* What Is a Custom Tag?

A custom tag is a user-defined JSP language element.

When a JSP page containing a custom tag is translated into a servlet, the tag is converted to operations on a tag handler. The web container then invokes those operations when the JSP page’s servlet is executed.

* Custom tags have a rich set of features. They can....

Be customized by means of attributes passed from the calling page.

Pass variables back to the calling page.

Access all the objects available to JSP pages.

Communicate with each other. You can create and initialize a JavaBeans component, create a public EL variable that refers to that bean in one tag, and then use the bean in another tag.

Be nested within one another and communicate by means of private variables.

JSP technology also provides a mechanism for encapsulating other types of dynamic functionality in custom tags, which are extensions to the JSP language.

Some examples of tasks that can be performed by custom tags include operating on implicit objects, processing forms, accessing databases and other enterprise services such as email and directories, and implementing flow control.

Custom tags increase productivity because they can be reused in more than one application.

Custom tags are distributed in a tag library, which defines a set of related custom tags and contains the objects that implement the tags. The object that implements a custom tag is called a tag handler. JSP technology defines two types of tag handlers: simple and classic. Simple tag handlers can be used only for tags that do not use scripting elements in attribute values or the tag body. Classic tag handlers must be used if scripting elements are required.

You can write simple tag handlers using the JSP language or using the Java language. A tag file is a source file containing a reusable fragment of JSP code that is translated into a simple tag handler by the web container. Tag files can be used to develop custom tags that are presentation-centric or that can take advantage of existing tag libraries, or by page authors who do not know Java. When the flexibility of the Java programming language is needed to define the tag, JSP technology provides a simple API for developing a tag handler in the Java programming language.