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With Protobuf and JSON Schema support, the Confluent Platform adds the ability to add new schema formats using schema plugins (the existing Avro support has been wrapped with an Avro schema plugin).

# Schema References

Confluent Platform (versions 5.5.0 and later) provides full support for the notion of *schema references*, the ability of a schema to refer to other schemas. Support for schema references is provided for out-of-the-box schema formats: Avro, JSON Schema, and Protobuf. Schema references use the `import` statement of Protobuf and the `$ref` field of JSON Schema. Avro in Confluent Platform is also updated to support schema references.

A schema reference consists of the following:

- A name for the reference. (For Avro, the reference name is the fully qualified schema name, for JSON Schema it is a URL, and for Protobuf, it is the name of another Protobuf file.)
- A subject, representing the subject under which the referenced schema is registered.
- A version, representing the exact version of the schema under the registered subject.