

Prometheus Cheatsheet

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1 METRIC VS. TIME-SERIES

Metric is a numerical value that represents a specific measurement at a specific point in time.

Time-Series is a sequence of data points, typically ordered by time, that represents the evolution of a metric over time.

2 PROMETHEUS TSDB

Prometheus TSDB is a time series database designed for storing and querying time series data, particularly metrics data collected from various sources.

2.1 HEAD BLOCK

Head block is the in-memory storage component of Prometheus TSDB that holds the most recent time series data before it is flushed to disk.

- Each chunk for a time series in the head block typically contains data points for a specific time range and can grow to 120 samples before it is flushed to the active chunk's segment file in the `chunks_head` directory on the disk.
- Each head chunk segment file can grow to 128 MB before it is finalized and a new segment file is created for that chunk.
- When the head block reaches 1.5x the minimum block size (default 2 hours), a new block is created, and the current head block is flushed to disk as a finalized block.

2.2 WAL

WAL (Write-Ahead Log) is a log file that records all changes made to the head block before they are applied, ensuring data durability and consistency in case of crashes.

- The WAL prevents loss of recent data by allowing Prometheus to replay the log and restore the head block to its last known state upon restart.
- WAL segments are stored in the `wal` directory and are named sequentially (e.g., 00000000, 00000001, etc.).
- Each WAL segment can grow up to 512 MB before a new segment is created

3 PROMQL

promQL is the query language used to query metrics stored in Prometheus.

PromQL queries can evaluate to one of four types of results:

- Instant vector: A set of time series containing a single sample for each time series, all sharing the same timestamp.
- Range vector: A set of time series containing a range of data points over time for each time series.
- Scalar: A single numerical value.
- String: A single string value.