Meta title: Convert an ISO 8601-compliant String to java.util.Date in Java.
Meta description: Learn the different methods to convert an ISO 8601-compliant String to java.util.Date in Java.

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Converting ISO 8601-compliant String to java.util.Date

When using dates and times in different time zones or sharing the data between systems, it is important to use a standard format. In Java, converting an ISO 8601 string to a java.util.Date can be complex because the built-in APIs can be confusing.

In this blog, we will discuss the methods used for converting an ISO 8601-compliant String to the java.util.Date format.

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What is ISO 8601 compliant?

ISO 8601 compliant refers to the standard way of representing the date and time in a constant format. ISO 8601 is an international standard used for representing dates and times by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). It ensures that the dates and times are represented in a format that avoids problems due to the different regional areas in the date formats, i.e., MM/DD/YYYY vs. DD/MM/YYYY.

Some of the key components of ISO 8601 are:

1. Date: The date is represented in the format of YYYY-MM-DD.

Example: 2025-03-21 (March 21, 2025).

2. Time: The time is represented in the format of HH:mm:ss.
Example: 14:35:00 (14 hours, 35 minutes, and 00 seconds).

3. Combined Date and Time: The date and time are combined using the letter "**T**" in between them.
Example: 2025-03-21**T**14:35:00 (March 21, 2025, 14:35:00).

4. Time Zone: For UTC (Coordinated Universal Time), the letter "**Z**" is used to indicate zero offsets from UTC, i.e., Z stands for "**Zulu**" time, which is the same as UTC.
Example: 2025-03-21T14:35:00**Z** (March 21, 2025, 14:35:00 UTC).

Important features of ISO 8601:

- It provides a standard format of dates and times across all cultures.
- It ensures that systems (databases, APIs, etc.) from different regions can work together without issues related to date formatting.
- The format YYYY-MM-DD makes sorting of dates easy.

Example of ISO 8601-compliant:
2025-03-21T14:35:00Z - Date and time in UTC (March 21, 2025, at 14:35:00 UTC).

Different Methods to Convert an ISO 8601 String into the java.util.Date

There are mainly 7 methods to convert the ISO 8601 string into the java.util.Date. These are as follows:

1. Using SimpleDateFormat

In Java 7 and earlier, the SimpleDateFormat class was used to convert the date and time strings into java.util.Date objects. This class defines a specific date and time pattern and changes the strings into Date objects.

Example:

[codelab lang="java" run="disable"]<pre>
import java.text.ParseException;
import java.text.SimpleDateFormat;
import java.util.Date;
import java.util.TimeZone;
public class Main {
  public static Date fromISO8601UTC(String isoD) {

```
        try {
            SimpleDateFormat sdf =new SimpleDateFormat("yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ssX");
            sdf.setTimeZone(TimeZone.getTimeZone("UTC"));
            return sdf.parse(isoD);
        } catch (ParseException e) {
            System.err.println("Failed to parse ISO 8601 date string: " + isoD);
            e.printStackTrace();
            return null;
        }
    }
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        String isoD = "2025-03-21T14:35:00Z";
        Date date = fromISO8601UTC(isoD);
        System.out.println("Parsed Date: " + date);
    }
}

</pre>[/codelab]
```

Note: Always check for null before using the returned Date object.

Output:

```
Parsed Date: Fri Mar 21 07:35:00 PDT 2025
```

Explanation:
In the above Java code, **an ISO 8601 string** is changed into a Date object by using the SimpleDateFormat. The format and time zone are first set to UTC, and then the string is parsed.

2. Using DateTimeFormatter

Java introduced a modern way to manage date and time parsing. The **DateTimeFormatter** class is made in such a way that it handles ISO 8601-compliant strings. It is the part of the new date-time API that is used more than the SimpleDateFormat for parsing and formatting the dates, which is older.

DateTimeFormatter makes parsing ISO 8601 strings easy by automatically managing the different date and time formats, including the seconds, time zone, and the ‘Z’ for UTC.

Example:
[codelab lang="java"]<pre>
```
import java.time.Instant;
import java.time.format.DateTimeFormatter;
import java.util.Date;
```

```
public class Main {
   public static Date fromISO8601UTC(String isoD) {
      Instant instant = DateTimeFormatter.ISO_INSTANT.parse(isoD, Instant::from);
            // Convert the Instant to a java.util.Date
      return Date.from(instant);
   }
   public static void main(String[] args) {
      String isoD = "2025-03-21T14:35:00Z";
      Date date = fromISO8601UTC(isoD);
      System.out.println("Parsed Date: " + date);
   }
   }
</pre>[/codelab]
```

Output:

```
Parsed Date: Fri Mar 21 14:35:00 UTC 2025
```

Explanation:
In the above code, **DateTimeFormatter.ISO_INSTANT** is used to convert an ISO 8601 string “2025-03-21T14:35:00Z” into an Instant, which shows a certain time at that moment. It then changes the Instant into a java.util.Date object and then prints it.

3. Using ZonedDateTime

The **ZonedDateTime** class allows you to handle date and time with specific time zones, hence making it more useful for parsing ISO 8601-compliant strings that include time zone information, e.g., +02:00 or -05:00.

Example:

```
[codelab lang="java"]<pre>
import java.time.ZonedDateTime;
import java.time.format.DateTimeFormatter;
import java.util.Date;
public class Main {
   public static Date fromISO8601WithTimeZone(String isoD) {
            ZonedDateTime zoneDT = ZonedDateTime.parse(isoD,
DateTimeFormatter.ISO_OFFSET_DATE_TIME);
             // Convert ZonedDateTime to java.util.Date
      return Date.from(zoneDT.toInstant());
   }
   public static void main(String[] args) {
      String isoD = "2025-03-21T14:35:00+02:00";  // ISO 8601 string with time zone offset
      Date date = fromISO8601WithTimeZone(isoD);
```

```
        System.out.println("Parsed Date: " + date);
    }
}
</pre>[/codelab]
```

Output:

```
Parsed Date: Fri Mar 21 12:35:00 UTC 2025
```

Explanation:
The above Java code parses an **ISO 8601 string** with a time zone “2025-03-21T14:35:00+02:00” into a ZonedDateTime using DateTimeFormatter, then changes ZonedDateTime into a java.util.Date.

Note: If your string contains a full time zone ID like “America/New_York”, you should use DateTimeFormatter.ISO_ZONED_DATE_TIME instead for correct parsing.

4. Using Instant

For UTC dates, **Instant** is the simplest and most efficient method to handle the UTC dates. It is used for parsing the ISO 8601 strings that use the "**Z**" suffix. The Instant.parse() method changes the strings into an Instant object and then changes it into a java.util.Date.

Example:

```
[codelab lang="java"]<pre>
import java.time.Instant;
import java.util.Date;
public class Main{
    public static Date fromISO8601UTC(String isoD) {
        Instant instant = Instant.parse(isoD);
        // Convert the Instant to java.util.Date
        return Date.from(instant);
    }
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        String isoD = "2025-03-21T14:35:00Z";
        Date date = fromISO8601UTC(isoD);
        System.out.println("Parsed Date: " + date);
    }
}
</pre>[/codelab]
```

Output:

```
Parsed Date: Fri Mar 21 14:35:00 UTC 2025
```

Explanation:
The above Java code uses the **Instant.parse() method** to convert an ISO 8601 UTC string "2025-03-21T14:35:00Z" into an Instant. After that, it changes the Instant into a Date and prints it. This method is simple and efficient for working with UTC dates.

5. Using Apache Commons Lang3

The Apache Commons Lang3 library has the DateUtils and FastDateFormat classes, which make working with dates easy in Java. To parse an ISO 8601-compliant string into a java.util.Date, you can use FastDateFormat from the Commons Lang class. This method is thread safe, but it itself does not have a built-in parser.

Let us understand this with the help of an example. For this method, first create a Maven project and then add the following dependencies in the pom.xml file.

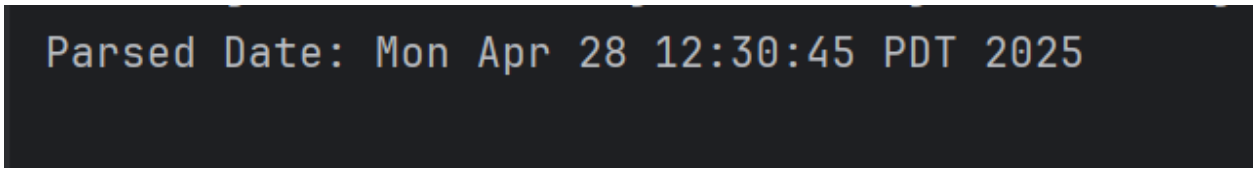
<pre>
<dependency>
  <groupId>org.apache.commons</groupId>
  <artifactId>commons-lang3</artifactId>
  <version>3.14.0</version> <!-- or latest -->
</dependency>
</pre>

Then, you can use the Apache Commons Lang3 library as per the following code.

[codelab lang="java" run="disable"]<pre>
import org.apache.commons.lang3.time.FastDateFormat;
import java.text.ParseException;
import java.util.Date;
public class Main {
  public static void main(String[] args) {
    String iso8601String = "2025-04-28T12:30:45Z"; // ISO 8601 string
    FastDateFormat isoFormat = FastDateFormat.getInstance("yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ss'Z'");
    try {
      Date date = isoFormat.parse(iso8601String);
      System.out.println("Parsed Date: " + date);
    } catch (ParseException e) {
      e.printStackTrace();
    }
  }

}
</pre>[/codelab]

Output:



Explanation:
In the above Java code, the FastDateFormat class from Apache Commons Lang3 is used to parse an ISO 8601 string into a java.util.Date object.

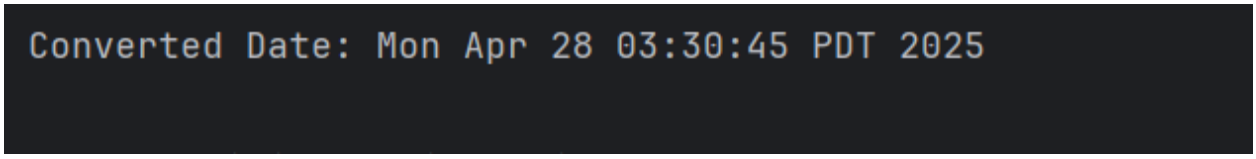
Note: FastDateFormat works only with ISO 8601 strings that have a literal 'Z' at the end. It isn't flexible with other variations.

6. Using OffsetDateTime

OffsetDateTime is a class in Java that is present in the java.time package. It can handle both the date and time with an offset from UTC. It represents a specific point of time. The offset part (e.g., +02:00) indicates how far ahead or behind the time is from UTC, which makes it a good choice.

[codelab lang="java" run="disable"]<pre>
import java.time.OffsetDateTime;
import java.time.format.DateTimeFormatter;
import java.util.Date;
public class Main {
  public static Date fromISO8601ToDate(String isoDate) {
    // Parse the ISO 8601 string into OffsetDateTime
    OffsetDateTime offsetDateTime = OffsetDateTime.parse(isoDate,
DateTimeFormatter.ISO_OFFSET_DATE_TIME);
    return Date.from(offsetDateTime.toInstant());
  }
  public static void main(String[] args) {
    String isoDate = "2025-04-28T12:30:45+02:00"; // ISO 8601 with offset
    Date date = fromISO8601ToDate(isoDate);
    System.out.println("Converted Date: " + date);
  }
}
</pre>[/codelab]

Output:



Explanation:
In the above Java code, the OffsetDateTime.parse(isoDate) method is used, which converts the ISO string into an OffsetDateTime. Then, the toInstant() method is used to get an Instant, that is present time.

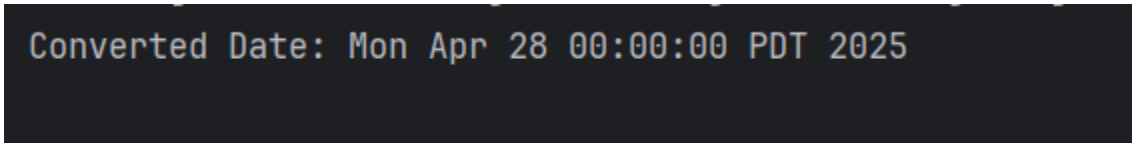
7. Using LocalDate

The LocalDate is a class that was introduced in Java 8. It represents a date without time or the time zone. It only contains the year, month, and day. This method is useful when the string contains only the date

Let us understand this method with the help of an example.

Example:
[codelab lang="java" run="disable"]<pre>
import java.time.LocalDate;
import java.time.ZoneId;
import java.util.Date;
public class Main {
    public static Date fromISO8601ToDate(String isoDate) {
        LocalDate localDate = LocalDate.parse(isoDate);
        return Date.from(localDate.atStartOfDay(ZoneId.systemDefault()).toInstant());
    }
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        String isoDate = "2025-04-28"; // ISO 8601 date only
        Date date = fromISO8601ToDate(isoDate);
        System.out.println("Converted Date: " + date);
    }
}
 </pre>[/codelab]

Output:



Explanation:
In the above Java code, the LocalDate.parse(isoDate) method is used to convert the string into

a LocalDate. Then, the atStartOfDay(ZoneId.systemDefault()) method gets the start of the day in the default time zone. And finally, Date.from() is used to convert it to java.util.Date.

Conclusion

There are many ways to convert an ISO 8601 string into a java.util.Date in Java. The **SimpleDateFormat** method is used for older Java versions, while **DateTimeFormatter** and **ZonedDateTime** are used for modern applications, when having time zone information. For UTC dates, Instant is the simplest and most efficient solution. Selecting the right method depends on the Java version, the need for a time zone, and the complexity of the date string.

Also, you can use libraries like Apache Commons Lang3 to make date parsing easier. Java's OffsetDateTime and LocalDate classes from the java.time package are also good options, depending on whether your date includes a time, an offset, or just the date.

If you want to learn more about Java, you can refer to our Java Course.

Converting ISO 8601-compliant String to java.util.Date -FAQs

Q1. How to convert an ISO 8601 string to an instant in Java?
An ISO 8601 string can be converted to an Instant using the Instant.parse() method.

Q2. What is the date format for ISO 8601 in Java?
The ISO 8601 format commonly used is yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ssZ or yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ssXXX, depending on the time zone handling.

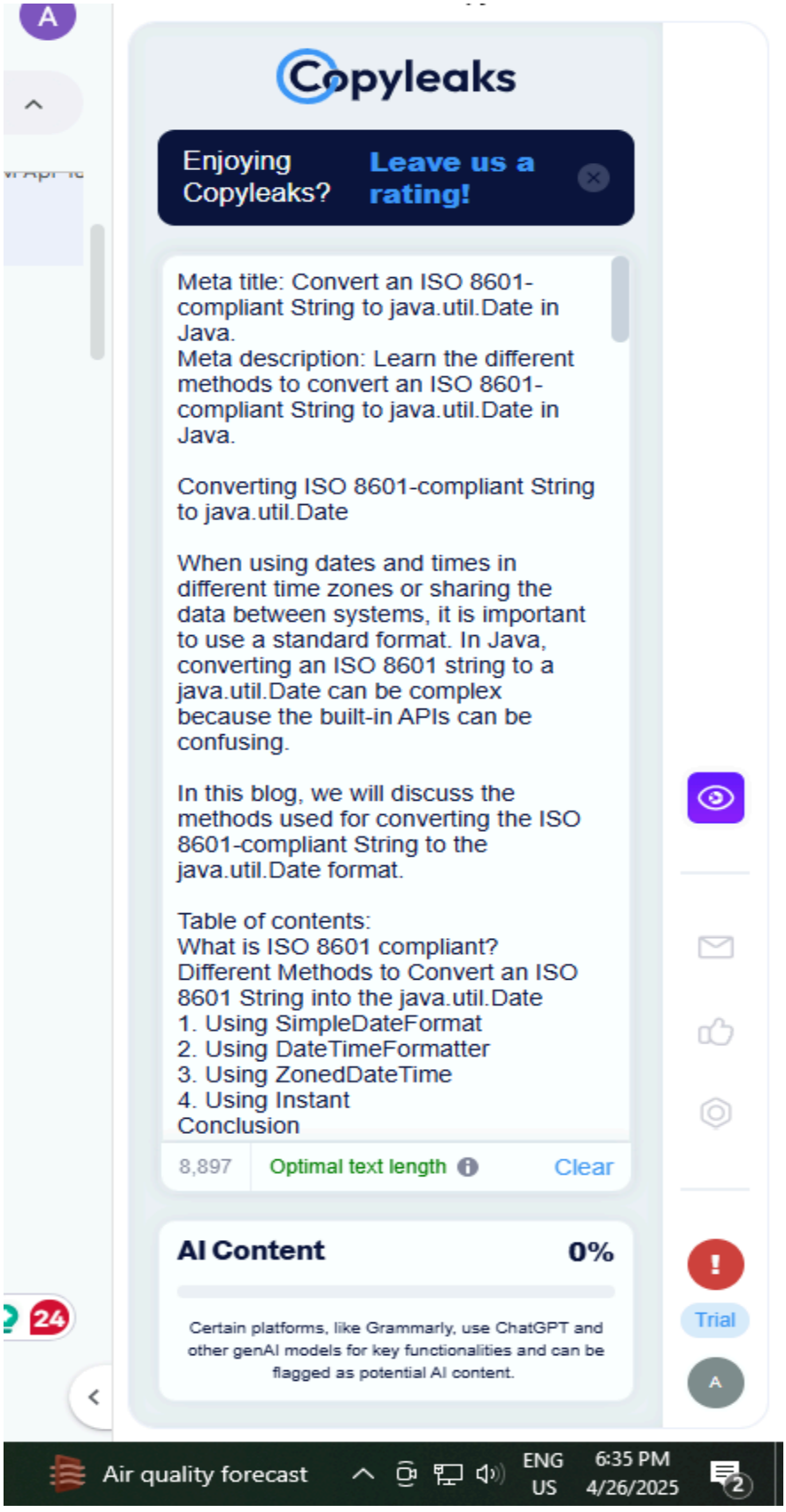
Q3. What is the best date format?
The ISO 8601 format (YYYY-MM-DD) is generally considered the best date format for its clarity and consistency.

Q4. How to parse any date format in Java?
We can parse a string to a date instance using the **parse()** method of the SimpleDateFormat class. For modern Java, you can also use the DateTimeFormatter class.

Q5. What are T and Z in the timestamp? What is the Z in ISO 8601 date?
The T is just a literal to separate the date from the time, and the Z means "zero hour offset," also known as "Zulu time".

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8,897
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