted code  
}
```

NOTE

In listing 6.5, I use the dependency injection with a field declared with the `AuthenticationProvider` interface. Spring recognizes the `AuthenticationProvider` as an interface (which is an abstraction). But Spring knows that it needs to find in its context an instance of an implementation for that specific interface. In our case, the implementation is the instance of `CustomAuthenticationProvider`, which is the only one of this type that we declared and added to the Spring context using the `@Component` annotation. For a refresher on dependency injection I recommend you read *Spring Start Here* (Manning, 2021), another book I wrote.

That's it! You successfully customized the implementation of the `AuthenticationProvider`. You can now customize the authentication logic for your application where you need it.

How to fail in application design

Incorrectly applying a framework leads to a less maintainable application. Worse is sometimes those who fail in using the framework believe that it's the framework's fault. Let me tell you a story.

One winter, the head of development in a company I worked with as a consultant called me to help them with the implementation of a new feature. They needed to apply a custom authentication method in a component of their system developed with Spring in its early days. Unfortunately, when implementing the application's class design the developers didn't rely properly on Spring Security's backbone architecture.

They only relied on the filter chain, reimplementing entire features from Spring Security as custom code.

Developers observed that with time, customizations became more and more difficult. But nobody took action to redesign the component properly to use the contracts as intended in Spring Security. Much of the difficulty came from not knowing Spring's capabilities. One of the lead developers said, "It's only the fault of this Spring Security! This framework is hard to apply, and it's difficult to use with any customization." I was a bit shocked at his observation. I know that Spring Security is sometimes difficult to understand, and the framework is known for not having a soft learning curve. But I've never experienced a situation in which I couldn't find a way to design an easy-to-customize class with Spring Security!

We investigated together, and I realized the application developers only used maybe 10% of what Spring Security offers. Then, I presented a two-day workshop on Spring Security, focusing on what (and how) we could do for the specific system component they needed to change.

Everything ended with the decision to completely rewrite a lot of custom code to rely correctly on Spring Security and, thus, make the application easier to extend to meet their concerns for security implementations. We also discovered some other issues unrelated to Spring Security, but that's another story.

A few lessons for you to take from this story:

- A framework, and especially one widely used in applications, is written with the participation of many smart individuals. Even so, it's hard to believe that it can be badly implemented. Always analyze your application before concluding that any problems are the framework's fault.
- When deciding to use a framework, make sure you understand, at least, its basics well.
- Be mindful of the resources you use to learn about the framework. Sometimes, articles you find on the web show you how to do quick workarounds and not necessarily how to correctly implement a class design.

- Use multiple sources in your research. To clarify your misunderstandings, write a proof of concept when unsure how to use something.
- If you decide to use a framework, use it as much as possible for its intended purpose. For example, say you use Spring Security, and you observe that for security implementations, you tend to write more custom code instead of relying on what the framework offers. You should raise a question on why this happens.

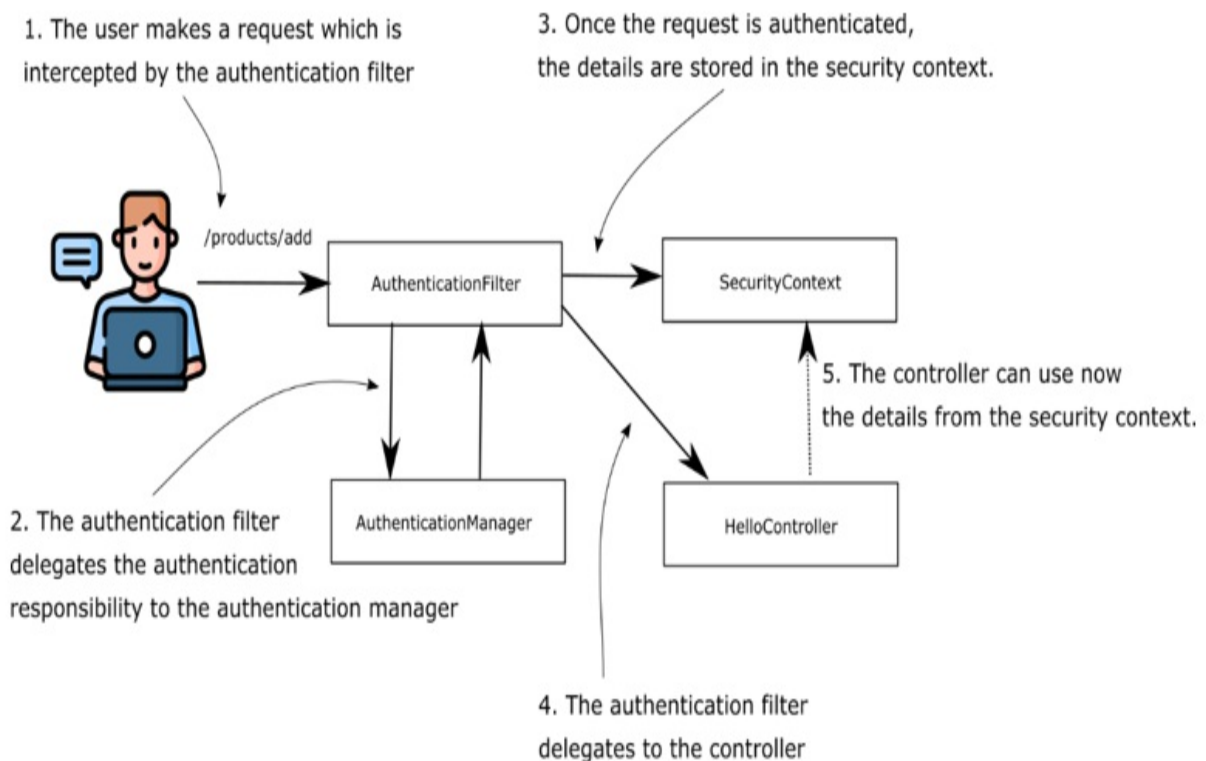
When we rely on functionalities implemented by a framework, we enjoy several benefits. We know they are tested and there are fewer changes that include vulnerabilities. Also, a good framework relies on abstractions, which help you create maintainable applications. Remember that when you write your own implementations, you're more susceptible to including vulnerabilities.

6.2 Using the SecurityContext

This section discusses the security context. We analyze how it works, how to access data from it, and how the application manages it in different thread-related scenarios. Once you finish this section, you'll know how to configure the security context for various situations. This way, you can use the details about the authenticated user stored by the security context in configuring authorization in chapters 7 and 8.

It is likely that you will need details about the authenticated entity after the authentication process ends. You might, for example, need to refer to the username or the authorities of the currently authenticated user. Is this information still accessible after the authentication process finishes? Once the `AuthenticationManager` completes the authentication process successfully, it stores the `Authentication` instance for the rest of the request. The instance storing the `Authentication` object is called the "charitalics"security context.

Figure 6.7 After successful authentication, the authentication filter stores the details of the authenticated entity in the security context. From there, the controller implementing the action mapped to the request can access these details when needed.



The security context of Spring Security is described by the `SecurityContext` interface. The following listing defines this interface.

Listing 6.6 The `SecurityContext` interface

```

public interface SecurityContext extends Serializable {

    Authentication getAuthentication();
    void setAuthentication(Authentication authentication);
}

```

As you can observe from the contract definition, the primary responsibility of the `SecurityContext` is to store the `Authentication` object. But how is the `SecurityContext` itself managed? Spring Security offers three strategies to manage the `SecurityContext` with an object in the role of a manager. It's named the `SecurityContextHolder`:

- **MODE_THREADLOCAL**—Allows each thread to store its own details in the security context. In a thread-per-request web application, this is a common approach as each request has an individual thread.

- `MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL`—Similar to `MODE_THREADLOCAL` but also instructs Spring Security to copy the security context to the next thread in case of an asynchronous method. This way, we can say that the new thread running the `@Async` method inherits the security context. The `@Async` annotation is used with methods to instruct Spring to call the annotated method on a separate thread.
- `MODE_GLOBAL`—Makes all the threads of the application see the same security context instance.

Besides these three strategies for managing the security context provided by Spring Security, in this section, we also discuss what happens when you define your own threads that are not known by Spring. As you will learn, for these cases, you need to explicitly copy the details from the security context to the new thread. Spring Security cannot automatically manage objects that are not in Spring's context, but it offers some great utility classes for this.

6.2.1 Using a holding strategy for the security context

The first strategy for managing the security context is the `MODE_THREADLOCAL` strategy. This strategy is also the default for managing the security context used by Spring Security. With this strategy, Spring Security uses `ThreadLocal` to manage the context. `ThreadLocal` is an implementation provided by the JDK. This implementation works as a collection of data but makes sure that each thread of the application can see only the data stored in its dedicated part of the collection. This way, each request has access to its security context. No thread will have access to another's `ThreadLocal`. And that means that in a web application, each request can see only its own security context. We could say that this is also what you generally want to have for a backend web application.

Figure 6.8 offers an overview of this functionality. Each request (A, B, and C) has its own allocated thread (T1, T2, and T3). This way, each request only sees the details stored in their own security context. But this also means that if a new thread is created (for example, when an asynchronous method is called), the new thread will have its own security context as well. The details from the parent thread (the original thread of the request) are not copied to the security context of the new thread.

NOTE

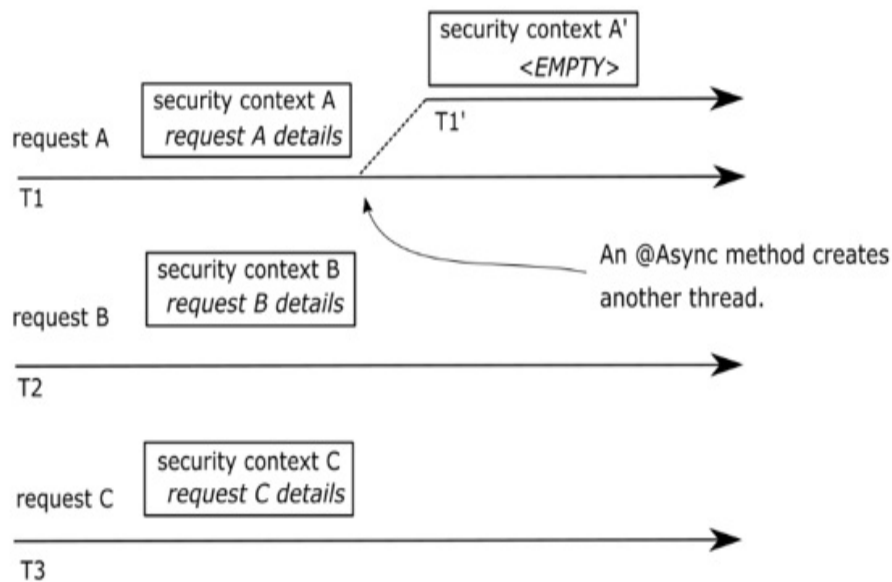
Here we discuss a traditional servlet application where each request is tied to a thread. This architecture only applies to the traditional servlet application where each request has its own thread assigned. It does not apply to reactive applications. We'll discuss the security for reactive approaches in detail in chapter 17.

Being the default strategy for managing the security context, this process does not need to be explicitly configured. Just ask for the security context from the holder using the static `getContext()` method wherever you need it after the end of the authentication process. In listing 6.7, you find an example of obtaining the security context in one of the endpoints of the application. From the security context, you can further get the `Authentication` object, which stores the details about the authenticated entity. You can find the examples we discuss in this section as part of the project `ssia-ch6-ex2`.

Figure 6.8 Each request has its own thread, represented by an arrow. Each thread has access only to its own security context details. When a new thread is created (for example, by an `@Async` method), the details from the parent thread aren't copied.

After authentication, request A will have the details about the authenticated entity in security context A.

The new thread has its own security context A', but the details from the original thread of the request weren't copied.



Each request has its own thread, and has access to one security context.

Listing 6.7 Obtaining the SecurityContext from the SecurityContextHolder

```
@GetMapping("/hello")
public String hello() {
    SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext();
    Authentication a = context.getAuthentication();

    return "Hello, " + a.getName() + "!";
}
```

Obtaining the authentication from the context is even more comfortable at the endpoint level, as Spring knows to inject it directly into the method parameters. You don't need to refer every time to the `SecurityContextHolder` class explicitly. This approach, as presented in the following listing, is better.

Listing 6.8 Spring injects Authentication value in the parameter of the method

```

@GetMapping("/hello")
public String hello(Authentication a) {           #A
    return "Hello, " + a.getName() + "!";
}

```

When calling the endpoint with a correct user, the response body contains the username. For example,

```

curl -u user:99ff79e3-8ca0-401c-a396-0a8625ab3bad http://localhost
Hello, user!

```

6.2.2 Using a holding strategy for asynchronous calls

It is easy to stick with the default strategy for managing the security context. And in a lot of cases, it is the only thing you need. `MODE_THREADLOCAL` offers you the ability to isolate the security context for each thread, and it makes the security context more natural to understand and manage. But there are also cases in which this does not apply.

The situation gets more complicated if we have to deal with multiple threads per request. Look at what happens if you make the endpoint asynchronous. The thread that executes the method is no longer the same thread that serves the request. Think about an endpoint like the one presented in the next listing.

Listing 6.9 An `@Async` method served by a different thread

```

@GetMapping("/bye")
@Async           #A
public void goodbye() {
    SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext();
    String username = context.getAuthentication().getName();

    // do something with the username
}

```

To enable the functionality of the `@Async` annotation, I have also created a configuration class and annotated it with `@EnableAsync`, as shown here:

```

@Configuration
@EnableAsync
public class ProjectConfig {

```

```
}
```

NOTE

Sometimes in articles or forums, you find that the configuration annotations are placed over the main class. For example, you might find that certain examples use the `@EnableAsync` annotation directly over the main class. This approach is technically correct because we annotate the main class of a Spring Boot application with the `@SpringBootApplication` annotation, which includes the `@Configuration` characteristic. But in a real-world application, we prefer to keep the responsibilities apart, and we never use the main class as a configuration class. To make things as clear as possible for the examples in this book, I prefer to keep these annotations over the `@Configuration` class, similar to how you'll find them in practical scenarios.

If you try the code as it is now, it throws a `NullPointerException` on the line that gets the name from the authentication, which is

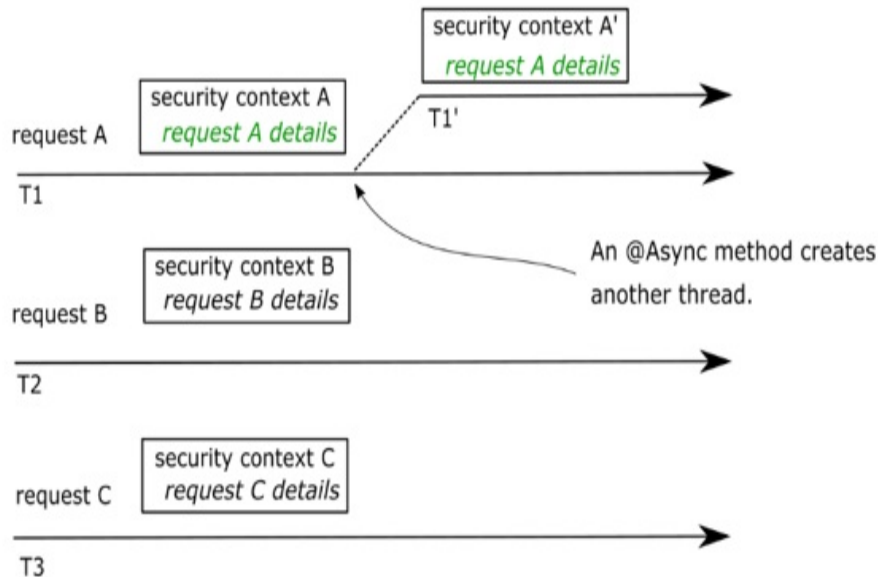
```
String username = context.getAuthentication().getName()
```

This is because the method executes now on another thread that does not inherit the security context. For this reason, the `Authorization` object is null and, in the context of the presented code, causes a `NullPointerException`. In this case, you could solve the problem by using the `MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL` strategy. This can be set either by calling the `SecurityContextHolder.setStrategyName()` method or by using the system property `spring.security.strategy`. By setting this strategy, the framework knows to copy the details of the original thread of the request to the newly created thread of the asynchronous method (figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9 When using the `MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL`, the framework copies the security context details from the original thread of the request to the security context of the new thread.

After authentication, request A will have the details about the authenticated entity in security context A.

The new thread has its own security context A', and the details from the original thread are copied to the security context of the new thread.



Each request has its own thread, and has access to one security context.

The next listing presents a way to set the security context management strategy by calling the `setStrategyName()` method.

Listing 6.10 Using `InitializingBean` to set `SecurityContextHolder` mode

```
@Configuration
@EnableAsync
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public InitializingBean initializingBean() {
        return () -> SecurityContextHolder.setStrategyName(
            SecurityContextHolder.MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL);
    }
}
```

Calling the endpoint, you will observe now that the security context is propagated correctly to the next thread by Spring. Additionally,

Authentication is not null anymore.

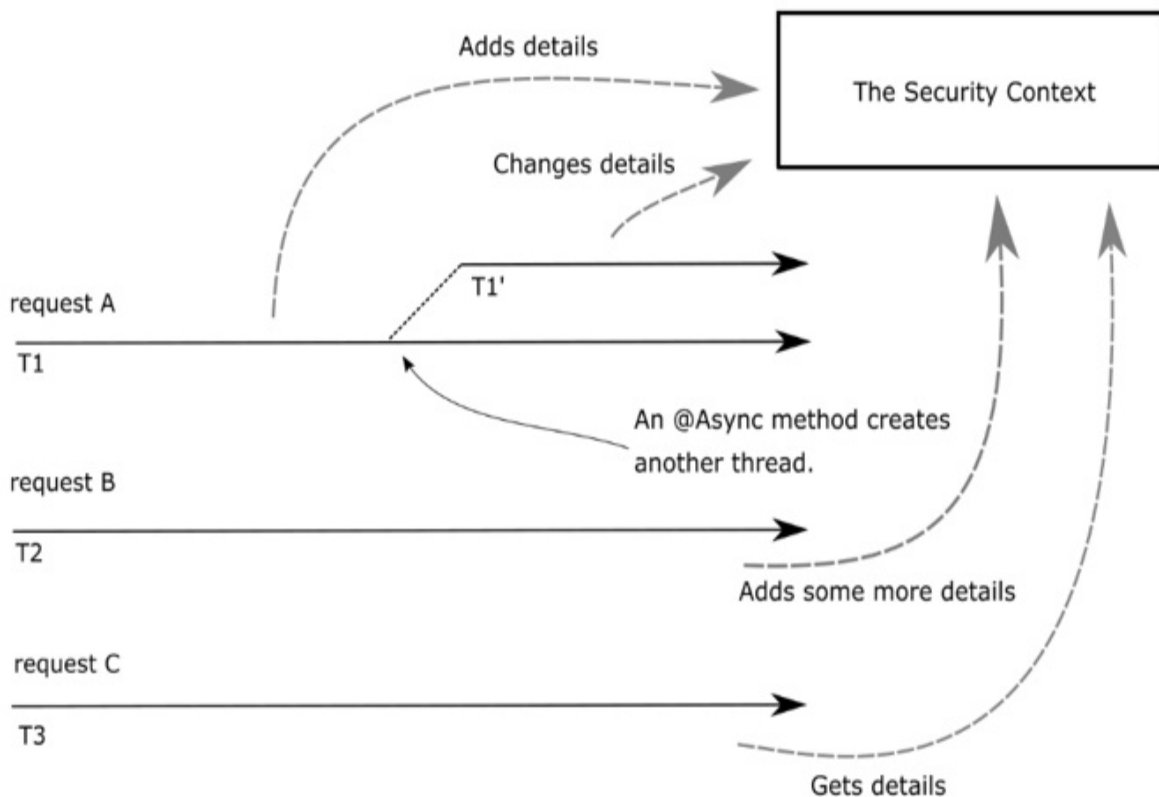
NOTE

This works, however, only when the framework itself creates the thread (for example, in case of an `@Async` method). If your code creates the thread, you will run into the same problem even with the `MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL` strategy. This happens because, in this case, the framework does not know about the thread that your code creates. We'll discuss how to solve the issues of these cases in sections 6.2.4 and 6.2.5.

6.2.3 Using a holding strategy for standalone applications

If what you need is a security context shared by all the threads of the application, you change the strategy to `MODE_GLOBAL` (figure 6.10). You would not use this strategy for a web server as it doesn't fit the general picture of the application. A backend web application independently manages the requests it receives, so it really makes more sense to have the security context separated per request instead of one context for all of them. But this can be a good use for a standalone application.

Figure 6.10 With `MODE_GLOBAL` used as the security context management strategy, all the threads access the same security context. This implies that these all have access to the same data and can change that information. Because of this, race conditions can occur, and you have to take care of synchronization.



As the following code snippet shows, you can change the strategy in the same way we did with `MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL`. You can use the method `SecurityContextHolder.setStrategyName()` or the system property `spring.security.strategy`:

```
@Bean
public InitializingBean initializingBean() {
    return () -> SecurityContextHolder.setStrategyName(
        SecurityContextHolder.MODE_GLOBAL);
}
```

Also, be aware that the `SecurityContext` is not thread safe. So, with this strategy where all the threads of the application can access the `SecurityContext` object, you need to take care of concurrent access.

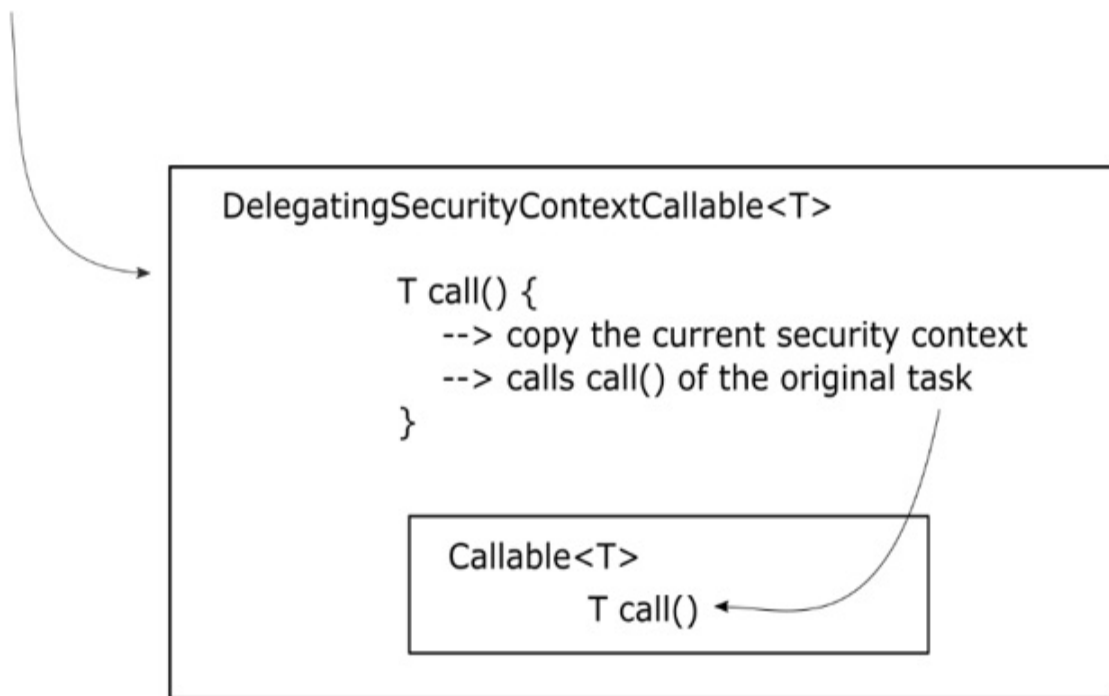
6.2.4 Forwarding the security context with `DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable`

You have learned that you can manage the security context with three modes provided by Spring Security: `MODE_THREADLOCAL`, `MODE_INHERITEDTHREADLOCAL`, and `MODE_GLOBAL`. By default, the framework only makes sure to provide a security context for the thread of the request, and this security context is only accessible to that thread. But the framework doesn't take care of newly created threads (for example, in case of an asynchronous method). And you learned that for this situation, you have to explicitly set a different mode for the management of the security context. But we still have a singularity: what happens when your code starts new threads without the framework knowing about them? Sometimes we name these "charitalics"self-managed threads because it is we who manage them, not the framework. In this section, we apply some utility tools provided by Spring Security that help you propagate the security context to newly created threads.

No specific strategy of the `SecurityContextHolder` offers you a solution to self-managed threads. In this case, you need to take care of the security context propagation. One solution for this is to use the `DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable` to decorate the tasks you want to execute on a separate thread. The `DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable` extends `Runnable`. You can use it following the execution of the task when there is no value expected. If you have a return value, then you can use the `Callable<T>` alternative, which is `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable<T>`. Both classes represent tasks executed asynchronously, as any other `Runnable` or `Callable`. Moreover, these make sure to copy the current security context for the thread that executes the task. As figure 6.11 shows, these objects decorate the original tasks and copy the security context to the new threads.

Figure 6.11 `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable` is designed as a decorator of the `Callable` object. When building such an object, you provide the callable task that the application executes asynchronously. `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable` copies the details from the security context to the new thread and then executes the task.

The DelegatingSecurityContextCallable decorates the Callable task that will be executed on a separate thread.



Listing 6.11 presents the use of `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`. Let's start by defining a simple endpoint method that declares a `Callable` object. The `callable` task returns the username from the current security context.

Listing 6.11 Defining a `callable` object and executing it as a task on a separate thread

```
@GetMapping("/ciao")
public String ciao() throws Exception {
    Callable<String> task = () -> {
        SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext()
        return context.getAuthentication().getName();
    };

    // Omitted code
}
```

We continue the example by submitting the task to an `ExecutorService`. The response of the execution is retrieved and returned as a response body by the endpoint.

Listing 6.12 Defining an `ExecutorService` and submitting the task

```
@GetMapping("/ciao")
public String ciao() throws Exception {
    Callable<String> task = () -> {
        SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext();
        return context.getAuthentication().getName();
    };

    ExecutorService e = Executors.newCachedThreadPool();
    try {
        return "Ciao, " + e.submit(task).get() + "!";
    } finally {
        e.shutdown();
    }
}
```

If you run the application as is, you get nothing more than a `NullPointerException`. Inside the newly created thread to run the callable task, the authentication does not exist anymore, and the security context is empty. To solve this problem, we decorate the task with `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`, which provides the current context to the new thread, as provided by this listing.

Listing 6.13 Running the task decorated by `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`

```
@GetMapping("/ciao")
public String ciao() throws Exception {
    Callable<String> task = () -> {
        SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext();
        return context.getAuthentication().getName();
    };

    ExecutorService e = Executors.newCachedThreadPool();
    try {
        var contextTask = new DelegatingSecurityContextCallable<>(task);
        return "Ciao, " + e.submit(contextTask).get() + "!";
    } finally {
        e.shutdown();
    }
}
```

Calling the endpoint now, you can observe that Spring propagated the security context to the thread in which the tasks execute:

```
curl -u user:2eb3f2e8-debd-420c-9680-48159b2ff905  
[CA]http://localhost:8080/ciao
```

The response body for this call is

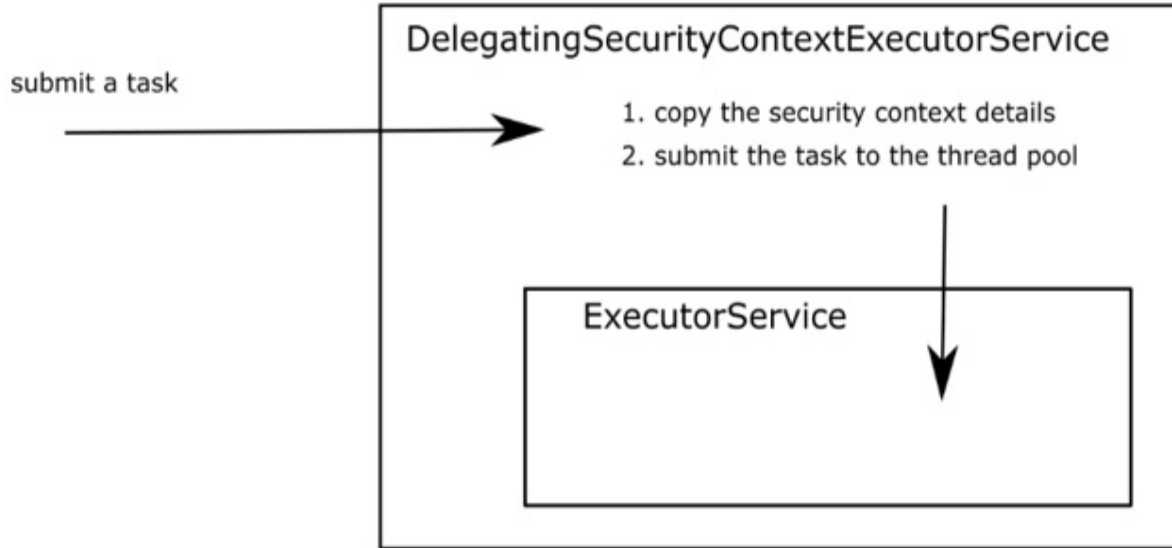
Ciao, user!

6.2.5 Forwarding the security context with `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService`

When dealing with threads that our code starts without letting the framework know about them, we have to manage propagation of the details from the security context to the next thread. In section 6.2.4, you applied a technique to copy the details from the security context by making use of the task itself. Spring Security provides some great utility classes like `DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable` and `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`. These classes decorate the tasks you execute asynchronously and also take the responsibility to copy the details from security context such that your implementation can access those from the newly created thread. But we have a second option to deal with the security context propagation to a new thread, and this is to manage propagation from the thread pool instead of from the task itself. In this section, you learn how to apply this technique by using more great utility classes provided by Spring Security.

An alternative to decorating tasks is to use a particular type of `Executor`. In the next example, you can observe that the task remains a simple `Callable<T>`, but the thread still manages the security context. The propagation of the security context happens because an implementation called `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` decorates the `ExecutorService`. The `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` also takes care of the security context propagation, as presented in figure 6.12.

Figure 6.12 `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` decorates an `ExecutorService` and propagates the security context details to the next thread before submitting the task.



The code in listing 6.14 shows how to use a `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` to decorate an `ExecutorService` such that when you submit the task, it takes care to propagate the details of the security context.

Listing 6.14 Propagating the SecurityContext

```
@GetMapping("/hola")
public String hola() throws Exception {
    Callable<String> task = () -> {
        SecurityContext context = SecurityContextHolder.getContext();
        return context.getAuthentication().getName();
    };

    ExecutorService e = Executors.newCachedThreadPool();
    e = new DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService(e);
    try {
        return "Hola, " + e.submit(task).get() + "!";
    } finally {
        e.shutdown();
    }
}
```

Call the endpoint to test that the `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` correctly delegated the

security context:

```
curl -u user:5a5124cc-060d-40b1-8aad-753d3da28dca http://localhost
```

The response body for this call is

Hola, user!

Note

Of the classes that are related to concurrency support for the security context, I recommend you be aware of the ones presented in table 6.1.

Spring offers various implementations of the utility classes that you can use in your application to manage the security context when creating your own threads. In section 6.2.4, you implemented `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`. In this section, we use `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService`. If you need to implement security context propagation for a scheduled task, then you will be happy to hear that Spring Security also offers you a decorator named `DelegatingSecurityContextScheduledExecutorService`. This mechanism is similar to the `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService` that we presented in this section, with the difference that it decorates a `ScheduledExecutorService`, allowing you to work with scheduled tasks.

Additionally, for more flexibility, Spring Security offers you a more abstract version of a decorator called `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutor`. This class directly decorates an `Executor`, which is the most abstract contract of this hierarchy of thread pools. You can choose it for the design of your application when you want to be able to replace the implementation of the thread pool with any of the choices the language provides you.

Table 6.1 Objects responsible for delegating the security context to a separate thread

Class	Description

DelegatingSecurityContextExecutor	Implements the Executor interface and is designed to decorate an Executor with the capability of forwarding the security context to the threads created by its pool.
DelegatingSecurityContextExecutorService	Implements the ExecutorService interface and is designed to decorate an ExecutorService with the capability of forwarding the security context to the threads created by its pool.
DelegatingSecurityContextScheduledExecutorService	Implements the ScheduledExecutorService interface and is designed to decorate a ScheduledExecutorService object with the capability of forwarding the security context to the threads created by its pool.
DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable	Implements the Runnable interface and represents a task that is executed on a different thread while returning a response. It is able to propagate the security context to use on the thread.

	thread.
DelegatingSecurityContextCallable	Implements the Callable interface and represents a task that is executed on a different thread and eventually returns a result. Above a normal Callable it is also able to provide a security context to the new thread.

6.3 Understanding HTTP Basic and form-based login authentications

Up to now, we've only used HTTP Basic as the authentication method, but throughout this book, you'll learn that there are other possibilities as well. The HTTP Basic authentication method is simple, which makes it an excellent choice for examples and demonstration purposes or proof of concept. But for the same reason, it might not fit all of the real-world scenarios that you'll need to implement.

In this section, you learn more configurations related to HTTP Basic. As well, we discover a new authentication method called `formLogin`. For the rest of this book, we'll discuss other methods for authentication, which match well with different kinds of architectures. We'll compare these such that you understand the best practices as well as the anti-patterns for authentication.

6.3.1 Using and configuring HTTP Basic

You are aware that HTTP Basic is the default authentication method, and we have observed the way it works in various examples in chapter 3. In this section, we add more details regarding the configuration of this authentication method.

For theoretical scenarios, the defaults that HTTP Basic authentication comes with are great. But in a more complex application, you might find the need to customize some of these settings. For example, you might want to implement a specific logic for the case in which the authentication process fails. You might even need to set some values on the response sent back to the client in this case. So let's consider these cases with practical examples to understand how you can implement this. I want to point out again how you can set this method explicitly, as shown in the following listing. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch6-ex3`.

Listing 6.15 Setting the HTTP Basic authentication method

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

You can call the `httpBasic()` method of the `HttpSecurity` instance with a parameter of type `Customizer`. This parameter allows you to set up some configurations related to the authentication method, for example, the realm name, as shown in listing 6.16. You can think about the realm as a protection space that uses a specific authentication method. For a complete description, refer to RFC 2617 at <https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2617>.

Listing 6.16 Configuring the realm name for the response of failed authentications

```
@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.httpBasic(c -> {
        c.realmName("OTHER");
        c.authenticationEntryPoint(new CustomEntryPoint());
    });
}
```

```
    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated())
    return http.build();
}
```

Listing 6.16 presents an example of changing the realm name. The lambda expression used is, in fact, an object of type `Customizer<HttpBasicConfigurer<HttpSecurity>>`. The parameter of type `HttpBasicConfigurer<HttpSecurity>` allows us to call the `realmName()` method to rename the realm. You can use `cURL` with the `-v` flag to get a verbose HTTP response in which the realm name is indeed changed. However, note that you'll find the `www-Authenticate` header in the response only when the HTTP response status is 401 Unauthorized and not when the HTTP response status is 200 OK. Here's the call to `cURL`:

```
curl -v http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response of the call is

```
/
...
< WWW-Authenticate: Basic realm="OTHER"
...
```

Also, by using a `Customizer`, we can customize the response for a failed authentication. You need to do this if the client of your system expects something specific in the response in the case of a failed authentication. You might need to add or remove one or more headers. Or you can have some logic that filters the body to make sure that the application doesn't expose any sensitive data to the client.

NOTE

Always exercise caution about the data that you expose outside of the system. One of the most common mistakes (which is also part of the OWASP top ten vulnerabilities - <https://owasp.org/www-project-top-ten/>) is exposing sensitive data. Working with the details that the application sends to the client for a failed authentication is always a point of risk for revealing confidential information.

To customize the response for a failed authentication, we can implement an `AuthenticationEntryPoint`. Its `commence()` method receives the `HttpServletRequest`, the `HttpServletResponse`, and the `AuthenticationException` that cause the authentication to fail. Listing 6.17 demonstrates a way to implement the `AuthenticationEntryPoint`, which adds a header to the response and sets the HTTP status to 401 Unauthorized.

NOTE

It's a little bit ambiguous that the name of the `AuthenticationEntryPoint` interface doesn't reflect its usage on authentication failure. In the Spring Security architecture, this is used directly by a component called `ExceptionHandlerManager`, which handles any `AccessDeniedException` and `AuthenticationException` thrown within the filter chain. You can view the `ExceptionHandlerManager` as a bridge between Java exceptions and HTTP responses.

Listing 6.17 Implementing an `AuthenticationEntryPoint`

```
public class CustomEntryPoint
    implements AuthenticationEntryPoint {

    @Override
    public void commence(
        HttpServletRequest httpServletRequest,
        HttpServletResponse httpServletResponse,
        AuthenticationException e)
        throws IOException, ServletException {

        httpServletResponse
            .addHeader("message", "Luke, I am your father!");
        httpServletResponse
            .sendError(HttpStatus.UNAUTHORIZED.value());

    }
}
```

You can then register the `CustomEntryPoint` with the HTTP Basic method in the configuration class. The following listing presents the configuration class for the custom entry point.

Listing 6.18 Setting the custom AuthenticationEntryPoint

```
@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.httpBasic(c -> {
        c.realmName("OTHER");
        c.authenticationEntryPoint(new CustomEntryPoint());
    });

    http.authorizeHttpRequests().anyRequest().authenticated();

    return http.build();
}
```

If you now make a call to an endpoint such that the authentication fails, you should find in the response the newly added header:

```
curl -v http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response of the call is

```
...
< HTTP/1.1 401
< Set-Cookie: JSESSIONID=459BAFA7E0E6246A463AD19B07569C7B; Path=/
< message: Luke, I am your father!
...
```

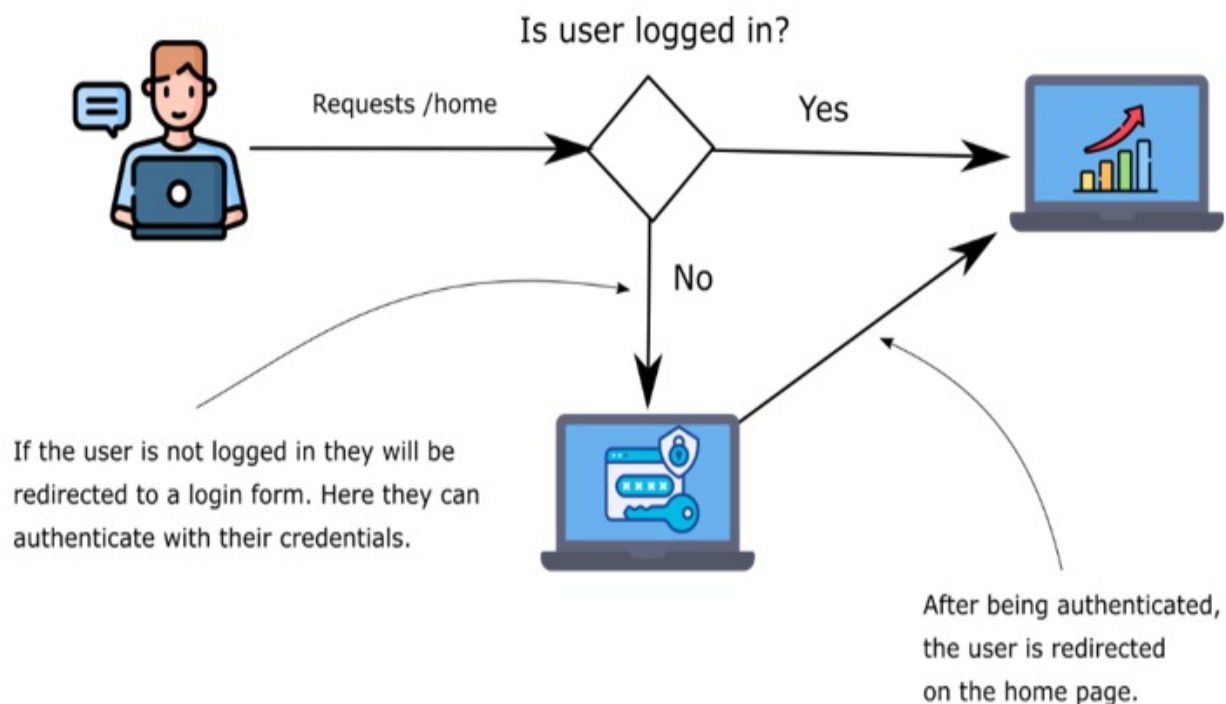
6.3.2 Implementing authentication with form-based login

When developing a web application, you would probably like to present a user-friendly login form where the users can input their credentials. As well, you might like your authenticated users to be able to surf through the web pages after they logged in and to be able to log out. For a small web application, you can take advantage of the form-based login method. In this section, you learn to apply and configure this authentication method for your application. To achieve this, we write a small web application that uses form-based login. Figure 6.13 describes the flow we'll implement. The examples in this section are part of the project `ssia-ch6-ex4`.

NOTE

I link this method to a small web application because, this way, we use a server-side session for managing the security context. For larger applications that require horizontal scalability, using a server-side session for managing the security context is undesirable. We'll discuss these aspects in more detail in chapters 12 through 15 when dealing with OAuth 2.

Figure 6.13 Using form-based login. An unauthenticated user is redirected to a form where they can use their credentials to authenticate. Once the application authenticates them, they are redirected to the homepage of the application.



To change the authentication method to form-based login, using the `HttpSecurity` object of the `SecurityFilterChain` bean, instead of `httpBasic()`, call the `formLogin()` method of the `HttpSecurity` parameter. The following listing presents this change.

Listing 6.19 Changing the authentication method to a form-based login

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {
```

```

@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
    throws Exception {

    http.formLogin(Customizer.withDefaults());

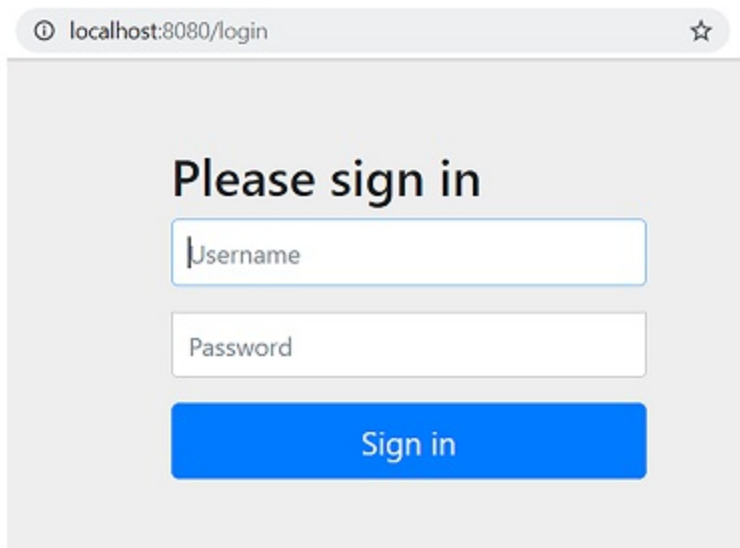
    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated()

    return http.build();
}
}

```

Even with this minimal configuration, Spring Security has already configured a login form, as well as a log-out page for your project. Starting the application and accessing it with the browser should redirect you to a login page (figure 6.14).

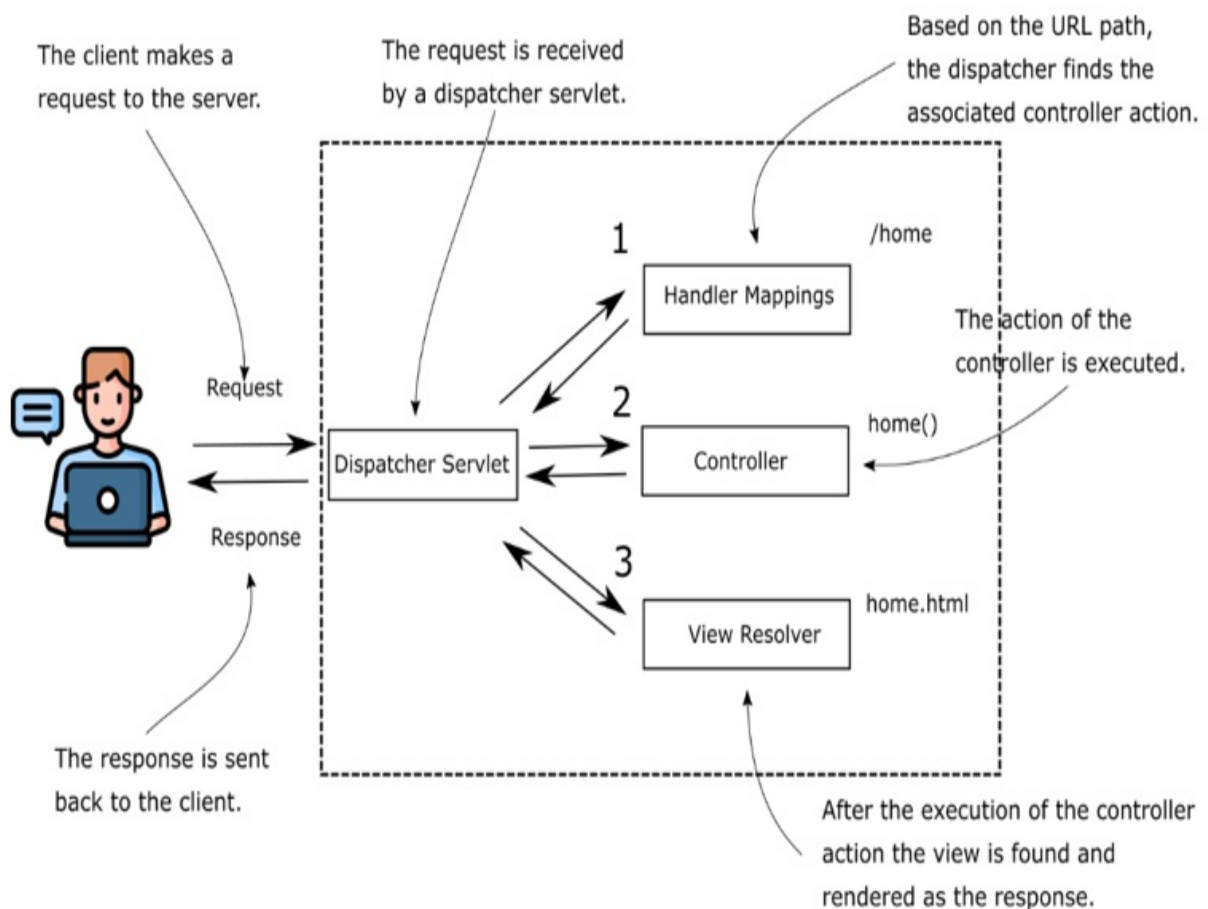
Figure 6.14 The default login page auto-configured by Spring Security when using the `formLogin()` method.



You can log in using the default provided credentials as long as you do not register your `UserDetailsService`. These are, as we learned in chapter 2, username “user” and a UUID password that is printed in the console when the application starts. After a successful login, because there is no other page defined, you are redirected to a default error page. The application relies on the same architecture for authentication that we encountered in previous

examples. So, like figure 6.14 shows, you need to implement a controller for the homepage of the application. The difference is that instead of having a simple JSON-formatted response, we want the endpoint to return HTML that can be interpreted by the browser as our web page. Because of this, we choose to stick to the Spring MVC flow and have the view rendered from a file after the execution of the action defined in the controller. Figure 6.15 presents the Spring MVC flow for rendering the homepage of the application.

Figure 6.15 A simple representation of the Spring MVC flow. The dispatcher finds the controller action associated with the given path, /home, in this case. After executing the controller action, the view is rendered, and the response is sent back to the client.



To add a simple page to the application, you first have to create an HTML file in the resources/static folder of the project. I call this file `home.html`. Inside it, type some text that you will be able to find afterward in the browser. You can just add a heading (for example, `<h1>welcome</h1>`). After creating

the HTML page, a controller needs to define the mapping from the path to the view. The following listing presents the definition of the action method for the home.html page in the controller class.

Listing 6.20 Defining the action method of the controller for the home.html page

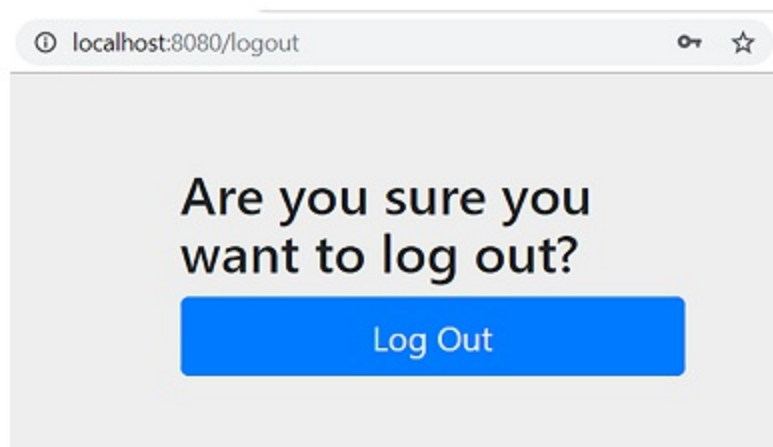
```
@Controller
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/home")
    public String home() {
        return "home.html";
    }
}
```

Mind that it is not a `@RestController` but a simple `@Controller`. Because of this, Spring does not send the value returned by the method in the HTTP response. Instead, it finds and renders the view with the name `home.html`.

Trying to access the `/home` path now, you are first asked if you want to log in. After a successful login, you are redirected to the homepage, where the welcome message appears. You can now access the `/logout` path, and this should redirect you to a log-out page (figure 6.16).

Figure 6.16 The log-out page configured by Spring Security for the form-based login authentication method.



After attempting to access a path without being logged in, the user is

automatically redirected to the login page. After a successful login, the application redirects the user back to the path they tried to originally access. If that path does not exist, the application displays a default error page. The `formLogin()` method returns an object of type `FormLoginConfigurer<HttpSecurity>`, which allows us to work on customizations. For example, you can do this by calling the `defaultSuccessUrl()` method, as shown in the following listing.

Listing 6.21 Setting a default success URL for the login form

```
@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.formLogin(c -> c.defaultSuccessUrl("/home", true));

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated())

    return http.build();
}
```

If you need to go even more in depth with this, using the `AuthenticationSuccessHandler` and `AuthenticationFailureHandler` objects offers a more detailed customization approach. These interfaces let you implement an object through which you can apply the logic executed for authentication. If you want to customize the logic for successful authentication, you can define an `AuthenticationSuccessHandler`. The `onAuthenticationSuccess()` method receives the servlet request, servlet response, and the `Authentication` object as parameters. In listing 6.22, you'll find an example of implementing the `onAuthenticationSuccess()` method to make different redirects depending on the granted authorities of the logged-in user.

Listing 6.22 Implementing an AuthenticationSuccessHandler

```
@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationSuccessHandler
    implements AuthenticationSuccessHandler {

    @Override
    public void onAuthenticationSuccess(
```

```

HttpServletRequest httpRequest,
HttpServletResponse httpResponse,
Authentication authentication)
    throws IOException {

    var authorities = authentication.getAuthorities();

    var auth =
        authorities.stream()
            .filter(a -> a.getAuthority().equals("read"))
            .findFirst();      #A

    if (auth.isPresent()) {    #B
        httpResponse
            .sendRedirect("/home");
    } else {
        httpResponse
            .sendRedirect("/error");
    }
}
}

```

There are situations in practical scenarios when a client expects a certain format of the response in case of failed authentication. They may expect a different HTTP status code than 401 Unauthorized or additional information in the body of the response. The most typical case I have found in applications is to send a "charitalics" request identifier. This request identifier has a unique value used to trace back the request among multiple systems, and the application can send it in the body of the response in case of failed authentication. Another situation is when you want to sanitize the response to make sure that the application doesn't expose sensitive data outside of the system. You might want to define custom logic for failed authentication simply by logging the event for further investigation.

If you would like to customize the logic that the application executes when authentication fails, you can do this similarly with an `AuthenticationFailureHandler` implementation. For example, if you want to add a specific header for any failed authentication, you could do something like that shown in listing 6.23. You could, of course, implement any logic here as well. For the `AuthenticationFailureHandler`, `onAuthenticationFailure()` receives the request, response, and the `Authentication` object.

Listing 6.23 Implementing an AuthenticationFailureHandler

```
@Component
public class CustomAuthenticationFailureHandler
    implements AuthenticationFailureHandler {

    @Override
    public void onAuthenticationFailure(
        HttpServletRequest httpServletRequest,
        HttpServletResponse httpServletResponse,
        AuthenticationException e) {

        try {

            httpServletResponse.setHeader("failed",
                LocalDateTime.now().toString());
            httpServletResponse.sendRedirect("/error");

        } catch (IOException ex) {
            throw new RuntimeException(ex);
        }
    }
}
```

To use the two objects, you need to register them in the `configure()` method on the `FormLoginConfigurer` object returned by the `formLogin()` method. The following listing shows how to do this.

Listing 6.24 Registering the handler objects in the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    private final CustomAuthenticationSuccessHandler
[CA]authenticationSuccessHandler;
    private final CustomAuthenticationFailureHandler
[CA]authenticationFailureHandler;

    // Omitted constructor

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService uds() {
        var uds = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        uds.createUser(
```

```

        User.withDefaultPasswordEncoder()
            .username("john")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build()
    );

    uds.createUser(
        User.withDefaultPasswordEncoder()
            .username("bill")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("write")
            .build()
    );

    return uds;
}

@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain configure(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.formLogin(c ->
        c.successHandler(authenticationSuccessHandler)
        .failureHandler(authenticationFailureHandler)
    );

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated())

    return http.build();
}
}

```

For now, if you try to access the /home path using HTTP Basic with the proper username and password, you are returned a response with the status HTTP 302 Found. This response status code is how the application tells you that it is trying to do a redirect. Even if you have provided the right username and password, it won't consider these and will instead try to send you to the login form as requested by the formLogin method. You can, however, change the configuration to support both the HTTP Basic and the form-based login methods, as in the following listing.

Listing 6.25 Using form-based login and HTTP Basic together

```

@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.formLogin(c ->
        c.successHandler(authenticationSuccessHandler)
        .failureHandler(authenticationFailureHandler)
    );

    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(c -> c.anyRequest().authenticated())

    return http.build();
}

```

Accessing the /home path now works with both the form-based login and HTTP Basic authentication methods:

```

curl -u user:cdd430f6-8ebc-49a6-9769-b0f3ce571d19
[CA]http://localhost:8080/home

```

The response of the call is

```
<h1>Welcome</h1>
```

6.4 Summary

- The AuthenticationProvider is the component that allows you to implement custom authentication logic.
- When you implement custom authentication logic, it's a good practice to keep the responsibilities decoupled. For user management, the AuthenticationProvider delegates to a UserDetailsService, and for the responsibility of password validation, the AuthenticationProvider delegates to a PasswordEncoder.
- The SecurityContext keeps details about the authenticated entity after successful authentication.
- You can use three strategies to manage the security context: MODE_THREADLOCAL, MODE_INHERITABLETHREADLOCAL, and MODE_GLOBAL. Access from different threads to the security context details works differently depending on the mode you choose.

- Remember that when using the shared-thread local mode, it's only applied for threads that are managed by Spring. The framework won't copy the security context for the threads that are not governed by it.
- Spring Security offers you great utility classes to manage the threads created by your code, about which the framework is now aware. To manage the `SecurityContext` for the threads that you create, you can use
 - `DelegatingSecurityContextRunnable`
 - `DelegatingSecurityContextCallable`
 - `DelegatingSecurityContextExecutor`
- Spring Security autoconfigures a form for login and an option to log out with the form-based login authentication method, `formLogin()`. It is straightforward to use when developing small web applications.
- The `formLogin` authentication method is highly customizable. Moreover, you can use this type of authentication together with the HTTP Basic method.

7 Configuring endpoint-level authorization: Restricting access

This chapter covers

- Defining authorities and roles
- Applying authorization rules on endpoints

Some years ago, I was skiing in the beautiful Carpathian mountains when I witnessed this funny scene. About ten, maybe fifteen people were queuing up to get into the cabin to go to the top of the ski slope. A well-known pop artist showed up, accompanied by two bodyguards. He confidently strode up, expecting to skip the queue because he was famous. Reaching the head of the line, he got a surprise. “Ticket, please!” said the person managing the boarding, who then had to explain, “Well, you first need a ticket, and second, there is no priority line for this boarding, sorry. The queue ends there.” He pointed to the end of the queue. As in most cases in life, it doesn’t matter who you are. We can say the same about software applications. It doesn’t matter who you are when trying to access a specific functionality or data!

Up to now, we’ve only discussed authentication, which is, as you learned, the process in which the application identifies the caller of a resource. In the examples we worked on in the previous chapters, we didn’t implement any rule to decide whether to approve a request. We only cared if the system knew the user or not. In most applications, it doesn’t happen that all the users identified by the system can access every resource in the system. In this chapter, we’ll discuss authorization. "charitalics"Authorization is the process during which the system decides if an identified client has permission to access the requested resource (figure 7.1).

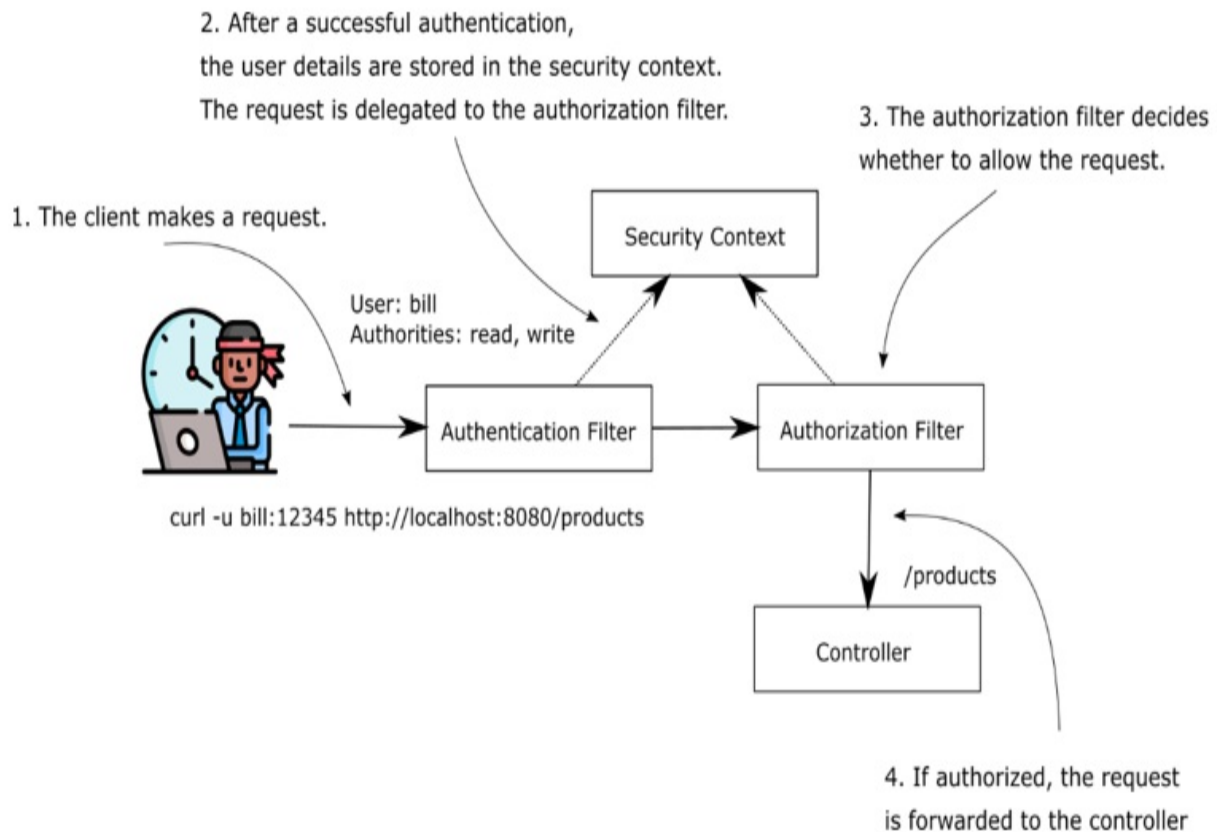
Figure 7.1 Authorization is the process during which the application decides whether an authenticated entity is allowed to access a resource. Authorization always happens after authentication.



In Spring Security, once the application ends the authentication flow, it delegates the request to an authorization filter. The filter allows or rejects the request based on the configured authorization rules (figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 When the client makes the request, the authentication filter authenticates the user. After successful authentication, the authentication filter stores the user details in the security context and forwards the request to the authorization filter. The authorization filter decides

whether the call is permitted. To decide whether to authorize the request, the authorization filter uses the details from the security context.



To cover all the essential details on authorization, in this chapter we'll follow these steps:

1. Gain an understanding of what an authority is and apply access rules on all endpoints based on a user's authorities.
2. Learn how to group authorities in roles and how to apply authorization rules based on a user's roles.

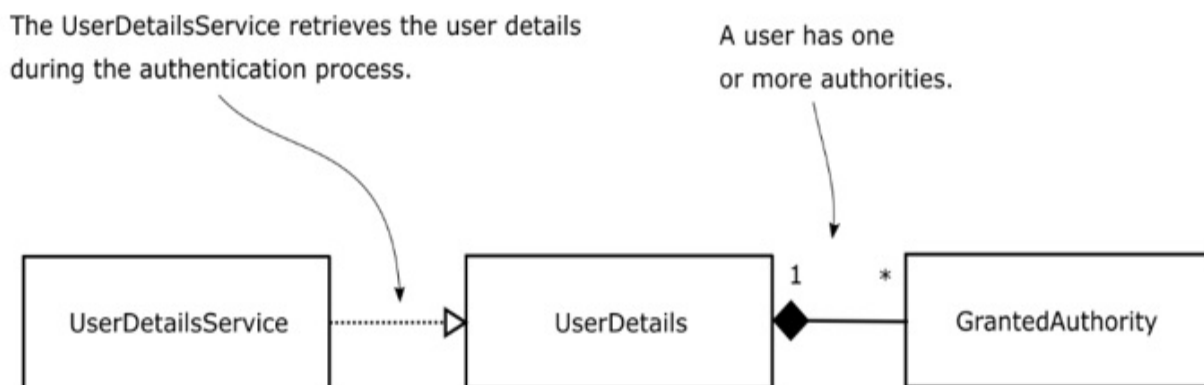
In chapter 8, we'll continue with selecting endpoints to which we'll apply the authorization rules. For now, let's look at authorities and roles and how these can restrict access to our applications.

7.1 Restricting access based on authorities and roles

In this section, you learn about the concepts of authorization and roles. You use these to secure all the endpoints of your application. You need to understand these concepts before you can apply them in real-world scenarios, where different users have different permissions. Based on what privileges users have, they can only execute a specific action. The application provides privileges as authorities and roles.

In chapter 3, you implemented the `GrantedAuthority` interface. I introduced this contract when discussing another essential component: the `UserDetails` interface. We didn't work with `GrantedAuthority` then because, as you'll learn in this chapter, this interface is mainly related to the authorization process. We can now return to `GrantedAuthority` to examine its purpose. Figure 7.3 presents the relationship between the `UserDetails` contract and the `GrantedAuthority` interface. Once we finish discussing this contract, you'll learn how to use these rules individually or for specific requests.

Figure 7.3 A user has one or more authorities (actions that a user can do). During the authentication process, the `UserDetailsService` obtains all the details about the user, including the authorities. The application uses the authorities as represented by the `GrantedAuthority` interface for authorization after it successfully authenticates the user.



Listing 7.1 shows the definition of the `GrantedAuthority` contract. An "authorities" authority is an action that a user can perform with a system resource. An authority has a name that the `getAuthority()` behavior of the object returns as a `String`. We use the name of the authority when defining the custom authorization rule. Often an authorization rule can look like this: "Jane is allowed to "authorities"delete the product records," or "John is allowed to "authorities"read the document records." In these cases,

"charitalics"delete and "charitalics"read are the granted authorities. The application allows the users Jane and John to perform these actions, which often have names like read, write, or delete.

Listing 7.1 The GrantedAuthority contract

```
public interface GrantedAuthority extends Serializable {  
    String getAuthority();  
}
```

The `UserDetails`, which is the contract describing the user in Spring Security, has a collection of `GrantedAuthority` instances as presented in figure 7.3. You can allow a user one or more privileges. The `getAuthorities()` method returns the collection of `GrantedAuthority` instances. In listing 7.2, you can review this method in the `UserDetails` contract. We implement this method so that it returns all the authorities granted for the user. After authentication ends, the authorities are part of the details about the user that logged in, which the application can use to grant permissions.

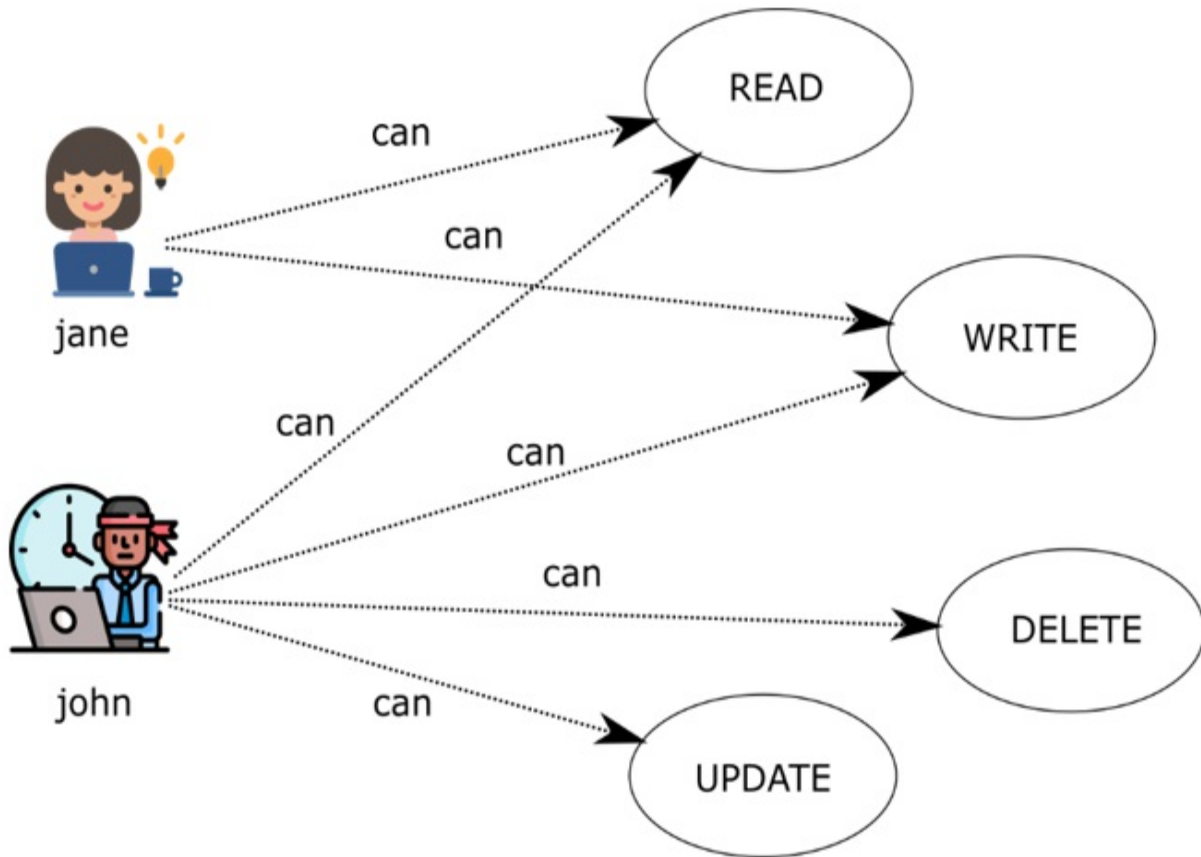
Listing 7.2 The `getAuthorities()` method from the `UserDetails` contract

```
public interface UserDetails extends Serializable {  
    Collection<? extends GrantedAuthority> getAuthorities();  
  
    // Omitted code  
}
```

7.1.1 Restricting access for all endpoints based on user authorities

In this section, we discuss limiting access to endpoints for specific users. Up to now in our examples, any authenticated user could call any endpoint of the application. From now on, you'll learn to customize this access. In the apps you find in production, you can call some of the endpoints of the application even if you are unauthenticated, while for others, you need special privileges (figure 7.4). We'll write several examples so that you learn various ways in which you can apply these restrictions with Spring Security.

Figure 7.4 Authorities are actions that users can perform in the application. Based on these actions, you implement the authorization rules. Only users having specific authorities can make a particular request to an endpoint. For example, Jane can only read and write to the endpoint, while John can read, write, delete, and update the endpoint.



Now that you remember the `UserDetails` and `GrantedAuthority` contracts and the relationship between them, it is time to write a small app that applies an authorization rule. With this example, you learn a few alternatives to configure access to endpoints based on the user's authorities. We start a new project that I name `ssia-ch7-ex1`. I show you three ways in which you can configure access as mentioned using these methods:

- `hasAuthority()`—Receives as parameters only one authority for which the application configures the restrictions. Only users having that authority can call the endpoint.
- `hasAnyAuthority()`—Can receive more than one authority for which the application configures the restrictions. I remember this method as “has any of the given authorities.” The user must have at least one of the

specified authorities to make a request.

I recommend using this method or the `hasAuthority()` method for their simplicity, depending on the number of privileges you assign the users. These are simple to read in configurations and make your code easier to understand.

- `access()`—Offers you unlimited possibilities for configuring access because the application builds the authorization rules based on a custom object named `AuthorizationManager` you implement. You can provide any implementation for the `AuthorizationManager` contract depending on your case. Spring Security provides a few implementations as well. The most common implementation is the `WebExpressionAuthorizationManager` which helps you apply authorization rules based on Spring Expression Language (SpEL). But using the `access()` method can make the authorization rules more difficult to read and understand. For this reason, I recommend it as the lesser solution and only if you cannot apply the `hasAnyAuthority()` or `hasAuthority()` methods.

The only dependencies needed in your `pom.xml` file are `spring-boot-starter-web` and `spring-boot-starter-security`. These dependencies are enough to approach all three solutions previously enumerated. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch7-ex1`

```
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
  <artifactId>spring-boot-starter-security</artifactId>
</dependency>
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.springframework.boot</groupId>
  <artifactId>spring-boot-starter-web</artifactId>
</dependency>
```

We also add an endpoint in the application to test our authorization configuration:

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }
}
```

```
}  
}
```

In a configuration class, we declare an `InMemoryUserDetailsManager` as our `UserDetailsService` and add two users, John and Jane, to be managed by this instance. Each user has a different authority. You can see how to do this in the following listing.

Listing 7.3 Declaring the `UserDetailsService` and assigning users

```
@Configuration  
public class ProjectConfig {  
  
    @Bean        #A  
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {  
        var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();    #B  
  
        var user1 = User.withUsername("john")              #C  
                        .password("12345")  
                        .authorities("READ")  
                        .build();  
  
        var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")              #D  
                        .password("12345")  
                        .authorities("WRITE")  
                        .build();  
  
        manager.createUser(user1);    #E  
        manager.createUser(user2);  
  
        return manager;  
    }  
  
    @Bean        #F  
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {  
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();  
    }  
}
```

The next thing we do is add the authorization configuration. In chapter 2 when we worked on the first example, you saw how we could make all the endpoints accessible for everyone. To do that, you created a `SecurityFilterChain` bean in the app's context, similar to what you see in the next listing.

Listing 7.4 Making all the endpoints accessible for everyone without authentication

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().permitAll()
        );      #A

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

The `authorizeHttpRequests()` method lets us continue with specifying authorization rules on endpoints. The `anyRequest()` method indicates that the rule applies to all the requests, regardless of the URL or HTTP method used. The `permitAll()` method allows access to all requests, authenticated or not.

Let's say we want to make sure that only users having `WRITE` authority can access all endpoints. For our example, this means only Jane. We can achieve our goal and restrict access this time based on a user's authorities. Take a look at the code in the following listing.

Listing 7.5 Restricting access to only users having `WRITE` authority

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());
```

```

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest()
                .hasAuthority("WRITE")
        );    #A

        return http.build();
    }
}

```

You can see that I replaced the `permitAll()` method with the `hasAuthority()` method. You provide the name of the authority allowed to the user as a parameter of the `hasAuthority()` method. The application needs, first, to authenticate the request and then, based on the user's authorities, the app decides whether to allow the call.

We can now start to test the application by calling the endpoint with each of the two users. When we call the endpoint with user Jane, the HTTP response status is 200 OK, and we see the response body "Hello!" When we call it with user John, the HTTP response status is 403 Forbidden, and we get an empty response body back. For example, calling this endpoint with user Jane,

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

we get this response:

```
Hello!
```

Calling the endpoint with user John,

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

we get this response:

```

{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/hello"
}

```

In a similar way, you can use the `hasAnyAuthority()` method. This method

has the parameter `varargs`; this way, it can receive multiple authority names. The application permits the request if the user has at least one of the authorities provided as a parameter to the method. You could replace `hasAuthority()` in the previous listing with `hasAnyAuthority("WRITE")`, in which case, the application works precisely in the same way. If, however, you replace `hasAuthority()` with `hasAnyAuthority("WRITE", "READ")`, then requests from users having either authority are accepted. For our case, the application allows the requests from both John and Jane. In the following listing, you can see how you can apply the `hasAnyAuthority()` method.

Listing 7.6 Applying the `hasAnyAuthority()` method

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest()
                .hasAnyAuthority("WRITE", "READ");
        );           #A

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

You can successfully call the endpoint now with any of our two users. Here's the call for John:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

```
Hello!
```

And the call for Jane:

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

Hello!

To specify access based on user authorities, the third way you find in practice is the `access()` method. The `access()` method is more general, however. It receives as a parameter an `AuthorizationManager` implementation. You can provide any implementation for this object that can apply any kind of logic that defines the authorization rules. This method is powerful, and it doesn't refer only to authorities. However, this method also makes the code more difficult to read and understand. For this reason, I recommend it as the last option, and only if you can't apply one of the `hasAuthority()` or `hasAnyAuthority()` methods presented earlier in this section.

To make this method easier to understand, I first present it as an alternative to specifying authorities with the `hasAuthority()` and `hasAnyAuthority()` methods. As you learn in this example, you'll use an `AuthorizationManager` implementation where you have to provide a SpEL expression as a parameter. The authorization rule we defined becomes more challenging to read, and this is why I don't recommend this approach for simple rules. However, the `access()` method has the advantage of allowing you to customize rules through the `AuthorizationManager` implementation you provide as a parameter. And this is really powerful! As with SpEL expressions, you can basically define any condition.

Note

In most situations, you can implement the required restrictions with the `hasAuthority()` and `hasAnyAuthority()` methods, and I recommend that you use these. Use the `access()` method only if the other two options do not fit and you want to implement more generic authorization rules.

I start with a simple example to match the same requirement as in the previous cases. If you only need to test if the user has specific authorities, the expression you need to use with the `access()` method can be one of the following:

- `hasAuthority('WRITE')`—Stipulates that the user needs the `WRITE` authority to call the endpoint.
- `hasAnyAuthority('READ', 'WRITE')`—Specifies that the user needs one of either the `READ` or `WRITE` authorities. With this expression, you can enumerate all the authorities for which you want to allow access.

Observe that these expressions have the same name as the methods presented earlier in this section. The following listing demonstrates how you can use the `access()` method.

Listing 7.7 Using the `access()` method to configure access to the endpoints

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest()
                .access("hasAuthority('WRITE')")
        );      #A

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

The example presented in listing 7.7 proves how the `access()` method complicates the syntax if you use it for straightforward requirements. In such a case, you should instead use the `hasAuthority()` or the `hasAnyAuthority()` method directly. But the `access()` method is not all evil. As I stated earlier, it offers you flexibility. You'll find situations in real-world scenarios in which you could use it to write more complex expressions, based on which the application grants access. You wouldn't be able to implement these scenarios without the `access()` method.

In listing 7.8, you find the `access()` method applied with an expression that's

not easy to write otherwise. Precisely, the configuration presented in listing 7.8 defines two users, John and Jane, who have different authorities. The user John has only read authority, while Jane has read, write, and delete authorities. The endpoint should be accessible to those users who have read authority but not to those that have delete authority.

NOTE

In Spring apps, you find various styles and conventions for naming authorities. Some developers use all caps, other use all small letters. In my opinion, all of these choices are OK as long as you keep these consistent in your app. In this book, I use different styles in the examples so that you can observe more approaches that you might encounter in real-world scenarios.

It is a hypothetical example, of course, but it's simple enough to be easy to understand and complex enough to prove why the `access()` method is more powerful. To implement this with the `access()` method, you can use an `AuthorizationManager` implementation that takes a SpEL expression. The SpEL expression must reflect the requirement. For example:

```
"hasAuthority('read') and !hasAuthority('delete')"
```

The next listing illustrates how to apply the `access()` method with a more complex expression. You can find this example in the project named `ssia-ch7-ex2`.

Listing 7.8 Applying the `access()` method with a more complex expression

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        var user1 = User.withUsername("john")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build();

        var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")
```

```

        .password("12345")
        .authorities("read", "write", "delete")
        .build();

    manager.createUser(user1);
    manager.createUser(user2);

    return manager;
}

@Bean
public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
    return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
}

@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
    throws Exception {

    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    String expression =
        ""hasAuthority('read') and          #A
        !hasAuthority('delete')  #A
        "";          #A

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.anyRequest()
            .access(new WebExpressionAuthorizationManager(expr

    ));

    return http.build();
}
}

```

Let's test our application now by calling the /hello endpoint for user John:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The body of the response is

Hello!

And calling the endpoint with user Jane:

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The body of the response is

```
{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/hello"
}
```

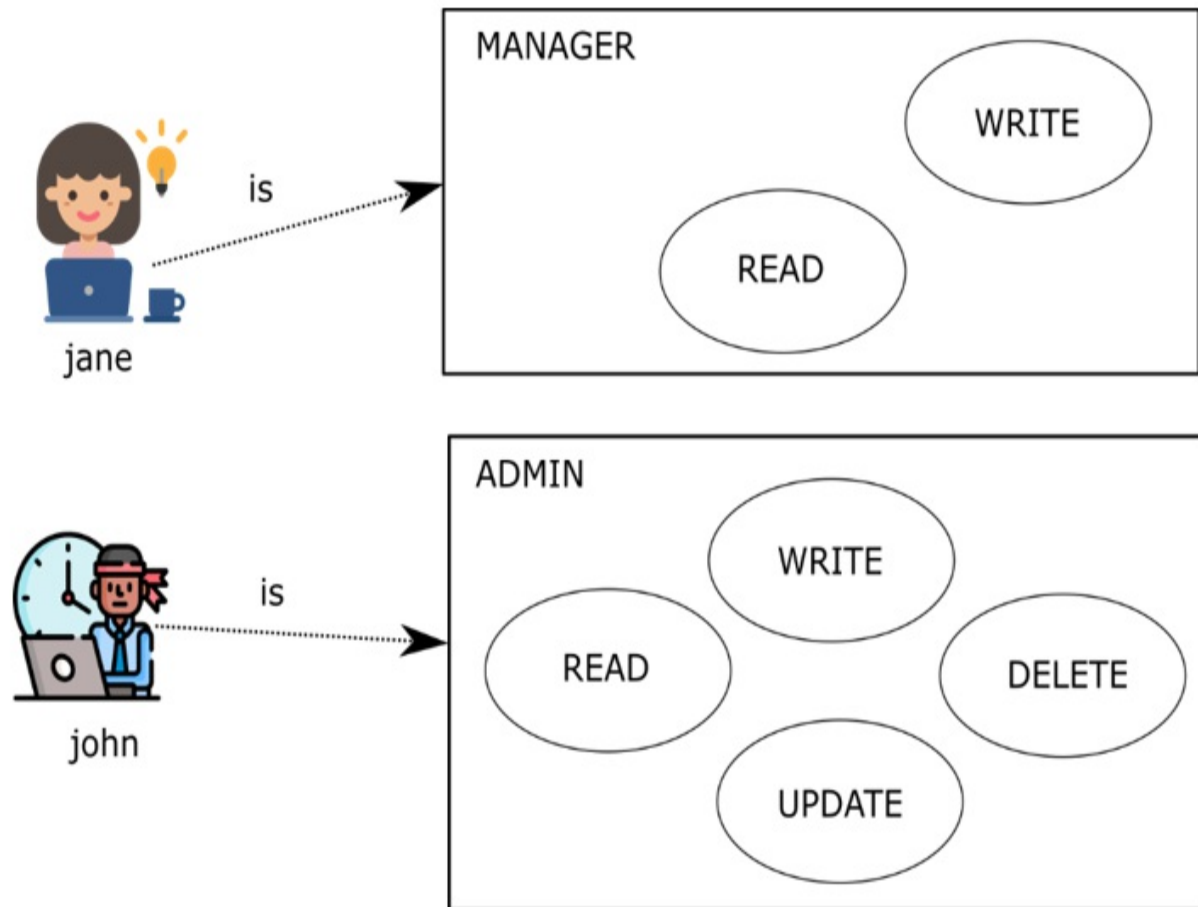
The user John has only read authority and can call the endpoint successfully. But Jane also has delete authority and is not authorized to call the endpoint. The HTTP status for the call by Jane is 403 Forbidden.

With these examples, you can see how to set constraints regarding the authorities that a user needs to have to access some specified endpoints. Of course, we haven't yet discussed selecting which requests to be secured based on the path or the HTTP method. We have, instead, applied the rules for all requests regardless of the endpoint exposed by the application. Once we finish doing the same configuration for user roles, we discuss how to select the endpoints to which you apply the authorization configurations.

7.1.2 Restricting access for all endpoints based on user roles

In this section, we discuss restricting access to endpoints based on roles. Roles are another way to refer to what a user can do (figure 7.5). You find these as well in real-world applications, so this is why it is important to understand roles and the difference between roles and authorities. In this section, we apply several examples using roles so that you'll know all the practical scenarios in which the application uses roles and how to write configurations for these cases.

Figure 7.5 Roles are coarse grained. Each user with a specific role can only do the actions granted by that role. When applying this philosophy in authorization, a request is allowed based on the purpose of the user in the system. Only users who have a specific role can call a certain endpoint.



Spring Security understands authorities as fine-grained privileges on which we apply restrictions. Roles are like badges for users. These give a user privileges for a group of actions. Some applications always provide the same groups of authorities to specific users. Imagine, in your application, a user can either only have read authority or have all: read, write, and delete authorities. In this case, it might be more comfortable to think that those users who can only read have a role named **READER**, while the others have the role **ADMIN**. Having the **ADMIN** role means that the application grants you read, write, update, and delete privileges. You could potentially have more roles. For example, if at some point the requests specify that you also need a user who is only allowed to read and write, you can create a third role named **MANAGER** for your application.

NOTE

When using an approach with roles in the application, you won't have to

define authorities anymore. The authorities exist, in this case as a concept, and can appear in the implementation requirements. But in the application, you only have to define a role to cover one or more such actions a user is privileged to do.

The names that you give to roles are like the names for authorities—it's your own choice. We could say that roles are coarse grained when compared with authorities. Behind the scenes, anyway, roles are represented using the same contract in Spring Security, `GrantedAuthority`. When defining a role, its name should start with the `ROLE_` prefix. At the implementation level, this prefix specifies the difference between a role and an authority. You find the example we work on in this section in the project `ssia-ch7-ex3`. In the next listing, take a look at the change I made to the previous example.

Listing 7.9 Setting roles for users

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        var user1 = User.withUsername("john")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("ROLE_ADMIN")      #A
            .build();

        var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("ROLE_MANAGER")
            .build();

        manager.createUser(user1);
        manager.createUser(user2);

        return manager;
    }

    // Omitted code
}
```

To set constraints for user roles, you can use one of the following methods:

- `hasRole()`—Receives as a parameter the role name for which the application authorizes the request.
- `hasAnyRole()`—Receives as parameters the role names for which the application approves the request.
- `access()`—Uses an `AuthorizationManager` to specify the role or roles for which the application authorizes requests. In terms of roles, you could use `hasRole()` or `hasAnyRole()` as SpEL expressions together with the `WebExpressionAuthorizationManager` implementation.

As you observe, the names are similar to the methods presented in section 7.1.1. We use these in the same way, but to apply configurations for roles instead of authorities. My recommendations are also similar: use the `hasRole()` or `hasAnyRole()` methods as your first option, and fall back to using `access()` only when the previous two don't apply. In the next listing, you can see what the `configure()` method looks like now.

Listing 7.10 Configuring the app to accept only requests from admins

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.anyRequest().hasRole("ADMIN")
        );           #A

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

NOTE

A critical thing to observe is that we use the `ROLE_` prefix only to declare the role. But when we use the role, we do it only by its name.

When testing the application, you should observe that user John can access the endpoint, while Jane receives an HTTP 403 Forbidden. To call the endpoint with user John, use

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

```
Hello!
```

And to call the endpoint with user Jane, use

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

```
{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/hello"
}
```

When building users with the `User` builder class as we did in the example for this section, you specify the role by using the `roles()` method. This method creates the `GrantedAuthority` object and automatically adds the `ROLE_` prefix to the names you provide.

NOTE

Make sure the parameter you provide for the `roles()` method does not include the `ROLE_` prefix. If that prefix is inadvertently included in the `role()` parameter, the method throws an exception. In short, when using the `authorities()` method, include the `ROLE_` prefix. When using the `roles()` method, do not include the `ROLE_` prefix.

In the following listing, you can see the correct way to use the `roles()`

method instead of the `authorities()` method when you design access based on roles. You can also compare listing 7.11 with listing 7.9 to observe the difference between using authorities and roles.

Listing 7.11 Setting up roles with the `roles()` method

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        var user1 = User.withUsername("john")
            .password("12345")
            .roles("ADMIN")      #A
            .build();

        var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")
            .password("12345")
            .roles("MANAGER")
            .build();

        manager.createUser(user1);
        manager.createUser(user2);

        return manager;
    }

    // Omitted code
}
```

More on the `access()` method

In sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2, you learned to use the `access()` method to apply authorization rules referring to authorities and roles. In general, in an application the authorization restrictions are related to authorities and roles. But it's important to remember that the `access()` method is generic and it only depends on what implementation of the `AuthorizationManager` contract you provide as a parameter. Moreover, in our example, we only used the `WebExpressionAuthorizationManager` implementation which applies the authorization restrictions based on a SpEL expression. With the examples I present, I focus on teaching you how to apply it for authorities and roles, but

in practice, `WebExpressionAuthorizationManager` receives any SpEL expression. It doesn't need to be related to authorities and roles.

A straightforward example would be to configure access to the endpoint to be allowed only after 12:00 pm. To solve something like this, you can use the following SpEL expression:

```
T(java.time.LocalTime).now().isAfter(T(java.time.LocalTime).of(12
```

For more about SpEL expressions, see the Spring Framework documentation:

<https://docs.spring.io/spring/docs/current/spring-framework-reference/core.html#expressions>

We could say that with the `access()` method, you can basically implement any kind of rule. The possibilities are endless. Just don't forget that in applications, we always strive to keep syntax as simple as possible. Complicate your configurations only when you don't have any other choice. You'll find this example applied in the project `ssia-ch7-ex4`.

7.1.3 Restricting access to all endpoints

In this section, we discuss restricting access to all requests. You learned in section 5.2 that by using the `permitAll()` method, you can permit access for all requests. You learned as well that you can apply access rules based on authorities and roles. But what you can also do is deny all requests. The `denyAll()` method is just the opposite of the `permitAll()` method. In the next listing, you can see how to use the `denyAll()` method.

Listing 7.12 Using the `denyAll()` method to restrict access to endpoints

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {
```

```

    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.anyRequest().denyAll()
    );           #A

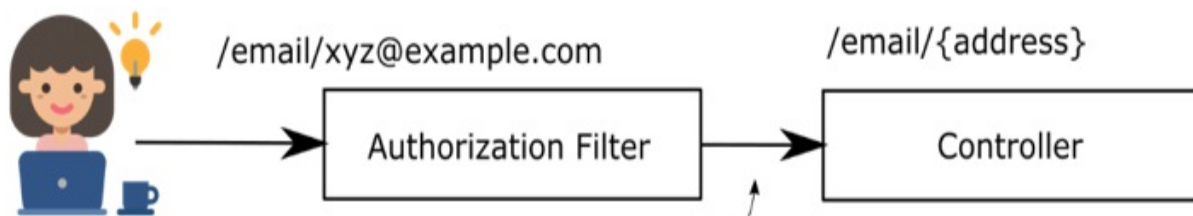
    return http.basic();
}
}

```

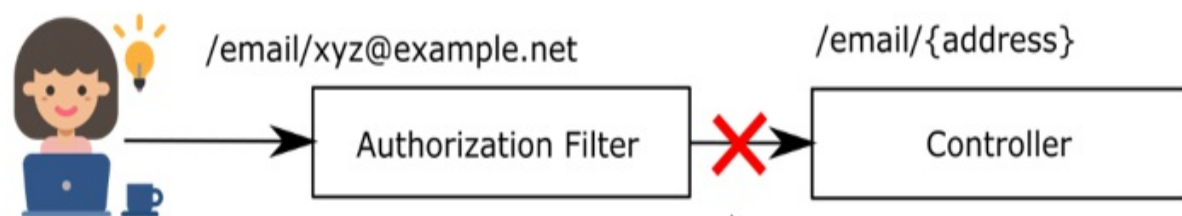
So, where could you use such a restriction? You won't find it used as much as the other methods, but there are cases in which requirements make it necessary. Let me show you a couple of cases to clarify this point.

Let's assume that you have an endpoint receiving as a path variable an email address. What you want is to allow requests that have the value of the variable addresses ending in .com. You don't want the application to accept any other format for the email address. (You'll learn in the next chapter how to apply restrictions for a group of requests based on the path and HTTP method and even for path variables.) For this requirement, you use a regular expression to group requests that match your rule and then use the `denyAll()` method to instruct your application to deny all these requests (figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6 When the user calls the endpoint with a value of the parameter ending in .com, the application accepts the request. When the user calls the endpoint and provides an email address ending in .net, the application rejects the call. To achieve such behavior, you can use the `denyAll()` method for all endpoints for which the value of the parameter doesn't end with .com.



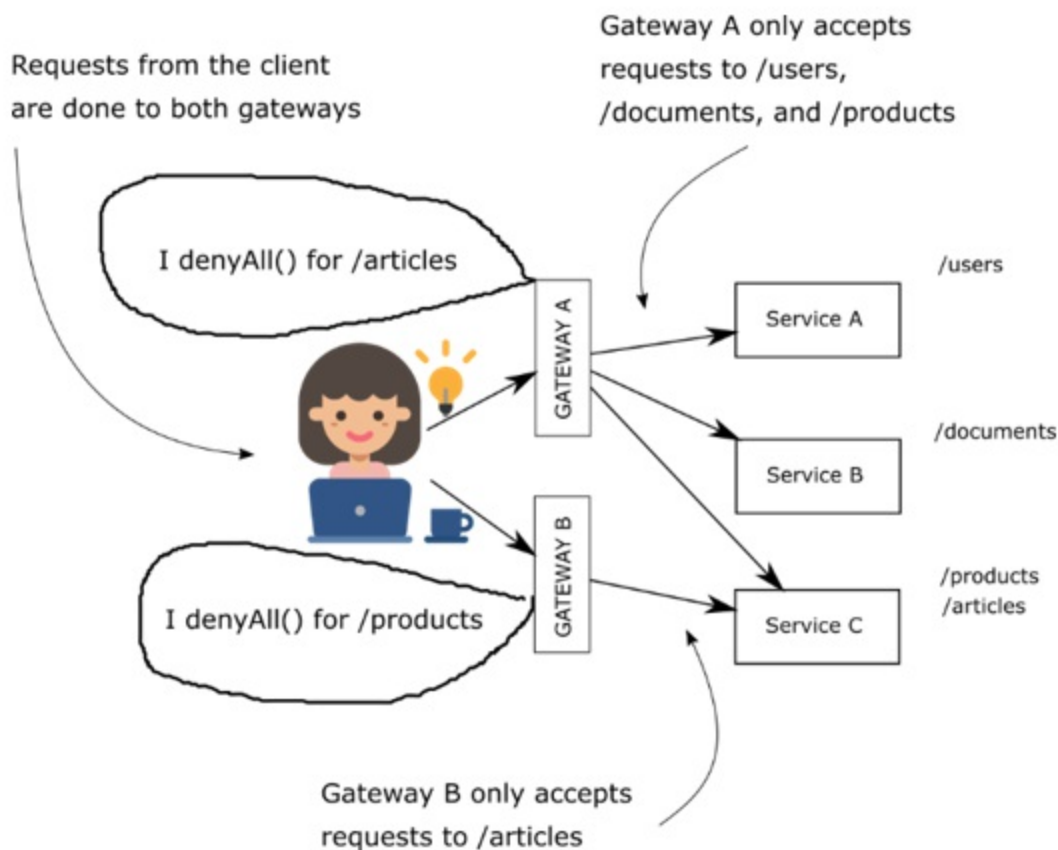
The request is accepted because the email address ends with .com



The request isn't accepted because the email address ends with .net

You can also imagine an application designed as in figure 7.7. A few services implement the use cases of the application, which are accessible by calling endpoints available at different paths. But to call an endpoint, the client requests another service that we can call a gateway. In this architecture, there are two separate services of this type. In figure 7.7, I called these Gateway A and Gateway B. The client requests Gateway A if they want to access the `/products` path. But for the `/articles` path, the client has to request Gateway B. Each of the gateway services is designed to deny all requests to other paths that these do not serve. This simplified scenario can help you easily understand the `denyAll()` method. In a production application, you could find similar cases in more complex architectures.

Figure 7.7 Access is done through Gateway A and Gateway B. Each of the gateways only delivers requests for specific paths and denies all others.



Applications in production face various architectural requirements, which could look strange sometimes. A framework must allow the needed flexibility for any situation you might encounter. For this reason, the `denyAll()` method is as important as all the other options you learned in this chapter.

7.2 Summary

- Authorization is the process during which the application decides if an authenticated request is permitted or not. Authorization always happens after authentication.
- You configure how the application authorizes requests based on the authorities and roles of an authenticated user.
- In your application, you can also specify that certain requests are possible for unauthenticated users.
- You can configure your app to reject any request, using the `denyAll()` method, or permit any requests, using the `permitAll()` method.

8 Configuring endpoint-level authorization: Applying restrictions

This chapter covers

- Selecting requests to apply restrictions using matcher methods
- Learning best-case scenarios for each matcher method

In chapter 7, you learned how to configure access based on authorities and roles. But we only applied the configurations for all of the endpoints. In this chapter, you'll learn how to apply authorization constraints to a specific group of requests. In production applications, it's less probable that you'll apply the same rules for all requests. You have endpoints that only some specific users can call, while other endpoints might be accessible to everyone. Each application, depending on the business requirements, has its own custom authorization configuration. Let's discuss the options you have to refer to different requests when you write access configurations.

Even though we didn't call attention to it, the first matcher method you used was the `anyRequest()` method. As you used it in the previous chapters, you know now that it refers to all requests, regardless of the path or HTTP method. It is the way you say "any request" or, sometimes, "any other request."

First, let's talk about selecting requests by path; then we can also add the HTTP method to the scenario. To choose the requests to which we apply authorization configuration, we use the `requestMatchers()` method.

8.1 Using the `requestMatchers()` method to select endpoints

In this section, you learn how to use the `requestMatchers()` method in general so that in sections 8.2 through 8.4, we can continue describing

various approaches you have to select HTTP requests for which you need to apply authorization restrictions. By the end of this chapter, you'll be able to apply the `requestMatchers()` method in any authorization configurations you might need to write for your application's requirements. Let's start with a straightforward example.

We create an application that exposes two endpoints: `/hello` and `/ciao`. We want to make sure that only users having the `ADMIN` role can call the `/hello` endpoint. Similarly, we want to make sure that only users having the `MANAGER` role can call the `/ciao` endpoint. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch8-ex1`. The following listing provides the definition of the controller class.

Listing 8.1 The definition of the controller class

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    @GetMapping("/hello")
    public String hello() {
        return "Hello!";
    }

    @GetMapping("/ciao")
    public String ciao() {
        return "Ciao!";
    }
}
```

In the configuration class, we declare an `InMemoryUserDetailsManager` as our `UserDetailsService` instance and add two users with different roles. The user John has the `ADMIN` role, while Jane has the `MANAGER` role. To specify that only users having the `ADMIN` role can call the endpoint `/hello` when authorizing requests, we use the `requestMatchers()` method. The next listing presents the definition of the configuration class.

Listing 8.2 The definition of the configuration class

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {
```

```

@Bean
public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
    var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

    var user1 = User.withUsername("john")
        .password("12345")
        .roles("ADMIN")
        .build();

    var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")
        .password("12345")
        .roles("MANAGER")
        .build();

    manager.createUser(user1);
    manager.createUser(user2);

    return manager;
}

@Bean
public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
    return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
}

@Bean
public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
    throws Exception {

    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.requestMatchers("/hello").hasRole("ADMIN")           #A
            .requestMatchers("/ciao").hasRole("MANAGER")           #B
    );

    return http.build();
}
}

```

You can run and test this application. When you call the endpoint /hello with user John, you get a successful response. But if you call the same endpoint with user Jane, the response status returns an HTTP 403 Forbidden.

Similarly, for the endpoint /ciao, you can only use Jane to get a successful result. For user John, the response status returns an HTTP 403 Forbidden. You can see the example calls using cURL in the next code snippets. To call the endpoint /hello for user John, use

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

Hello!

To call the endpoint /hello for user Jane, use

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/hello
```

The response body is

```
{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/hello"
}
```

To call the endpoint /ciao for user Jane, use

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/ciao
```

The response body is

Ciao!

To call the endpoint /ciao for user John, use

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/ciao
```

The response body is

```
{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/ciao"
}
```

```
}
```

If you now add any other endpoint to your application, it is accessible by default to anyone, even unauthenticated users. Let's assume you add a new endpoint `/hola` as presented in the next listing.

Listing 8.3 Adding a new endpoint for path `/hola` to the application

```
@RestController
public class HelloController {

    // Omitted code

    @GetMapping("/hola")
    public String hola() {
        return "Hola!";
    }
}
```

Now when you access this new endpoint, you see that it is accessible with or without having a valid user. The next code snippets display this behavior. To call the endpoint `/hola` without authenticating, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/hola
```

The response body is

```
Hola!
```

To call the endpoint `/hola` for user John, use

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/hola
```

The response body is

```
Hola!
```

You can make this behavior more visible if you like by using the `permitAll()` method. You do this by using the `anyRequest()` matcher method at the end of the configuration chain for the request authorization, as presented in listing 8.4.

NOTE

It is good practice to make all your rules explicit. Listing 8.4 clearly and unambiguously indicates the intention to permit requests to endpoints for everyone, except for the endpoints `/hello` and `/ciao`.

Listing 8.4 Marking additional requests explicitly as accessible without authentication

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.mvcMatchers("/hello").hasRole("ADMIN")
                .mvcMatchers("/ciao").hasRole("MANAGER")
                .anyRequest().permitAll()           #A
        );

        return http.build();
    }
}
```

NOTE

When you use matchers to refer to requests, the order of the rules should be from particular to general. This is why the `anyRequest()` method cannot be called before a more specific `requestMatchers()` method.

Unauthenticated vs. failed authentication

If you have designed an endpoint to be accessible to anyone, you can call it without providing a username and a password for authentication. In this case, Spring Security won't do the authentication. If you, however, provide a

username and a password, Spring Security evaluates them in the authentication process. If they are wrong (not known by the system), authentication fails, and the response status will be 401 Unauthorized. To be more precise, if you call the /hola endpoint for the configuration presented in listing 8.4, the app returns the body “Hola!” as expected, and the response status is 200 OK. For example,

```
curl http://localhost:8080/hola
```

The response body is

Hola!

But if you call the endpoint with invalid credentials, the status of the response is 401 Unauthorized. In the next call, I use an invalid password:

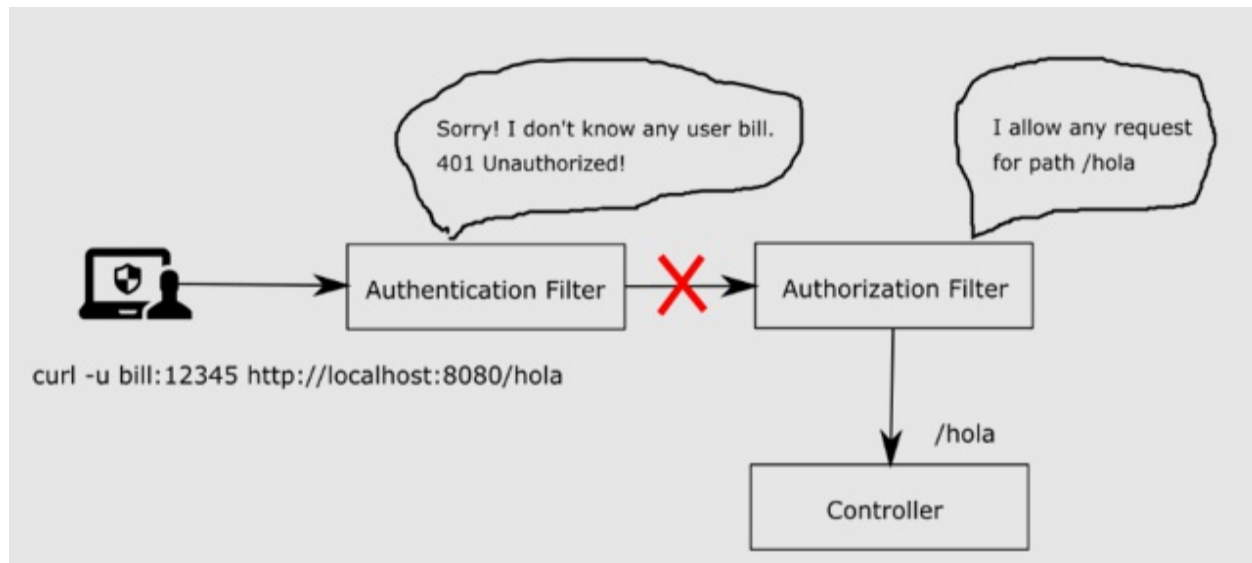
```
curl -u bill:abcde http://localhost:8080/hola
```

The response body is

```
{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/hola"
}
```

This behavior of the framework might look strange, but it makes sense as the framework evaluates any username and password if you provide them in the request. As you learned in chapter 7, the application always does authentication before authorization, as this figure shows.

The authorization filter allows any request to the /hola path. But because the application first executes the authentication logic, the request is never forwarded to the authorization filter. Instead, the authentication filter replies with an HTTP 401 Unauthorized.



In conclusion, any situation in which authentication fails will generate a response with the status 401 Unauthorized, and the application won't forward the call to the endpoint. The `permitAll()` method refers to authorization configuration only, and if authentication fails, the call will not be allowed further.

You could decide, of course, to make all the other endpoints accessible only for authenticated users. To do this, you would change the `permitAll()` method with `authenticated()` as presented in the following listing. Similarly, you could even deny all other requests by using the `denyAll()` method.

Listing 8.5 Making other requests accessible for all authenticated users

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.requestMatchers("/hello").hasRole("ADMIN")
```

```

        .requestMatchers("/ciao").hasRole("MANAGER")
        .anyRequest().authenticated()           #A
    );

    return http.build();
}

```

Here, at the end of this section, you've become familiar with how you should use matcher methods to refer to requests for which you want to configure authorization restrictions. Now we must go more in depth with the syntaxes you can use.

In most practical scenarios, multiple endpoints can have the same authorization rules, so you don't have to set them up endpoint by endpoint. As well, you sometimes need to specify the HTTP method, not only the path, as we've done until now.

Sometimes, you only need to configure rules for an endpoint when its path is called with HTTP GET. In this case, you'd need to define different rules for HTTP POST and HTTP DELETE. In the next section, we take each type of matcher method and discuss these aspects in detail.

8.2 Selecting requests to apply authorization restrictions

In this section, we deep dive into configuring request matchers. Using the `requestMatchers()` method is a common approach to refer to requests for applying authorization configuration. So I expect you to have many opportunities to use this method to refer to requests in the applications you develop.

This matcher uses the standard ANT syntax (table 8.1) for referring to paths. This syntax is the same one you use when writing endpoint mappings with annotations like `@RequestMapping`, `@GetMapping`, `@PostMapping`, and so forth. The two methods you can use to declare MVC matchers are as follows:

- `requestMatchers(HttpMethod method, String... patterns)`—Lets you specify both the HTTP method to which the restrictions apply and the paths. This method is useful if you want to apply different restrictions for different HTTP methods for the same path.
- `requestMatchers(String... patterns)`—Simpler and easier to use if you only need to apply authorization restrictions based on paths. The restrictions can automatically apply to any HTTP method used with the path.

In this section, we approach multiple ways of using `requestMatchers()` methods. To demonstrate this, we start by writing an application that exposes multiple endpoints.

For the first time, we write endpoints that can be called with other HTTP methods besides GET. You might have observed that until now, I've avoided using other HTTP methods. The reason for this is that Spring Security applies, by default, protection against cross-site request forgery (CSRF). In chapter 9, we'll discuss how Spring Security mitigates this vulnerability by using CSRF tokens. But to make things simpler for the current example and to be able to call all endpoints, including those exposed with POST, PUT, or DELETE, we need to disable CSRF protection in our `configure()` method:

```
http.csrf(  
    c -> c.disable()  
);
```

NOTE

We disable CSRF protection now only to allow you to focus for the moment on the discussed topic: matcher methods. But don't rush to consider this a good approach. In chapter 9, we'll discuss in detail the CSRF protection provided by Spring Security.

We start by defining four endpoints to use in our tests:

- `/a` using the HTTP method GET
- `/a` using the HTTP method POST
- `/a/b` using the HTTP method GET

- /a/b/c using the HTTP method GET

With these endpoints, we can consider different scenarios for authorization configuration. In listing 8.6, you can see the definitions of these endpoints. You can find this example in the project ssia-ch8-ex2.

Listing 8.6 Definition of the four endpoints for which we configure authorization

```
@RestController
public class TestController {

    @PostMapping("/a")
    public String postEndpointA() {
        return "Works!";
    }

    @GetMapping("/a")
    public String getEndpointA() {
        return "Works!";
    }

    @GetMapping("/a/b")
    public String getEndpointB() {
        return "Works!";
    }

    @GetMapping("/a/b/c")
    public String getEndpointC() {
        return "Works!";
    }
}
```

We also need a couple of users with different roles. To keep things simple, we continue using an `InMemoryUserDetailsManager`. In the next listing, you can see the definition of the `UserDetailsService` in the configuration class.

Listing 8.7 The definition of the `UserDetailsService`

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var manager = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();    #A
    }
}
```



```

    var user1 = User.withUsername("john")
        .password("12345")
        .roles("ADMIN")          #B
        .build();

    var user2 = User.withUsername("jane")
        .password("12345")
        .roles("MANAGER")        #C
        .build();

    manager.createUser(user1);
    manager.createUser(user2);

    return manager;
}

@Bean
public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
    return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();    #D
}
}

```

Let's start with the first scenario. For requests done with an HTTP GET method for the /a path, the application needs to authenticate the user. For the same path, requests using an HTTP POST method don't require authentication. The application denies all other requests. The following listing shows the configurations that you need to write to achieve this setup.

Listing 8.8 Authorization configuration for the first scenario, /a

```

@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {

        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

        http.authorizeHttpRequests(
            c -> c.requestMatchers(HttpMethod.GET, "/a")
                .authenticated()          #A

```

```

        .requestMatchers(HttpMethod.POST, "/a")
            .permitAll()      #B
        .anyRequest()
            .denyAll()        #C
    );

    http.csrf(
        c -> c.disable()
    );      #D

    return http.build();
}
}

```

In the next code snippets, we analyze the results on the calls to the endpoints for the configuration presented in listing 8.8. For the call to path /a using the HTTP method POST without authenticating, use this cURL command:

```
curl -XPOST http://localhost:8080/a
```

The response body is

Works!

When calling path /a using HTTP GET without authenticating, use

```
curl -XGET http://localhost:8080/a
```

The response is

```

{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/a"
}

```

If you want to change the response to a successful one, you need to authenticate with a valid user. For the following call

```
curl -u john:12345 -XGET http://localhost:8080/a
```

the response body is

Works!

But user John isn't allowed to call path /a/b, so authenticating with his credentials for this call generates a 403 Forbidden:

```
curl -u john:12345 -XGET http://localhost:8080/a/b
```

The response is

```
{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/a/b"
}
```

With this example, you now know how to differentiate requests based on the HTTP method. But, what if multiple paths have the same authorization rules? Of course, we can enumerate all the paths for which we apply authorization rules, but if we have too many paths, this makes reading code uncomfortable. As well, we might know from the beginning that a group of paths with the same prefix always has the same authorization rules. We want to make sure that if a developer adds a new path to the same group, it doesn't also change the authorization configuration. To manage these cases, we use "charitalics" path expressions. Let's prove these in an example.

For the current project, we want to ensure that the same rules apply for all requests for paths starting with /a/b. These paths in our case are /a/b and /a/b/c. To achieve this, we use the ** operator. You can find this example in the project ssia-ch8-ex3.

Listing 8.9 Changes in the configuration class for multiple paths

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    // Omitted code

    @Bean
```

```

public void configure(HttpSecurity http)
    throws Exception {

    http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

    http.authorizeHttpRequests(
        c -> c.requestMatchers( "/a/b/**").authenticated()    #A
            .anyRequest().permitAll()

    );

    http.csrf(
        c -> c.disable()
    );

    return http.build();
}

```

With the configuration given in listing 8.9, you can call path /a without being authenticated, but for all paths prefixed with /a/b, the application needs to authenticate the user. The next code snippets present the results of calling the /a, /a/b, and /a/b/c endpoints. First, to call the /a path without authenticating, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/a
```

The response body is

Works!

To call the /a/b path without authenticating, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/a/b
```

The response is

```

{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/a/b"
}

```

To call the /a/b/c path without authenticating, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/a/b/c
```

The response is

```
{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/a/b/c"
}
```

As presented in the previous examples, the `**` operator refers to any number of pathnames. You can use it as we have done in the last example so that you can match requests with paths having a known prefix. You can also use it in the middle of a path to refer to any number of pathnames or to refer to paths ending in a specific pattern like `/a/**/c`. Therefore, `/a/**/c` would not only match `/a/b/c` but also `/a/b/d/c` and `a/b/c/d/e/c` and so on. If you only want to match one pathname, then you can use a single `*`. For example, `a/*/c` would match `a/b/c` and `a/d/c` but not `a/b/d/c`.

Because you generally use path variables, you can find it useful to apply authorization rules for such requests. You can even apply rules referring to the path variable value. Do you remember the discussion from section 8.1 about the `denyAll()` method and restricting all requests?

Let's turn now to a more suitable example of what you have learned in this section. We have an endpoint with a path variable, and we want to deny all requests that use a value for the path variable that has anything else other than digits. You can find this example in the project `ssia-ch8-ex4`. The following listing presents the controller.

Listing 8.10 The definition of an endpoint with a path variable in a controller class

```
@RestController
public class ProductController {

    @GetMapping("/product/{code}")
    public String productCode(@PathVariable String code) {
        return code;
    }
}
```

```
}  
}
```

The next listing shows you how to configure authorization such that only calls that have a value containing only digits are always permitted, while all other calls are denied.

Listing 8.11 Configuring the authorization to permit only specific digits

```
@Configuration  
public class ProjectConfig {  
  
    @Bean  
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http  
        throws Exception {  
  
        http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());  
  
        http.authorizeHttpRequests(  
            c -> c.requestMatchers  
                [CA]("/product/{code:^[0-9]*$}")           #A  
                .permitAll()  
                .anyRequest()  
                .denyAll()  
  
        );  
  
        return http.build();  
    }  
}
```

NOTE

When using parameter expressions with a regex, make sure to not have a space between the name of the parameter, the colon (:), and the regex, as displayed in the listing.

Running this example, you can see the result as presented in the following code snippets. The application only accepts the call when the path variable value has only digits. To call the endpoint using the value 1234a, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/product/1234a
```

The response is

```
{
  "status":401,
  "error":"Unauthorized",
  "message":"Unauthorized",
  "path":"/product/1234a"
}
```

To call the endpoint using the value 12345, use

```
curl http://localhost:8080/product/12345
```

The response is

12345

We discussed a lot and included plenty of examples of how to refer to requests using `requestMatchers()` method. Table 8.1 is a refresher for the path expressions you used in this section. You can simply refer to it later when you want to remember any of them.

Table 8.1 Common expressions used for path matching with MVC matchers

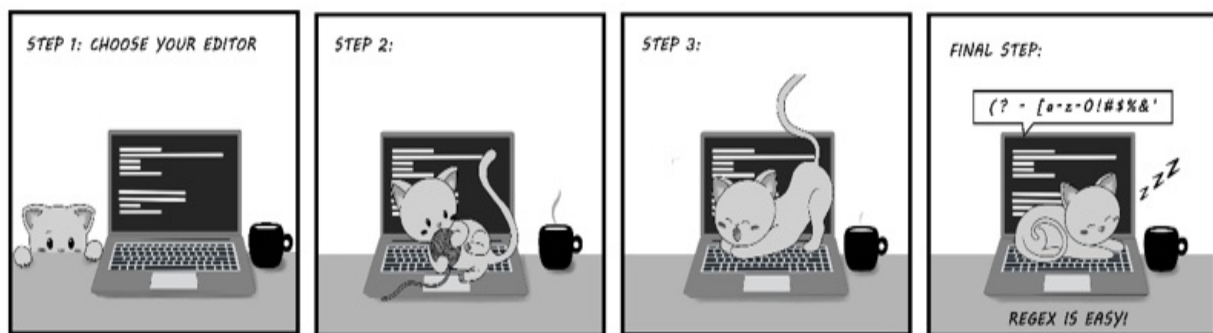
Expression	Description
/a	Only path /a.
/a/*	The * operator replaces one pathname. In this case, it matches /a/b or /a/c, but not /a/b/c.
/a/**	The ** operator replaces multiple pathnames. In this case, /a as well as /a/b and /a/b/c are a match for this expression.

<code>/a/{param}</code>	This expression applies to the path <code>/a</code> with a given path parameter.
<code>/a/{param:regex}</code>	This expression applies to the path <code>/a</code> with a given path parameter only when the value of the parameter matches the given regular expression.

8.2.1 Using regular expressions with request matchers

In this section, we discuss regular expression (regex). You should already be aware of what regular expressions are, but you don't need to be an expert in the subject. Any of the books recommended at <https://www.regular-expressions.info/books.html> are excellent resources from which you can learn about the subject in more depth. For writing regex, I also often use online generators like (figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Letting your cat play over the keyboard is not the best solution for generating regular expressions (regex). To learn how to generate regexes you can use an online generator like <https://regexr.com/>.



You learned in sections 8.2 and 8.3 that in most cases, you can use path expression syntaxes to refer to requests to which you apply authorization configurations. In some cases, however, you might have requirements that are more particular, and you cannot solve those with path expressions. An example of such a requirement could be this: “Deny all requests when paths contain specific symbols or characters.” For these scenarios, you need to use

a more powerful expression like a regex.

You can use regexes to represent any format of a string, so they offer limitless possibilities for this matter. But they have the disadvantage of being difficult to read, even when applied to simple scenarios. For this reason, you might prefer to use path expressions and fall back to regexes only when you have no other option. To implement a regex request matcher you can use the `requestMatchers()` method with a `RegexRequestMatcher` implementation as parameter.

To prove how regex matchers work, let's put them into action with an example: building an application that provides video content to its users. The application that presents the video gets its content by calling the endpoint `/video/{country}/{language}`. For the sake of the example, the application receives the country and language in two path variables from where the user makes the request. We consider that any authenticated user can see the video content if the request comes from the US, Canada, or the UK, or if they use English.

You can find this example implemented in the project `ssia-ch8-ex5`. The endpoint we need to secure has two path variables, as shown in the following listing. This makes the requirement complicated to implement with request matchers.

Listing 8.12 The definition of the endpoint for the controller class

```
@RestController
public class VideoController {

    @GetMapping("/video/{country}/{language}")
    public String video(@PathVariable String country,
                       @PathVariable String language) {
        return "Video allowed for " + country + " " + language;
    }
}
```

For a condition on a single path variable, we can write a regex directly in the path expression. We referred to such an example in section 8.2, but I didn't go in depth about it at that time because we weren't discussing regexes.

Let's assume you have the endpoint `/email/{email}`. You want to apply a rule using a matcher only to the requests that send as a value of the `email` parameter an address ending in `.com`. In that case, you write a request matcher as presented by the next code snippet. You can find the complete example of this in the project `ssia-ch8-ex6`.

```
http.authorizeHttpRequests(  
    c -> c.requestMatchers("/email/{email:.*(?:.+@.+\.\.com)}" ).pe  
        .anyRequest().denyAll()  
);
```

If you test such a restriction, you find that the application only accepts emails ending in `.com`. For example, to call the endpoint to `jane@example.com`, you can use this command:

```
curl http://localhost:8080/email/jane@example.com
```

The response body is

```
Allowed for email jane@example.com
```

And to call the endpoint to `jane@example.net`, you use this command:

```
curl http://localhost:8080/email/jane@example.net
```

The response body is

```
{  
  "status":401,  
  "error":"Unauthorized",  
  "message":"Unauthorized",  
  "path":/email/jane@example.net  
}
```

It is fairly easy and makes it even clearer why we encounter regex matchers less frequently. But, as I said earlier, requirements are complex sometimes. You'll find it handier to use regex matchers when you find something like the following:

- Specific configurations for all paths containing phone numbers or email addresses

- Specific configurations for all paths having a certain format, including what is sent through all the path variables

Back to our regex matchers example (ssia-ch8-ex6): when you need to write a more complex rule, eventually referring to more path patterns and multiple path variable values, it's easier to write a regex matcher. In listing 8.13, you find the definition for the configuration class that uses a regex matcher to solve the requirement given for the `/video/{country}/{language}` path. We also add two users with different authorities to test the implementation.

Listing 8.13 The configuration class using a regex matcher

```
@Configuration
public class ProjectConfig {

    @Bean
    public UserDetailsService userDetailsService() {
        var uds = new InMemoryUserDetailsManager();

        var u1 = User.withUsername("john")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read")
            .build();

        var u2 = User.withUsername("jane")
            .password("12345")
            .authorities("read", "premium")
            .build();

        uds.createUser(u1);
        uds.createUser(u2);

        return uds;
    }

    @Bean
    public PasswordEncoder passwordEncoder() {
        return NoOpPasswordEncoder.getInstance();
    }

    @Bean
    public SecurityFilterChain securityFilterChain(HttpSecurity http
        throws Exception {
```

```

http.httpBasic(Customizer.withDefaults());

http.authorizeHttpRequests(
    c -> c.regexMatchers(".*(us|uk|ca)+/(en|fr).*")    #A
        .authenticated()
        .anyRequest()
        .hasAuthority("premium");    #B
);
}
}

```

Running and testing the endpoints confirm that the application applied the authorization configurations correctly. The user John can call the endpoint with the country code US and language en, but he can't call the endpoint for the country code FR and language fr due to the restrictions we configured. Calling the /video endpoint and authenticating user John for the US region and the English language looks like this:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/video/us/en
```

The response body is

```
Video allowed for us en
```

Calling the /video endpoint and authenticating user John for the FR region and the French language looks like this:

```
curl -u john:12345 http://localhost:8080/video/fr/fr
```

The response body is

```

{
  "status":403,
  "error":"Forbidden",
  "message":"Forbidden",
  "path":"/video/fr/fr"
}

```

Having premium authority, user Jane makes both calls with success. For the first call,

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/video/us/en
```

the response body is

```
Video allowed for us en
```

And for the second call,

```
curl -u jane:12345 http://localhost:8080/video/fr/fr
```

the response body is

```
Video allowed for fr fr
```

Regexes are powerful tools. You can use them to refer to paths for any given requirement. But because regexes are hard to read and can become quite long, they should remain your last choice. Use these only if path expressions don't offer you a solution to your problem.

In this section, I used the most simple example I could imagine so that the needed regex is short. But with more complex scenarios, the regex can become much longer. Of course, you'll find experts who say any regex is easy to read. For example, a regex used to match an email address might look like the one in the next code snippet. Can you easily read and understand it?

```
(?:[a-z0-9!#$%&'*/+=?^_`{|}~-]+(?:\.[a-z0-9!#$%&'*/+=?^_`{|}~-]+)
```

8.3 Summary

- In real-world scenarios, you often apply different authorization rules for different requests.
- You specify the requests for which authorization rules are configured based on path and HTTP method. To do this, you use the `requestMatchers()` method.
- When requirements are too complex to be solved with path expressions, you can implement them with the more powerful regexes.