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HTTP Request Methods

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What is HTTP?

The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is designed to enable communications between clients and servers.

HTTP works as a request-response protocol between a client and server.

Example: A client (browser) sends an HTTP request to the server; then the server returns a response to the client. The response contains status information about the request and may also contain the requested content.

HTTP Methods

- **GET**
- **POST**
- **PUT**
- **HEAD**
- **DELETE**
- **PATCH**
- **OPTIONS**
- **CONNECT**
- **TRACE**

The two most common HTTP methods are: GET and POST.

The GET Method

GET is used to request data from a specified resource.

Note that the query string (name/value pairs) is sent in the URL of a GET request:

```
/test/demo_form.php?name1=value1&name2=value2
```

Some notes on GET requests:

- GET requests can be cached
- GET requests remain in the browser history
- GET requests can be bookmarked
- GET requests should never be used when dealing with sensitive data
- GET requests have length restrictions
- GET requests are only used to request data (not modify)

The POST Method

POST is used to send data to a server to create/update a resource.

The data sent to the server with POST is stored in the request body of the HTTP request:

```
POST /test/demo_form.php HTTP/1.1
Host: w3schools.com

name1=value1&name2=value2
```

Some notes on POST requests:

- POST requests are never cached
- POST requests do not remain in the browser history
- POST requests cannot be bookmarked
- POST requests have no restrictions on data length

Compare GET vs. POST

The following table compares the two HTTP methods: GET and POST.

	GET	POST
BACK button/Reload	Harmless	Data will be re-submitted (the browser should alert the user that the data are about to be re-submitted)
Bookmarked	Can be bookmarked	Cannot be bookmarked
Cached	Can be cached	Not cached
Encoding type	application/x-www-form-urlencoded	application/x-www-form-urlencoded or multipart/form-data. Use multipart encoding for binary data
History	Parameters remain in browser history	Parameters are not saved in browser history
Restrictions on data length	Yes, when sending data, the GET method adds the data to the URL; and the length of a URL is limited (maximum URL length is 2048 characters)	No restrictions
Restrictions on data type	Only ASCII characters allowed	No restrictions. Binary data is also allowed
Security	GET is less secure compared to POST because data sent is part of the URL Never use GET when sending passwords or other sensitive information!	POST is a little safer than GET because the parameters are not stored in browser history or in web server logs
Visibility	Data is visible to everyone in the URL	Data is not displayed in the URL

The PUT Method

PUT is used to send data to a server to create/update a resource.

The difference between POST and PUT is that PUT requests are idempotent. That is, calling the same PUT request multiple times will always produce the same result. In contrast, calling a POST request repeatedly have side effects of creating the same resource multiple times.

The HEAD Method

HEAD is almost identical to GET, but without the response body.

In other words, if GET /users returns a list of users, then HEAD /users will make the same request but will not return the list of users.

HEAD requests are useful for checking what a GET request will return before actually making a GET request - like before downloading a large file or response body.

The DELETE Method

The DELETE method deletes the specified resource.

The PATCH Method

The PATCH method is used to apply partial modifications to a resource.

The OPTIONS Method

The OPTIONS method describes the communication options for the target resource.

The CONNECT Method

The CONNECT method is used to start a two-way communications (a tunnel) with the requested resource.

The TRACE Method

The TRACE method is used to perform a message loop-back test that tests the path for the target resource (useful for debugging purposes).

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