Oracle Database Easy Connect Plus

Configurable Database Connection Syntax for applications using Oracle Database

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EASY CONNECT PLUS OVERVIEW

Oracle Database 19c introduced a significantly enhanced connection string syntax called Easy Connect Plus. For Oracle Database 21c, you can add DRCP connection parameters to the Easy Connect Plus syntax.

Easy Connect Plus makes it easier to use features such as TLS connections, wallets, load balancing, connection timeouts, and network buffer size tuning. It reduces the need for external configuration files such as *sqlnet.ora* and *tnsnames.ora*. For example, to access Oracle Cloud Database services via mutual TLS (mTLS) for secure communication, you can include the wallet location in the Easy Connect Plus string and do away with these configuration files.

Easy Connect Plus can be used in <u>JDBC</u>¹, C-based Oracle Call Interface (OCI), Oracle C++ Call Interface (OCCI), and .NET applications. It is also usable in applications and drivers built on OCI, such as the Oracle Database drivers for Python, Node.js, PHP, Ruby, and Go.

EASY CONNECT BACKGROUND

Easy Connect is a syntax currently used by Oracle programs and applications when connecting to an Oracle Database service. At its simplest, an Easy Connect URL string includes a hostname where the Oracle Database is running, an optional port, and the database service name:

```
host[:port][/[service name]]
```

For example, when Oracle Database is running on a host with a name, say, *mydbhost.example.com* with the default Pluggable Database service "*orclpdb1*", then a typical connection in SQL*Plus would be:

```
SQL> connect scott/pw@mydbhost.example.com/orclpdb1
```

Or in Python:

```
connection = oracledb.connect(user='scott',
password='password', dsn='mydbhost.example.com/orclpdb1')
```

EASY CONNECT PLUS SYNTAX

Easy Connect Plus syntax is a superset of Easy Connect that supports more connection options. The syntax is available in all the Oracle Database drivers (*JDBC*, *ODP.NET* ², *OCI*, *C++ based OCCI*, *python-oracledb*, *node-oracledb*, etc.) that use Oracle Client 19c (and later versions) and connect to Oracle Database 11.2 or later.

In addition to the normal Easy Connect features listed in the earlier section, Easy Connect Plus provides the following capabilities:

It allows TCPS connections and security-related properties in the URL. For example, tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?ssl_server_cert_dn="cn=sales,cn=OracleContext,dc=us,dc=example,dc=com"

¹ Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) is Java's standard database access API developed by Oracle

² Oracle Data Provider for .NET – ODP.NET

- It allows connection properties in the URL, which can enable High Availability (HA) features for the application. For example, tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?connect_timeout=60&transport_connect_timeout=30&retry count=3
- It allows multiple hostnames and multiple port numbers in the URL, making it compatible with Oracle RAC³. E.g.,
 tcps://salesserver1:1521,salesserver2,salesserver3:1522/sales.us.example.com

The Oracle Database Easy Connect Plus syntax is:

```
[[protocol:]//]host1{,host12}[:port1]{,host2:port2}{;host3{,host32}[
:port3]}[/[service_name][:server_type][/instance_name]][?parameter_n
ame1=value1{&parameter_name2= value2}]
```

Older Clients (such as 19c and 21c) do not support address lists (separated by a semi-colon) with Easy Connect Plus. So, the Oracle Database Easy Connect Plus syntax with Oracle 19c and 21c clients is:

```
[[protocol:]//]host1{,host2}[:port1]{,host2:port2}[/[service_name][:
server_type][/instance_name]][?parameter_name1=value1{&parameter_name2= value2}]
```

Protocol

The protocol specifies the transport protocol to be used while connecting to the database host. From 19c, the supported values are *TCP* and *TCPS*. The default is *TCP*.

Hosts

The host list is a comma-separated list of hostnames or IP addresses used to connect to a database.

When multiple hosts are used, load balancing is turned on automatically.

The host list can also be separated by semi-colons, if there are multiple address lists in the Easy Connect string.

Ports

Port numbers indicate the ports that the database services are listening on. The default is 1521.

When using multiple hosts, if the same port is used on each host, then you can use:

host1, host2:port

Otherwise, you can indicate different ports that should be used:

host1:port1,host2:port2

³ Oracle Real Application Clusters

Service Name

The service name is the <u>service</u> the database is known by. It is a name comprised of the database name and domain name entered during installation or database creation.

Service names can be found by running "Isnrctl services" on the database host.

Note that database "System IDentifiers "(SIDs) cannot be used in Easy Connect or Easy Connect Plus syntax.

Server Type

The server type specifies what kind of server is used on the database host to handle the connection. It can be one of **DEDICATED**, **SHARED**, or **POOLED**. The default is to leave it unspecified and let the listener decide.

The common, traditional server type is <u>dedicated</u>.

<u>Shared servers</u> ensure that the server processes are shared, but the session state is not shared. Session state is in the SGA.

A <u>pooled server</u> is used by <u>Database Resident Connection Pooling</u> (DRCP). The server process and session state are both shared. Session state is in the PGA.

Shared servers and DRCP are used when the database host does not have enough memory to handle a large number of dedicated connections.

Instance Name

If you need to connect to a specific instance that the service represents, you can use an instance name.

Parameters

Parameters are name-value pairs that control the behavior of connections. The syntax uses '?' to indicate the start of parameters and a '&' delimiter between each parameter. Leading and trailing white spaces are ignored within parameter values. If whitespace is required as part of the value, it should be placed within double quotes. Parameters are described in the next section.

PARAMETERS

Easy Connect Plus allows Security, Proxy, Description and DRCP parameters to be specified.

In all drivers except JDBC Thin, any parameters not noted here are passed through as *Description* parameters, allowing further (or future) options to be used when connecting. JDBC Thin has a <u>whitelist</u> of allowed *Description* parameters.

Security Parameters

Security parameters are used to configure a TLS connection to a database. When using these parameters, the protocol must be set to **TCPS**.

SSL SERVER CERT DN

Specifies the distinguished name (DN) of the database server.

When SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH is ON, this DN is matched with the DN from the server certificate.

SSL SERVER DN MATCH

Specifies if server certification validation through distinguished name (DN) matching should be enforced on the client side. The value can be on or off. The default value is on (from Oracle Client 19.2).

This parameter is used in conjunction with <code>SSL_SERVER_CERT_DN</code>.

If the SSL_SERVER_CERT_DN parameter is not specified, then the database server hostname (as specified by the HOST parameter in the original connect string) is checked against the Common Name (CN) and Server Alternate Name (SAN) fields from the server certificate by default. The connection will not succeed if the check fails.

WALLET LOCATION

Sets the directory containing the Oracle wallets. Wallets are certificates, keys, and trustpoints⁴ processed by SSL.

Only filesystem wallets are supported with this method.

Proxy Parameters

Proxy parameters configure traffic to be routed through a proxy server.

Successful connection depends on specific proxy configurations. The performance of data transfers depends on proxy capacity. Oracle does not recommend using this feature in production environments where performance is critical.

HTTPS PROXY

Sets an HTTP proxy hostname or IP address for tunneling TLS client connections. Non-TLS connections cannot be tunneled.

HTTPS PROXY PORT

Sets an HTTP proxy host port for tunneling TLS client connections.

Description Parameters

All other parameters will be description parameters. These include:

CONNECT TIMEOUT

Sets the timeout duration in seconds for an application to establish an Oracle Net connection. There is no timeout by default.

⁴ For drivers using Oracle Client's 19.14 and 21.5 version libraries, built-in trustpoints support is available. With this feature, an SSO wallet is not required as long as the server certificate is signed by a Root CA which is present in the system trust store (the most commonly used Root CAs are present). This is also supported in the Managed and Core ODP.NET drivers (version 19.13 and 21.4 onwards). All versions of JDBC Thin driver use the default "truststore" mechanism from the JDK.

EXPIRE TIME

Sets a time interval in minutes to send probes to verify that connections are active. Setting a value greater than 0 ensures that connections are not left open indefinitely due to an abnormal database server termination. If **EXPIRE_TIME** is used to prevent firewalls from terminating idle connections, the value should be less than half of the firewall timeout period.

FAILOVER

Enables or disables connect-time failover for multiple hosts. The value can be **on** or **off**. The default is **on**.

LOAD BALANCE

Enables or disables Oracle client load balancing for multiple hosts. The value can be on or off. The default is on.

RECV BUF SIZE

Sets the TCP/TCPS socket receive buffer size in bytes. This parameter should be tuned to accommodate the Bandwidth-Delay Product (BDP) of the connection. The database server configuration file *sqlnet.ora* should also set this parameter.

BDP refers to the amount of data on the "wire" (data network) at any given point in time. Default Operating System buffers do not hold enough data to fill the wire. A starting recommendation is to set the receive buffer size to accommodate the BDP. For example, on a 40 Mbps network with 25 millisecond round-trip time between endpoints, the BDP is (40 * 1000 / 8) KB/second * (0.025) seconds, which is 125 KB. The RECV_BUF_SIZE parameter could be set to 125000.

Large buffer sizes help applications queue more data to the operating system and utilize the available bandwidth on the "wire" efficiently.

SEND BUF SIZE

Sets the TCP/TCPS socket send buffer size in bytes. This parameter should be tuned to accommodate the bandwidth-delay product (BDP) of the connection. The database server configuration file *sqlnet.ora* should also set this parameter.

A starting recommendation is to set the send buffer size to accommodate the BDP described by RECV_BUF_SIZE earlier. See RECV_BUF_SIZE for an example.

SDU

Sets the Oracle Net Session Data Unit (SDU) packet size in bytes. Larger SDU values give better network throughput due to fewer system calls and lower CPU usage at the expense of memory. The database server configuration should also set this parameter.

For bulk data transfers, set this to 64 K.

SOURCE ROUTE

Enables network routing through multiple hosts. The value can be **on** or **off**. The default is **off**.

RETRY COUNT

Sets the number of times the list of hosts is traversed when attempting to connect to Oracle Database.

Connection is attempted in turn to each host in the host list, until a connection is successful or the whole host list has been traversed the specified number of times. If only one host is used, then the connection to this host is attempted the specified number of times.

RETRY DELAY

Sets the delay in seconds between retries of host list traversal. The default is 0. This parameter works in conjunction with the **RETRY COUNT** parameter.

TRANSPORT CONNECT TIMEOUT

Sets the transport connect timeout duration in seconds for a client to establish an Oracle Net connection to an Oracle database. This parameter is a subset of **CONNECT_TIMEOUT** and only applies to TCP and TCPS connection establishment.

Other parameters can also be used for all drivers except for the JDBC Thin driver. They are treated as parameters in the **DESCRIPTION** section of an equivalent *tnsnames.ora* connection descriptor entry. They are validated during connection.

DRCP Parameters

For applications running Oracle Client version 19c or later that connect to Oracle Database 21c, you can configure <u>Database Resident Connection Pooling</u> (DRCP) settings in the Easy Connect Plus Syntax in your applications through these parameters:

POOL CONNECTION CLASS

Explicitly names the connection class for a DRCP connection to an Oracle Database. A connection class is a logical name for the type of connection required by the application. The connection class setting lets different applications (which connect to the Oracle Database as the same database user) identify their DRCP pooled sessions using a logical name that corresponds to the application. Thus, sessions belonging to a particular connection class are not shared outside the connection class.

The maximum allowed length for the POOL_CONNECTION_CLASS value is 1024 characters (including the NULL terminating character), and it cannot include an asterisk (*).

POOL PURITY

Specifies if an application needs a new session that is not filled with any earlier session state or must reuse a previous session from a DRCP connection to an Oracle Database. The values can be **NEW** or **SELF**. Using **POOL_PURITY=SELF** gives the best reuse and performance.

It is recommended to set the <code>POOL_CONNECTION_CLASS</code> in the Easy Connect string to partition the connections effectively and prevent session information leakage. You can set <code>POOL_PURITY=SELF</code> to get optimum performance and best resource (processes and sessions) utilization, especially when multiple instances of the application access Oracle Database through DRCP and can share session information.

If the application uses POOL_PURITY=SELF in the Easy Connect string, there is no guarantee that the application will honor drop session calls for the DRCP connection.

The DRCP parameters can be configured for both Container Databases (CDBs) and Pluggable Databases (PDBs) in Oracle Database. They can be used for all client drivers that use Oracle Client version 19c or later and Managed ODP.NET Thin driver. They are not supported by the JDBC Thin driver.

Implicit Connection Pooling Parameters

From Oracle Database 23ai onwards, Implicit Connection Pooling capability has been introduced with both Oracle Database's DRCP and Oracle Connection Manager - Traffic Director Mode (CMAN-TDM)'s Proxy Resident Connection Pooling (PRCP) features. To enable Implicit Connection Pooling, the POOL_BOUNDARY parameter needs to be set in the Connect String.

POOL BOUNDARY

Enables <u>Implicit Connection Pooling</u> (an Oracle Database 23ai feature) with DRCP or PRCP. The values can be **STATEMENT** or **TRANSACTION**. This setting specifies the boundary condition to release an application session back to the DRCP or PRCP pool.

EXAMPLES

This section includes various Easy Connect Plus syntax examples. It depicts how each Easy Connect connection string can replace the connect descriptor that might be used in *tnsnames.ora* and other configuration files.

Example 1 - Protocol

```
tcp://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 2 - Multiple hosts

```
salesserver1, salesserver2:1782/sales.us.example.com
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (LOAD_BALANCE=ON)
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1782))
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver2) (PORT=1782))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 3 – Multiple hosts and ports

```
salesserver1:1521,salesserver2,salesserver3:1522/sales.us.example.com
```

```
(DESCRIPTION=
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(LOAD_BALANCE=ON)
(ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
(ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver2) (PORT=1522))
(ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver3) (PORT=1522))
(CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 4 - Multiple address lists

salesserver1:1521;saleserver2,salesserver3:1522/sales.us.example.com
replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS_LIST=
          (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=saleserver1) (PORT=1521)))
(ADDRESS_LIST=
          (LOAD_BALANCE=ON)
          (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=saleserver2) (PORT=1522))
          (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=saleserver3) (PORT=1522)))
(CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

This example will not work with older Oracle Clients (21c or earlier).

Example 5 - IPv6 address as the host

```
[2606:b400:41c:8a19:f816:3eff:fe8f:e3ef]:1521/sales.us.example.com replaces the following descriptor
```

Note that a numeric IPv6 address has to be placed between enclosing square brackets.

Example 6 – TLS Connections

```
tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com replaces the following descriptor
```

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcps) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (SECURITY=(SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH=ON))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Note that SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH=ON gets automatically added to the full connect string and enforces server DN matching. The hostname used for connecting (*salesserver1* in this example) is matched against the CN⁵ and SAN⁶ fields in the server's SSL certificate. The client application gets connected to the database, only if the match succeeds.

⁵ CN - Common Name

⁶ SAN - Subject Alternative Name

Example 7 – TLS Connections (No Server DN matching)

tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?ssl_server_dn_match=off
replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcps) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (SECURITY=(SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH=OFF))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

The server DN matching is not enforced in this case.

Example 8 – Wallet location

tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?wallet_location="/tmp/
oracle"

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcps) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com))
  (SECURITY=(WALLET LOCATION=/tmp/oracle) (SSL SERVER DN MATCH=ON)))
```

Example 9 – Distinguished Name Matching

tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?ssl_server_cert_dn=
"cn=sales,cn=OracleContext,dc=us,dc=example,dc=com"

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcps) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (SECURITY=(SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH=ON)
  (SSL_SERVER_CERT_DN=cn=sales, cn=OracleContext, dc=us, dc=example, dc=com))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 10 - HTTPS Proxy

tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?https_proxy=wwwproxy.mycompany.com&https_proxy_port=80

replaces the following descriptor

Example 11 - Session Data Unit (SDU)

salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?sdu=16384

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
```

```
(SDU=16384)
(ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp)(HOST=saleserver1)(PORT=1521))
(CONNECT DATA=(SERVICE NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 12 - Connect Timeouts

```
salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?connect_timeout=60&
transport_connect_timeout=30&retry_count=3
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (RETRY_COUNT=3) (CONNECT_TIMEOUT=60) (TRANSPORT_CONNECT_TIMEOUT=30)
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)))
```

Example 13 – DRCP Pool Connection Class

salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com:pooled?pool_connection_class=
value

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com)
  (SERVER=POOLED) (POOL_CONNECTION_CLASS=value)))
```

Example 14 - DRCP Pool Purity

```
salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com:pooled?
pool_connection_class=value&pool_purity=new
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com) (SERVER=POOLED)
  (POOL_CONNECTION_CLASS=value) (POOL_PURITY=NEW)))
```

Example 15 – Implicit Connection Pooling with DRCP (STATEMENT boundary)

```
salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com:pooled?
pool_boundary=statement
```

replaces the following descriptor

```
(DESCRIPTION=
  (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=tcp) (HOST=salesserver1) (PORT=1521))
  (CONNECT_DATA=(SERVICE_NAME=sales.us.example.com) (SERVER=POOLED)
  (POOL BOUNDARY=STATEMENT)))
```

Example 16 - Easy Connect to an Oracle Cloud Autonomous Database (ADB) using mTLS

Applications can connect to Oracle Cloud ADBs through mutual TLS (mTLS) for secure communication. mTLS requires a database wallet on the client side, where the application is run. This wallet is a .sso file downloaded as part of a zip package from the ADB cloud console. A sample Easy Connect Plus syntax for connecting to an Oracle Cloud ADB via mTLS is as follows:

tcps://hostname.region.oraclecloud.com:1522/abc_dbsvcname_high.oracl
ecloud.com?wallet_location=/path/to/walletdir&retry_count=20&retry_d
elay=3

The wallet is stored in the /path/to/walletdir directory on the client side.

Using Easy Connect Plus syntax in the application means that you do not need the *sqlnet.ora* and *tnsnames.ora* files of the Oracle Cloud ADB. The equivalent settings in the *sqlnet.ora* and *tnsnames.ora* configuration files are shown below:

sglnet.ora

```
WALLET_LOCATION = (SOURCE = (METHOD = file) (METHOD_DATA =
(DIRECTORY="/path/to/walletdirectory")))
SSL_SERVER_DN_MATCH=yes
```

tnsnames.ora

(description=

(retry_count=20) (retry_delay=3) (address=(protocol=tcps) (port=1522) (h
ost=hostname.region.oraclecloud.com)) (connect_data=(service_name=dbs
vcname_high.adb.oraclecloud.com)) (security=(ssl_server_cert_dn="CN=c
ommon_name.oraclecloud.com, OU=Oracle BMCS US, O=Oracle Corporation,
L=Redwood City, ST=California, C=US")))

Example 17 - Easy Connect to an Oracle Cloud Autonomous Database (ADB) using 1-way TLS

Applications can connect to Oracle Cloud ADBs through TLS for secure communication using 1-way TLS. Latest versions of database clients can use the built-in trust points (as mentioned in Note 4 – Page 7) and no wallet download is needed. A sample Easy Connect Plus syntax for connecting to an Oracle Cloud ADB via 1-way TLS is as follows:

tcps://hostname.region.oraclecloud.com:1521/abc_dbsvcname_high.oracl
ecloud.com?retry count=20&retry delay=3

Using Easy Connect Plus syntax in the application means that you do not need the *sqlnet.ora* and *tnsnames.ora* files of the Oracle Cloud ADB.

The equivalent settings in sqlnet.ora and tnsnames.ora configuration files are shown below:

sqlnet.ora

```
SSL SERVER DN MATCH=yes
```

tnsnames.ora

```
(description=
```

(retry_count=20) (retry_delay=3) (address=(protocol=tcps) (port=1521) (h
ost=hostname.region.oraclecloud.com)) (connect_data=(service_name=dbs
vcname high.adb.oraclecloud.com)))

Example 18 - Quoting Easy Connect Strings

Quoting of parameters may be required in some tools and environments.

The following example invokes SQL*Plus in a Linux shell. This illustrates the placement of single and double quotes to escape interpretation of special characters by the shell:

```
$ sqlplus
scott@'tcps://salesserver1:1521/sales.us.example.com?ssl_server_cert
_dn="cn=sales,cn=Oracle Context
Server,dc=us,dc=example,dc=com"&sdu=8128&connect_timeout=60'
```

CONCLUSION

Oracle Database's Easy Connect Plus syntax makes deploying highly available and secure applications easier without needing external configuration files for database connection management.

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