

# Designing for cacheability



Scott Koon, 2010-25-05

One of the things we kept in mind while working on the new site was how make sure that the only content that you have to load when you come to the DevCentral site is the dynamic, new content. We chose a design that puts the content first, the menu bar is smaller and includes links to the most viewed topics on the site. We made our header much shorter than the previous design. We also narrowed the right hand column, removed the big images.

By moving the content around and into modules, we've made it easier to cache different parts of the page. So even though we are showing more content on the page, we can control how long each content section is cached by our CMS. The majority of our design is done using [Cascading Style Sheets \(CSS\)](#) rather than images. Some design elements, like the rounded corners at the top and bottom of the page as well as the containers, is rendered either using CSS or using a JavaScript plugin. By not using very many images in our design, we made it easier for our [Web Accelerator](#) module to cache the CSS and JavaScript files. This means that, instead of our servers sending the files to your browser, we let our WA handle serve them directly out of it's cache. You can see this in action if you view the source for our website in your browser.

```
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="/Portals/_default/Skins/DC5/stylesheets/vader/jquery-ui-  
<link rel="stylesheet" href="/Portals/_default/Skins/DC5/stylesheets/devcentral-release-min.css;pv8fe
```

Those funky little character sequences at the end of the url to our stylesheets are used by WA to track the version it should serve out. Every so often WA will empty out it's cache and reload the CSS and JavaScript files from our server. It does this without any of the DevCentral team intervening. Wa also tells your browser how long to cache a file and when to expire your browser cache and re-fetch the file. As you may know, the perceived speed of a web site has almost nothing to do with how much bandwidth is available from your ISP or how fast your connection is, but instead is determined [mainly by how many roundtrips your browser has to make](#) to our server.

That being said, how long it takes to download our page DOES matter. Next I'll talk about how we compress, minimize, and otherwise shrink our page down as much as we can so that we can deliver our content to you faster.

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