

Reading Web.config Values in ASP.NET 2.0

When working with the new .NET 2.0 framework there are a lot of new features, classes, and methodologies available to developers. Some things are brand new, some things are advancements upon existing features in the .NET 1.x framework.

Sometimes when changing parts of very fundamental pieces of an application, a lot of confusion is generated. Developers wonder which is the correct method, or recommended best practice for using a new piece of functionality. With the new .NET 2.0 framework, one of these fundamental changes is with the Web.config file.

The Web.config file is of course responsible for laying out the entire configuration of your ASP.NET application. It controls everything from authentication to your SQL connection strings, security, page access, even HTTP settings for IIS.

Because the Web.config file plays such a large part in an application it can be confusing to know where to start especially if you are familiar with .NET 1.x. Finding feature parity is probably the most difficult part about migrating from one technology to another.

The goal of this tutorial is not to teach all the different features available in the Web.config but rather to demonstrate how to use 3 common features used in almost any ASP.NET applications. The first is how to read connection strings from the Web.config file. The second is how to read name/value application setting variables, and finally, a new method available in .NET 2.0 whereby you can create a custom class to represent custom settings defined in the Web.config file so you can programmatically reference specific settings and values.

Note: Visual Studio 2005 running ASP.NET 2.0 is required for this tutorial. Both VB and C# code samples will be provided

Setting Up

First we need an ASP.NET project to work with so begin by starting Visual Studio 2005 and creating a new web application on the File System, using either VB or C# as the code type. Use "WebConfig" for VB and "WebConfigCS" for C#.

When you create a C# project you have to manually add the web.config file so first right click the web project in the solution explorer and select "Add new item..." Select "Web Configuration File" as the type of file to add and click ok.

By default the file will look like the following after creation:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<!--
  Note: As an alternative to hand editing this file you can use the
  web admin tool to configure settings for your application. Use
  the Website->Asp.Net Configuration option in Visual Studio.
  A full list of settings and comments can be found in
  machine.config.comments usually located in
  \Windows\Microsoft.Net\Framework\v2.x\Config
-->
<configuration>
```

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