



OVERVIEW

REST API style/protocol for service communication
Key principles and design philosophy
Compare to REST, SOAP, GraphQL alternatives
Typical request
curl -X POST https://api.example.com/graphql \ -H 'Content-Type: application/json' \ -d '{"query": "{ users { id name } }"}'

CORE CONCEPTS

Schema: defines types, queries, mutations
Operations: Query (read), Mutation (write), Subscription (real-time)
Resolver: function that returns data for a field
Schema example:
type User { id: ID!, name: String!, email: String! }
type Query { user(id: ID!): User, users: [User!]! }

SETUP & SERVER

```
npm install apollo-server graphql
const { ApolloServer } = require('@apollo/server')
const server = new ApolloServer({ typeDefs, resolvers })
await server.listen({ port: 4000 })
# GraphQL Playground at http://localhost:4000
```

QUERIES & MUTATIONS

```
# Query
query { user(id: "1") { name email } }
# Mutation
mutation { createUser(name: "Alice", email: "a@b.com") { id } }
# Variables
query GetUser($id: ID!) { user(id: $id) { name } }
{ "id": "123" }
```

RESOLVERS

```
const resolvers = {
  Query: {
    user: (_, { id }, ctx) => ctx.db.users.findById(id),
    users: (_, __, ctx) => ctx.db.users.findAll(),
  },
  Mutation: {
    createUser: (_, args, ctx) => ctx.db.users.create(args),
  },
}
```

AUTH & SECURITY

Add auth in context or middleware
const server = new ApolloServer({ context: async ({ req }) => ({ user: await authenticate(req.headers.authorization), db, }), })
Validate and sanitize all inputs
Rate limit and depth-limit queries

ERROR HANDLING

```
throw new UserInputError('Invalid input', { field: 'email' })
throw new AuthenticationError('Not authenticated')
throw new ForbiddenError('Not authorized')
Errors returned in errors[] array alongside data
Use formatError to sanitize error messages in production
```

PERFORMANCE

N+1 problem: use DataLoader for batching
const userLoader = new DataLoader(ids => batchLoadUsers(ids))
Query.user = (_, { id }) => userLoader.load(id)
Persisted queries: cache query document hash
Response caching: @cacheControl directive
Field-level tracing for performance analysis

TOOLING

GraphQL Playground / Apollo Studio
interactive IDE
graphql-codegen generate types from schema
graphql-inspector schema diff/validation
Apollo Client frontend integration
urql lightweight GraphQL client
graphql-shield permission layer

TESTING

```
# Apollo Server integration test
const { query } = createTestClient(server)
const { data } = await query({ query: GET_USER, variables: { id: '1' } })
expect(data.user.name).toBe('Alice')
Test resolvers in isolation with mock context
Use Jest or Vitest as test runner
```

COMMON GOTCHAS

N+1 queries: always use DataLoader for relations
Query depth limiting: prevent DoS attacks
Don't expose internal error details in production
Schema-first vs code-first: choose one approach
Subscriptions need separate WebSocket transport setup