

## Using the Ajax AutoComplete Control in ASP.NET 2.0 – Part 1

The new world of Ajax in ASP.NET 2.0 applications has brought developers a plethora of interesting controls that will greatly enhance your applications or even your existing applications. By combining powerful client side scripting techniques with traditional server side patterns you are now able to provide a visually enticing end user experience on your web applications.

The Ajax Control Toolkit available for free download has a large collection of powerful controls that you can use in your ASP.NET 2.0 applications. There are so many new controls in fact that it can be quite difficult to thoroughly understand them all or even dream up creative ways to use them all.

The goal of these Ajax controls is to make the end user experience more like a desktop application. New web applications that behave more and more like a thick client desktop program, seamlessly integrating the client-server linkage of data transmitting over the internet, are cropping up everyday.

One of the new controls provided in the Ajax Toolkit is the AutoComplete control extender. The premise of this control is to provide your users with suggestions based on the text they are typing into a Textbox control. This is a neat but finicky control that began with fairly inflexible features but now supports more common properties that work more closely with database driven applications.

Throughout the development of the sample application I built for this tutorial I discovered some interesting things that would be of interest to a lot of developers who may have tried implementing this control. Also, you'll learn how to extend the current version of this control to a modified version which supports new features and client side methods that allow you to more easily link the suggested values to key/value pairs returned from a database.

The idea behind the sample application is to type text into a textbox and have a web service called asynchronously on the client through javascript which returns a set of suggested user names from the sample Northwind SQL database. Additionally, since the suggested values have an associated primary key value, the service will enable retrieval of not only the textual name value but also storage of its primary key which can later be used when the user selects once the suggestions provided.

In the current unmodified version of the Ajax Toolkit the ability to also return a primary key value is not supported. Since most applications are going to derive the suggested values from a database with integer key values, this additional feature will allow you to find more uses for your AutoComplete control implementations.

Note: Visual Studio 2004 or Visual Web Developer is required for this tutorial. Additionally, access to any SQL server version/instance which has the sample Northwind database is used but not absolutely required. Should you wish to use another database you will simply need to modify some of the code provided in the tutorial.

### *Prepping the Ajax Toolkit*

In order to get the Ajax Control Toolkit fully functional in Visual Studio we need to do 2 things. The first is to download and install the Toolkit from the asp.net website in order to enable the Ajax Control Toolkit Website template within Visual Studio.

You can download the Ajax Extensions and the Ajax Control Toolkit from this location. You will need both installed if you haven't already done so:

<http://ajax.asp.net/downloads>

Thanks for your interest in the "Using the Ajax AutoComplete Control in ASP.NET 2.0 – Part 1" article by Kevin Koch. To purchase the full article [click here](#)