

How to get started with Prefuse and Netbeans

[The JavaDude Weblog](#)

I was looking for a java based **visualization toolkit** for quite a while. Either they are very static (image rendered and delivered without any interaction) or cost too much money or badly documented or plain buggy and incomplete. I found a toolkit called **prefuse** ([link](#)) on sourceforge which is an amazing piece of work done by **Jeffrey Heer** ([link](#)) of Berkeley University Stanford. Thanks for this and to the people in the forum ([link](#)) to continue the effort to answer questions.

Though it's last release is dating **2007.10** it is feature complete and not really need to carry the beta tag, but never mind. The project migrated to flare ([link](#)) based on Flash and AS, but unfortunately that is not always the first choice, even more powerful in terms of graphics. But I wonder what would be missing. It is open source, so with community effort things can be implemented or even added. It is released under BSD and can be used freely for commercial and non-commercial applications.

I am a true Netbean nerd, aka NB user and spent some time to get started with prefuse.

Today I want to share with you the steps (i did) to get a running with prefuse and Netbeans running Windows.

(Please note, it might not be the perfect or smartest approach. I don't claim it's the right way or complete, but I got it to work this way.)

I am sure this is very basic information for the prefuse experts, but other beginners might need to go through the same steps.

1. Download the file **prefuse-beta-20071021.zip** ([link](#)).

2. Unzip the file to folder.

3. Check for a properly set **JAVA_HOME** path, like

```
E:\Documents and Settings\SAM>echo %JAVA_HOME%
```

```
E:\Program Files\Java\jdk1.6.0_10
```

4. Open the file **build.bat** with text editor of your choice and change the following line

```
%JAVA_HOME%\bin\java.exe -Dant.home=...
```

to

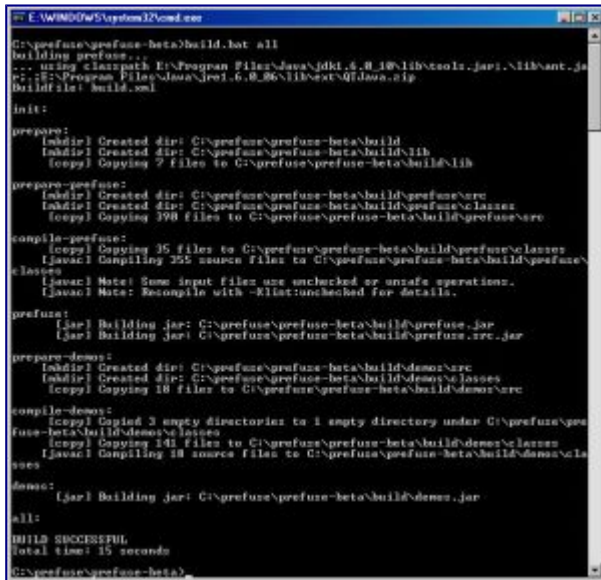
```
java.exe -Dant.home=...
```

(I removed the JAVA_HOME because java already is in the system PATH)

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5. Open a DOS-Box (Windows, aka run.. CMD) and navigate to the folder with the build.bat file.

6. Execute *'build.bat all'*. You should get something like this:



```
E:\V\W\0\0\5\System32\cmd.exe
C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build.bat all
building prefuse...
... using classpath: E:\Program Files\Java\jdk1.6.0_10\lib\classes.jar;.\lib\ant.jar;
C:\Program Files\Java\jdk1.6.0_10\lib\ext\classes.jar
Buildfile: build.xml

init:
prepare:
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\lib
  [copy] Copying 7 files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\lib
prepare-prefuse:
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse\src
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse\classes
  [copy] Copying 398 files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse\src
compile-prefuse:
  [copy] Copying 35 files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse\classes
  [javac] Compiling 355 source files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse\classes
  [javac] Note: Some input files use unchecked or unsafe operations.
  [javac] Note: Recompile with -Xlint:unchecked for details.
prefuse:
  [jar] Building jar: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse.jar
  [jar] Building jar: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\prefuse.src.jar
prepare-demo:
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\src
  [mkdir] Created dir: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\classes
  [copy] Copying 18 files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\src
compile-demo:
  [copy] Copied 2 empty directories to 1 empty directory under C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\classes
  [copy] Copying 141 files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\classes
  [javac] Compiling 18 source files to C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo\classes
demo:
  [jar] Building jar: C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta\build\demo.jar
all:
BUILD SUCCESSFUL
Total time: 15 seconds
C:\prefuse\prefuse-beta>
```

prefuse and Netbeans: Build the jarfiles

7. Start **Netbeans** and create a **new project** (New, Choose project, Java, Java Application). Lets call it *PrefuseDemo*.

8. Open the **project properties** (right click on the project name in the project explorer) and select properties. Go to the libraries section and add *prefuse.jar* and *demo.jar* (required for the sample code). You find these files in the folder 'build' created by our build.bat.

9. Now you change the packagename (with the initial created Main.java if selected) to *prefusedemo*.

10. In the build folder you also find a **src folder** with various sample java code. For this tutorial I took *GraphView.java*.

11. Create a **new java class** in the *prefuse* package with the name *GraphView*.

12. Copy the complete sourcecode from *GraphView.java* into it and replace the basic skeleton.

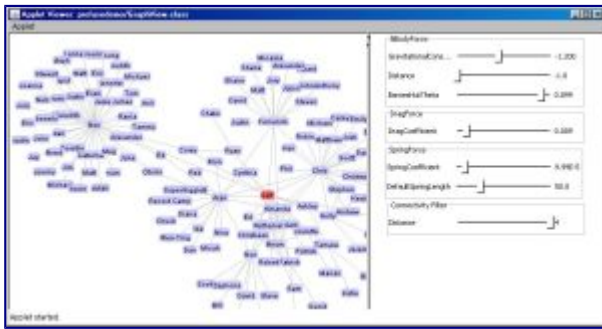
13. Fix the package name to package *prefusedemo*;

14. You can delete the Main.java if NB created it for you.

15. **Build** the project.

16. Right click on *GraphView.java* and select **Run File**. Finished ! You should see this:

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prefuse and Netbeans: Run the demo

Remarks:

1. The other files (demos that come with the prefuse package) you can create the same way and add them into your demo application.
2. I tried to import the whole prefuse source folder into Netbeans via Import, but it didnt work.

Conclusion:

Now we got started, lets move on to understand the prefuse concept and adapt some of the samples to our own applications or create new ones from the scratch ! Stay tuned for more prefuse !