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2024

Introduction to React

JS Frameworks to the rescue

Fulvio Corno

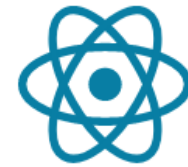
Luigi De Russis



Goal

- Learn one of the most popular front-end libraries
 - Basic principles
 - Application architecture
 - Programming techniques
- Leverage the knowledge of JS concepts

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React

The library for web and native user interfaces

<https://react.dev/>
<https://github.com/facebook/react>

Why a Library?

- Simplify the browser environment
 - Uniform DOM methods
 - More explicit hierarchy
 - **Higher-level** components than HTML elements
 - **Automatic** processing of events and updates
- Simplify the development methods
 - Predefined programming **patterns** and application architecture
 - Lots of compatible plugins and extensions
 - Explicit and rigid **state** management

Main Resources

Tutorials and guides

The screenshot shows the 'Quick Start' page on the React documentation website. The page title is 'Quick Start' and it includes a welcome message: 'Welcome to the React documentation! This page will give you an introduction to the 80% of React concepts that you will use on a daily basis.' A section titled 'You will learn' lists several topics: 'How to create and nest components', 'How to add markup and styles', 'How to display data', 'How to render conditions and lists', 'How to respond to events and update the screen', and 'How to share data between components'. Below this, there is a section 'Creating and nesting components' which explains that React apps are made of components and provides a code example for a button component and its usage within another component.

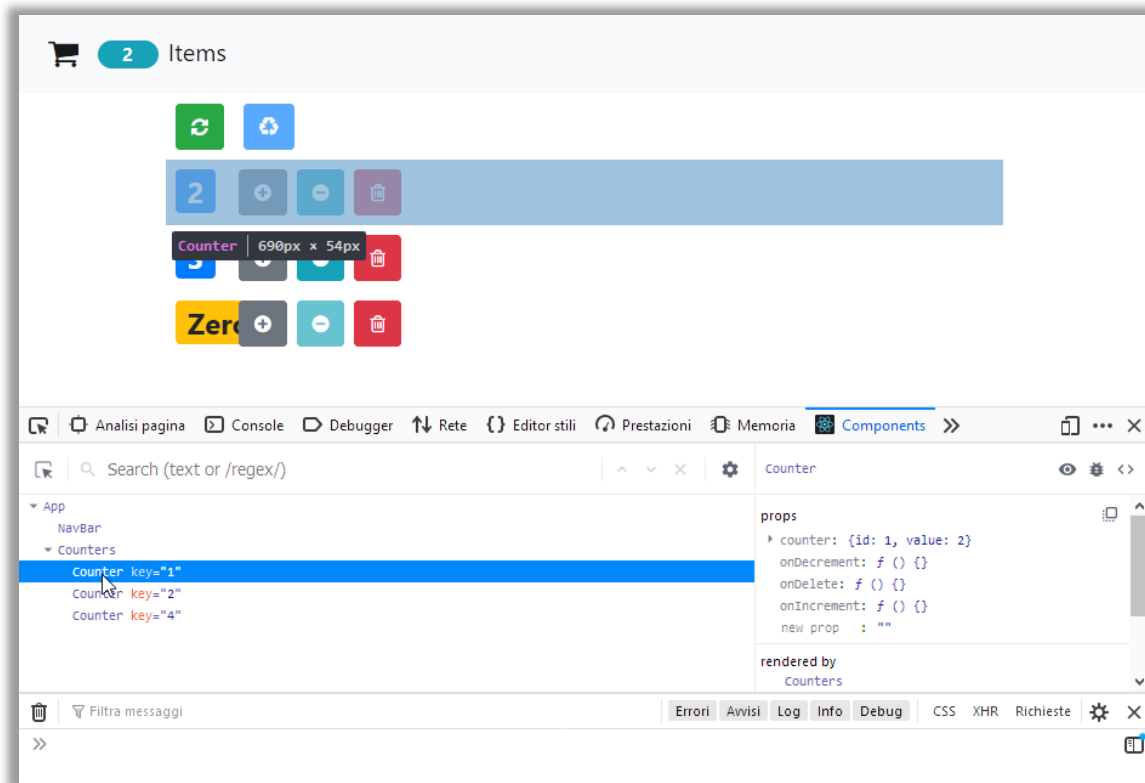
<https://react.dev/learn>


API Reference

The screenshot shows the 'Built-in React Hooks' page on the React documentation website. The page title is 'Built-in React Hooks' and it includes an introduction: 'Hooks let you use different React features from your components. You can either use the built-in Hooks or combine them to build your own. This page lists all built-in Hooks in React.' The page is organized into sections for different types of hooks: 'State Hooks', 'Context Hooks', and 'Ref Hooks'. Each section includes a brief description and a code example. For example, the 'State Hooks' section explains that 'State' lets a component 'remember' information like user input and provides a code example for the 'useState' hook. The 'Context Hooks' section explains that 'Context' lets a component receive information from distant parents without passing it as props and provides a code example for the 'useContext' hook. The 'Ref Hooks' section explains that 'Refs' let a component hold some information that isn't used for rendering and provides a code example for the 'useRef' hook.

<https://react.dev/reference/react>

Browser Development Tools



 chrome web store

 React Developer Tools
Featured

★★★★★ 1,419 | Developer Tools | 4,000,000+ users

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/react-developer-tools/fmkadmapgofadopljbjfkapdkoienihi?hl=en>

 Firefox Browser
ADD-ONS



React Developer Tools
by React

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/react-devtools/>



The React Handbook, Flavio Copes

<https://flaviocopes.com/page/react-handbook/>

A first high-level run about the main design concepts in React

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

React Key Concepts

- **Declarative** approach
 - Never explicitly manipulate the DOM
 - Never explicitly define the order of operations
 - Just define how each component is going to render itself
- Functional design approach
 - **Components** as functions
 - Re-render everything on every change (Virtual DOM)
 - Explicit management of the *state* of the application

React is Functional

- UI Fragment = $f(\text{state}, \text{props})$
- Many components don't need to manage state
- UI Fragment = $f(\text{props})$
 - Idempotent
 - Immutable
- Jargon note: `props` = *properties*

Immutability

- Reacts exploits **Immutability** of objects, for ease of programming and efficiency of processing
- Component **'props'** are immutable (read-only by the component)
- Component **'state'** is not directly mutable (can be changed only through special calls)
- Functions are **'pure'** (have no side-effects besides computing the return value)
 - Idempotency (re-rendering the same component always yields the same result)
 - Predictability

Re-Rendering

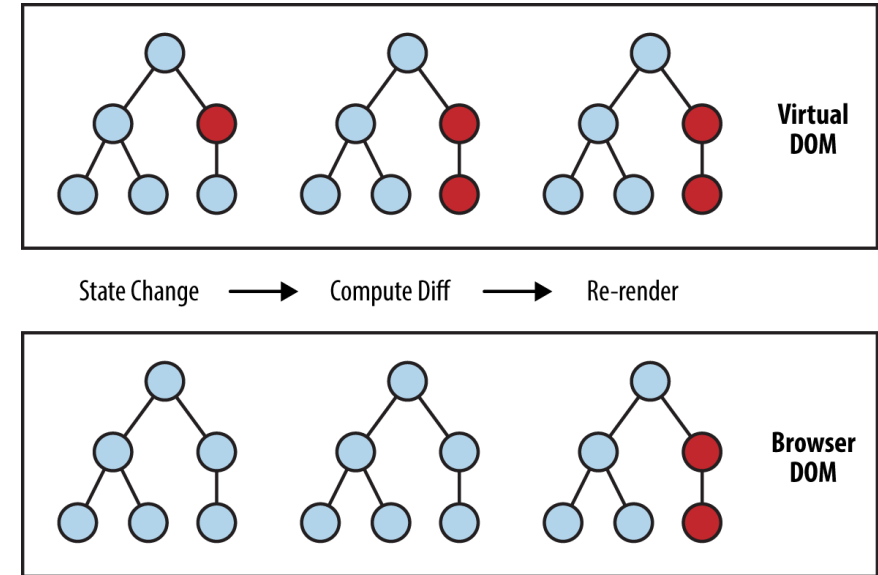
- The application is made of Components
- The entire application is **re-rendered**:
 - Every time a **state** is changed
 - Every time a **property** is changed
- Each Component will re-build itself from scratch
 - With minor variations, or
 - Radically different
- Performance?

Re-Rendering Performance

- Modifications to the DOM are expensive (re-computing layout and updating GUI)
- React implements a **Virtual DOM** layer
 - Internal in-memory data structure, optimized and very fast to update
 - Corrects some DOM anomalies and asymmetries
 - Manages its own set of “synthetic” events
 - After components re-render, React computes the difference between the “old” DOM and the new modified Virtual DOM
 - Only modifications and differences are selectively applied to the browser’s DOM, in batch

Update Cycle

- Build new Virtual DOM tree
- Diff with old one
- Compute minimal set of changes
- Put them in a queue
- Batch render all changes to browser



<https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/learnin-g-react-native/9781491929049/ch02.html>

Synthetic Events

- React implements its own event system
- A single native event handler at root of each component
- Normalizes events across browsers
- Decouples events from DOM

How React Code is integrated in the DOM

```
const container =  
  document.getElementById('root');  
  
const root = createRoot(container);  
  
root.render(<h1>Hello, world!</h1>);
```

DOM container node

Render element into container

React element

JSX Syntax

```
const container =  
document.getElementById('myapp');  
const root = createRoot(container);
```

```
root.render(  
  

```

```
<div id="test">  
  <h1>A title</h1>  
  <p>A paragraph</p>  
</div>
```

```
);
```

JSX Syntax

Equivalent

```
const container =  
document.getElementById('myapp');  
const root = createRoot(container);
```

```
root.render(  
  

```

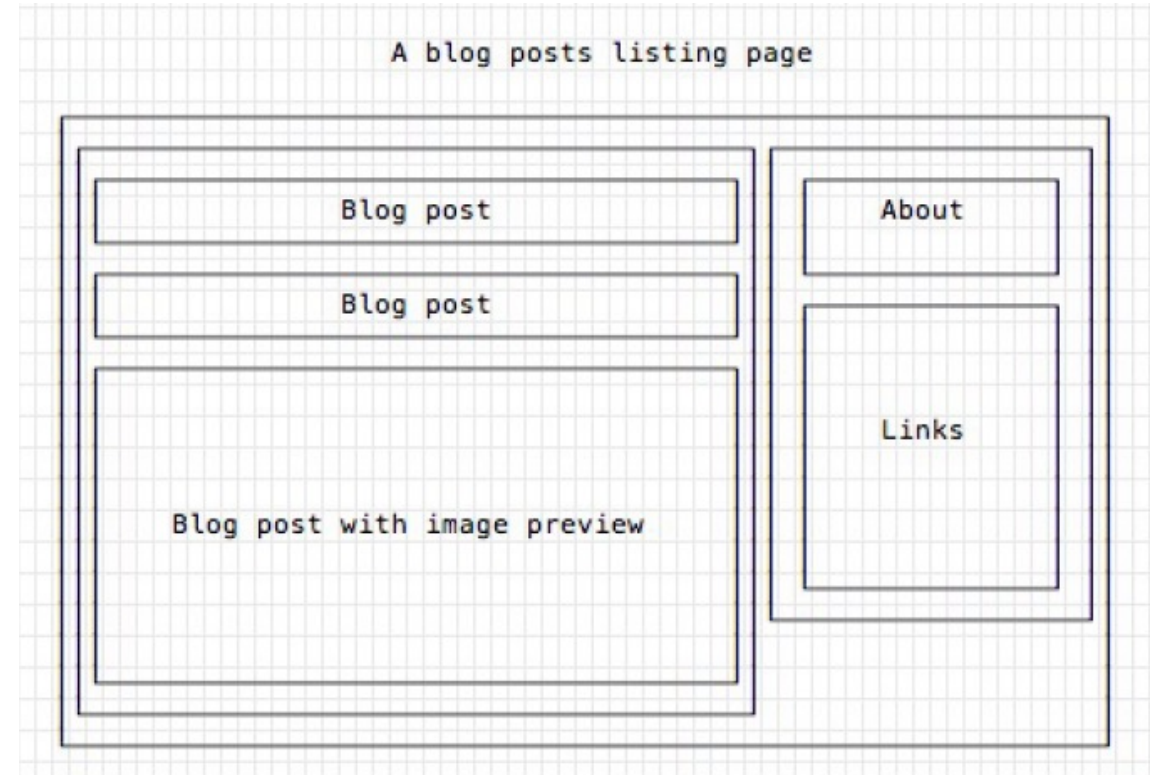
```
React.DOM.div(  
  { id: 'test' },  
  React.DOM.h1(null, 'A title'),  
  React.DOM.p(null, 'A paragraph')
```

JS calls to `React.createElement`

Transpiling
(Babel)

Components

- Everything on a page is a Component
 - Even simple HTML tags (React.DOM.element)
- Components may be **nested**
- ReactDOM.createRoot().render() builds a component and attaches it to a DOM container



Defining Custom Components

As a function, returning DOM elements

```
const BlogPostExcerpt = () => {  
  return (  
    <div>  
      <h1>Title</h1>  
      <p>Description</p>  
    </div>  
  )  
}
```

The function may receive some props

```
const BlogPostContent = (props) => {  
  return (  
    <div>  
      <p>{props.content}</p>  
    </div>  
  )  
}
```

Types of Components

Presentational Components

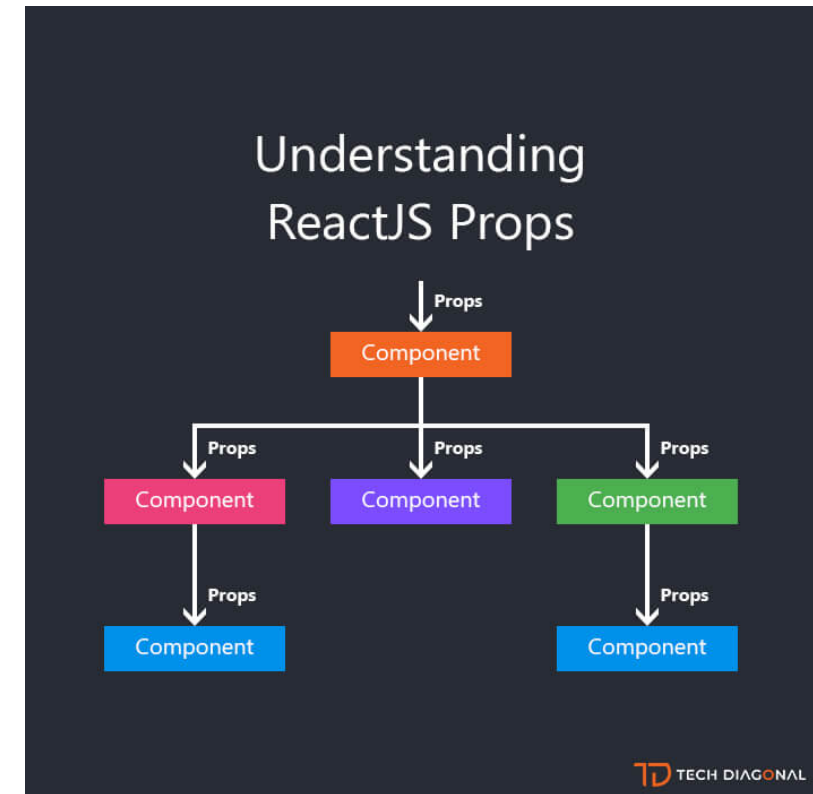
- Generate DOM nodes to be displayed
- Do not manage application state
- Might have some internal state, uniquely for **presentation** purposes

Container Components

- Manage the **state** for a group of children
- May interact with the back-end
- Create (presentational) children to display the information

Props and State

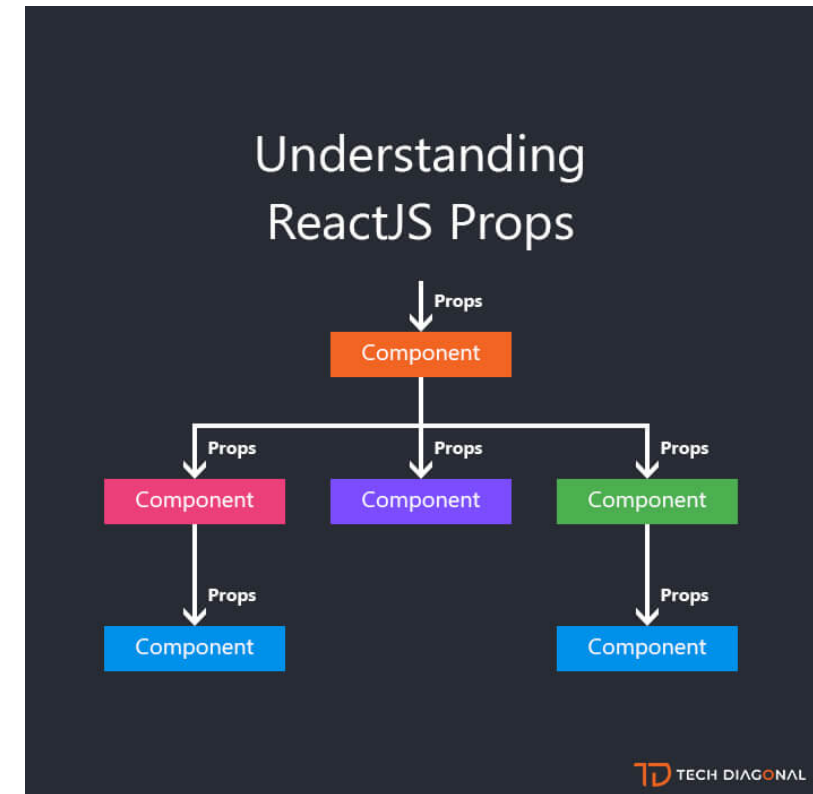
- **Props** (properties) are passed to a component by its parent
 - **Values** (strings, objects, ...) to configure how the component displays or behaves
 - Top-to-bottom data flow
 - **Functions** (callbacks) to access the parent's methods
 - Bottom-to-top action requests



https://www.techdiagonal.com/reactjs_courses/beginner/understanding-reactjs-props/

Props and State

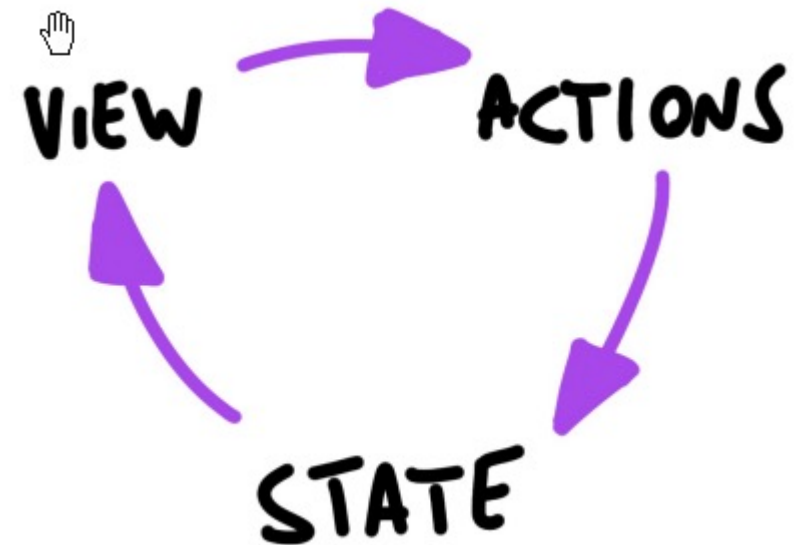
- **State** is a set of variables local to the component
 - **Initialized** with default value or by props' values
 - Can be **mutated** only by calling **specific methods**
 - Asynchronous
 - Will initiate **re-rendering** of the Virtual DOM
 - Current state value can be passed to children (as props)



https://www.techdiagonal.com/reactjs_courses/beginner/understanding-reactjs-props/

Unidirectional Data Flow

- State is passed to the view and to child components
- Actions are triggered by the view
- Actions can update the state
- The state change is passed to the view and to child component



Corollary

- A **state** is always **owned by one Component**
 - Any data that's affected by this state can only affect Components below it: its children.
- Changing state on a Component will never affect its parent, or its siblings, or any other Component in the application
 - Just its children
- For this reason, state is often **moved up** in the Component tree, so that it can be **shared** between components that need to access it.

Installing, configuring and running the Hello World

FIRST REACT APPLICATION

Basic requirements

- Import the React library
 - Import several needed libraries
- We want to use **JSX**
 - Babel required
- We need to run on a web server
 - To be able to use modules
 - `import` in JS code
 - `<script type='module'>` in HTML code
 - Avoid problems with CORS
- Implement polyfills for browser compatibility
- Ease app development (edit-save-reload cycle)
- ...

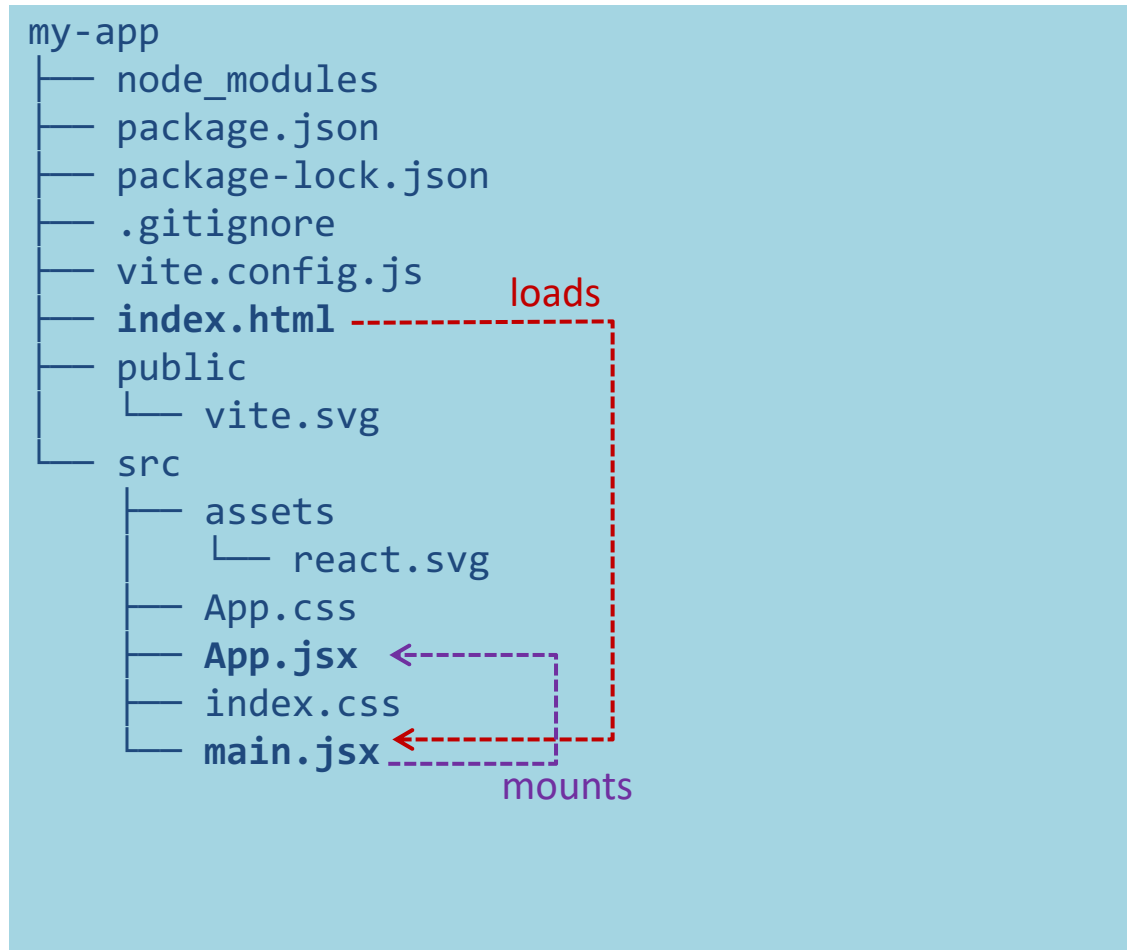
Starting With All The Needed Infrastructure



<https://vitejs.dev/>

1. `npm create vite@latest my-app`
2. From the menu, choose **React**, then **JavaScript**
3. `cd my-app`
4. `npm install`
5. ⌚ ... *65 Megabytes later* ... ⌚
6. `npm run dev`
7. Visit <http://localhost:5173>

Folder Structure



- `public` is the web server root
 - Static files go here
- `index.html` is the page template
 - Published at <http://localhost:xxxx>
 - Automatically reloads when app changes
 - No need to modify, normally
 - Contains an element with `id="root"`
- `src` contains all scripts
- `src/main.jsx` is the JavaScript entry point
 - Contains the `createRoot` call to mount the App in the `#root` element
 - Do not touch, normally
- `src/App.jsx` is the file containing your application
 - **Develop here!**
 - Feel free to `import` other components

Importing/Exporting

- The browser uses “ES6 Modules”
 - ECMA Standard
- Uses `import/export` keywords
 - The `require` function used in Node.js doesn't work here

Module Cheatsheet

Name Export	→	Name Import
<pre>export const name = 'value'</pre>		<pre>import { name } from '...'</pre>
Default Export	→	Default Import
<pre>export default 'value'</pre>		<pre>import anyName from '...'</pre>
Rename Export	→	Name Import
<pre>export { name as newName }</pre>		<pre>import { newName } from '...'</pre>
Export List + Rename	→	Import List + Rename
<pre>export { name1, name2 as newName2 }</pre>		<pre>import { name1 as newName1, newName2 } from '...'</pre>

📷 samanthaming 🌐 samanthaming.com 🐦 samantha_ming

<https://www.samanthaming.com/tidbits/79-module-cheatsheet/>

Example: Hello world

App.jsx

```
function Button(props) {
  if (props.lang === 'it')
    return <button>Ciao!</button>;
  else
    return <button>Hello!</button>;
}

function App() {
  return (
    <p>
      Press here: <Button lang='it' />
    </p>
  );
}

export default App;
```

- App must return the JSX of the whole application
- We may use “custom components”
 - Simply defined as JS functions
 - Receive ‘props’
 - The lang JSX attribute becomes a property props.lang

Example: Components in a Separate File

App.jsx

```
import Button from './Button.jsx';

function App() {
  return (
    <p>
      Premi qui: <Button lang='it' />
    </p>
  );
}

export default App;
```

Button.jsx

```
function Button(props) {
  if (props.lang === 'it')
    return <button>Ciao!</button>;
  else
    return <button>Hello!</button>;
}

export default Button;
```

Example: Dynamic State

Button.jsx

```
import { useState } from "react";

function Button(props) {
  let [buttonLang, setButtonLang] = useState(props.lang) ;

  if (buttonLang === 'it')
    return <button onClick={()=>setButtonLang('en')}>Ciao!</button>;
  else
    return <button onClick={()=>setButtonLang('it')}>Hello!</button>;
}

export default Button;
```



Example: adding Bootstrap

- Bootstrap CSS may be loaded “manually” from index.html
or, better...
- The `react-bootstrap` library delivers many React Components that mimic the various Bootstrap classes
 - `npm install react-bootstrap`
 - `npm install bootstrap`

App.jsx

```
import 'bootstrap/dist/css/bootstrap.min.css';
import { Col, Container, Row } from 'react-bootstrap';

import MyButton from './Button.jsx';

function App() {
  return (
    <Container>
      <Row>
        <Col>
          Premi qui: <MyButton lang='it' />
        </Col>
      </Row>
    </Container>
  );
}

export default App;
```



Example: adding Bootstrap

Button.jsx

```
import { useState } from "react";
import { Button } from "react-bootstrap";

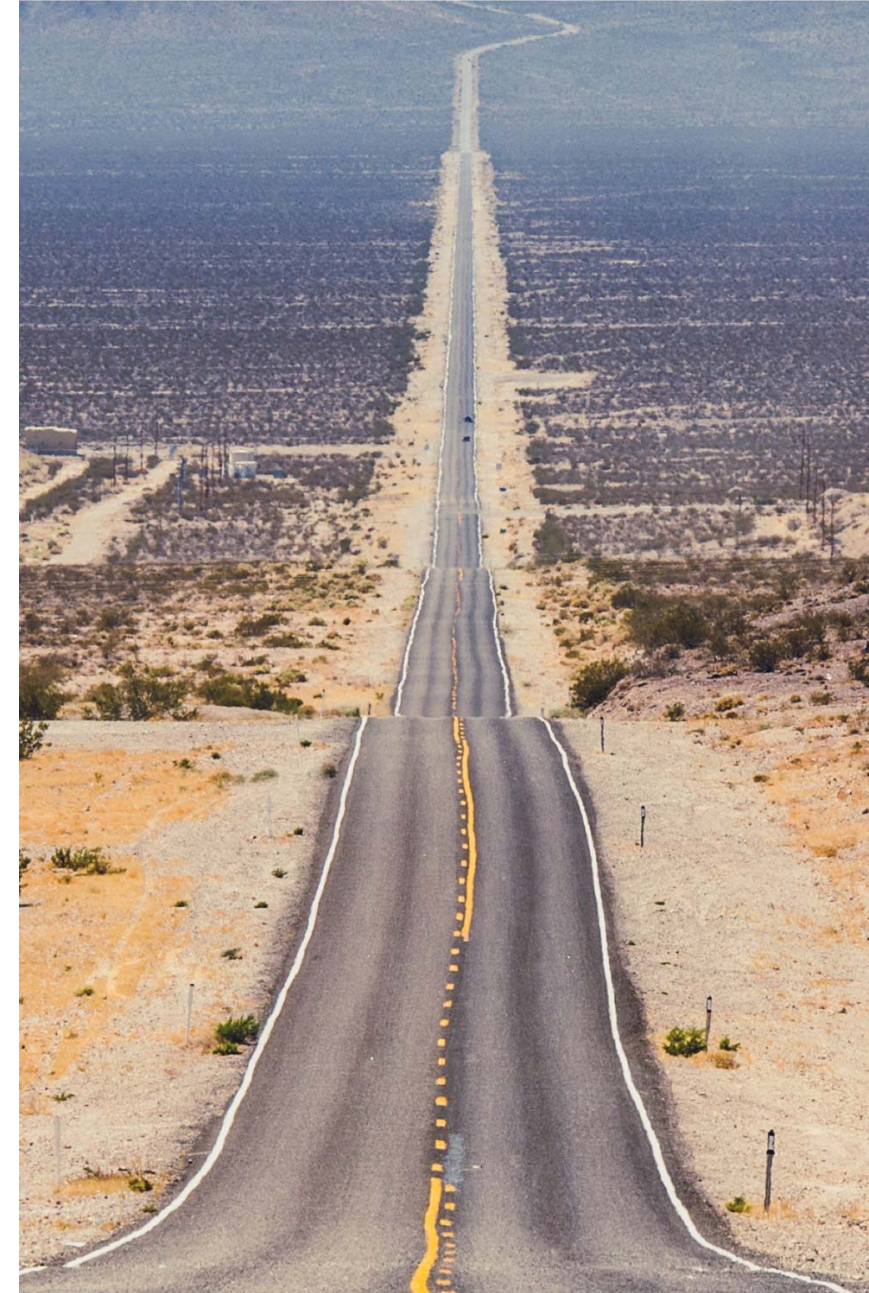
function MyButton(props) {
  let [buttonLang, setButtonLang] = useState(props.lang) ;

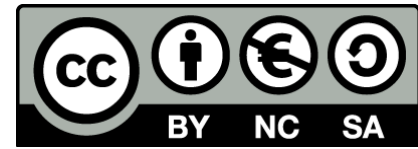
  if (buttonLang === 'it')
    return <Button variant='primary' onClick={()=>setButtonLang('en')}>Ciao!</Button>
  else
    return <Button variant='primary' onClick={()=>setButtonLang('it')}>Hello!</Button>
}

export default MyButton;
```


What's next?

- Components and props
- JSX
- State and Hooks
- Events
- Forms
- Lifecycle
- Router
- ...





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