# Clojure For React Developers

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## 1.1 Namespaces

Clojure code is organized in namespaces which can be thought of as modules in other languages. Namespace is declared with a ns macro.

```
(ns namespace-name)
```

If you are following along in the REPL you might have noticed that the cljs.user in the prompt changed to namespace-name.

```
cljs.user=> (ns namespace-name)
nil
namespace-name=>
```

Namespace can have have a docstring as an optional second argument to describe what is the namespace used for, similar to function docstrings.

```
(ns namespace-name
  "Docstring for the namespace")
```

As in Javascript and Typescript you can import code from other modules. Required namespace can be aliased with the :as keyword and then used with alias/var-name syntax.

```
(ns namespace-name
  "Docstring for the namespace"
  :require [other-namespace :as other])

;; use function from another namespace
(other/function arg1)
```

Node modules can be imported imported and used as in JS by using the quoted library name when requiring the module.

```
cljs.user=> (require '["fs" :as fs])
cljs.user=> (fs/readdirSync ".")
[".calva" ".clj-kondo" ".gitignore" ".lsp" ".shadow-cljs"
    "node_modules" "out" "package-lock.json" "package.json"
    "shadow-cljs.edn" "src"]
```

Read more about namespaces from the official reference and differences between Clojurescript and Clojure namespaces.

#### 1.2 Variables

In Clojure variables are defined with def macro.

```
(def one 1)
(def hello "hello world")
```

After the variables are defined they can be used as expected.

```
(inc one)
;; => 2
```

## 1.3 Data Types

I recommend using these as reference as we go further, since this intro is just a quick overview to introduce basics:

- Clojurescript Cheatsheet: https://cljs.info/cheatsheet/
- Clojurescript API: http://cljs.github.io/api/

## 1.3.1 Maps

```
(def number-variable 1)
;; number-variable
;; => 1
(def string-variable "variable")
;; string-variable
;; => "variable"
```

Maps are hash maps comparable to objects in JS.

```
(def map-variable {:a 1 :b 2})
;; map-variable
;; => {:a 1, :b 2}
```

To get values from a map you can use get with or without a default in the case that the value is not found. This is useful in cases where in JS you'd reach out for the or operator.

```
const var = obj.maybeKey || "default-value"
```

```
(get map-variable :a)
;; => 1
(get map-variable :c :not-found)
;; => :not-found
```

In the case there's more than one possible undefined value in this chain.

```
const var = obj.maybeKey || obj.secondMaybe || "default-value"
```

In Clojure just reach out to or.

```
cljs.user=> (def obj {})
cljs.user=> (or (:maybe-key obj) (:second-maybe obj) "default-value")
"default-value"
```

The value can also be obtained with they keyword as a function or the map itself as a function applied with the keyword.

```
;; use the key as a function to get the value
(:a map-variable)
;; => 1
;; or use the map as a function to get the value
(map-variable :a)
;; => 1
```

To remove value from a map use dissoc but remember that this do not alter the original map, it returns a new value of existing parameters minus the removed parameter. It also can take multiple args.

```
(dissoc map-variable :b)
;; => {:a 1}
(dissoc map-variable :a :b)
;; => ={}
```

### 1.3.2 Vectors

Vectors in Clojure are like arrays in Javascript. Clojure also has lists but we'll concentrate just on the arrays in this context. Vectors are defined with brackets [] and lists with parenthesis ().

```
cljs.user=> (type [])
cljs.core/PersistentVector

cljs.user=> (type ())
cljs.core/EmptyList

cljs.user=> (type (1 2))
[true ""]:repl/exception! ;; here we got an error!

cljs.user=> (type '(1 2))
cljs.core/List
```

Empty list can be initialized with just the parenthesis () but if there's any elements in the list a quote ' or quote needs to be used.

```
cljs.user=> (quote (1 2 3))
(1 2 3)
cljs.user=> '(1 2 3)
(1 2 3)
```

This is because clojure evaluates the first element as function. Using quote returns the unevaluated form. I.e. just the data without evaluation.

```
(def vector-variable [1 2 3])
```

We can retrieve a value in and index with get.

```
(get vector-variable 0)
;; => 1
```

You can map a function over a vector similarly as you do in JS. For example the following JS would translate into

```
[1,2,3].map(value => value + 1)
    the following.

(map inc vector-variable)
;; => (2 3 4)
```

In Clojure we are not using the prototype methods as in JS. Instead we use a dedicated function map and declare all the arguments. Technically you could do this by using JS interop from Clojurescript, but in this case you would not be using the Clojure data structures.

I'll add an example here as a sneak peak and we'll talk more about the JS interop a bit later.

But let's get back on the topic. Similarly as with map we can filter and reduce vectors.

```
(filter odd? [1 2 3])
;; => (1 3)

(reduce + [1 2 3])
;; => 6

(reduce + 10 [1 2 3])
;; => 16
```

Clojure has threading macros that helps chaining this type of operations together.

Which in practice translates to following.

```
(filter even? (map inc [1 2 3]))
```

We can evaluate the above expression with macroexpand function to see past the syntactic sugar ->> provides.

Read more about threading macros in the threading macro guide.

## 1.4 Branching

Here's a few of the branching options, look up the rest from the cheatsheet!

```
cljs.user=> (if (true? true) "true" "false")
"true"

cljs.user=> (if-not (true? true) "true" "false")
"false"

cljs.user=> (when true "continue")
"continue"

cljs.user=> (when false "do nothing")
nil

cljs.user=> (when-not true "reverse 'when'")
nil

cljs.user=> (when-let [value 1] (inc value))
2
```

```
cljs.user=> (when-let [value nil] (inc value))
nil

cljs.user=> (when-first [value []] :found-value)
nil

cljs.user=> (when-first [value [:first :second]] value)
:first

cljs.user=> (if-let [value 2] (inc value) 0)
3

cljs.user=> (if-let [value nil] (inc value) 0)
0
```

#### 1.5 Functions

Functions are defined with defn macro.

```
(defn hello-world []
  (println "Hello, World!"))
```

We can inspect the produced Javascript by setting the dynamic variable \*print-fn-bodies\* to true.

As you can see from the output the result is plain old javascript that uses CLJS core library println function to do the printing.

```
function hello_world(){
    return cljs.core.println.call(null,"Hello, World!");
}
```

This is a good way to get familiar on what is happening behind the scenes. Now, let's do explore more about functions. Function arguments are defined in the vector.

```
(defn hello [name]
  (println (str "Hello " name))

Functions can be anonymous and functions can return functions
(defn hello-to [name]
  (fn [] (str "Hello " name))
(def hello-to-you (hello-to "you"))
(with-out-str (hello-to-you))
```

Anonymous functions can be declared with a reader macro #

```
(defn hello-to [name]
  #(str "Hello " %))

(def hello-to-you (hello-to "you"))

(with-out-str (hello-to-you))
;; => "Hello you"
```

;; => "Hello you"

with-out-str is a macro that captures the standard output input from a function and returns the captured values as an input so we can inspect the printed charactecs as values.

If we evalue the anynomous function created with # we can see that the arity is generated based on the number of arguments in the function body

```
cljs.user=> (def add #(+ %1 %2))
function cljs$user$add(p1__25209_SHARP_,p2__25210_SHARP_){
    return (p1__25209_SHARP_ + p2__25210_SHARP_);
}
```

By adding an extra arg it's reflected on the argument list.

There's still a lot to cover in Clojure but this should be enough for us to get you started on the React side of things.

## 2 Project

We already created the project for the REPL exploration so let's continue with it. The file structure should look something like this.

```
app
node_modules
package.json
 package-lock.json
 shadow-cljs.edn
 src
   And package.json should have shadow-cljs as a dev dependency.
{
  "name": "app",
  "version": "0.0.1",
  "private": true,
  "devDependencies": {
    "shadow-cljs": "2.21.0"
  },
  "dependencies": {}
}
```

Clojure dependencies and configuration is in shadow-cljs.edn

```
{:source-paths
["src/dev"
    "src/main"
    "src/test"]

:dependencies
[]

:builds
{}}
```

As the configuration shows, there's no dependencies by default nor build configurations. To compile our the sources into Javascript, we need to configure a build target.

But let's start by writing some source code to compile and creating an HTML file to load the soon compiled javascript bundle into the browser.

```
mkdir src/main/app
touch src/main/app/core.cljs
```

And here's some Clojurescript code for the file.

```
(ns app.core)
;; Here we define the name for the namespace that is like a "module" in Javascript
;; The name `core` is used often in clojure similarly as `index.js` in Javascript

(defn start
    "We'll configure this to run after loading"
[]
    (prn "app start"))

(defn stop
    "We'll configure this to run before loading"
[]
    (prn "app stop"))

(defn init
    "We'll configure this to be run when index.html is loaded the first time."
[]
    (js/console.log "Browser loaded the code"))
```

In the content you might have noticed the mystical js/console.log Just a moment...

Create the public folder to the project root and add <code>index.html</code> file into it.

```
mkdir public
touch public/index.html
```

The index file could look like this.

## 2.1 Set browser build target

And finally lets configure the build target in shadow-cljs.edn to emit the main.js file from Clojure sources.

```
;; the javascript bundle is targeted to browser env
:target
            :browser
;; the module `:main` is written here as `main.js`
:output-dir "public/js/compiled"
:asset-path "/js/compiled"
;; modules created from Clojurescript sources
:modules {:main {:entries [app.core]}}
;; set up development related configuration
:devtools
{
 ;; before live-reloading any code call this function
 :before-load app.core/stop
 ;; after live-reloading finishes call this function
 :after-load app.core/start
 ;; serve the public directory over http at port 3000
 :http-port
             3000
 :http-root
             "public"
 ;; initialize devtools
 :preloads
             [devtools.preload]}}}}
```

Now we are ready to start the development server.

#### \$ npx shadow-cljs watch app

```
shadow-cljs - HTTP server available at http://localhost:3000
shadow-cljs - server version: 2.21.0 running at http://localhost:9630
shadow-cljs - nREPL server started on port 35837
shadow-cljs - watching build :app
[:app] Configuring build.
[:app] Compiling ...
[:app] Build completed. (144 files, 0 compiled, 0 warnings, 1.83s)
```

Navigate to localhost: 3000 to load the index.html file to your browser via our development server, and open up the devtools to see if everything up and running as expexted.

## 2.2 Setup VSCode and Calva

Now we are ready to set up our editor to interact with our application. Lastly lets setup a connection between our application and our text editor.

Open the VSCode command prompt with and search for:

```
Connect to a running REPL server in your project
```

Select app, shadow-cljs, :app when prompetd and you should be ready to go. You can confirm by evaluating a Clojure form in your editor.

```
(+11)
```

Move your cursor over or inside the parenthesis and press ALT+Enter and if this doesn't work on your operating system try searching the right command from VS code's command prompt with "Calva evaluate".

If you see the number 2 floating around the cursor after this you've connected to the Clojure REPL successfully.

## 2.3 Javascript Interop

Now that we have the editor connected to the browser let's take a look how to talk with the browser in Clojurescript. In practice it is as simple as prefixing every browser's JS API command with js/ and call the method as you would do in JS. For example evaluating the following code in should prompt the alert window in the browser.

```
cljs.user=> (js/alert 1)
```

To access values like the document.location

```
cljs.user=> js/document.location
;; => #object[Location http://localhost:3000/]
```

Or simply print values to browser console using JS console.log function from the REPL.

```
cljs.user=> (js/console.log 123)
```

#### 2.3.1 Interacting With the DOM

Let's create an input element dynamically from our editor and update the DOM on the fly in the running browser.

You can do this in the REPL or write the code in the core.cljs file and evaluate the code with Calva.

```
;; lets create an input element
(def el (js/document.createElement "input"))
;; => [#object[HTMLInputElement [object HTMLInputElement]]]
(set! (.-id el) "input")
;; => "input"
(.appendChild (js/document.getElementById "app") el)
;; => #object[HTMLInputElement [object HTMLInputElement]]
```

By this point you should have a new input field in the browser window. Next change the input's value from the editor by evaluating the following

```
;; lets update the value of that input
(set! (.-value el) "some value from the browser")
```

You should see the new value in the browser. Magic! One last experiment, edit the input's value in the browser and see if you can retrieve the updated value dynamically in your editor.

```
(.. (js/document.getElementById "input") -value)
;; => "some edited value from the browser"
```

Voila! This is the magic behind Clojure REPL. Interacting with the application in real time from your editor without needing to refresh the whole application for every change. Let's continue on to the main event, setting up React rendering with Clojurescript.

## 3 Configure React

We'll be using the Helix library as our React wrapper of choice and there's a reason for this. This is only a thin layer of Clojurescript to interact with

the React API so there's no extra complexity introduced. It is common to use Reagent that is another Clojurescript React wrapper that introduces it's own philosophy and quirks. For now, it's enough that you know it exists but no need to delve any deeper at this point.

#### 3.1 Installing dependencies

The only Clojurescript dependency we need to get started with is Helix, add it to your dependencies in shadow-cljs.edn file. You can find the latest version from https://clojars.org/lilactown/helix.

We also need the matching JS counterpart react and react-dom.

```
$ npm install react react-dom
```

Clojurescript dependencies can be loaded dynamically but for us to have access to the updated JS dependecies we need to restart our development server.

## 3.2 Setup React Rendering

Let's start by creating a new file src/main/app/utils.cljs for utility functions where we define our render function to mount the app into the DOM.

```
(ns app.utils
1
      (:require [helix.core :refer [$]]
2
                 ["react" :as react]
3
                 ["react-dom/client" :as rdom]))
4
5
   (defn app-container []
6
      (js/document.getElementById "app"))
7
8
   (defonce root (atom nil))
9
10
   (defn react-root □
11
```

```
(when-not @root
12
        (reset! root (rdom/createRoot (app-container))))
13
      @root)
14
15
    (defn render
16
      [qqA]
17
      (.render (react-root)
18
                ($ react/StrictMode
19
                   ($ App))))
20
```

I'll explain the steps we took starting from the bottom. Line 16 defines a render function that takes a React component as the only argument that will be mounted as the application root wrapped in React.StrictMode and then we are calling the render method of react-root created with react-dom/client modules createRoot function.

We get the root instance with react-root function defined on line 11. It initializes the value in the root atom we defined if the value is not already initialized and then returning it. Clojure reference describes atoms as:

Atoms provide a way to manage shared, synchronous, independent state. They are a reference type like refs and vars. ... Changes to atoms are always free of race conditions.

```
https://clojure.org/reference/atoms
```

On the line 9 we define a variable root with defonce that defines a variable if and only if the value is not already defined.

```
cljs.user=> (defonce once 1)
[1]
cljs.user=> (defonce once 2)
nil
```

In practice we are creating a singleton "instance" for react-root that is accessed by calling the react-root function. helix.core/\$ is a macro that creates React elements from valid types but let's explore that a bit more in moment! Now that we have the rendering covered we can create the first component, App.

```
(ns app.core
(:require [helix.core :refer [defnc $]])
```

```
[helix.dom :as d]
[app.utils :as utils]))

(defnc App []
(d/div "This is a React component."))

(defn ^:dev/after-load init []
(utils/render App))
```

If VSCode is warning on the App we need to import Helix's clj-kondo configurations.

For this we need to create new file called deps.edn in the project root directory.

```
{:deps {lilactown/helix {:mvn/version "0.1.10"}}}
```

And next we run clj-kondo as instructed by the documentation. https://cljdoc.org/d/clj-kondo/clj-kondo/2023.03.17/doc/configuration#importing

clj-kondo is a static analyzer and linter for Clojure code that sparks joy. https://github.com/clj-kondo/clj-kondo

Calva uses clj-kondo for linting.

```
$ clj-kondo --lint "$(clojure -Spath)" --copy-configs --skip-lint
$ clj-kondo --lint $(clojure -Spath) --dependencies --parallel
```

Here the defnc macro on the creates a React.FunctionalComponent that we can then render with the \$ macro. Our init function has the meta ^:dev/after-load keyword to tell shadow-cljs that whenever the source files are loaded this should be evaluated. The App components produces the same results as the following React component.

```
const App = () => {
  return <div>This is a React component.
```

Evaluating our App creates a valid React type.

```
=> App
```

```
function app$core$App_render(props__12584__auto__,maybe_ref__12585__auto__){
    var vec__25299 = new cljs.core.PersistentVector(
        null,
        2,
        5,
        cljs.core.PersistentVector.EMPTY_NODE,
        [helix.core.extract_cljs_props.call(
            props__12584__auto__),
         maybe_ref__12585__auto__],
        null);
    return helix
        .core
        .get_react
        .call(null)
        .createElement("div",null,"This is a React component.");
}
   Create a new React element from a valid React type.
=> ($ App)
{"$$typeof" "Symbol(react.element)",
 "type" #object[app$core$App_render],
 "key" nil,
 "ref" nil,
 "props" #js {},
 "_owner" nil,
 "_store" #js {}}
   And if we compare this to the JS
const react = require("react");
const App = () \Rightarrow {
    return react.createElement("div", null, "This is a React component");
};
console.log(App);
console.log(App());
```

```
[Function: App]
{
    '$$typeof': Symbol(react.element),
    type: 'div',
    key: null,
    ref: null,
    props: { children: 'This is a React component' },
    _owner: null,
    _store: {}
}
```

We can see how these relate.

## 3.3 Build an App

Let's start by creating the template with navigation and the content container, and setup js/cljs interop with the react-router

But first things first, install react-router

```
npm install react-routerv6
```

```
(ns app.router
     (:require [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
                ["react-router-dom" :refer [createBrowserRouter
3
                                              RouterProvider
4
                                              NavLink
                                              Outlet]]))
   (defn make-router
     "Create react-router/BrowserRouter from given routes."
10
     (createBrowserRouter (clj->js routes)))
11
12
   (defnc WrapRouter
13
     "Make routes and wrap in a RouterProvider"
14
     [{:keys [routes]}]
15
     ($ RouterProvider
16
         {:router (make-router routes)}))
17
18
   (defnc Link
19
     "Wrapper react-router/NavLink"
20
```

```
[{:keys [to label] :as props}]
21
22
      ($ NavLink {:to to
23
                   & props}
         label))
25
26
    (defnc RouteContent
27
      "Render the route content."
28
29
      ($ Outlet))
30
```

Now that we have dealt with the interop, we are ready to define the routes and start the work on our first component, the Navbar.

```
(ns app.nav
     (:require [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
2
                [helix.dom :as d]
                [app.router :as router]))
5
   (defnc Navbar [{:keys [navlinks]}]
6
     (d/nav
      (for [{:keys [to label]} navlinks]
8
         ($ router/Link {:key to
9
                          :to to
10
                          :label label}))))
11
```

Here we have a simple renderer for Navlinks. Next, Put this into play and define the routes in the core.cljs file.

```
(ns app.core
1
      (:require [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
2
                 [helix.dom :as d]
3
                [app.router :as router]
                [app.nav :as nav]
                [app.utils :as utils]))
6
   (def routes
      [{:to "/movies"
9
        :label "movies"
10
        :element (d/div "movies")}
11
       {:to "/people"
12
```

```
:label "people"
13
        :element (d/div "people")}])
14
15
   (defnc Layout []
      (d/div
17
       ($ nav/Navbar {:navlinks routes})
18
       ($ router/RouteContent)))
19
20
   (defnc App []
21
      ($ router/WrapRouter
22
         {:routes [{:path "/"
23
                     :element ($ Layout)
                     :children (for [{:keys [to element]} routes]
25
                                  {:path to
26
                                   :element element}))])))
27
28
   (defn ^:dev/after-load init
29
      "This function is used in the `index.html`
30
     to load the application."
31
      (utils/render App))
33
```

Now you should be able to have a working frontend navigation in your application between the movies and people pages.

Let's get some data for rendering the page content. For that we need a function to make http requests. We'll be using the browser fetch for this.

```
(ns app.http)
1
2
   (defn fetch
3
      "Browser fetch wrapper
5
     Same as:
     fetch(URL)
         .then((response) => response.json())
9
         .then((data) => console.log(data))"
10
      ([url] (fetch url {}))
11
      ([url opts]
12
       (-> (js/fetch url (clj->js opts))
13
```

```
(.then (fn [response]
14
                     (.json response)))
15
           (.then (fn [data]
16
                     (js->clj data :keywordize-keys true))))))
       Now we are ready to make our first HTTP query!
   (ns app.movies
      (:require [app.http :as http]
2
                [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
3
                [helix.dom :as d]
                [helix.hooks :as hooks]
                ["react" :as react]))
   (defnc MovieList []
8
      (let [[movies set-movies] (react/useState [])]
9
10
        (hooks/use-effect
11
         :once
12
         (-> (http/fetch "https://swapi.dev/api/films")
             (.then (fn [data]
14
                       (set-movies (:results data))))))
15
16
        (d/ul
17
         (for [film movies]
18
           (d/li)
19
            (d/strong (:title film))
20
            (d/p " by " (:director film)))))))
21
```

Nobody wants to deal with managing the queries themselves so let's just create a wrapper for the react-query library to make our lives a lot easier in the long term.

## npm install @tanstack/react-query

```
(ns app.query
   "Lightweight CLJS wrapper for React Query"
   (:require [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
        ["@tanstack/react-query" :as react-query]))

(defonce query-client (react-query/QueryClient.))
```

```
7
   (defn use-query
8
     "create clojure wrapper for useQuery"
     [{:keys [query-key query-fn]}]
10
      (let [result (react-query/useQuery
11
                    #js {:queryFn query-fn
                          :queryKey (into-array query-key)})]
13
        (js/console.log result)
14
        {:data result.data
15
         :loading? result.isLoading}))
16
17
   (defnc WrapQueryClientProvider [{:keys [children]}]
18
      ($ react-query/QueryClientProvider {:client query-client}
19
         children))
20
      And now lets update the movielist component to use the new query
   wrapper
   (ns app.movies
      (:require [app.http :as http]
2
                [app.query :as query]
3
                [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
                [helix.dom :as d]
                ["react" :as react]))
   (def url "https://swapi.dev/api/films")
8
   (defnc MovieList []
10
      (let [{:keys [data]} (query/use-query {:query-key [url]
11
                                               :query-fn #(http/fetch url)})]
12
        (d/ul
13
         (for [film (:results data)]
           (d/li)
15
            (d/strong (:title film))
16
            (d/p " by " (:director film))))))
17
      Let's add a detail view to make a dynamic view.
   (ns app.movies
      (:require [app.http :as http]
2
                [app.query :as query]
3
```

```
[clojure.string :as str]
                [cljs-bean.core :refer [bean]]
5
                [helix.core :refer [defnc $]]
                [helix.dom :as d]
                ["react" :as react]
                ["react-router-dom" :refer [useNavigate
9
                                              useParams]]))
10
11
   (def url "https://swapi.dev/api/films")
12
13
   (defn movie-detail-url [id]
14
     (str url "/" id "/"))
15
16
   (defnc MovieList []
17
      (let [navigate (useNavigate)
18
            {:keys [data]} (query/use-query {:query-key [url]
19
                                               :query-fn #(http/fetch url)})]
20
        (d/ul
21
         (for [film (:results data)]
22
           (let [resource-id (last (str/split (:url film) #"/"))]
             (d/li {:key (:id film)
24
                     :on-click #(navigate (str "/movies/" resource-id))}
25
                   (d/strong (:title film))
26
                   (d/p " by " (:director film)))))))
27
28
   (defnc MovieDetail []
29
     (let [params (bean (useParams))
30
            movie-detail-url (movie-detail-url (:id params))
31
            query-params {:query-key [movie-detail-url]
32
                           :query-fn #(http/fetch movie-detail-url)}
33
            {movie :data} (query/use-query query-params) ]
34
        (d/pre (str movie))))
35
```