

{JSON}

The Fat-Free Alternative to XML

JSON as an XML Alternative

- JSON is a light-weight alternative to XML for data-interchange
- JSON = JavaScript Object Notation
 - It's really language independent
 - Most programming languages can easily read it and instantiate objects or some other data structure
- Defined in [RFC 4627](#), IETF, July 2006
- <http://json.org/> has more information

JSON TL;DR

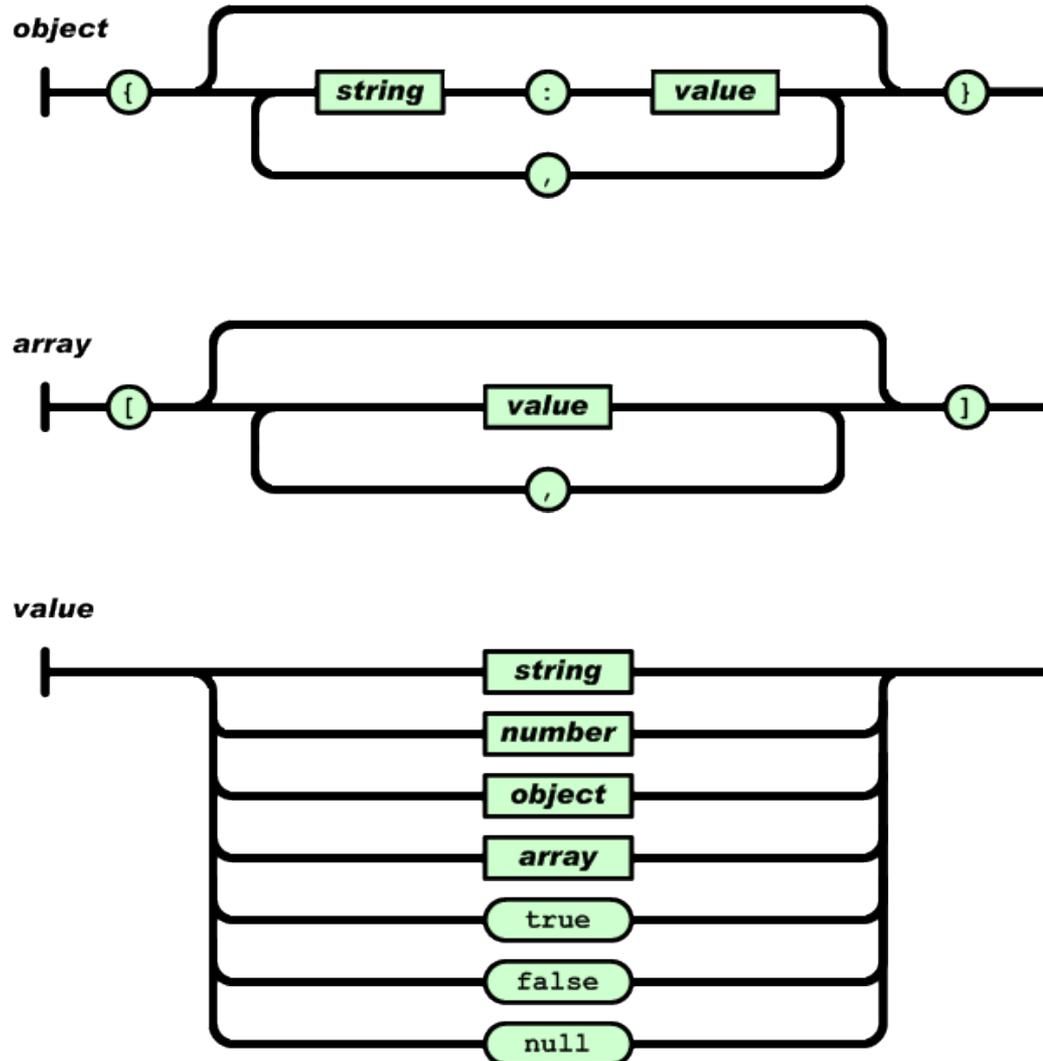
- Lightweight data-interchange format
- Easy for humans to read and write
- Easy for machines to parse and generate
- Not tied tied to Javascript or Web

Example

```
{ "firstName": "John",  
  "lastName" : "Smith",  
  "age"       : 25,  
  "address"   :  
    { "streetAdr" : "21 2nd Street",  
      "city"      : "New York",  
      "state"     : "NY",  
      "zip"       : "10021"},  
  "phoneNumber":  
    [ { "type" : "home",  
        "number": "212-555-1234"},  
      { "type" : "fax",  
        "number" : "646-555-4567"} ]  
}
```

- This is a JSON object with five key-value pairs
- Objects are wrapped by curly braces
- There are no object IDs
- Keys are strings
- Values are numbers, strings, objects or arrays
- Arrays/lists are wrapped by square brackets

Simple BNF



Evaluation

- JSON is simpler and more compact than XML
 - No closing tags, but if you compress XML and JSON the difference is not so great
 - XML parsing is hard because of its complexity
- JSON has a better fit for OO systems than XML
- JSON is not as extensible as XML
- Preferred for simple data exchange by many
- Less syntax, no semantics
- Schemas? We don't need no stinkin schemas!*_
- Transforms? Write your own

JSON-LD

JSON-LD is a W3C recommendation for representing RDF data as JSON objects

```
{ "@context": {  
  "name": "http://xmlns.com/foaf/0.1/name",  
  "homepage": {  
    "@id": "http://xmlns.com/foaf/0.1/workplaceHomepage",  
    "@type": "@id"  
  },  
  "Person": "http://xmlns.com/foaf/0.1/Person"  
},  
"@id": "http://me.markus-lanthaler.com",  
"@type": "Person",  
"name": "Markus Lanthaler",  
"homepage": "http://www.tugraz.at/"  
}
```

Many popular systems use JSON

- MongoDB is an open-source database for JSON objects
 - Very popular NoSQL database
 - A NoSQL DB is one that uses a model not based on relational tables
- Elastic Search is a popular, scalable information retrieval engine that uses JSON as its native representation

Example: JSON in Python

```
>>> import json
>>> x = json.load(open('example.json'))
>>> x
{'lastName': u'Smith', u'age': 25, u'phoneNumber': [{u'type': u'
u'number': u'646-555-4567'}], u'firstName': u'John', u'address':
u'10021', u'city': u'New York'}}
>>> x['address']['state']
u'NY'
>>> print json.dumps(x, sort_keys=True, separators=(',', ':'), ind
{"address":{
  "city":"New York",
  "state":"NY",
  "streetAdr":"21 2nd Street",
  "zip":"10021"},
 "age":25,
 "firstName":"John",
 "lastName":"Smith",
 "phoneNumber":[
  { "number":"212-555-1234",
    "type":"home"},
  {"number":"646-555-4567",
    "type":"fax" } ] }
```

- Python's JSON package reads and writes json from/to files and strings
- Maps JSON objects to Python dictionaries
- Maps JSON arrays to python lists
- Dump (write to file) and dumps (write to string) functions can do simple pretty printing

JSON vs. XML

- JSON: The Fat-Free Alternative to XML

json.org page laying out the case for JSON over XML

- Stop Comparing JSON and XML

Blog post arguing that they're very different things with their own areas of applicability

- XML ↔ JSON

There are many web tools and software packages that can convert between simple xml and json representations, e.g.: [this one](#)

Worse is Better?

- JSON vs. XML can be viewed as an example of “Worse is Better”
- In 1989 Dick Gabriel headed a company that had the best commercial version of Lisp
 - Lisp was considered by programming language experts to be superior to the much more popular C
 - Cf. today: Scheme vs. Python (w.r.t. mutable lists)
- Gabriel explained it as *worse is better*
software that's limited, but simple to learn/use, and flexible, can be more popular to most users