FACTORY METHOD

Class Creational

Intent

Define an interface for creating an object, but let subclasses decide which class to instantiate. Factory Method lets a class defer instantiation to subclasses.

Also Known As

Virtual Constructor

Motivation

Frameworks use abstract classes to define and maintain relationships between objects. A framework is often responsible for creating these objects as well.

Consider a framework for applications that can present multiple documents to the user. Two key abstractions in this framework are the classes Application and Document. Both classes are abstract, and clients have to subclass them to realize their application-specific implementations. To create a drawing application, for example, we define the classes DrawingApplication and DrawingDocument. The Application class is responsible for managing Documents and will create them as required—when the user selects Open or New from a menu, for example.

Because the particular Document subclass to instantiate is application-specific, the Application class can't predict the subclass of Document to instantiate—the Application class only knows *when* a new document should be created, not *what kind* of Document to create. This creates a dilemma: The framework must instantiate classes, but it only knows about abstract classes, which it cannot instantiate.

The Factory Method pattern offers a solution. It encapsulates the knowledge of which Document subclass to create and moves this knowledge out of the framework.