Build a RESTful Web service

An introduction to REST and the Restlet framework

Skill Level: Intermediate

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22 Jul 2008

Representational state transfer (REST) is a style of designing loosely coupled applications that rely on named resources rather than messages. The hardest part of building a RESTful application is deciding on the resources you want to expose. Once you've done that, using the open source Restlet framework makes building RESTful Web services a snap. This tutorial guides you step-by-step through the fundamental concepts of REST and building applications with Restlets.

Section 1. Before you start

About this tutorial

REST is a way of thinking, not a protocol or standard. It's a style of designing loosely coupled applications — more often than not, applications oriented for the Web — that rely on named resources rather than messages. In this tutorial, you'll get to know what REST is and how to build RESTful applications with Restlets, a lightweight REST framework for Java™ applications.

Objectives

This tutorial guides you step-by-step through the fundamental concepts of REST and
building applications with Restlets. You'll learn how to:

- Define RESTful Web services
- Implement them with the Restlet framework
- Verify them with the JUnit testing framework

When you are done with the tutorial, you will understand the benefits of designing with RESTful principles, and you'll see how the Restlet framework makes it easy.

Prerequisites

To get the most from this tutorial, you should be familiar with Java syntax and the basic concepts of object-oriented development on the Java platform. You should also be familiar with Web applications. Familiarity with Groovy, JUnit, DbUnit, and XMLUnit is also helpful.

System requirements

To follow along and try out the code for this tutorial, you need a working installation of either:

- Sun's JDK 1.5.0_09 (or later)
- IBM Developer Kit for Java technology 1.5.0 SR3
- Apache Ant 1.7 or greater

There are two versions of the source code for this tutorial (see Download). One version includes all code and required dependencies (the Restlet framework, JUnit, XMLUnit, and DbUnit). Readers with a low-bandwidth connection might prefer to download the Restlet framework, JUnit, XMLUnit, and DbUnit from their respective sites (see Resources) and use the Download package version that does not include dependencies.

The recommended system configuration for this tutorial is:

- A system supporting either the Sun JDK 1.5.0_09 (or later) or the IBM JDK 1.5.0 SR3 with at least 500MB of main memory
- At least 20MB of disk space to install the software components and examples covered

The instructions and examples in the tutorial are based on a Microsoft® Windows®
operating system. All the tools covered in the tutorial also work on Linux® and UNIX® systems.

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Section 2. What is REST?

REST is a style of designing loosely coupled Web applications that rely on named resources — in the form of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs), and Uniform Resource Names (URNs), for instance — rather than messages. Ingeniously, REST piggybacks on the already validated and successful infrastructure of the Web — HTTP. That is, REST leverages aspects of the HTTP protocol such as GET and POST requests. These requests map quite nicely to standard business-application needs such as create read, update, and delete (CRUD), as shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application task</th>
<th>HTTP command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>POST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>GET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update</td>
<td>PUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete</td>
<td>DELETE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By associating requests, which act like verbs, with resources, which act like nouns, you end up with a logical expression of behavior — GET this document and DELETE that record, for example.

Roy Fielding, the veritable father of REST, states in his PhD dissertation that REST "emphasizes scalability of component interactions, generality of interfaces, independent deployment of components, and intermediary components to reduce interaction latency, enforce security, and encapsulate legacy systems" (see Resources). Building RESTful systems isn't difficult, and the systems are highly scalable while also being loosely coupled to the underlying data; they also leverage caching quite nicely.

Everything on the Web (pages, images, and so on) is in essence a resource. REST's reliance on named resources rather than messages facilitates loose coupling in application design, because it limits the exposure of the underlying technology. For instance, the following URL exposes a resource without implying anything about the underlying technology:

http://thediscoblog.com/2008/03/20/unambiguously-analyzing-metrics/
This URL represents a resource — an article called "Unambiguously analyzing metrics." A request for this resource leverages the HTTP GET command. Notice that the URL is noun-based. A verb-based version (which might look something like http://thediscoblog.com/2008/03/20/getArticle?name=unambiguously-analyzing-metrics) would violate REST principles, because it embeds a message, in the form of getArticle. You could also imagine posting a new resource (say, an article resource such as http://thediscoblog.com/2008/03/22/rest-is-good-for-you/) via HTTP's POST command. Although you can also imagine associated, verb-based APIs — such as createArticle?name=rest-is-good-for-you and deleteArticle?name=rest-is-good-for-you — such calls hijack the HTTP GET command and, for the most part, ignore the already available (and successful) HTTP infrastructure. In other words, they are not RESTful.

The beauty of REST is that resources can be anything, and how they are represented can vary too. In the preceding example, the resource is an HTML file; accordingly, the format of the response would be HTML. But the resource could have easily been an XML document, serialized object, or JSON representation. It really doesn't matter. What matters is that a resource is named and that communication with it doesn't affect its state. Not affecting state is important because stateless interactions facilitate scalability.

Why should you care?

To quote Leonardo da Vinci, "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." The implementation of the World Wide Web is as simple as it gets and an undeniable success. REST leverages the Web's simplicity and thus yields highly scalable, loosely coupled systems that, as it turns out, are simple to build.

As you'll see, the hardest part of building a RESTful application is deciding on the resources you want to expose. Once you've done that, using the Restlet framework makes building RESTful Web services a snap.

Section 3. Off to the races: Building a RESTful API

In this section, you'll build a RESTful API for a Web service that leverages the functionality of an existing database-backed application.

RESTful races
Imagine an online application that manages races in which contestants run various distances (such as the Chicago Marathon). The application manages races (or events) and the runners associated with them. And it reports a particular runner’s time (how long it took to run the race) and rank (what place the runner finished in). The race-management company, Acme Racing, wants you to build a RESTful Web service that enables sponsors to create new races and racers for a particular race, and that can provide official results for a particular race.

Acme Racing already has a legacy fat-client application that supports similar requirements and leverages a simple database along with a domain model. Thus, the job of exposing this functionality is all that’s left to do. Remember that the beauty of REST is its implicit loose coupling with an underlying application. Accordingly, your job, at the moment, isn’t to worry about the data model or the technology associated with it — it’s to construct a RESTful API that supports the company’s requirements.

Race URIs

Acme Races would like sponsors to be able to:

- View the details of existing races
- Create new races
- Update existing races
- Delete races

Because REST boils down to named resources, the API becomes a series of URI patterns, and the behavior associated with a resource is invoked via standard HTTP commands.

As you can see, the client’s requirements map nicely to CRUD. And as you know from Table 1, REST supports CRUD via the HTTP POST, GET, PUT, and DELETE requests, respectively. Accordingly, a base RESTful URI that supports these requirements could be http://racing.acme.com/race. Note that in this case, race is the resource clients would work with.

Invoking this URI with an HTTP GET would return a list of races. (Don’t worry about the format of the response just yet.) To add a new race, you would invoke the same URI with an HTTP POST containing the appropriate information (for instance, an XML document containing required race information, such as name, date, and distance).

For updating and deleting existing races, you would need to act on a particular instance of a race. Accordingly, individual races can be addressed with a URI of
http://racing.acme.com/race/race_id. In this case, race_id represents a placeholder for any race identifier (such as 1 or 600meter). Consequently, viewing an existing race instance would be an HTTP GET to that URI; updating or deleting a race would be a PUT or DELETE request, respectively.

Acme Racing also wishes to expose data regarding runners associated with a race. They’d like their service to support:

- Obtaining all runners for a particular race. This data should also include run times and ranks for a race that’s already completed.
- Creating one or more runners for a particular race.
- Updating a runner's information (such as age) for a particular race.
- Deleting a runner for a particular race.

Acme would also like the service to let users view individual data for a particular runner in a particular race.

Just as with races, applying RESTful URIs to runners associated with a race is a logical exercise. Viewing all runners for a particular race, for example, would be implemented via a GET request to http://racing.acme.com/race/race_id/runner.

Obtaining individual data for a runner in a race would be addressed as http://racing.acme.com/race/race_id/runner/runner_id.

Just like race_id, runner_id is a placeholder for the logical implementation of IDs, which could be numbers, names, alphanumeric combinations, and so on.

Adding runners to a race would be a POST request to http://racing.acme.com/race/race_id/runner. Updating or deleting particular runners would be, respectively, PUT and DELETE requests to http://racing.acme.com/race/race_id/runner/runner_id.

Thus, these URIs (each supporting some or all of the four standard HTTP requests) capture Acme Racing's requirements:

- /race
- /race/race_id
- /race/race_id/runner
- /race/race_id/runner/runner_id

Remember, a particular URI can map to more than one HTTP verb (for instance, applying an HTTP GET to /race returns data; applying a POST with appropriate data
creates data on the server). Accordingly, some HTTP commands wouldn't be implemented. For example, /race wouldn't support the DELETE command (Acme Racing wouldn't want to delete all races); /race/race_id could support the DELETE command because removing a particular instance of a race is a business requirement.

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Section 4. Formating the resource

In this section, you'll construct a series of XML documents to represent the resources that the RESTful races Web service will support.

Race URIs

The RESTful API you built in the preceding section for Acme Racing covers the network endpoints or URIs but not the resources. As far as REST is concerned, the format of the resources doesn't matter, as I mentioned earlier. You could pass XML or binary streams back and forth, for example.

XML is arguably the *lingua franca* of machine-to-machine communication in the context of business transactions, so it makes sense to construct a series of XML documents that the RESTful service will support. The domain for racing is fairly simple, and you can use an existing data model, so the task of defining a few XML documents that represent races and runners is straightforward.

For instance, a race can be defined in XML as in Listing 1:

**Listing 1. XML document for a race**

```xml
<race name="Mclean 1/2 Marathon" date="2008-05-12" distance="13.1" id="1">
  <uri>/races/1</uri>
  <description/>
</race>
```

Note that a `<race>` has an id and that Listing 1 includes a URI as part of the definition of a race. This is a key aspect of REST and indeed, the Web — resources are related and should be linked together. Accordingly, a `<race>` always contains a `<uri>` element describing its RESTful representation. The XML in Listing 1 is arguably the response of a GET request to /races/1.

To create a new race, you could omit the id aspect (because managing unique IDs is something the application you're building here controls). This implies you could
exclude the <uri> element as well. Consequently, a POST request would look something like Listing 2:

Listing 2. Race-creation XML

```xml
<race name="Limerick 2008 Half" date="2008-05-12" distance="13.4">
  <description>erin go braugh and have a good time!</description>
</race>
```

What about runners? A runner is connected to race, right? So the <race> element supports holding one or more <runner> elements, as shown in Listing 3:

Listing 3. Runners associated with a race

```xml
<race name="Limerick 200 Half" date="2008-05-12" distance="13.4" id="9">
  <uri>races/9</uri>
  <description>erin go braugh and have a good time!</description>
  <runners>
    <runner first_name="Linda" last_name="Smith" age="25" id="21">
      <uri>/races/9/runner/21</uri>
    </runner>
    <runner first_name="Andrew" last_name="Glover" age="22" id="20">
      <uri>/races/9/runner/20</uri>
    </runner>
  </runners>
</race>
```

The XML document in Listing 3, for example, is what would be returned via the URI /race/race_id/runner. The API also supports CRUD operations performed on a single runner via the URI /race/race_id/runner/runner_id.

Accordingly, the XML for these CRUD actions looks like Listing 4:

Listing 4. CRUD XML

```xml
<race name="Mclean 1/2 Marathon" date="2008-05-12" distance="13.1" id="1">
  <uri>/races/1</uri>
  <description />
  <runner first_name="Andrew" last_name="Glover" age="32" id="1">
    <uri>/races/1/runner/1</uri>
    <result time="100.04" place="45"/>
  </runner>
</race>
```

Note that if the race is already complete, a runner's results can be included in the XML document. Remember, using a POST request means creating a runner; consequently, the <runner> element's id attribute would not be present.
Section 5. Restlets

You've defined a RESTful API that maps quite nicely to CRUDing races and runners. And you've defined the format of the communication: XML documents. In this section, you'll start to put this all together using an innovative framework that is modeled after servlets.

The Restlet framework

Restlet applications are akin to servlet applications in that they reside in a container, but in practice they are quite different in two major ways. First, Restlets use no direct notion of HTTP or its stateful manifestations such as cookies or sessions, per se. Second, the Restlet framework is extremely lightweight. As you'll see, a fully functional RESTful application can be built with a handful of classes that extend from a few core Restlet base classes. Configuration and deployment leverage existing container models, so you simply update the customary web.xml file and deploy a standard Web archive (WAR) file.

For the most part, the bulk of a RESTful application built with the Restlet framework requires the use of two base classes: Application and Resource. Logically speaking, an Application instance maps URIs to Resource instances. Resource instances do the work of handling the basic CRUD commands, which are, of course, mapped to GET, POST, PUT, and DELETE.

The race application

You create a starting point with the Restlet framework by extending from the framework's Application class. In this class, you define Resources that respond to URIs. This definition process is done with the framework's Router class. For example, if you have a URI such as order/order_id, you need to specify which object can handle these requests. This object is an instance of the framework's Resource type. You link objects with URIs by attaching them to a Router instance, as in Listing 5:

Listing 5. Creating Router instances and mapping URIs

```java
Router router = new Router(this.getContext());
router.attach("order/{order_id}", Order.class);
```

So in this example, the URI order/order_id is logically mapped to an Order class (which, in turn, extends Resource).
Acme Racing has the four logical RESTful URIs that you've already defined — four patterns that work with various aspects of races and runners:

- /race
- /race/race_id
- /race/race_id/runner
- /race/race_id/runner/runner_id

The behavior of each URI (such as if it works with POST, DELETE, GET, and so on) isn't important at this point. The behavior of each Resource is the job of a Resource instance; however, the Application instance is used to map these URIs to (yet-to-be-defined) Resources via a Router instance, as shown in Listing 6:

**Listing 6. Mapping Acme Racing's URIs to Resources**

```java
public class RaceApplication extends Application{
    public RaceApplication(Context context) {
        super(context);
    }
    public Restlet createRoot() {
        Router router = new Router(this.getContext());
        router.attach("/race", RacesResource.class);
        router.attach("/race/{race_id}", RaceResource.class);
        router.attach("/race/{race_id}/runner", RaceRunnersResource.class);
        router.attach("/race/{race_id}/runner/{runner_id}" , RaceRunnerResource.class);
        return router;
    }
}
```

The base class, Application, is an abstract class. Extending classes must implement the createRoot() method. In this method, you can create a Router instance and attach Resources to URIs as I've done in Listing 6.

As you can see, there are four different Resource classes. I've named them to match the desired high-level behavior of the URI. For instance, the /race URI is intended to work with multiple race instances; consequently the Resource type is named RacesResource. Once an id is included in the URI (/race/race_id), the implication is that a single race is being manipulated; accordingly, the Resource type is apply named RaceResource.

**Race resources**

Now that you've defined the Application instance to handle four different URI patterns, you must implement the four Resources.
Resource types in the Restlet framework are known as Restlets. They are the heart of any RESTful application developed with the Restlet framework. Unlike the Application type, the base Resource class is not abstract. It’s more like a template with default behavior that you can override as needed.

At a high level, Resource has four methods that require overriding. Not coincidentally, they map to the basic HTTP commands that are the touchstone of REST — GET, POST, PUT, and DELETE. Because the Resource class is nonabstract, the framework requires a paired method to be implemented for desired behavior to be invoked. For instance, if you want a particular resource to respond to DELETE requests, you would first implement the delete() method. Second, you also must implement the allowDelete() method and have this method return true (it defaults to false). By default, the corresponding PUT, POST, and DELETE allow methods return false, and the allowGet() method returns true. This means for read-only Resources, you need to override only one method (instead of two in the other three cases). You can alternatively call the setModifcation(true) in a Resource class and thus not have to override individual HTTP verb allow methods.

For instance, the RacesResource is intended to respond to GET requests with an XML document that describes the races in the system. Users can also create new races via this Resource type. Therefore, the RacesResource class overrides at least three methods from the Resource base class:

- getRepresentation()
- allowPost()
- post()

Remember, Resources instances, by default, are read-only. Hence the allowGet() method doesn't need to be overridden.

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Section 6. Generating XML documents

In Formatting the resource, we decided to leverage XML as the data mechanism for sharing information between clients and the service. Your Restlets, therefore, must manipulate XML: build it in the case of a GET and consume it in the case of a POST, PUT, or DELETE. In this section, you’ll take the pain out of generating and manipulating XML documents by leveraging the Groovy scripting language (see Resources).
Leveraging Groovy

Working with XML is no easy chore. It can be tedious and error prone, to say the least. Fortunately, Groovy makes working with XML much easier.

You'll leverage Groovy's power to generate XML and do the tedious job of manipulating XML documents. Working with XML in Groovy couldn't be any easier. For instance, parsing an XML document is a cakewalk. Take the XML document in Listing 7:

Listing 7. A simple XML document to parse

```xml
<acme-races>
  <race name="Alaska 200 below" date="Thu Jan 01" distance="3.2" id="20">
    <uri>/races/20</uri>
    <description>Enjoy the cold!</description>
  </race>
</acme-races>
```

Suppose you wanted to grab the value of the `<race>` element's `name` attribute. All you need to do is pass in an instance of the XML document to Groovy's `XmlSlurper` class, call the `parse()` method, and then navigate to your desired element or attribute, as shown in Listing 8:

Listing 8. Parsing XML in Groovy

```groovy
def root = new XmlSlurper().parseText(raceXML)
def name = root.race.@name.text()
```

If you want the description, it's as easy as calling

```groovy
def description = root.race.description.text()
```

Creating XML is easy too. If you wanted to create the XML snippet in Listing 7, all you have to do is create an instance of Groovy's `MarkupBuilder` class and add nodes to it, as in Listing 9:

Listing 9. Creating XML couldn't be easier

```groovy
def writer = new StringWriter()
def builder = new MarkupBuilder(writer)
builder."acme-races"() {
  race(name: "Alaska 200 below", date: "Thu Jan 01", distance: "3.2", id: "20") {
    uri("/races/20")
    description("Enjoy the cold!")
  }
}
println writer.toString()
```
Note how elements are added to the XML document by attaching names to the 
builder instance. I had to put quotation marks around acme-races because 
hyphens aren't allowed in string literals in Groovy; consequently, making 
acme-races a String solves that problem nicely.

Elements can have attributes. Attribute names and values are created by 
constructing a Groovy map, which links the two together (for example, 
name:"Alaska 200 below").

---

Section 7. The data layer

This section describes the existing domain objects that make the up data layer that 
your RESTful service will reuse.

Domain objects

As you know from Off to the races: Building a RESTful API, Acme Racing invested in 
a data layer for a previous project and wants to reuse it for the new Web service. 
This, of course, makes your job even easier. In a nutshell, the data layer consists of 
three business objects: Race, Runner, and Result. They are effectively managed 
by Spring and Hibernate; however, these frameworks are hidden from you; you 
simply have a JAR file that works nicely (that is, lets you easily create new races, 
find existing runners, and so on).

The business objects support a series of finder methods that make obtaining race 
and runner instances quite easy. Objects can be persisted, updated, and removed 
from the underlying database via save(), update(), and remove() methods, 
respectively.

For example, a Race object supports a series of finder methods and facilitates 
manipulating persisted data nicely. The Race object's API is straightforward, as 
shown in Listing 10:

**Listing 10. Race's API**

```
Collection<Race> findAll();
Race findById(long id);
Race findByName(String name);
void create(Race race);
void update(Race race);
void remove(Race race);
```
A `Race` instance has a number of properties, as shown in Listing 11:

**Listing 11. Race's properties**

```java
private long id;
private String name;
private Date date;
private double distance;
private Set<Runner> participants;
private Set<Result> results;
private String description;
```

All of `Race`'s properties are available via getters and setters. What's more, collections of items (such as `participants` and `results`) support adding individual items. Therefore, the `Race` object has an `addParticipant()` method, shown in Listing 12:

**Listing 12. Race's `addParticipant()` method**

```java
public void addParticipant(final Runner participant);`
```

As you've seen, working with this domain model is quite easy.

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**Section 8. Building and testing the service**

Now that you know how you'll work with XML and already have a data layer to use, it's time to continue building your RESTful application with Restlets and do some test preparation.

**The Races service**

Recall that Acme Racing would like its service to enable clients to view existing races as well as create new ones. You've already outlined the RESTful URI that'll support this behavior: `/race`.

Via the `Router` class in the `RaceApplication` class, you linked this URI to the `RacesResource` class. You already know that you must implement three methods:

- `getRepresentation()`
- `allowPost()`
Accordingly, create a class called `RacesResource` and ensure that it extends `org.restlet.resource.Resource`. Also, implement a three-parameter constructor, as shown in Listing 13:

**Listing 13. Three-parameter constructor in RacesResource**

```java
public class RacesResource extends Resource {
    public RacesResource(Context context, Request request, Response response) {
        super(context, request, response);
    }
}
```

Restlets must be instructed how to communicate resource representations properly. Because XML will serve as the resources format, you must direct your Restlet by adding an XML variant type. Variants, in Restlets, represent a format for Resources. The base class, `Resource`, contains a `getVariants()` method that facilitates adding various Variant types. Accordingly, add the line in Listing 14 to your constructor:

**Listing 14. Signifying XML as a variant**

```java
this.getVariants().add(new Variant(MediaType.TEXT_XML));
```

The Restlet framework supports a wide variety of media types, including images and video.

**Handling GET requests**

Now it’s time to implement the easiest behavior of the class: handling a GET request. Override the `getRepresentation()` method as shown in Listing 15:

**Listing 15. Overriding getRepresentation()**

```java
public Representation getRepresentation(Variant variant) {
    return null;
}
```

As you can see, this method returns a `Representation` type, of which there are multiple implementations. One implementation — aptly dubbed `StringRepresentation` — represents strings and will suffice for your needs.

As you know, you already have a legacy domain model that supports working with
the database. It also turns out that someone has already written a utility class, called 
RaceReporter, that transforms domain objects into XML documents. This class’s 
racesToXml() method takes a collection of Race instances and returns a String 
representing an XML document looking something like Listing 16:

Listing 16. An XML response

```xml
<acme-races>
  <races>
    <race name="Leesburg 5K" date="2008-05-12" distance="3.1" id="5">
      <uri>/races/5</uri>
    </description/>
  </race>
  <race name="Leesburg 10K" date="2008-07-30" distance="6.2" id="6">
    <uri>/races/6</uri>
    <description/>
  </race>
</races>
</acme-races>
```

In fact, this XML document is an example of what your RESTful Web service will 
return when the /race URI is invoked with a GET request.

Therefore, your job is to link the retrieval of all race instances in the underlying data 
store; in fact, at this point, you can already write a test.

Testing the service

Using the Restlet framework, you can construct a client instance and have it invoke 
your RESTful Web service. Moreover, you can leverage XMLUnit (see Resources) 
to verify that the service’s output is some known XML document. Last, but not least, 
you can also use DbUnit (see Resources) to put the underlying database into a 
known state (so you can always get back the same XML document).

Using JUnit 4, you can create two fixtures that properly initialize XMLUnit and 
DbUnit, as shown in Listing 17:

Listing 17. Setting up XMLUnit and DbUnit

```java
@Before
public void setUpXMLUnit() {
    XMLUnit.setControlParser("org.apache.xerces.jaxp.DocumentBuilderFactoryImpl");
    XMLUnit.setTestParser("org.apache.xerces.jaxp.DocumentBuilderFactoryImpl");
    XMLUnit.setSAXParserFactory("org.apache.xerces.jaxp.SAXParserFactoryImpl");
    XMLUnit.setIgnoreWhitespace(true);
}

@Before
public void setUpDbUnit() throws Exception {
```
In the `setUpDbUnit` method, an XML representation of the database is inserted into the database via the `CLEAN_INSERT` command. This XML file effectively inserts six different races. Therefore, the response to a `GET` will be an XML document with six races.

Next, you can create a test case that invokes an HTTP `GET` on the `/race` URI, obtains the response XML, and compares it to a control XML file using XMLUnit's `Diff` class, as demonstrated in Listing 18:

**Listing 18. Verifying a GET response with XMLUnit**

```java
@Test
public void getRaces() throws Exception {
    Client client = new Client(Protocol.HTTP);
    Response response =
        client.get("http://localhost:8080/racerest/race/");
    Diff diff = new Diff(new FileReader(
        new File("./etc/control-xml/control-web-races.xml")),
        new StringReader(response.getEntity().getText()));
    assertTrue(diff.toString(), diff.identical());
}
```

The `control-web-races.xml` file is the expected XML response from the Web service. It contains the data shown in Listing 19:

**Listing 19. A control XML file**

```xml
<acme-races>
    <races>
        <race name="Mclean 1/2 Marathon" date="2008-05-12" distance="13.1" id="1">
            <uri>http://localhost:8080/races/1</uri>
            <description/>
        </race>
        <race name="Reston 5K" date="2008-09-13" distance="3.1" id="2">
            <uri>http://localhost:8080/races/2</uri>
            <description/>
        </race>
        <race name="Herndon 10K" date="2008-10-22" distance="6.2" id="3">
            <uri>http://localhost:8080/races/3</uri>
            <description/>
        </race>
        <race name="Leesburg 1/2 Marathon" date="2008-01-02" distance="13.1" id="4">
            <uri>http://localhost:8080/races/4</uri>
            <description/>
        </race>
    </races>
</acme-races>
```
Running this test now, of course, causes a series of failures, because you haven’t implemented the RESTful service yet. Note too that the Ant build file included in the source download contains tasks for deploying a WAR file and starting and stopping Tomcat (see Download). These are prerequisites for running a successful test.

It turns out that fulfilling the GET request is a cakewalk. All that’s required is to invoke the findAll method on the Race domain object, then pass in the result of that call to RaceReporter’s racesToXml() method. Accordingly, you need to update the RacesResource instance with a new member variable along with a new initialization in the constructor, as shown in Listing 20:

**Listing 20. Don’t forget to add the RaceReporter**

```java
public class RacesResource extends Resource {
    private RaceReporter reporter;

    public RacesResource(Context context, Request request, Response response) {
        super(context, request, response);

        this.getVariants().add(new Variant(MediaType.TEXT_XML));
        this.reporter = new RaceReporter();
    }
}
```

Now, it becomes quite easy to finish implementing the GET request. Simply add three lines to the getRepresentation method, as shown in Listing 21:

**Listing 21. Finishing the GET request**

```java
public Representation getRepresentation(Variant variant) {
    Collection<Race> races = Race.findAll();
    String xml = this.reporter.racesToXml(races);
    return new StringRepresentation(xml);
}
```

Believe it or not, that’s it!

But wait: don’t you have to deploy this application to test it?
Section 9. Deployment and verification

Before you can actually test your RESTful service that returns a list of races, you need to deploy the application. This section shows you how.

Configuring web.xml

Luckily, deploying a Restlet application couldn't be any easier. You simply create a normal WAR file and ensure that the web.xml file is configured appropriately.

For a Restlet application to function properly in a servlet container, you must update the web.xml file to:

- Properly load your application
- Route all requires through the framework's custom servlet

Consequently, your web.xml file should look like Listing 22:

Listing 22. Sample web.xml file

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<web-app id="WebApp_ID" version="2.4"
    xmlns="http://java.sun.com/xml/ns/j2ee"
    xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
    xsi:schemaLocation="http://java.sun.com/xml/ns/j2ee
    http://java.sun.com/xml/ns/j2ee/web-app_2_4.xsd">
  <display-name>RESTful racing</display-name>
  <context-param>
    <param-name>org.restlet.application</param-name>
    <param-value>RaceApplication</param-value>
  </context-param>
  <servlet>
    <servlet-name>RestletServlet</servlet-name>
    <servlet-class>com.noelios.restlet.ext.servlet.ServerServlet</servlet-class>
  </servlet>
  <servlet-mapping>
    <servlet-name>RestletServlet</servlet-name>
    <url-pattern>*/*</url-pattern>
  </servlet-mapping>
</web-app>
```

The source code for this tutorial (see Download) includes a war task that automatically builds a WAR file, and the build file supports deploying the WAR file to a local instance of Tomcat.

As you can see, in the first part of Listing 22, org.restlet.application is paired with the class name of the Restlet application, which is RaceApplication.
(You might need to fully qualify that name if you gave it a package name.) Note too that the last section of the document maps all requests to the `RestletServlet` type, which was previously mapped to the `com.noelios.restlet.ext.servlet.ServerServlet` class.

Testing RESTfully

Testing your RESTful Web service is now a matter of rerunning the test case in Listing 18.

Another look at the test starts to explain some things too. The Restlet's `Client` object supports the basic HTTP commands of `GET`, `PUT`, `POST`, and `DELETE`. And the `Client` object can take the form of different protocols — you just happen to be relying on HTTP in this case.

Your `GET` request already works (see Figure 1), so you can write another test. This time, flesh out the desired behavior of a `POST`; that is, test the creation of a new race via the `RacesResource` class.

**Figure 1. Viewing a RESTful GET request in a browser**
To test a POST, you need to fashion an XML request document with the relevant information and ensure that the service sends back a successful response. Of course, it turns out that writing this test is fairly simple. All you need to do is add some additional code to the existing JUnit class, as shown in Listing 23:

**Listing 23. The createRace test case**

```java
private static String raceXML = "<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>" +
"<acme-races>
" +
" <race name='Limerick 2008 Half' date='2008-05-12' distance='13.4'>
" +
" <description>erin go brach</description>
" +
" </race>
" +
" </acme-races>";

@Test
public void createRace() {
  Form form = new Form();
  form.add("data", this.raceXML);
  Representation rep = form.getWebRepresentation();
  Client client = new Client(Protocol.HTTP);

  Response response =
    client.post("http://localhost:8080/racerrest/race/", rep);
  assertTrue(response.getStatus().isSuccess());
}
```
As you can see, Listing 23 quickly fashions a String that represents an XML document. In this case, I'm creating a new race called the Limerick 2008 Half. Then it uses the Restlet framework’s Client object to post this document to the server. Finally, it ensures that a success indication is returned.

Now run the test. It fails, doesn't it? That's because you haven't implemented the POST request code, which you'll do in the next section.

Section 10. Race creation RESTfully

Creating races via the RESTful Web service is a matter of a few steps: receiving an XML document, parsing it, creating a new Race instance in the underlying database, and finally returning a response indicating the result of the transaction. This section covers these steps.

Handling POST requests

To implement a create style behavior via REST, you need to handle POST requests logically. Accordingly, in the RacesResource class, you must override two methods: allowPost() and post().

The post() method does all the work here. It takes a Representation instance, from which you can obtain posted data. Recall that the createRace test case in Listing 23 associated the XML document with a name: data. Consequently, via the Restlet framework’s Form object, you can obtain a String representing the incoming XML, which you can then pass to the provided RaceConsumer object. This object is handy enough to accept XML documents and correspondingly manipulate the underlying database.

If the transaction works, you'll then respond accordingly with a successful response; otherwise, you'll need to respond with a failure message.

Go ahead and override allowPost() and post(), as shown in Listing 24:

Listing 24. Overriding POST methods

```java
public boolean allowPost() {
    return true;
}

public void post(Representation representation) {}
```
Because you'll use the RaceConsumer object, it makes sense to add it as a member variable of the RacesResource class and to initialize it in the constructor. Update your object accordingly, as shown in Listing 25:

Listing 25. Adding the RaceConsumer class

```java
public class RacesResource extends Resource {
    private RaceReporter reporter;
    private RaceConsumer consumer;

    public RacesResource(Context context, Request request, Response response) {
        super(context, request, response);
        this.getVariants().add(new Variant(MediaType.TEXT_XML));
        this.reporter = new RaceReporter();
        this.consumer = new RaceConsumer();
    }
}
```

Next, ensure your post() method looks like Listing 26:

Listing 26. Implementing post()

```java
public void post(Representation representation) {
    Form form = new Form(representation);
    String raceXML = form.getFirstValue("data");
    Representation rep = null;
    try {
        long id = this.consumer.createRace(raceXML);
        getResponse().setStatus(Status.SUCCESS_CREATED);
        rep = new StringRepresentation(raceXML, MediaType.TEXT_XML);
        rep.setIdentifier(getRequest().getResourceRef().getIdentifier() + id);
    } catch (Throwable thr) {
        getResponse().setStatus(Status.SERVER_ERROR_INTERNAL);
        rep = new StringRepresentation("there was an error creating the race",
                                       MediaType.TEXT_PLAIN);
    }
    getResponse().setEntity(rep);
}
```

As you can see, a lot is going on in the post method; however, upon close inspection, things aren't as cerebral as they seem. First, the incoming XML is obtained via the Form object. The XML (in the form of a String) is then passed to the createRace() method of the consumer instance. If things worked (that is, the race was persisted), a response is generated that contains a successful status and then a rehashing of the incoming XML, plus the resulting URI (that is, race/43, where 43 is the id of the newly created race).

If things don't go well, the same process is essentially followed except that a failure status is returned with a failure message: no URI is returned because nothing was created.

Go ahead and rerun the createRace test. Assuming you've redeployed the RESTful Web application, things should work quite nicely!
Section 11. A point RESTed

This tutorial managed to implement only a modest number of Acme Racing's requirements. But in the process of doing so, you've seen that working with Restlets is quite simple. The hardest part of the whole exercise was figuring out the logical RESTful API. The source code for this tutorial has all features implemented for your learning pleasure (see Download).

The poet Alexander Pope said, "There is a certain majesty in simplicity which is far above all the quaintness of wit." This couldn't be more true when it comes to REST. Remember, REST is a way of thinking — a style of designing loosely coupled applications that rely on named resources rather than messages. And by piggybacking on the already validated and successful infrastructure of the Web, REST makes these applications simple to design and implement. And REST applications scale quite well.

This tutorial covered only a handful of the Restlet framework's features, but don't let that fool you. The framework does a lot, including adding security when you need it. Restlets are a joy to code, and the code base is easy understand once you see a few Restlets coded.

Albert Einstein said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." I hope you agree with me that the Restlet framework and REST itself exemplify this mantra's wisdom.
## Downloads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Download method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample code with dependent libraries</td>
<td>j-rest.zip</td>
<td>19.5MB</td>
<td>HTTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample code without dependent libraries</td>
<td>j-rest2.zip</td>
<td>19KB</td>
<td>HTTP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about download methods
Resources

Learn


- **Restlet**: Visit the Restlet framework Web site.

- **Groovy**: Visit Groovy’s Web site.


- "**Write REST services**" (J. Jeffrey Hanson, developerWorks, October 2007): Work through this tutorial to create REST services with Java technology and the Atom Publishing Protocol.

- "**Crossing borders: REST on Rails**" (Bruce Tate, developerWorks, August 2006): Read about building RESTful applications with a popular non-Java Web application development framework.


- "**Jump into JUnit 4**" (Andrew Glover, developerWorks, February 2007): This tutorial shows you how to leverage the new features in JUnit 4 enabled by annotations, including parametric tests, exception tests, and timed tests.

- "**Discover XMLUnit**" (Andrew Glover, developerWorks, December 2006): Developers are natural problem solvers, so it makes sense that someone has come up with an easier way to validate XML documents. This article introduces XMLUnit, a JUnit extension framework that meets all your XML validation needs.

- "**Mark it up with Groovy Builders**" (Andrew Glover, developerWorks, April 2005): Groovy Builders let you mimic markup languages like XML, HTML, Ant tasks, and even GUIs with frameworks like Swing. They’re especially useful for rapid prototyping and, as this article shows you, they’re a handy alternative to data binding frameworks when you need consumable markup in a snap!

- "**Effective Unit Testing with DbUnit**" (Andrew Glover, OnJava, January 2004): Writing unit tests first can be impractical when your code will depend on access to a database. Enter DbUnit, which allows you to write simple XML files to fill in for the yet-to-be populated database for testing purposes.
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About the author
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Andrew Glover is president of Stelligent Incorporated, which helps companies embrace developer testing strategies and continuous integration techniques that enable teams to deliver software faster. Check out Andy's blog for a list of his publications.

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