

# Building and structuring a Node.js MVC application

<https://blog.logrocket.com/building-structuring-node-js-mvc-application/>



Developers follow many conventions when programming that may or may not be hard rules, but are often the building blocks of great development projects. These conventions are used so frequently and adopted so widely because they are proven to work.

In this tutorial, we'll learn about the popular architectural pattern Model-View-Controller (MVC) followed by building and structuring an application in Node.js using MVC.

## Tutorial prerequisites

To follow this tutorial, you will need the following:

- Node.js
- A MongoDB Atlas account to create our app's database
- Yarn if you are not using npm with Node.js
- A text editor, such as Visual Studio Code

## What is Model-View-Controller?

MVC is simply a design or architectural pattern used in software engineering. While this isn't a hard rule, but this pattern helps developers focus on a particular aspect of their application, one step at a time.

The main goal of MVC is to split large applications into specific sections that have their own individual purpose.

It also allows developers to logically structure applications in a secure way, which we will show in this tutorial. But first, let's break down what each aspect of the pattern provides.

## Model

As the name implies, [a model is a design or structure](#). In the case of MVC, the model determines how a database is structured, defining a section of the application that interacts with the database. This is where we will define the properties of a user that will be stored in our database.

The controller accesses the database through the model. You could say that the model is the heart of the application.

## View

The view is where end users interact within the application. Simply put, this is where all the HTML template files go.

## Controller

The controller interacts with the model and serves the response and functionality to the view. When an end user makes a request, it's sent to the controller which interacts with the database.

You can think of the controller as a waiter in a restaurant that handles customers' orders, which in this case is the view. The waiter then goes to the kitchen, which is the model/database, and gets food to serve the customers, which is the controller handling the request.

Now, let's build an application using the MVC pattern!

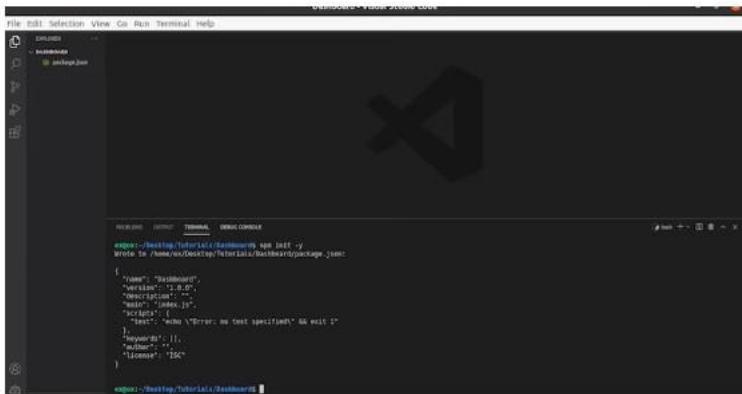
## Setting up the application

To understand how to use MVC, we will build a simple login and registration system with a dashboard that shows users' information. However, this tutorial is more about structuring than about the application we are building.

So, open up your terminal in an empty folder and run the following command:

```
npm init -y
```

This creates a `package.json` file.



Now for this project, we will need to install some packages to get started:

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- [Explore Tauri](#), a new framework for building binaries
- Compare [NestJS vs. Express.js](#)
- [Discover](#) popular ORMs used in the TypeScript landscape

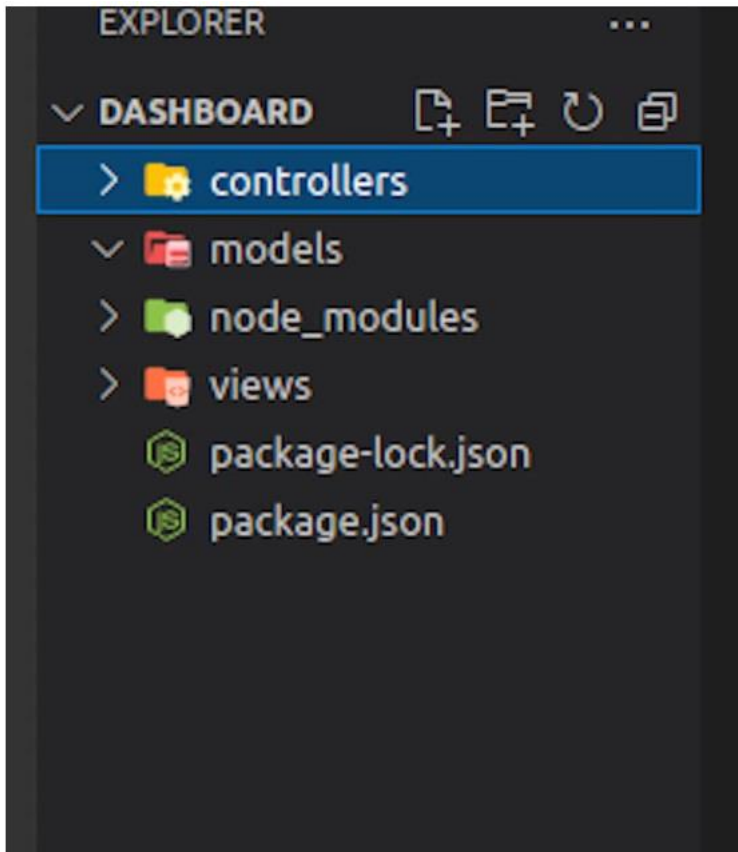
```
npm install express ejs mongoose bcryptjs passport passport-local
```

These packages provide is with the following:

- [express](#) is an Express application, which is necessary for our Express server
- [ejs](#) is a templating engine that generates HTML
- [mongoose](#) is a package that connects our application to our MongoDB
- [bcryptjs](#) handles encrypting passwords
- [passport](#) and [passport-local](#) [handle authentication](#)

After this is complete, you should see a `node_module` folder (this is where all the packages are downloaded to).

Now create three folders to represent MVC: `models`, `views`, and `controllers`.



## Setting up the server

While we've created our folders, they can't do anything without a server. To create our server, let's create an `index.js` folder in our root directory. We can call this file whatever we want, provided we state so in the `package.json` file.

After creating the `index.js` file, go to the `package.json` file and edit the `scripts` like so:

```
//json
```

```
{
  "name": "Dashboard",
  "version": "1.0.0",
  "description": "",
  "main": "index.js",
  "scripts": {
    "develop": "node index.js"
  },
  "keywords": [],
  "author": "",
  "license": "ISC",
```

```
"dependencies": {  
  "bcryptjs": "^2.4.3",  
  "ejs": "^3.1.6",  
  "express": "^4.17.1",  
  "mongoose": "^6.0.3",  
  "passport": "^0.4.1",  
  "passport-local": "^1.0.0"  
}
```

Notice how `main` points to `index.js` and `scripts` has `develop` pointing to `index.js`. This means that whenever we run `npm run develop` from the command in the root of the application, it will run the entry point, which, in our case is the `index.js` file.

Now, let go of the `index.js` file to create our Express server. Copy and paste the following code into it:

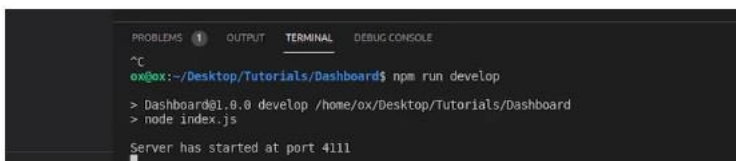
```
//js  
const express = require('express');  
const app = express();  
const PORT = process.env.PORT || 4111;  
app.listen(PORT, console.log("Server don start for port: " +  
PORT))
```

Remember that we already installed Express. Now, we are simply requiring it and assigning the `express()` function to `app`.

In line 5, we are now using the `listen()` method to start up a server that runs at <http://localhost:4111>. To confirm that our server is now up and running, run the following:

```
npm run develop
```

It then renders our confirmation that the server is running at `port 4111`.

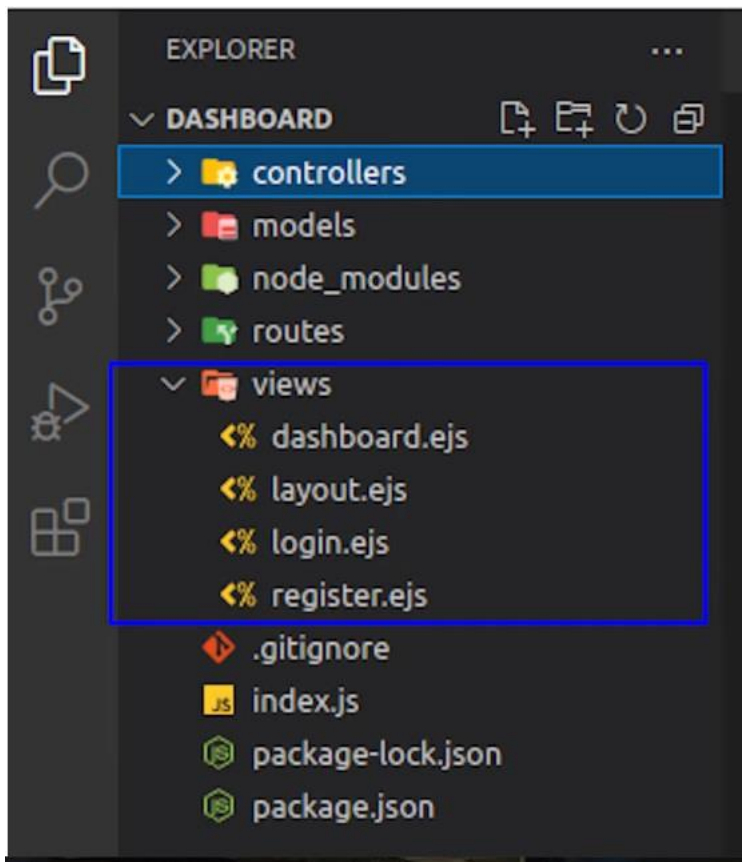


```
PROBLEMS 1 OUTPUT TERMINAL DEBUG CONSOLE  
^C  
ox@ox:~/Desktop/Tutorials/Dashboard$ npm run develop  
  
> Dashboard@1.0.0 develop /home/ox/Desktop/Tutorials/Dashboard  
> node index.js  
  
Server has started at port 4111
```

## Creating routes, views, and controllers

With our server up and running, let's create some `.ejs` files in our `view` folder. Since we are following the MVC pattern, we need all our views, that is, what the end users see, to be in one folder.

Inside the `views` folder, create the following files: `login.ejs`, `register.ejs`, `dashboard.ejs`, `layout.ejs`.



You can [copy the code from here](#).

The `layout.ejs` code is included across the `.ejs` files in the `view` folder:

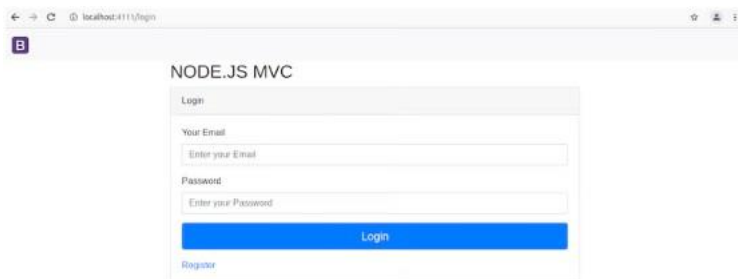
```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
  <meta charset='utf-8'>
  <meta http-equiv='X-UA-Compatible' content='IE=edge'>
  <title>MVC</title>
```

```

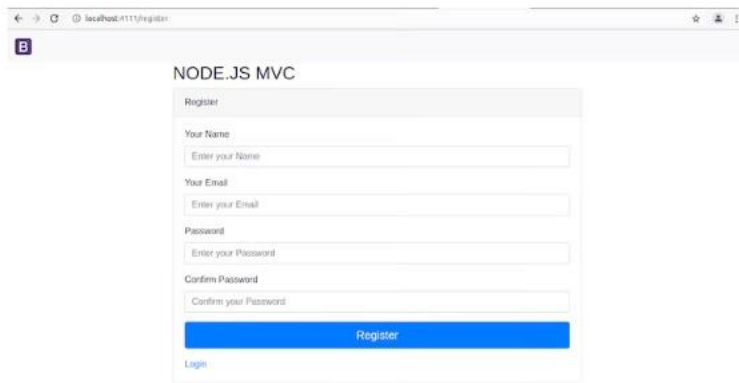
    <meta name='viewport' content='width=device-width, initial-
scale=1'>
    <link
href="//maxcdn.bootstrapcdn.com/bootstrap/4.1.1/css/bootstrap.min.
css" rel="stylesheet" id="bootstrap-css">
<script
src="//maxcdn.bootstrapcdn.com/bootstrap/4.1.1/js/bootstrap.min.js
"></script>
<script
src="//cdnjs.cloudflare.com/ajax/libs/jquery/3.2.1/jquery.min.js">
</script>
</head>
<body><!-- Just an image -->
    <nav class="navbar navbar-light bg-light">
        <a class="navbar-brand" href="#">
            
        </a>
    </nav>

```

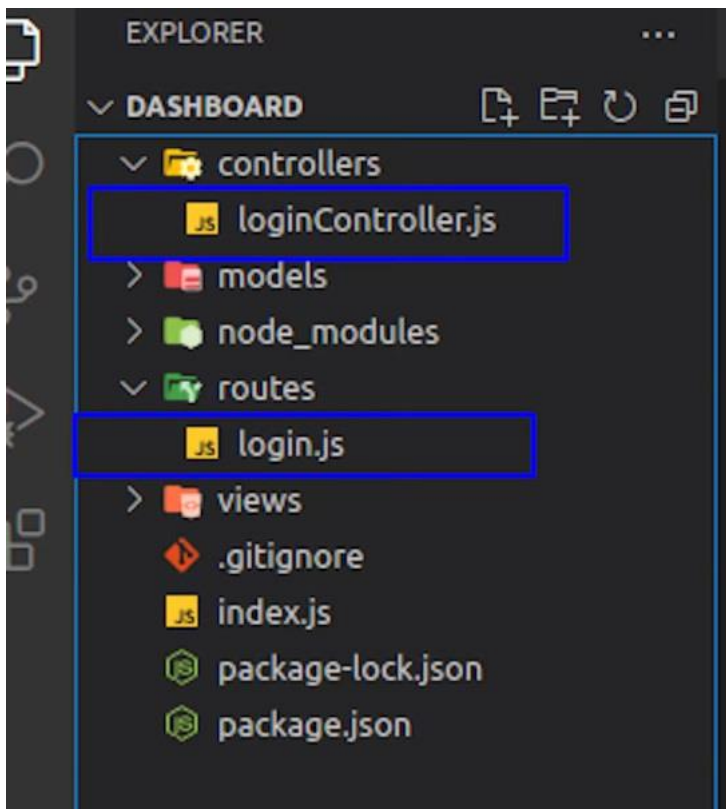
Next, the `login.ejs` code renders our Login page, as seen below:



Then, the `register.ejs` renders our Register page:



Next, create a folder called `routes`; this is technically part of the controller, but it is nice to have all the routing in one, separate folder.



Here is the `loginController.js` file in the `controller` folder:

```
//js

//For Register Page
const registerView = (req, res) => {
  res.render("register", {
  } );
}
```



```

}
// For View
const loginView = (req, res) => {

  res.render("login", {
    } );
}
module.exports = {
  registerView,
  loginView
};

```

Here, `registerView` and `loginView` render the `register.ejs` and `login.ejs` view, respectively. Both are exported.

This is followed by the `login.js` code in the `routes` folder.

```

//js
const express = require('express');
const {registerView, loginView } =
require('../controllers/loginController');
const router = express.Router();
router.get('/register', registerView);
router.get('/login', loginView);
module.exports = router;

```

What we are doing here is using the Express router with `registerView` and `loginView`, which are exported from `loginController` under `controllers`.

The above two code blocks will not render the Login and Register pages without updating the `index.js` file to the following:

```

//js
const express = require('express');
const app = express();
app.set('view engine', 'ejs');
//Routes
app.use('/', require('./routes/login'));
const PORT = process.env.PORT || 4111;
app.listen(PORT, console.log("Server has started at port " +
PORT));

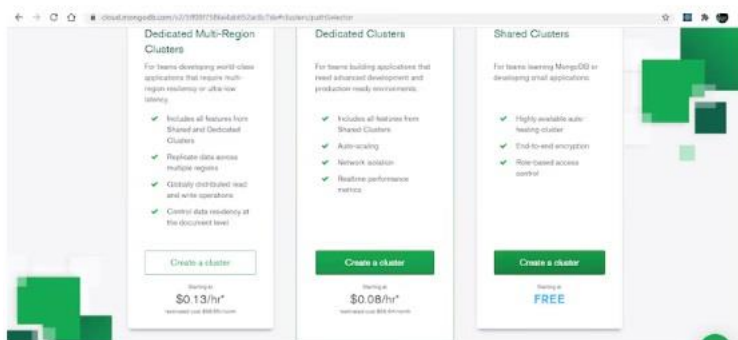
```

Notice that we have set the view engine to use `.ejs` and defined the root route to use what's in `login` under `routes`.

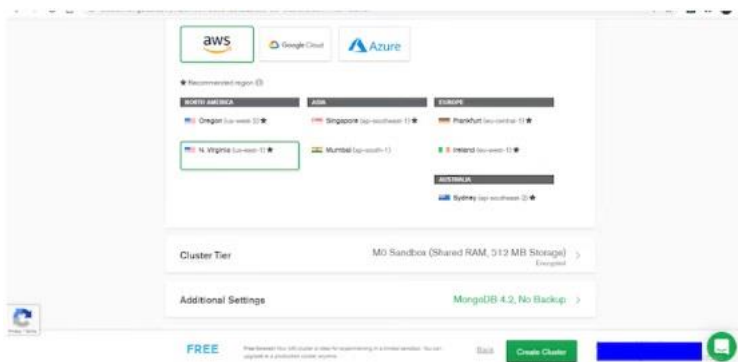
## Setting up MongoDB Atlas

As mentioned earlier, we must set up a [MongoDB database with Atlas](#). Remember that we installed Mongoose as part of the npm packages that we needed. So, go ahead and create a new account if you don't already have one.

Now, you should have your Atlas MongoDB account ready. Go to Atlas and create a new project and a cluster (use the free option for the sake of this tutorial).



After creating a cluster, a second page opens, which we can ignore and leave everything in the default settings. Then, click **Create Cluster**.

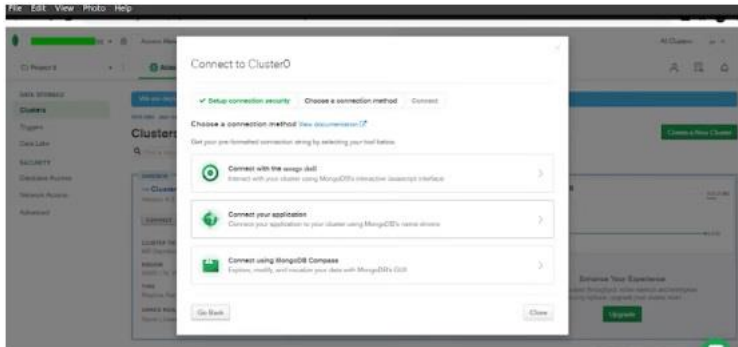


There are few things we need to set to connect the created cluster to our application.

On the **Security** tab, select **Database Access** and create a user by deciding a username and password. Next, allow users to read and write the database.

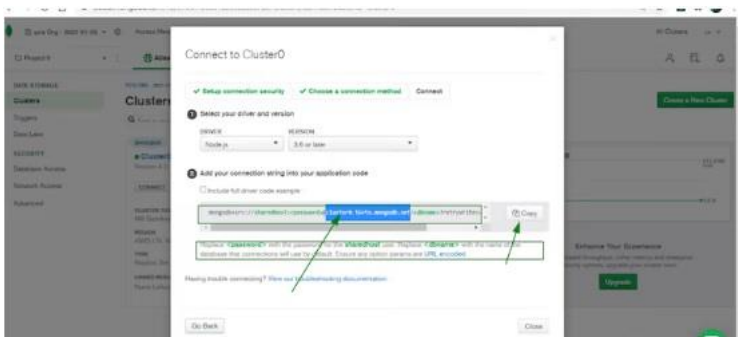
Again, on the **Security** tab, select **Network Access**, add the IP address, select **ALLOW ACCESS FROM ANYWHERE**, and confirm it (this will take about 3 minutes to be active).

Now, go back to the clusters, click **Connect**, and select **Connect your application**



The driver should be Node.js by default, and the version should be 3.6 or later.

The highlighted part in the screenshot below is where your host will be. Note that yours will be different than mine.



Copy the host and head back to the project.

## Connecting to the database

To connect to our database, we must store the credential we copied somewhere and ensure it's safe. So, it is best practice to put sensitive credentials in an **.env** file.

Let's go ahead and install **.dotenv** and create the **.env** file in our root directory:

```
npm install dotenv
```

Inside the **.env** file, add the following:

```
MONGODB_URI= "Your credential goes here"
```

Note that this `.env` file should not be uploaded to your production or even committed to git; you must include it in your `.gitignore` file. The `.env` file stores virtual environments that must be rebuilt on the server using our configuration.

Now, let's go to our `index.js` entry point to import Mongoose and connect it to our database. Remember that we installed `dotenv`, and we must import and use it along with Mongoose.

Now our `index.js` becomes the following:

```
//js
const express = require('express');
const app = express();
const mongoose = require('mongoose');
const dotenv = require("dotenv");
dotenv.config();
// Mongo DB connction
const database = process.env.MONGOLAB_URI;
mongoose.connect(database, {useUnifiedTopology: true,
useNewUrlParser: true })
.then(() => console.log('e don connect'))
.catch(err => console.log(err));

app.set('view engine', 'ejs');
//Routes
app.use('/', require('./routes/login'));
const PORT = process.env.PORT || 4111;
app.listen(PORT, console.log("Server has started at port " +
PORT))
```


By importing `mongoose` and `dotenv`, they immediately call the config method to enable our connection to read the environment variables and assign their contents to `process.env`.

We also created a `database` variable and assigned it to `process.env.MONGOLAB_URI` that receives its value from what we defined in `.env` file. Lines 9 to 11 then connect to the database using the Mongoose method, `mongoose.connect()`.

Stop the server from your terminal with Ctrl + C and run `npm run develop` again. You should get this response that lets us know we did everything correctly.

```
ox@ox:~/Desktop/Tutorials/Dashboard$ npm run develop
> Dashboard@1.0.0 develop /home/ox/Desktop/Tutorials/Dashboard
> node index.js

Server has started at port 4111
e don connect
```



Our application is now connected to our MongoDB database.

## Creating a model for user registration

Models are what communicate directly to our database. So in our `model` folder, let's create a `User.js` file and input the following code:

```
const mongoose = require("mongoose");
const UserSchema = new mongoose.Schema({
  name: {
    type: String,
    required: true,
  },
  email: {
    type: String,
    required: true,
  },
  password: {
    type: String,
    required: true,
  },
  location: {
    type: String,
    default: "New York",
  },
  date: {
    type: Date,
    default: Date.now,
  },
});
const User = mongoose.model("User", UserSchema);
module.exports = User;
```

These are the fields we want to insert into the database whenever a new user registers through the Registration page. We can store a name, password, email address, give users a default location of New York, and include a timestamp when the registration completes.

## Registering users

We have created a schema to store our user information in our database inside the `User.js` folder within the `model` folder. To see how this works, let's make a `POST` request on the Registration page.

Whenever an end user hits the **Register** button, a `POST` request is sent to the `/register` route (remember what we did before was a `GET` request). To make this work, we must go to `loginController.js` and require the `User.js` model `bcrypt` because we must hash the password:

```
const User = require("../models/User");
const bcrypt = require("bcryptjs");
```

Next, create a function that handles the `POST` request to the `/register` route. Here, the `registerUser` function uses data submitted through the form at the Registration page:

```
//js
//Post Request that handles Register
const registerUser = (req, res) => {
  const { name, email, location, password, confirm } = req.body;
  if (!name || !email || !password || !confirm) {
    console.log("Fill empty fields");
  }
  //Confirm Passwords
  if (password !== confirm) {
    console.log("Password must match");
  } else {
    //Validation
    User.findOne({ email: email }).then((user) => {
      if (user) {
        console.log("email exists");
        res.render("register", {
          name,
          email,
          password,
          confirm,
        });
      } else {
        //Validation
```

```

    const newUser = new User({
      name,
      email,
      location,
      password,
    });
    //Password Hashing
    bcrypt.genSalt(10, (err, salt) =>
      bcrypt.hash(newUser.password, salt, (err, hash) => {
        if (err) throw err;
        newUser.password = hash;
        newUser
          .save()
          .then(res.redirect("/login"))
          .catch((err) => console.log(err));
      })
    );
  });
}
});
}
};

```

In line 4, we get all the inputs submitted into the form by users:

```
>const { name, email, location, password, confirm } = req.body;
```

`req.body` is an Express API that holds the submitted parameters through the frontend of our application. From lines 5 to 7, we check to see if any of the fields are empty; if any are empty, it logs, "Fill empty fields".

Lines 8 to 10, check to see if the password fields match; if they do not match, it logs "Password must match".

Lines 11 through 21 are an `else if` statement that only happens if the first two conditions are `false`. What it does is check to make sure that multiple users do not register with the same email address.

By checking the database, if a user exists with the same email address, it will console log "email exists" and renders the Registration page maintaining the user's inputs.

Add a built-in [Express middleware that parses incoming requests](#) by adding the following to the `index.js` file:

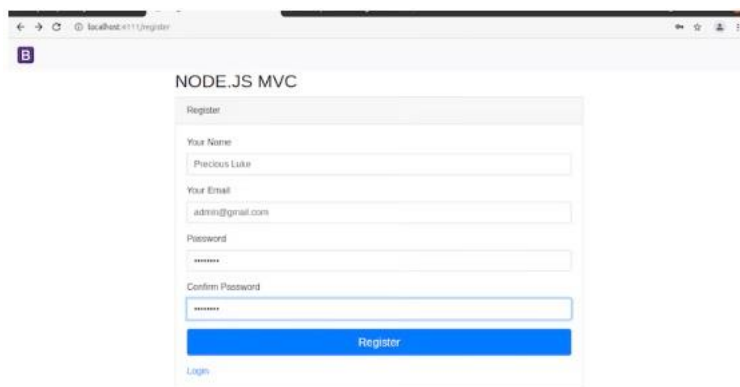
```
//js
```

```
//BodyParsing
app.use(express.urlencoded({extended: false}));
```

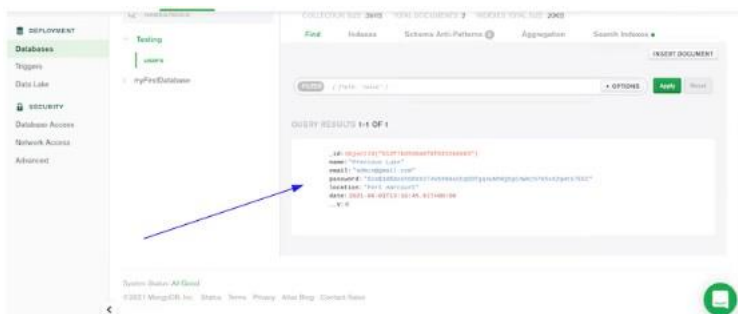
This built-in express middleware gives us the ability to process posted data and store it in the `req.body`.

Before we save the user's information and hashed the password, we must also check the database to ensure there will never be multiple email addresses so every user's email is unique.

Finally, we can export the `registerUser` module and import it into our `login.js` file.



Whenever a user selects the **Register** button, if everything checks out, the form creates a user instance in the database and redirects them to the Login page.



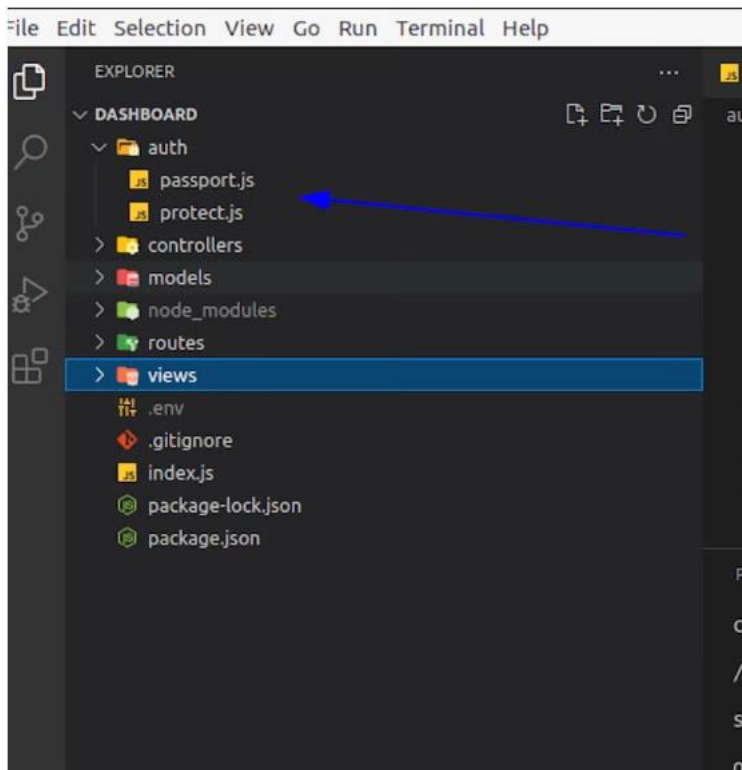
## Logging in and authenticating users

We have made the user registration process work. Now let's work on the login section of our application.

To ensure our Login page works, we must authenticate users using Passport. If there is a user in the database, Passport redirects us to a dashboard that displays the user's details.



For better organization, let's create a folder that will handle authentication. In our root folder create an `auth` folder, and add `passport.js` `protect.js`.



In the `passport.js` file, paste the following code:

```
//js
const bcrypt = require("bcryptjs");
LocalStrategy = require("passport-local").Strategy;
//Load model
const User = require("../models/User");
const loginCheck = passport => {
  passport.use(
    new LocalStrategy({ usernameField: "email" }, (email,
password, done) => {
      //Check customer
      User.findOne({ email: email })
        .then((user) => {
          if (!user) {
            console.log("wrong email");
            return done();
          }
          //Match Password
          bcrypt.compare(password, user.password, (error, isMatch)
=> {
```

```

        if (error) throw error;
        if (isMatch) {
            return done(null, user);
        } else {
            console.log("Wrong password");
            return done();
        }
    });
}
).catch((error) => console.log(error));
});
);
passport.serializeUser((user, done) => {
    done(null, user.id);
});
passport.deserializeUser((id, done) => {
    User.findById(id, (error, user) => {
        done(error, user);
    });
});
});
module.exports = {
    loginCheck,
};

```

Within lines 2 to 5, we imported `bcryptjs`, `passport-local`, and our `User.js` model file. `bcryptjs` compares the plain text entered into the login form with the encrypted data in the database.

Lines 6 through 45 contain the `loginCheck` function that has the `passport` parameter. Inside the function, we used the `LocalStrategy` to check the database to see if there is an existing email already; if there is none, it consoles `"wrong email"`.

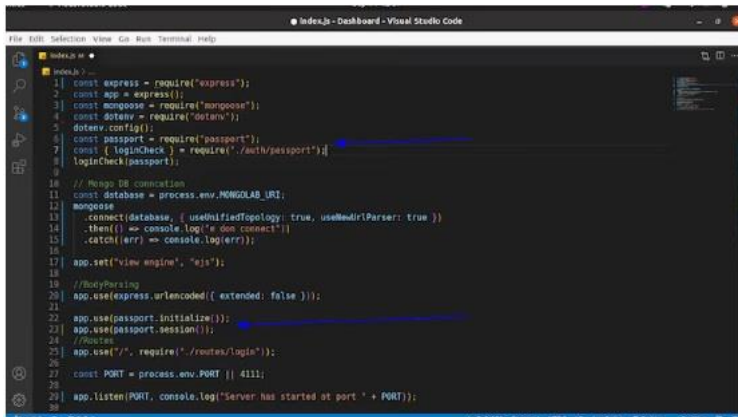
`bcrypt.compare()` then compares the entered password with the one previously encrypted in the database.

With the introduction of `passport.serializeUser` and `passport.deserializeUser` to configure authentication, if the previous conditions in the code are `false`, Passport will serialize and deserialize the user.

Once confirming the user, Passport creates a session that the user's browser maintains for subsequent requests.

Finally, we export the `loginCheck`. This is what handles our authentication, but we will need to add some middleware to our `index.js` file to initialize it.

The middleware requires the `passport` package and `loginCheck` from the `./auth/passport.js`:



In lines 22 and 23, we used the middleware provided by Passport in our Express `app` instance to initialize Passport and maintain a consistent session.

Finally, we must create a route for `POST` requests to `/login`. In our `loginController.js` inside the `controller` folder, right above the `export` objects, paste the following code:

```
//js
const loginUser = (req, res) => {
  const { email, password } = req.body;
  //Required
  if (!email || !password) {
    console.log("Please fill in all the fields");
    res.render("login", {
      email,
      password,
    });
  } else {
    passport.authenticate("local", {
      successRedirect: "/dashboard",
      failureRedirect: "/login",
      failureFlash: true,
    })(req, res);
  }
};
```

With this, we declare a `loginUser` function. Inside this function, we look for the email and password entered into our Login page and check to see if the password or the email field is empty.

If either are empty, we console `"Please fill in all the fields"` and re-render the Login page.

Now, if that does not happen, and the email and password are correct, we then log the user in and redirect to `/dashboard`, however, we have not created this route yet.

The finalized `loginController.js` is as follows:

```
//js
const passport = require("passport");
const User = require("../models/User");
const bcrypt = require("bcryptjs");
//For Register Page
const registerView = (req, res) => {
  res.render("register", {});
};
//Post Request for Register
const registerUser = (req, res) => {
  const { name, email, location, password, confirm } = req.body;
  if (!name || !email || !password || !confirm) {
    console.log("Fill empty fields");
  }
  //Confirm Passwords
  if (password !== confirm) {
    console.log("Password must match");
  } else {
    //Validation
    User.findOne({ email: email }).then((user) => {
      if (user) {
        console.log("email exists");
        res.render("register", {
          name,
          email,
          password,
          confirm,
        });
      } else {
        //Validation
        const newUser = new User({
          name,
          email,
          location,
```

```

        password,
    });
    //Password Hashing
    bcrypt.genSalt(10, (err, salt) =>
    bcrypt.hash(newUser.password, salt, (err, hash) => {
        if (err) throw err;
        newUser.password = hash;
        newUser
            .save()
            .then(res.redirect("/login"))
            .catch((err) => console.log(err));
    })
    );
    }
    });
}
};
// For View
const loginView = (req, res) => {
    res.render("login", {});
};
//Logging in Function
const loginUser = (req, res) => {
    const { email, password } = req.body;
    //Required
    if (!email || !password) {
        console.log("Please fill in all the fields");
        res.render("login", {
            email,
            password,
        });
    } else {
        passport.authenticate("local", {
            successRedirect: "/dashboard",
            failureRedirect: "/login",
            failureFlash: true,
        })(req, res);
    }
};
module.exports = {
    registerView,
    loginView,
    registerUser,
    loginUser,
};

```

## Dashboard sessions and logging out

With a user authenticated and every login detail is correct, let's look into the dashboard route that will display the user's name and location. We must protect this route from unauthorized users. In our `auth` folder inside the `project.js` file, paste the following code:

```
//js
const protectRoute = (req, res, next) =>{
  if (req.isAuthenticated()) {
    return next();
  }
  console.log('Please log in to continue');
  res.redirect('/login');
}

const allowIf = (req, res, next) =>{
  if (!req.isAuthenticated()) {
    return next();
  }
  res.redirect('/dashboard');
}

module.exports = {
  protectRoute,
  allowIf,
};
```

The `protectRoute` function redirects the user to the Login page if they try to access the dashboard without being authenticated first by logging in through the Login page.

With the function exported, let's first add some code to the `dashboard.ejs` to define the routes we want to protect.

In `dashboard.ejs` under `views`, add the following code:

```
//ejs
<%- include('layout.ejs'); %>
<div class="container">
  <div class="row justify-content-center">
    <h3>My name is <%= user.name %> </h3> &nbsp;
    <h3>I stay at <%= user.location %> </h3> <br>
  </div>
</div>
<div>
  <a href="/logout"> <button type="submit" class="btn btn-
primary btn-lg btn-block login-button">Logout</button> </a>
```

```
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

This is simply using the `layout.ejs`, providing some dynamic user information displayed using `.ejs` templating and a button for logging out.

For orderliness, create another `controller` file. So, in the `controllers` folder, create the `dashboardController.js` file and add the following code:

```
//For Register Page
const dashboardView = (req, res) => {
  res.render("dashboard", {
    user: req.user
  });
};
module.exports = {
  dashboardView,
};
```

Here, we render the `dashboard.ejs` as the view here and accessing the `req.user`, which is available once there is an active session established by `expressjs`. With that, we have successfully logged into the dashboard.

Then, in our `login.js` folder under `routes`, require the `protectRoute` that we exported from `protect.js` under `auth`:

```
const { protectRoute } = require("../auth/protect");
```

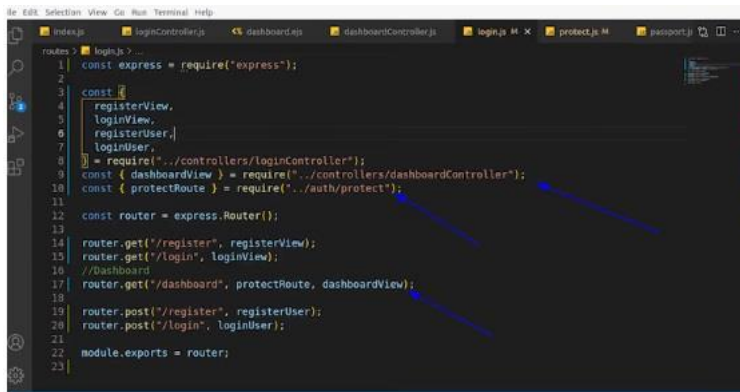
Next, require the `dashboardController.js` under `controllers`:

```
const { dashboardView } =
require("../controllers/dashboardController");
```

Finally, add the protected dashboard route to return the `dashboard.ejs` through the `dashboardView`:

```
router.get("/dashboard", protectRoute, dashboardView);
```

Our `login.js` under `routes` should look like this:



```
1 const express = require('express');
2
3 const {
4   registerView,
5   loginView,
6   registerUser,
7   loginUser,
8 } = require("../controllers/loginController");
9 const { dashboardView } = require("../controllers/dashboardController");
10 const { protectRoute } = require("../auth/protect");
11
12 const router = express.Router();
13
14 router.get('/register', registerView);
15 router.get('/login', loginView);
16 //dashboard
17 router.get('/dashboard', protectRoute, dashboardView);
18
19 router.post('/register', registerUser);
20 router.post('/login', loginUser);
21
22 module.exports = router;
23
```

A final Express middleware is needed to initialize a session. In this instance, we can use `express-session`. To install, run:

```
npm i express-session
```

After this installs successfully, require it in the `index.js` file after our express `app` instance:

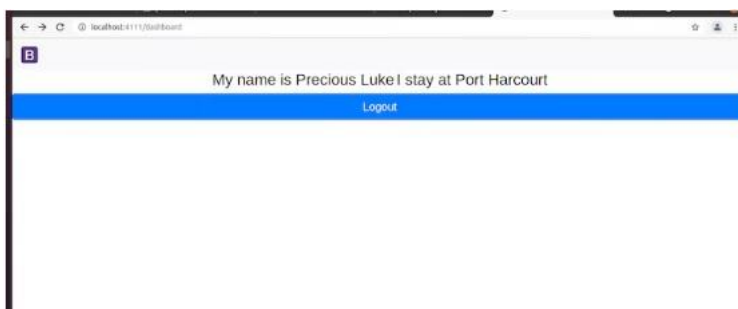
```
const session = require('express-session');
```

Then, add this before initializing your Passport instance. You can [find the full code here](#):

```
app.use(session({
  secret: 'oneboy',
  saveUninitialized: true,
  resave: true
}));
```

This creates a session. And note, according to the Express docs, “Session data is not saved in the cookie itself, just the session ID. Session data is stored server-side”.

Now, when we log in with the correct email and password, we should see this:



## Conclusion



Congratulations! You have seen this through. I hope you enjoyed and learned a lot about how to structure and build your next application using the MVC architectural pattern.

We were able to elucidate on what model, view, and controller mean and followed this pattern to build and structure a user registration and login system using Express.js and Passport for authentication. You also saw how we put all these together with a MongoDB database.

Note that with this structure, you can extend it to whatever application you want to create, including a full application.

