



JSF 2: Explicit Page Navigation and faces-config.xml

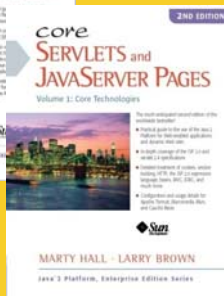
JSF 2.2 Version

Originals of slides and source code for examples: <http://www.coreservlets.com/JSF-Tutorial/jsf2/>

Also see the PrimeFaces tutorial – <http://www.coreservlets.com/JSF-Tutorial/primefaces/>
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Marty is also available for consulting and development support

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Topics in This Section

- **Explicit navigation rules**
- **Explicit bean declarations**
- **Advanced navigation options**
 - Wildcards in navigation rules
 - Conditional navigation rules
 - Dynamically computed to-ids
- **Static navigation**
- **Common navigation problems**

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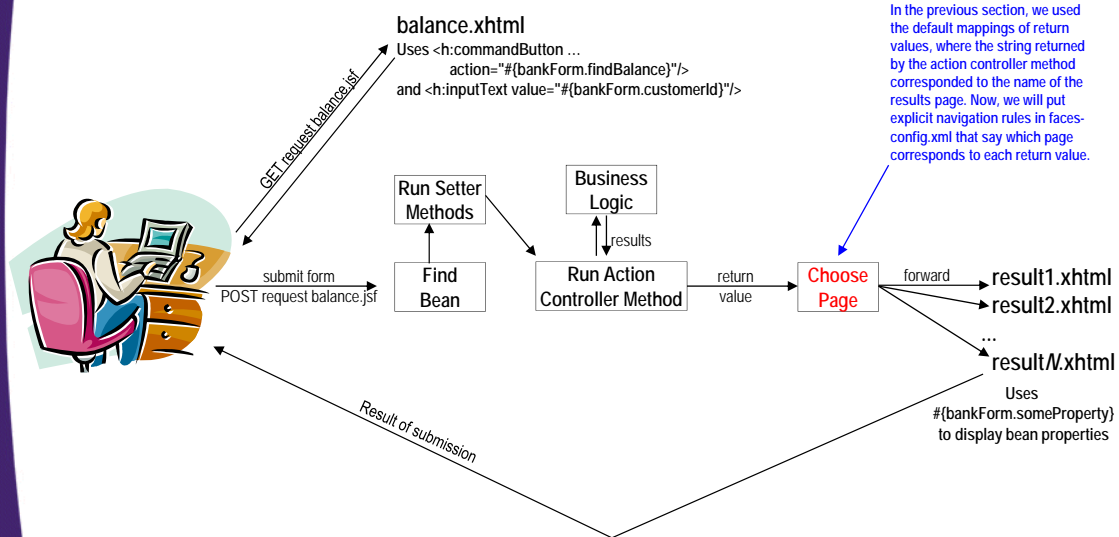
Explicit Navigation Rules



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JSF Flow of Control (Simplified)



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faces-config.xml: Overview

- **Location**
 - WEB-INF/faces-config.xml
- **Purposes**
 - Give navigation rules
 - Map return conditions to results pages
 - Declare beans
 - Map bean names to bean classes
 - Inject bean properties
 - Define properties files
 - Declare Locales
 - Register validators and renderers
 - Register custom components that use pure-Java syntax
 - ...

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faces-config.xml: Syntax Summary

- **General format**

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<faces-config ... version="2.2">
    ...
</faces-config>
```

- **Navigation rules**

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/some-start-page.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>return-condition-1</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/result-page-1.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  More navigation-case entries for other conditions
</navigation-rule>
```

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Navigation Rules: Syntax Details

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<faces-config ... version="2.2">
  <navigation-rule>
    <from-view-id>/starting-page.xhtml</from-view-id>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>return-value-1</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/result-page-1.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>return-value-2</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/result-page-2.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
    ...
  </navigation-rule>
</faces-config>
```

Interpretation: "If you start on such-and-such a page, press a button, and the action controller method returns such-and-such a value, go to page 1. If the action controller returns some other value, go to page 2. And so on."

Each form has one navigation-rule with a single from-view-id, but each navigation-rule can have many navigation-cases.

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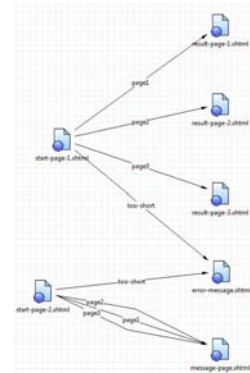
Pros and Cons of Explicit Mappings

- **Default mappings (return values=pages)**
 - Simpler to start with. Faster to make quick test cases.
 - Redundant if return values are 1-to-1 to results pages
- **Explicit mappings in faces-config.xml**
 - Better understanding of project.

- Lets you look in one place for navigation rules, instead of searching many Java files
 - There are Eclipse and NetBeans tools that automatically graph page flow based on faces-config.xml

- More flexible

- Can remap conditions to other pages later
 - Can use wildcards for starting page
 - Can use wildcards for outcomes



I find the arguments in favor of explicit mappings to be strong, and recommend using them on most real projects.

For Eclipse, see tutorial at http://help.eclipse.org/luna/index.jsp?topic=/%2Forg.eclipse.jst.jst.doc.user%2Fhtml%2Fgettingstarted%2Ftutorial%2FJSFTools_tutorial_JSF20.html
This tutorial is outdated in a few ways, but gives good examples of using and interactively editing the visual navigation rules chart

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Example

- **Overview**
 - Collect a message, then navigate to one of three possible results pages that display the message.
 - If the message is missing or only one character long, show an error page
- **Implementation**
 - Action controller returns four possible strings: page1, page2, page3, and too-short
 - Navigation rules in faces-config.xml map each of those return conditions to results page

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Example: Starting Page (start-page-1.xhtml)

```
<!DOCTYPE ... >
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
<h:head><title>JSF 2: Basic Navigation Rules</title>
...
</h:head>
<h:body>
...
<h:form>
  Your message:
  <h:inputText value="#{simpleController.message}"/>
  <br/>
  <h:commandButton value="Show Results"
    action="#{simpleController.doNavigation}"/>
</h:form>
...
</h:body></html>
```

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Example: Managed Bean

```
@ManagedBean
public class SimpleController {
  private String message="";

  // getMessage and setMessage

  public String doNavigation() {
    if (message.trim().length() < 2) {
      return("too-short");
    } else {
      String[] results =
        { "page1", "page2", "page3" };
      return(RandomUtils.randomElement(results));
    }
  }
}
```

This example uses explicit navigation rules, but does not use explicit bean declarations. So, the @ManagedBean entry is needed so that the references in the facelets pages to #{simpleController.blah} point at this class.

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Example: faces-config.xml

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<faces-config ...>
  <navigation-rule>
    <from-view-id>/start-page-1.xhtml</from-view-id>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>page1</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/result-page-1.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>page2</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/result-page-2.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
    <navigation-case>
      <from-outcome>page3</from-outcome>
      <to-view-id>/result-page-3.xhtml</to-view-id>
    </navigation-case>
  </navigation-rule>
</faces-config>
```

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Example: First Results Page (result-page-1.xhtml)

```
<!DOCTYPE ...>
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
  <h:head><title>Result Page 1</title>
  <link href="./css/styles.css"
        rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"/>
</h:head>
<h:body>
  <div align="center">
    <h1 class="title">Result Page 1</h1>
    <br/>

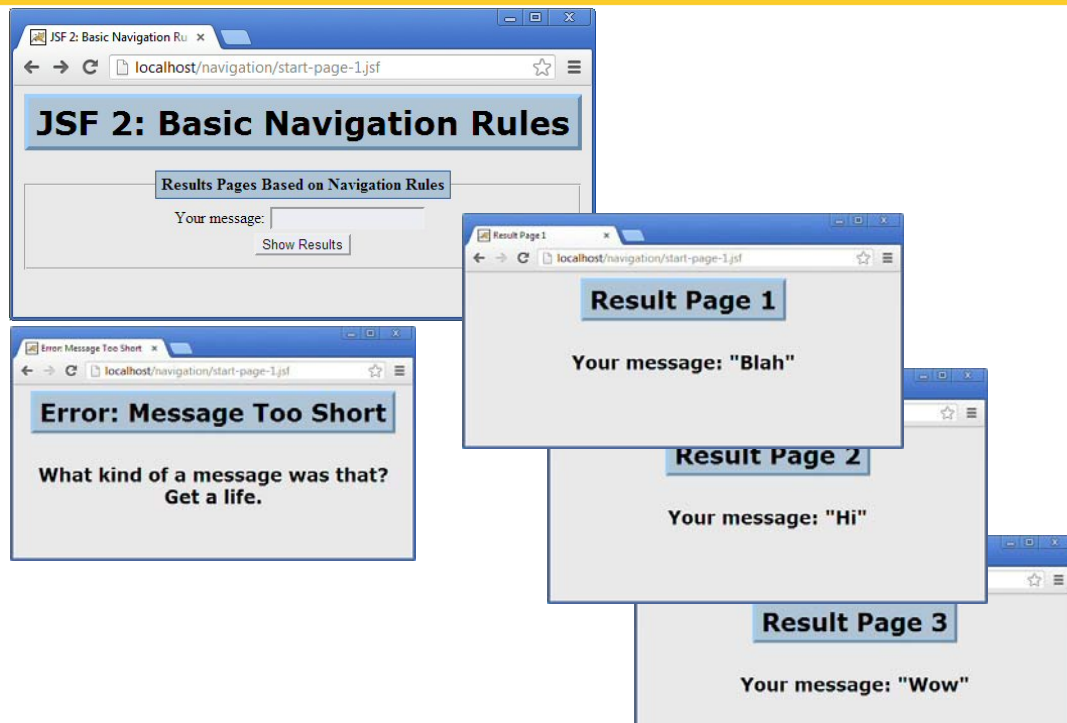
    <h2>Your message: "#{simpleController.message}"</h2>

  </div></h:body></html>
```

Other results pages are similar.

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Example: Results



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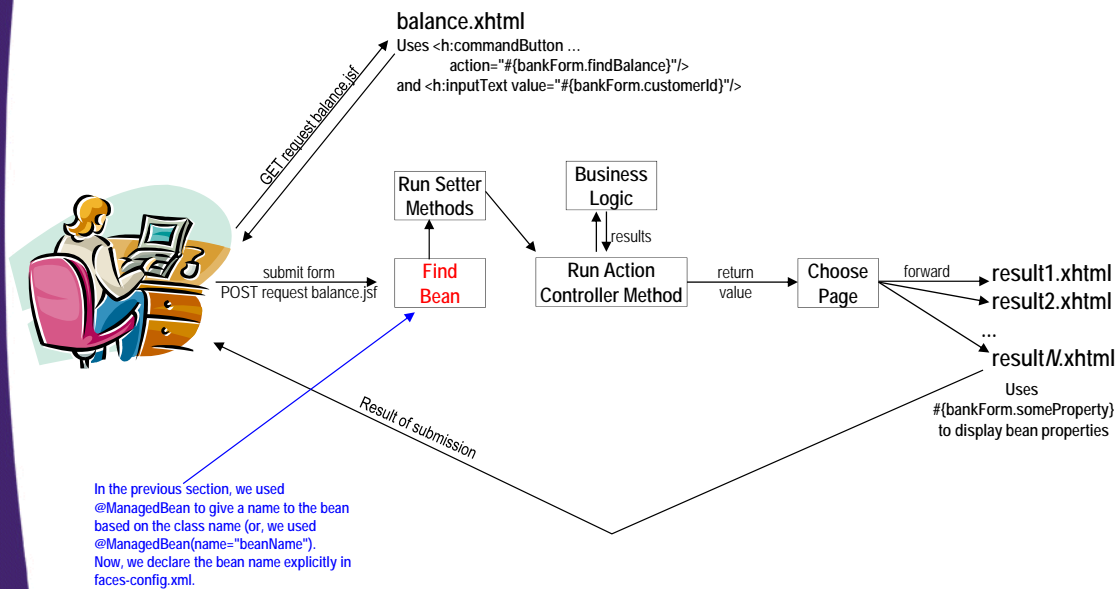
Explicit Bean Declarations



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JSF Flow of Control (Simplified)



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Bean Declarations: Syntax

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<faces-config ...>
  <managed-bean>
    <managed-bean-name>someName</managed-bean-name>
    <managed-bean-class>
      somePackage.SomeClass
    </managed-bean-class>
    <managed-bean-scope>request</managed-bean-scope>
  </managed-bean>
  ...
</faces-config>
```

Scopes are request, session, application, view, none, custom. They are discussed elsewhere. Unlike with @ManagedBean, there is no default, so you cannot omit <managed-bean-scope> altogether.

You can also define ("inject") bean properties in faces-config. This is discussed in separate tutorial section.

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Pros and Cons of Explicit Bean Declarations

- **@ManagedBean**
 - Simpler/faster to start with
 - Java developer knows the bean name
- **Explicit declarations in faces-config.xml**
 - Easier for facelets developer to find bean
 - If you have a large project with many packages, even knowing the bean class name (as with @ManagedBean) requires you to search many packages to find the class
 - Can use multiple instances of the same bean class in the same page. See temperature converter in first PrimeFaces lecture for example.
 - Can use same class in different pages with different scopes
 - Better understanding of beans used in project
 - One central file lists all managed beans

I find the arguments in favor of explicit bean declarations to be much less compelling than the arguments for using explicit navigation rules. So, I would recommend starting off with @ManagedBean, and only changing when you find a situation where the explicit definitions clearly help you. The exceptions are if you want to inject properties, if you have a large project with many packages, or if you know you will use the same bean class more than once in a page and want independent values (as with temperature converter in PrimeFaces lecture on number input). In those cases, start with the explicit definitions from the beginning.

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Example

- **Overview**
 - Start with form that collects a message
 - Go to either an error page (message too short) or a results page (here is the message)
- **Implementation**
 - Reuse the same bean as in last example
 - Use managed-bean
 - Declare bean explicitly in faces-config.xml, so that the bean name used in the form comes from the config file
 - Use navigation-rule
 - Remap the return conditions so that page1, page2, and page3 all point to the same results page

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Example: Starting Page (start-page-2.xhtml)

```
<!DOCTYPE ... >
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
<h:head>
...
</h:head>
<h:body>
...
<h:form>
  Your message:
  <h:inputText value="#{messageHandler.message}"/>
  <br/>
  <h:commandButton value="Show Results"
    action="#{messageHandler.doNavigation}"/>
</h:form>
...
</h:body></html>
```

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Example: Managed Bean

```
package coreservlets;

public class SimpleController2
    extends SimpleController {

    // Inherits getMessage, setMessage,
    // and doNavigation. doNavigation returns
    // "too-short", "page1", "page2", or "page3".

}
```

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Example: faces-config.xml (Bean Declaration)

```
...
<managed-bean>
  <managed-bean-name>messageHandler</managed-bean-name>
  <managed-bean-class>
    coreservlets.SimpleController2
  </managed-bean-class>
  <managed-bean-scope>request</managed-bean-scope>
</managed-bean>
...
```

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Example: faces-config.xml (Navigation Rules)

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-2.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page1</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page2</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page3</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
```

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Example: Main Results Page (message-page.xhtml)

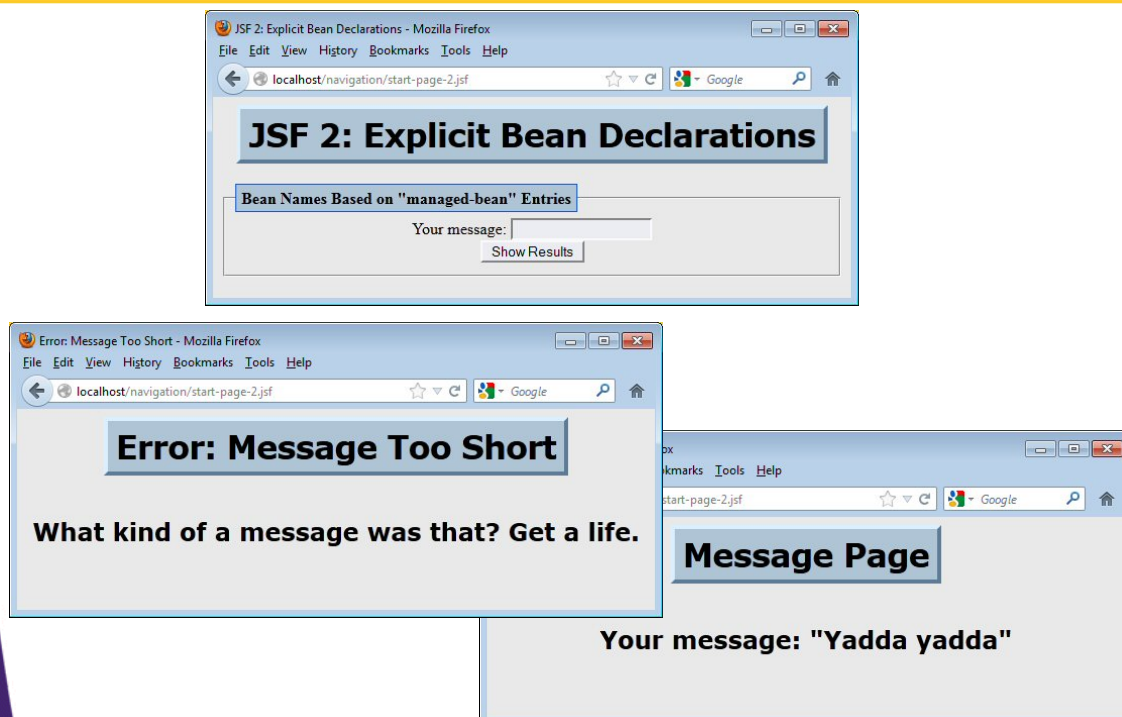
```
<!DOCTYPE ...>
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
<h:head><title>Message Page</title>
<link href="./css/styles.css"
      rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"/>
</h:head>
<h:body>
<div align="center">
<h1 class="title">Message Page</h1>
<br/>

<h2>Your message: "#{messageHandler.message}"</h2>

</div></h:body></html>
```

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Example: Results



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Wildcards in Navigation Rules

And Other Advanced Navigation Capabilities



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Summary

- **Overview**

- * for from-view-id matches any starting page
- Omitting from-outcome: all other return conditions match
 - Except for null, which always means redisplay form

- **Application**

- * for from-view-id (common)
 - Multiple forms can share some of the results pages without repeating entries in navigation-rule
- Omitting from-outcome (rare)
 - Can have multiple return values point at the same results page. Useful when you want to change results pages independently of Java code
 - Temporary results pages with details coming later
 - Reusing existing Java code but different rules on results pages

Example: * for from-view-id

- **Problem**

- Both of the previous examples used the same error page
- The navigation-case was repeated

- **Solution**

- Make a shared entry that maps “too-short” to the error page

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faces-config.xml: Before

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-1.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <!-- Entries for page1, page2, page 3 -->
</navigation-rule>
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-2.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <!-- Entries for page1, page2, page 3 -->
</navigation-rule>
```

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faces-config.xml: After

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>*</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-1.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <!-- Entries for page1, page2, page 3 -->
</navigation-rule>
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-2.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <!-- Entries for page1, page2, page 3 -->
</navigation-rule>
```

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Precedence for Wildcards

- **Specific from-view-id wins over wildcard**

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>*</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>some-result</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/result-page-1.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
```

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/some-start-page.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <!-- No from-outcome -->
    <to-view-id>/result-page-2.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
```

- The right rule takes precedence, so all results from some-start-page will be mapped to result-page-2, including "some-result".

- **Consequence**

- You cannot mix wildcards for from-view-id with defaults for outcomes (by omitting from-outcome) for same start page!

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Precedence for Wildcards

- **Longer from-view-id wins over shorter**

```
<navigation-rule>  
  <from-view-id>/banking*</from-view-id>  
  <navigation-case>  
    <from-outcome>some-result</from-outcome>  
    <to-view-id>/result-page-1.xhtml</to-view-id>  
  </navigation-case>  
</navigation-rule>
```

```
<navigation-rule>  
  <from-view-id>*</from-view-id>  
  <navigation-case>  
    <from-outcome>some-result</from-outcome>  
    <to-view-id>/result-page-2.xhtml</to-view-id>  
  </navigation-case>  
</navigation-rule>
```

- Left rule takes precedence if both rules match.
 - For a start page of /banking/blah.xhtml and a return value of "some-result", the result page is result-page-1 (left rule), not result-page-2 (right rule).

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Example: Omitting from-outcome

- **Problem**

- In the second example, we reused Java code from the first example (good). But, we repeated virtually the same navigation-case three times (bad).

- **Solution**

- Omit the from-outcome. This means that any return values not explicitly mentioned are mapped to the same results page.
 - The exception is a return value of null, which always means to redisplay input form (except for the rare case where you omit from-outcome and also have an <if>). Returning null will be discussed in the section on validation.
 - Wildcards for from-view-id will no longer apply!

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faces-config.xml: Before

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-2.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page1</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page2</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>page3</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
```

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faces-config.xml: After

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/start-page-2.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <from-outcome>too-short</from-outcome>
    <to-view-id>/error-message.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
  <navigation-case>
    <to-view-id>/message-page.xhtml</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
```

You canNOT move this to a wildcard as we did before, because the rule below takes precedence over wildcard rules. So, without this case here, all conditions including too-short would be mapped to message-page.xhtml.

All conditions except for too-short are mapped to message-page.xhtml. If you knew you would do this when you designed the Java code, you would have just had a single return value and would not have needed this default mapping. But, using this default (where you omit from-outcome and all return conditions not specifically mapped in the navigation rule go to the same page) lets you change the page mappings without having to change the Java code.

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Conditional Navigation Rules

- **Idea**

- You can put `<if>` tags that designate when rules apply

- **Example**

```
<navigation-case>
  <from-outcome>success</from-outcome>
  <if>#{user.returnVisitor}</if>
  <to-view-id>/welcome-back.xhtml</to-view-id>
</navigation-case>
<navigation-case>
  <from-outcome>success</from-outcome>
  <if>#{!user.returnVisitor}</if>
  <to-view-id>/welcome-aboard.xhtml</to-view-id>
</navigation-case>
```

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Dynamic To-Ids

- **Idea**

- You can compute the destination page directly in faces-config, rather than indirectly via return value of the action controller method

- **Example**

```
<navigation-rule>
  <from-view-id>/exam-question.xhtml</from-view-id>
  <navigation-case>
    <to-view-id>#{exam.nextQuestionPage}</to-view-id>
  </navigation-case>
</navigation-rule>
```

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Static Navigation



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Idea

- **Situation**

- Sometimes you don't want/need Java code
 - No input elements
 - No logic needed to determine results page
 - Sometimes used for simple testing. But also used in real projects when you want a button for navigation.

- **Approach**

- Instead of this
 - `<h:commandButton ... action="#{someBean.doNav}"/>`
 - Have the doNav method always return "fixed-page"
- Use this
 - `<h:commandButton ... action="fixed-page"/>`
 - You can use either default mapping or explicit navigation rules to determine the meaning of "fixed-page"

Example

- **Overview**

- page-a.xhtml has a button that causes navigation to page-b.xhtml
- page-b.xhtml has a button that causes navigation to page-a.xhtml

- **Implementation**

- Page A
 - `<h:commandButton ... action="page-b"/>`
- Page B
 - `<h:commandButton ... action="page-a"/>`

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Example: page-a.xhtml

```
<!DOCTYPE ... >
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
<h:head><title>JSF 2: Static Navigation</title>
...
</h:head>
<h:body>
<div align="center">
<table border="5">
  <tr><th class="title">Page A</th></tr>
</table>
<br/>
<h:form>
  <h:commandButton value="Go to Page B"
                    action="page-b"/>
</h:form>
</div></h:body></html>
```

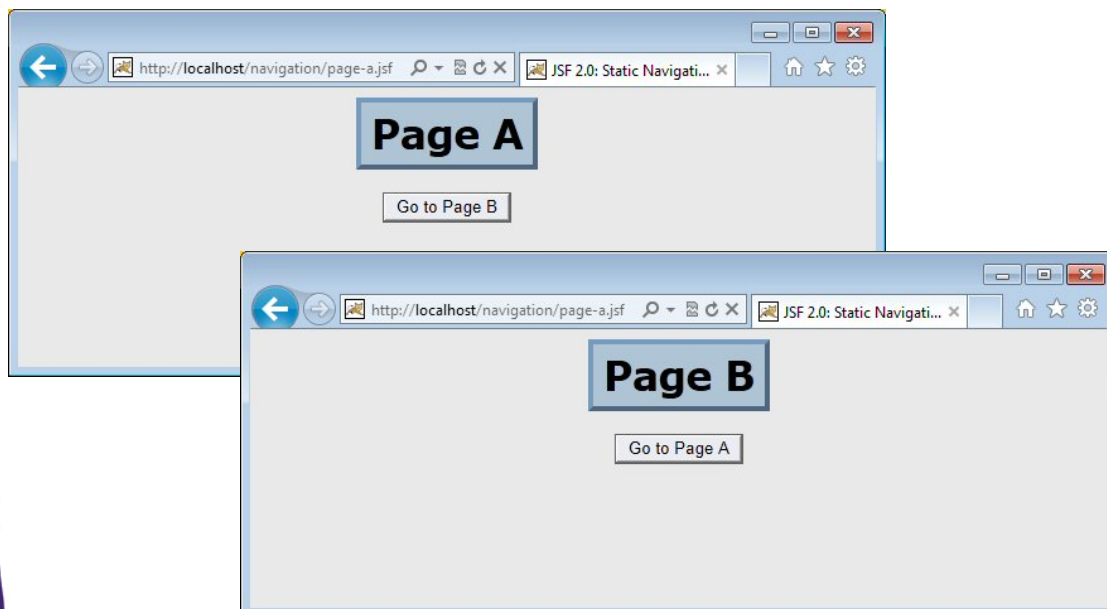
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Example: page-b.xhtml

```
<!DOCTYPE ... >
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml"
      xmlns:h="http://xmlns.jcp.org/jsf/html">
<h:head><title>JSF 2: Static Navigation</title>
...
</h:head>
<h:body>
<div align="center">
<table border="5">
  <tr><th class="title">Page B</th></tr>
</table>
<br/>
<h:form>
  <h:commandButton value="Go to Page A"
                    action="page-a"/>
</h:form>
</div></h:body></html>
```

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Example: Results



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Common Navigation Problems



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Pressing Button and Nothing Happens

- **Issue**
 - Many error conditions simply result in the system redisplaying the form with no warning or error messages
- **Debugging strategies**
 - Set **PROJECT_STAGE** to Development in web.xml
 - This is already set in jsf-blank
 - Many of the errors cause the process to abort at certain points. Knowing how far things got is very helpful.
 - Use print statements or IDE breakpoints
 - Put a print statement in the action controller method
 - Put a print statement in the empty constructor
 - `public MyBean() { System.out.println("MyBean built"); }`
 - Bean should be instantiated *twice* for request scope
 - Put print statements in the bean setter methods

Pressing Button and Nothing Happens: Common Cases

1. Return value of controller method does not match from-outcome of navigation-case

- Remember values are case sensitive

2. Using from-action instead of from-outcome

```
<navigation-case>  
  <from-action>accepted</from-action>  
  <to-view-id>/accept-registration.jsp</to-view-id>  
</navigation-case>
```

Should be from-outcome, not from-action

- This is really a special case of (1), since there is now *no* from-outcome
- This situation occurs frequently with Eclipse users that don't look carefully at the choices Eclipse offers in popup menu for the navigation-case entries.

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Pressing Button and Nothing Happens: Common Cases

3. Forgetting # in action of h:commandButton

```
<h:commandButton  
  value="Button Label"  
  action="{beanName.methodName}"/>
```

Should have # here

- This is really a special case of (1), since `action="{beanName.methodName}"` means the literal string `"{beanName.methodName}"` is the from-outcome
 - In this situation and several others, it is very helpful to put a print statement in controller method to see if/when it is invoked

4. Typo in from-view-id

- This is a special case of (1), since the from-outcome applies to nonexistent page

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Pressing Button and Nothing Happens: Common Cases

5. Controller method returns null

- This is often done on purpose to redisplay the form, but can be done accidentally as well.

6. Type conversion error

- You declare field to be of type int, but value is not an integer when you submit.
 - Behavior of redisplaying form is useful here. See validation section.

7. Missing h:form

- If you use h:commandButton with no surrounding h:form, a button will still be displayed, but nothing will happen when you press it

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Wrap-Up



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Summary

- **Explicit navigation rules**
 - Compared to default mappings, this is more flexible and lets you understand system page flow more easily
- **Explicit bean declarations**
 - It is less clear whether this is better than @ManagedBean, but in large projects with many packages, this might let you find beans more easily
- **Wildcards in navigation rules**
 - * in from-view-id lets you share results pages across forms
 - Omitting from-outcome lets you map different return values to same results page.
 - Never mix both approaches for the same start page!
- **Static navigation**
 - For simple testing, you can use a static string (instead of an EL expression) for the action of h:commandButton
- **Navigation problems**
 - Many situations result in JSF redisplaying input form
 - Most due to return value of Java code not matching from-outcome
 - Debugging: set PROJECT_STAGE to Development, trace Java code

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Questions?

More info:

<http://www.coreservlets.com/JSF-Tutorial/jsf2/> – JSF 2.2 tutorial

<http://www.coreservlets.com/JSF-Tutorial/primefaces/> – PrimeFaces tutorial

<http://courses.coreservlets.com/jsf-training.html> – Customized JSF and PrimeFaces training courses

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