**Spring IoC Containers,** The Spring container is at the core of the Spring Framework. The container will create the objects, wire them together, configure them, and manage their complete life cycle from creation till destruction. The Spring container uses dependency injection (DI) to manage the components that make up an application.

Spring provides following two distinct types of containers.

1. BeanFactory container
2. ApplicationContext container

Spring IoC container classes are part of org.springframework.beans andorg.springframework.context packages. Spring IoC container provides us different ways to decouple the object dependencies.

BeanFactory is the root interface of Spring IoC container. ApplicationContext is the child interface ofBeanFactory interface that provide Spring AOP features, i18n etc.

**BeanFactory container,** A BeanFactory is essentially nothing more than the interface for an advanced factory capable of maintaining a registry of different beans and their dependencies. The BeanFactory enables you to read bean definitions and access them using the bean factory. When using just the BeanFactory you would create one and read in some bean definitions in the XML format as follows:

Resource resource = **new** FileSystemResource(Constant.***APPLICATION\_CONTEXT\_XML***);

BeanFactory factory = **new** XmlBeanFactory(resource);

HelloWorld helloWorld = (HelloWorld) factory.getBean("helloWorld");

System.***out***.println(helloWorld.getMessage());

Other ways to create factory are as below:

Resource resource = **new** FileSystemResource(Constant.***APPLICATION\_CONTEXT\_XML***);

BeanFactory factory = **new** XmlBeanFactory(resource);

ClassPathResource resource = **new** ClassPathResource("ContainerOverviewBeans.xml");

BeanFactory factory = **new** XmlBeanFactory(resource);

ApplicationContext context = **new** ClassPathXmlApplicationContext(**new** String[] {"ContainerOverviewBeans.xml"});

BeanFactory factory = context;

HelloWorld helloWorld = (HelloWorld) factory.getBean("helloWorld");

System.***out***.println(helloWorld.getMessage());

Basically that’s all there is. Using getBean(String) you can retrieve instances of your beans; the client-side view of theBeanFactory is surprisingly simple. The BeanFactory interface has only six methods for client code to call:

* boolean containsBean(String): returns true if the BeanFactory contains a bean definition or bean instance that matches the given name
* Object getBean(String): returns an instance of the bean registered under the given name. Depending on how the bean was configured by the BeanFactory configuration, either a singleton and thus shared instance or a newly created bean will be returned. A BeansException will be thrown when either the bean could not be found (in which case it’ll be a NoSuchBeanDefinitionException), or an exception occurred while instantiating and preparing the bean
* Object getBean(String, Class): returns a bean, registered under the given name. The bean returned will be cast to the given Class. If the bean could not be cast, corresponding exceptions will be thrown (BeanNotOfRequiredTypeException). Furthermore, all rules of the getBean(String) method apply
* Class getType(String name): returns the Class of the bean with the given name. If no bean corresponding to the given name could be found, a NoSuchBeanDefinitionException will be thrown
* boolean isSingleton(String): determines whether or not the bean definition or bean instance registered under the given name is a singleton. If no bean corresponding to the given name could be found, aNoSuchBeanDefinitionException will be thrown
* String[] getAliases(String): Return the aliases for the given bean name, if any were defined in the bean definition

**ApplicationContext container,** This container adds more enterprise-specific functionality such as the ability to resolve textual messages from a properties file and the ability to publish application events to interested event listeners. This container is defined by the *org.springframework.context.ApplicationContext* interface.

The *ApplicationContext* container includes all functionality of the *BeanFactory* container, so it is generally recommended over the *BeanFactory*. BeanFactory can still be used for lightweight applications like mobile devices or applet based applications where data volume and speed is significant.

The most commonly used ApplicationContext implementations are:

* **FileSystemXmlApplicationContext**: This container loads the definitions of the beans from an XML file. Here you need to provide the full path of the XML bean configuration file to the constructor.
* **ClassPathXmlApplicationContext** This container loads the definitions of the beans from an XML file. Here you do not need to provide the full path of the XML file but you need to set CLASSPATH properly because this container will look bean configuration XML file in CLASSPATH.
* **WebXmlApplicationContext:** This container loads the XML file with definitions of all beans from within a web application.

A sample code for application context instantiation will look like this.

ApplicationContext applicationContext = **new** FileSystemXmlApplicationContext("beans.xml");

HelloWorld helloWorld = (HelloWorld) context.getBean("helloWorld");

Some of the useful child-interfaces of ApplicationContext are ConfigurableApplicationContextand WebApplicationContext. Spring Framework provides a number of useful ApplicationContext implementation classes that we can use to get the spring context and then the Spring Bean.

Some of the useful ApplicationContext implementations that we use are;

* **AnnotationConfigApplicationContext**: If we are using Spring in standalone java applications and using annotations for Configuration, then we can use this to initialize the container and get the bean objects.
* **ClassPathXmlApplicationContext**: If we have spring bean configuration xml file in standalone application, then we can use this class to load the file and get the container object.
* **FileSystemXmlApplicationContext**: This is similar to ClassPathXmlApplicationContext except that the xml configuration file can be loaded from anywhere in the file system.
* **AnnotationConfigWebApplicationContext** and **XmlWebApplicationContext** for web applications.

Usually if you are working on Spring MVC application and your application is configured to use Spring Framework, Spring IoC container gets initialized when application starts and when a bean is requested, the dependencies are injected automatically.