Main manifest directory

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Puppet starts compiling a catalog either with a single manifest file or with a directory of manifests that are treated like a single file. This starting point is called the *main manifest* or *site manifest*.

For more information about how the site manifest is used in catalog compilation, see Catalog compilation.

Specifying the manifest for Puppet apply

The `puppet apply` command uses the manifest you pass to it as an argument on the command line:

```
puppet apply /etc/puppetlabs/code/environments/production/manifests/site.pp
```

You can pass Puppet apply either a single `.pp` file or a directory of `.pp` files. Puppet apply uses the manifest you pass it, not an environment's manifest.

Specifying the manifest for Puppet master

Puppet master uses the main manifest set by the current node's environment, whether that manifest is a single file or a directory of `.pp` files.

By default, the main manifest for an environment is `<ENVIRONMENTS DIRECTORY>/<ENVIRONMENT>/manifests`, for example `/etc/puppetlabs/code/environments/production/manifests`. You can configure the manifest per-environment, and you can also configure the default for all environments.

To determine its main manifest, an environment uses the `manifest` setting in `environment.conf`. This can be an absolute path or a path relative to the environment's main directory.

If the `environment.conf manifest` setting is absent, it uses the value of the `default_manifest` setting from the `puppet.conf` file. The `default_manifest` setting defaults to `./manifests`. Similar to the environment's `manifest` setting, the value of `default_manifest` can be an absolute path or a path relative to the environment's main directory.

To force all environments to ignore their own `manifest` setting and use the `default_manifest` setting instead, set `disable_per_environment_manifest = true` in `puppet.conf`.

To check which manifest your Puppet master uses for a given environment, run:

```
puppet config print manifest --section master --environment <ENVIRONMENT>
```

For more information, see Creating environments, and Checking values of configuration settings.

Manifest directory behavior

When the main manifest is a directory, Puppet parses every `.pp` file in the directory in alphabetical order and evaluates the combined manifest. It descends into all subdirectories of the manifest directory and loads files in depth-first order. For example, if the manifest directory contains a directory named `01`, and a file named `02.pp`, it parses the files in `01` before it parses `02.pp`.

Puppet treats the directory as one manifest, so, for example, a variable assigned in the file `01_all_nodes.pp` is accessible in `node_web01.pp`.

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