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The **E**T**ag** HTTP response header is an identifier for a specific version of a resource. It allows caches to be more efficient, and saves bandwidth, as a web server does not need to send a full response if the content has not changed. On the other side, if the content has changed, etags are useful to help prevent simultaneous updates of a resource from overwriting each other ("mid-air collisions").

If the resource at a given URL changes, a new Etag value must be generated. Etags are therefore similar to fingerprints and might also be used for tracking purposes by some servers. A comparison of them allows to quickly determine whether two representations of a resource are the same, but they might also be set to persist indefinitely by a tracking server.

Header type	Response header
Forbidden header name	no

Syntax

```
ETag: W/ "<etag_value>"
ETag: "<etag_value>"
```

Directives

W/ Optional
'W/' (case-sensitive) indicates that a [weak validator](#) is used. Weak validators are easy to generate but are far less useful for comparisons. Strong validators are ideal for comparisons but can be very difficult to generate efficiently. Weak Etag values of two representations of the same resources might be semantically equivalent, but not byte-for-byte identical.

"<etag_value>"
Entity tags uniquely representing the requested resources. They are a string of ASCII characters placed between double quotes (Like "675af34563dc - tr34"). The method by which Etag values are generated is not specified. Oftentimes, a hash of the content, a hash of the last modification timestamp, or just a revision number is used. For example, MDN uses a hash of hexadecimal digits of the wiki content.

Examples

1	E T ag: "33a64df551425fcc55e4d42a148795d9f25f89d4"
2	E T ag: W/ "0815"

Avoiding mid-air collisions

With the help of the ETag and the **If-Match** headers, you are able to detect mid-air edit collisions.

For example when editing MDN, the current wiki content is hashed and put into an Etag in the response:

1	E T ag: "33a64df551425fcc55e4d42a148795d9f25f89d4"
---	---

When saving changes to a wiki page (posting data), the **POST** request will contain the **If-Match** header containing the ETag values to check freshness against.

1	I f -M atch : "33a64df551425fcc55e4d42a148795d9f25f89d4"
---	--

If the hashes don't match, it means that the document has been edited in-between and a **412 Precondition Failed** error is thrown.


Caching of unchanged resources

Another typical use case of the ETag header is to cache resources that are unchanged. If a user visits a given URL again (that has an ETag set), and it is *stale*, that is too old to be considered usable, the client will send the value of its ETag along in an **If-None-Match** header field:

1	I f -N one -M atch : "33a64df551425fcc55e4d42a148795d9f25f89d4"
---	--

The server compares the client's ETag (sent with If-None-Match) with the ETag for its current version of the resource and if both values match (that is, the resource has not changed), the server send back a **304 Not Modified** status, without any body, which tells the client that the cached version of the response is still good to use (*fresh*).


Specifications

Specification	Title
 RFC 7232, section 2.3: ETag	Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP/1.1): Conditional Requests

Browser compatibility

	Desktop	Mobile						
Feature	Chrome	Edge	Firefox	Internet Explorer	Opera	Safari	Servo	
E T ag	(Yes)	(Yes)	(Yes)	(Yes)		(Yes)	(Yes)	(Yes)

See also

- [If-Match](#)
- [If-None-Match](#)
- [304 Not Modified](#)
- [412 Precondition Failed](#)
-  [W3C Note: Editing the Web – Detecting the Lost Update Problem Using Unreserved Checkout](#)

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