

# Re: strings vs regular expressions

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- *From:* "Kevin Spencer" <[unclechutney@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:unclechutney@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Wed, 11 Apr 2007 08:01:54 -0400
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Hi AVL,

Just to clear things up regarding regular expressions versus string functions. Use regular expressions when looking for a *\*pattern\** of characters in a string, which may be different characters in the same pattern, and string functions for looking for substrings. What I mean by "patterns" is, for example, a hyperlink in an HTML document.

A hyperlink is a string that must follow certain rules. It must begin with the character sequence "<a" followed by one or more white space characters, followed by 0 or more attribute name=value pairs, followed by the ">" character. This is followed by a string of text that is followed by the "</a>" character sequence. Note that only several of the characters are specified, and you don't know what the rest of them will be. So, how do you look for a string that satisfies these rules? Example:

```
(?m)(?i)(?<=<a(?:\s+href=(?<href>[^\s]+))|(?:\s+[^\s=>]+=[^\s=>]+))*>(?:<innerHTML>[^\s]*)(?=</a>)
```

The above is a regular expression that identifies substrings that satisfy those rules. In addition, it captures 2 groups, one for the link text, one for the innerHtml of the anchor.

You could not use a string function to find this pattern. Generally, string functions are faster than regular expressions, but when looking for patterns (groups of characters that satisfy rules), regular expressions are the fastest method.

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HTH,

Kevin Spencer  
Microsoft MVP

Printing Components, Email Components,  
FTP Client Classes, Enhanced Data Controls, much more.  
DSI PrintManager, Miradyne Component Libraries:  
<http://www.miradyne.net>

Re: strings vs regular expressions

"AVL" <AVL@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message  
news:A15C2E96-968B-4323-A3BF-D1F5663FB776@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

hi,

I need to compare or check for substrings in a given string.  
which would give better performance – string related compare functions or  
regular expressions....