git-flow Documentation

Release 1.0

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Mar 05, 2020
## Contents

1 Presentation 3
   1.1 Conventions 4
   1.2 Pre-requisites 5
   1.3 Working with Github 5
   1.4 Initialization 5
   1.5 Not finished process 6
   1.6 merge vs rebase 6

2 Features 9
   2.1 Creation 9
   2.2 Lifetime 10
   2.3 Pull Request 10
   2.4 Finishing 10

3 Hotfix 11
   3.1 Creation 11
   3.2 Lifetime 11
   3.3 Pull Request 12
   3.4 Finishing 12

4 Releases 15
   4.1 Creation 15
   4.2 Lifetime 15
   4.3 Pull request 16
   4.4 Finishing 16

5 References 19
   5.1 Tools 19
We’ve decided to use the `git-flow` workflow for the GLPI plugins we maintain. This documentation will show some use cases, which commands to use and when to use them.
git-flow is a branching model, which come along with some documentation, and a git plugin to add command line facilities.
Keep in mind that it is just designed to get something standardized; all the background use standard git commands, you can achieve “manually” everything git-flow propose. It is just simpler to use, and it prevents to use the incorrect branch, or to forget about merging somewhere.

It is not the goal of the present documentation to list pros and cons of this model, we’ll note that it is not designed to get long running support branches, it has been once something that would have been implemented; but it has not been done.

According to the semantic versionning rules:

- you’ll add features only for major or minor versions,
- you’ll release major or minor versions,
- you’ll hotfix patch versions.

### 1.1 Conventions

The present documentation assumes that:

- a $ sign will precede each command line instructions,
- any term between () before the $ sign is the name of the current branch,
• all is driven from the command line (I do not use any git GUI anyways).

1.2 Pre-requisites

In order to get the commands available; you’ll have to install the git-flow git plugin.

Most of Linux distributions have it in their repositories (so `yum install git-flow` or `apt-get install git-flow` would do the trick) or you can follow the installation instructions provided on the project wiki.

Many GIT software are aware of gitflow, or can be if you install a simple plugin; check their respective documentation.

If you use command line, there are numerous ways to get useful information displayed in your prompt. While this is not a pre-requisite, it can help you save time!

Fig. 1: As an example, the ZSH git prompt I use

1.3 Working with Github

Each project will have a main repository hosted on Github. Even if you are part of the core developers, you will use the main repository only to push changes on the develop and master branches. All other branches will be created on a fork (use the eponym button at the top of the project - see below) you will create on your account.

Fig. 2: The fork button

From the main repository you’ve cloned the project to, add a new remote, let’s say naming as your github username (name does not matter, just remember what you choose, and stay consistent across projects). Replacing `{github_username}` with your own username, run the following:

```bash
$ git remote add {github_username} git@github.com:{github_username}/mreporting.git
```

All branches you will create that must be reviewed will be pushed to your fork.

1.4 Initialization

Initializing git-flow is quite simple, just clone the repository, go to the master branch and run:

```bash
$ git remote add {github_username} git@github.com:{github_username}/mreporting.git
```
Note: When you clone a git repository, the default branch will be checkout. In most cases, it will be master, but double check.

```
(master) $ git flow init
```

You can assume the default answer is correct for all questions. If the develop branch already exists, it will be used, the process will create it otherwise.

### 1.5 Not finished process

On some occasions, a git-flow command may not finish (in case of conflict, for exemple). This is really not a problem since its fully managed :)

If a git-flow process is stopped, just fix the issue and run the same command again. It will simply run all tasks remaining.

Note: To be sure everything worked as expected, always take a close look at the output!

### 1.6 merge vs rebase

Should I merge or should I rebase? Well, it’s up to you!

**Warning:** Even if both solutions can be used, and you can choose one or another on some cases; always remember that a rebase can be destructive! Keep that in mind.

In facts, you can repair a rebase issue, but only on your local workspace (using reflog). Note this is really something you should not use if you’re not a git expert ;)

I do not want to feed any troll; both have pros and cons. My advice would be to avoid merge commits when it is not required. I’ll try to explain some common cases, and the way I do manage them with the few following examples...
You work on a feature; all that ends once squashed into one only commit. By default, the git-flow process will add your commit on the develop branch and will add an (empty) merge commit also. This one is really not required, it only make history less readable. If the merge commit is not empty, this begin to be more complicated; you probably miss a git flow feature rebase somewhere.

Conclusion: use rebase

You’ve added a hotfix, again one only commit. git-flow will create merge commits as well. For instance, I’m used to keep those commits, this is a visual trace in the history of what has been done regarding bug fixes.

Conclusion: use merge

You’ve finished a feature, just like someone else… But other side changes have already been pushed to remote develop. If you run (develop) $ git push, you will be informed that you cannot push because remote has changed.

I guess many will just run a (develop) $ git pull in that case, that will add a merge commit in your history. Those merge commits are really annoying searching in history, whether they’re empty or not. As an alternative, you can run (develop) $ git pull --rebase, this will prevent the merge commit.

Conclusion: use rebase

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![git commit history](image)

Fig. 4: An example history (from the mreporting plugin).

1.6. merge vs rebase
Fig. 5: Another example history (from the Galette project).
CHAPTER 2

Features

Warning: Be careful your develop branch is up-to-date before starting or finishing a feature! Even if you can quite easily fix that ;)

This possibility will be used to implement new features in the project. Features are designed to be created from the develop branch, and reintegrated in the develop branch as well.

Note: You can have as many features as you want on a project; you’ll see at usage than working with too many features can be a kind of nightmare; as well as long running ones ;)

2.1 Creation

The name of the feature is up to you, choose something simple and short, describing what you are doing. To start a feature named my-great-feature you’ll use:

$ git flow feature start my-great-feature

This will automatically do the following:

1. create a new branch named feature/my-great-feature from the develop branch,
2. checkout the feature/my-great-feature branch.

So, yes, you’re ready to go! Just hack, commit, push, ... You’re on a branch, you can do what you want (well... almost!).

As stated in Working with Github, you will use your fork to push new branches. You’ll achieve that running:

(feature/my-great-feature) $ git push -u {github_username} feature/my-great-feature
2.2 Lifetime

Sometimes, nothing happened on the develop branch until you finish your feature, and you’ll have nothing to take care of.

But sometimes, some other features have been added, or some bugs have been fixed... You’ll have to keep your feature branch up-to-date. Considering your develop branch has been updated (you always keep your develop updated, don’t you? :p):

(feature/my-great-feature) $ git flow feature rebase

This will rebase your feature branch on top of the develop; it sounds just like you’ve just created your feature right now and it applies your commit one by one on the top. Explaining rebasing is out of the scope of the current documentation, but you’ll find many resources on it.

2.3 Pull Request

Your feature has been finished, it must now be reviewed before being merged. Push last changes to your fork, go to your github fork page, select your branch and click “New pull request” button.

You can provide additional details if any, submit, and wait for another developer to review your changes! Once accepted, go back to your local copy, and see the paragraph below.

2.4 Finishing

Once you’re done, and your PR has been accepted, you can clean up a bit your branch history, squashing your commits to prevent keeping commit messages like “oops, I did it again!”*. Assuming your working copy is on the feature branch, you’ll then run:

(feature/my-great-feature) $ git flow feature finish

This will do the following:

1. merge branch feature/my-great-feature into develop,
2. ask you for a commit message (default will be “Merge branch ‘feature/my-great-feature’ into develop”)
3. delete branch feature/my-great-feature

For the second step, you can just save the message as it; if you’ve squashed your commits, you can remove the merge commit simply using:

(develop) $ git rebase -i

Or not, it’s up to you :)

Finally, push the develop branch for remote repository to be updated! And then you’re done, the my-great-feature has reached develop and will be part of the next release! Congratulations o/

Do not forget to remove remote feature/my-great-feature branch:

$ git push {github_username} :feature/my-great-feature

* Do not forget to remove remote feature/my-great-feature branch:
CHAPTER 3

Hotfix

Warning: Be careful your master branch is up-to-date before starting a hotfix, and both your master and develop branches are up-to-date before finishing it!

You will use hotfix to fix bugs against the latest stable release of the project, no matter it was a major, a *minor or another patch.

Note: You can have only one hotfix at the same time!

3.1 Creation

The name of the hotfix must be the release it will become. If the latest release was 1.3.2, you’ll want to create a 1.3.3 hotfix using:

```
$ git flow hotfix start 1.3.3
```

This will automatically do the following:

1. create a new branch named hotfix/1.3.3 from the master branch,
2. checkout the hotfix/1.3.3 branch.

3.2 Lifetime

Just like Features, you will have nothing to do if there were no changes on the master branch since you’ve created your hotfix.
If something has changed in the master, that means another hotfix has already been done, which also means that the version you are using is probably incorrect now. In that case, you will have to:

- rename your hotfix branch,
- update the code

Assuming the 1.3.3 version has been released from another hotfix, you will work on the 1.3.4 version:

```
(hotfix/1.3.3) $ git branch -m hotfix/1.3.4
(hotfix/1.3.4) $ git rebase -i master
```

### 3.3 Pull Request

Your hotfix has been finished, it must now be reviewed before being merged. Push last changes to your fork, go to your github fork page, select your branch and click “New pull request” button.

You can provide additional details if any, submit, and wait for another developer to review your changes! Once accepted, go back to your local copy, and see the paragraph below.

### 3.4 Finishing

**Warning:** Before running the commands to end your hotfix, make sure that:

- your master branch is up-to-date
- no other hotfix using the same version number has been merged (use `git tag | sort -V`)

**Warning:** You must use Git command line, and not Github facilities to finish the hotfix!

Finishing a hotfix is as simple as:

```
$ git flow hotfix finish 1.3.4
```

This will:

- Merge changes into the master branch,
- Create a 1.3.4 tag,
- Merge changes into the develop branch,
- Remove your local hotfix/1.3.4 branch.

Once your hotfix has been finished; you’ll have to push master, develop and tags and also remove remote hotfix/1.3.4 branch:

```
(master) $ git push
(master) $ git push --tags
(master) $ git checkout develop
(develop) $ git push
    $ git push {github_username} :hotfix/1.3.4
```
CHAPTER 4

Releases

Warning: Be careful your develop branch is up-to-date before starting a release, and both your master and develop branches are up-to-date before finishing it!

You will use the release feature to publish new minor or major versions, but not patches. It is designed to begin a new fresh release from the develop branch.

Note: You can have several releases on a project; but honestly, I cannot find a use case where it should really be used. It’s up to you ;)

4.1 Creation

Just as hotfixes, the branch name must be the version it will become. Let’s say we want to release a new minor 1.4.0:

```
$ git flow release start 1.4.0
```

This will automatically do the following:

1. create a new branch named release/1.4.0 from the develop branch,
2. checkout the release/1.4.0 branch.

4.2 Lifetime
Warning: Until it’s finished, you can still add new **hotfixes** or **features** (anyways, if a new feature must reach your release, you’ve a planning issue ;)).

But keep in mind **nothing will not reach your release branch until you do something!**.

Most of the time, your release branch should have a quite short lifetime; and changes should be very light comparing your develop. As an example, on several project I own (or I’ve owned); the release branch was created to update the changelog if any, add the release date, and eventually bump the version.

This kind of branch may be used for testing purposes also.

Sometimes, you can also just create a **release** to finish it immediately without doing any changes... :-(

If a new **hotfix** has been added, than you’ll have to get it back to your release branch. To know how to proceed, you’ll have to determine if something else has changed; because you probably do not want a feature finished after you decide to release to be backported.

**Note:** Remember that you should always prefer to merge or cherry pick rather than report changes manually; that would cause conflicts while finishing.

In the simpliest case, nothing else has changed in your develop, just update it and run:

```
(release/1.4.0) $ git merge develop
```

If there were other changes, it may be a bit more complex. You can either **cherry-pick** the fix commit, or use advanced git possibilities of **merge** command (such as merging a specific range of commits, for example); refer to the **Git documentation**.

### 4.3 Pull request

If you’ve just created the **release** to bump the version, it is not mandatory to open a pull request. On the other hand, if you’ve made fixes, you’ll have to.

If you’re on the second use case, push last changes to your fork, go to your github fork page, select your branch and click “New pull request” button.

You can provide additional details if any, submit, and wait for another developer to review your changes!

Once accepted, or if you do not need a PR, go back to your local copy, and see the paragraph below.

### 4.4 Finishing

**Warning:** Before running the commands to end your **release**, make sure that:

- your master and develop branches are up-to-date
- no other tag using the same version number has been created (use `git tag | sort -V`)

**Warning:** You **have to use Git command line, and not Github facilities** to finish the release!
Finishing a release is as simple as:

```
$ git flow release finish 1.4.0
```

This will:

- Merge changes into the master branch,
- Create a 1.4.0 tag,
- Merge changes into the develop branch,
- Remove your local release\1.4.0 branch.

Once your release has been finished; you’ll have to push master, develop and tags and also remove remote release/1.4.0 branch (if any):

```
(master) $ git push
(master) $ git push --tags
(master) $ git checkout develop
(develop) $ git push
    $ git push {github_username} :release/1.4.0
```
A few references and links relative to git-flow.

- model explained (original author)
- git extension <https://github.com/nvie/gitflow> (original author)
- a quick tutorial
- another tutorial, by Atlassian
- a cheat sheet
- a french video tutorial
- stack overflow questions

Some links about git itself:

- official website
- the ProGit book you can view online or download for free; and that has also been printed
- Atlassian tutorials
- an interactive cheat sheet (I find this one really usefull to understand all interactions and “levels”
- a Stanford publication with several translations

## 5.1 Tools

Well, I do use vim to code, and the git extension to manage my workflow; even if some vim plugins exists; I do not use them.

Anyways, if you use a tool that implements git-flow natively or with a plugin; feel free to open a PR on the current doc!