**What is Data Structure (and why)**

It is a way of organizing all data items and their relationships to each other inside the program in order to deal with them. It affects the design of both structural and functional aspects of the program. It is how you organize, manage and store data for efficiency reasons.

It is not only used for organizing data. It also used for processing, retrieving and storing data.

There are different basic and advanced types of data structures that are sued in almost every program or software system that has been developed. So we must have a good knowledge of data structures.

They are an integral part of computers used for the arrangement of data in memory. They are essential and responsible for organizing processing, accessing and storing data efficiently. But this is not all. Various types of data structures have their own characteristics, features, applications, advantages and disadvantages.

**Calcification of Data Structures**

**Primitive (Basic):**

Is generally a basic structure that is usually built into the language and directly operated upon the machine instructions, such as Integer, Float, Char, Pointer, etc...

**NON-Primitive (Advanced):**

**Linear, Non-Linear:**

* Complex/Sophisticated data structures derived for primitive DS.
* Emphasize on structuring of group of homogenous (same type) or heterogenous (different type) data items.
* The design of an efficient data structure must take operations to be performed on data structure.

**Linear vs Non-Linear Data Structures:**

* **Linear:**
  + Data structure in which data elements are arranged sequentially or linearly, where each element is attached to its previous and next adjacent elements is called a linear data structure.
* **Non-Linear:**
  + Data structures where data elements are not placed sequentially or linearly are called non-linear data structures. In a non-linear data structure, we can’t traverse all the elements in a single run only.
  + Example of this data structure are Tree, Graph, etc.

**Static vs Non-Static:**

* **Static:**
  + It has a fixed memory size. It is easier to access the elements in a static data structure.
  + Example of this one is an array.
* **Dynamic:**
  + In this one the size is not fixed. It can be randomly updated during the runtime which may be considered efficient concerning the memory (space) complexity of the code.
  + Examples are Stack, Queue, etc.

**Operation on Data Structures:**

Create, Update, Search, Select, Sorting, Merging, Destroy or Delete.

**Boxing**

It is the process of converting a value type to a reference type. This involves wrapping a value type like (int, float, char) in an object or any interface type implemented by this value type.

**Example:**

using System;

class Program

{

    static void Main()

    {

        int valType = 10;

        object objType = valType; // Boxing

        Console.WriteLine("Value Type: " + valType);

        Console.WriteLine("Object Type: " + objType);

    }

}

**Expected Output:**

Value Type: 10

Object Type: 10

**Output Explanation:**

The output demonstrates the boxing process where valType, an integer (value type), is boxed into objType (object type). Both display the same value, but objType is a reference type stored in the heap.

**Conclusion:**

Boxing is a fundamental concept in C#, allowing value types to be treated as objects. While it necessary in certain scenarios, developers should be aware of its performance.

**Unboxing**

It is the reverse process of Boxing, where the value type is extracted from the object. It’s crucial to ensure the type being Unboxed matches the type of the object.

**Example:**

using System;

class Program

{

    static void Main()

    {

        int valType = 10;

        object objType = valType; // Boxing

        int unboxedValType = (int)objType; // Unboxing

        Console.WriteLine("Unboxed Value: " + unboxedValType);

    }

}

**Output:**

Unboxed Value: 10

Explanation:

The program demonstrates Unboxing, where the value 10 is retrieved from objType (the boxed object) and stored back in UnboxedValType, a value type.

**Key Point**

Unboxing requires the exact data type match, otherwise, it results in InvalidCastException.

**Conclusion:**

Unboxing is a critical operation in C# that retrieves values from object. Proper type matching is essential for successful unboxing.

**Introduction to Collections**

**What are Collections:**

* Collections are data structures used to store and organize groups of related objects in memory.
* They are sophisticated ways to store and manage data in C#. they offer more flexibility and functionality compared to basic array types.
* They allow for dynamic memory allocation, meaning the size of the collection can grow or shrink as needed.

**Why Use Collections:**

* They are used to store, retrieve, manipulate and communicate aggregate data.
* They provide efficient ways to handle large amount of data with built-int methods for common tasks.
* Collection provide efficient ways to manipulate and manage data, making programming tasks easier and more efficient.

**Common operations on collections:** Adding, removing, modifying, and accessing elements.

**Exploring Types of Collections:**

* The System.Collections and System.Collection.Generic name spaces.
  + These namespaces include various collection types. System.Collections contains non-generic collections.

**Common Collections types in C#:**

1. **List<T>:** A List<T> is a collection of objects that can be accessed by index. It functions like a dynamic array, which can automatically resize as needed. It’s versatile and suitable for sorting and manipulating a list of objects of a specific types.
2. **SortedList<TKey, TValue>:** It is a collection that maintain its elements in sorted order. It’s a combination of an array and hash table, providing fast lookups as well as maintaining a sorted order.
3. **Dictionary<TKey, TValue>:** This collection stores key-value pairs. It enables fast retrieval of values based on keys, making it ideal for situations where you need to access elements quickly and uniquely, like lookup table.
4. **HashSet<T>:** It stores a set of unique elements. It’s useful for operations that requires uniqueness for each element and is efficient in performing set operations like union or intersection.
5. **Stack<T>:** It represents a Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) structure. It’s perfect for scenarios that require reverse order processing, such as undo mechanism in applications.
6. **Queue<T>:** Representing First-In-First-Out (FIFO) structure, it is great for tasks where you need to process items in the order they where added, like task scheduling.
7. **linkedList<T>:** This is a doubly linked list, where each element points to both its previous and next element. It allows for efficient insertions and deletions at any point in the list.
8. **ObservableCollection<T>:** this collection is used primarily in data binding, typically in UI context. It notifies listeners of dynamic changes, like when items get added, removed or the whole list is refreshed.
9. **CurrentDictionary<TKey, TValue>:** A thread safe version of dictionary, this one is designed for concurrent access. It’s useful in multi-threading applications where different threads need to add or remove items simultaneously.
10. **BitArray:** this one manages compact array of bit values, which are represented as Booleans. It’s used in scenarios where you need to store bits but don’t need the overhead of a Boolean array.

Each of this collection types in C# serves specific purpose and choosing the right type depends on the requirements of the application or the specific problem you’re solving.

**Conclusion:**

In this lesson, we explored the fundamental of collections in C#, including various collection types and their characteristics. By understanding collection, you will be able to efficiently mange and manipulate data in your applications.

**Generic vs Non-Generic Collections**

1. **Generic Collections:**

**What are Generic Collections?**

* They are part of the System.Collections.Generic namespace.
* Generics allow us to create reusable code that can work with different types.
* Generics introduce the concept of type parameters to collections, making them more flexible and type-safe.
* They allow the collections to store any data type and prevent runtime type errors.
* They allow you to specify the type of objects they store, for example List<int>.
* They offer type safety, better performance, and reduced need for boxing/unboxing.

Advantages of Generic Collections

* Type Safety: They store elements of a specified type, reducing runtime errors.
* Performance: No need for boxing/unboxing of value types, which improves performance.
* Reduce Memory Overhead: They directly store elements without converting them to object type.
* Code Reusability: Avoid code duplication by creating generic algorithms and data structures.

**Key Generic Collections**

1. List<T>: A list of elements that can be accessed by index.
2. Dictionary<TKey, TValue>: A collection of key-value pairs.
3. Queue<T>: A first-in, first-out (FIFO) collection of objects.
4. Stack<T>: A last-in, first-out (LIFO) collection of objects.
5. HashSet<T>: A collection of unique and unordered elements.
6. LinkedList<T>: A double – linked list.
7. SortedSet<T>: A collection of objects that maintains order.
8. SortedDictionary<TKey, TValue>: A dictionary with sorted keys.
9. SortedList<TKey, TValue>: Similar to SortedDictionary but with different performance characteristics.
10. ConcurrentDictionary<TKey, TValue>: A thread-safe dictionary used in concurrent scenarios.
11. BlockingCollection<T>: Provides blocking and bounding capabilities for thread-safe collections.
12. ConcurrentBag<T>: An unordered collection of objects suitable for concurrent scenarios.
13. ConcurrentQueue<T>: A thread-safe FIFO collection.
14. ConcurrentStack<T>: A thread-safe LIFO collection.
15. **Non – Generic Collections**

**What are Non – Generic Collections?**

* Non – Generic collections are part of the System.Collections namespace.
* They store elements as object types, allowing them to hold any data type.
* They require boxing/unboxing for value types.

**Disadvantages of Non – Generic?**

* Type Unsafe: Can store any type of object, leading to runtime errors.
* Performance Overhead: Boxing/Unboxing of value types impacts performance.
* Memory Overhead: Storing value types as object consumes more memory.

**Key Non – Generic Collections:**

1. ArrayList: A dynamically resizable collection.
2. Hashtable: A collection of key-value pairs organized based on the hash code of the key.
3. Queue: A first-in, first-out (FIFO) collection.
4. Stack: A last-in, first-out (LIFO) collection.
5. SortedList: A collection of key-value pairs that are sorted by the keys and are accessible by key and index.
6. BitArray: Manages compact array of bit values, which are represented as Booleans.
7. HybridDictionary: Implements IDictionary using ListDictionary while the collection is small, and then switching to Hashtable as the collection grows.
8. ListDictionary: A simple, small dictionary implemented as a singly linked list.
9. NameValueCollection: Represents a collection of associated string keys and string values that can be accessed either with the key or with the index.
10. OrderedDictionary: A collection of key-value pairs that are accessible by the key or index.
11. StringCollection: A collection of strings.
12. StringDictionary: A collection of associated string keys and string values with a hash table implementation.

**Conclusion:**

Understanding the distinction between generic and non-generic collections is crucial for selecting the right type of collection in C#. while generic collections are preferred for their type safety and performance benefits, non – generic collections can still be useful in scenarios requiring heterogenous data storage.

These collections offer a wide range of functionalities and characteristics, making them suitable for various scenarios in programming. The choice between generic and non-generic collections typically depends on factors like type safety, performance requirement and specific use cases.

**What is List**

It is a generic collection class in the .NET Framework. It’s used to store a collection of objects of the same type. Unlike array List is dynamic, meaning it can automatically resize as needed.

**Key Concepts:**

* Generic Collection: T in List<T> is a type parameter, meaning that you can create a list of any type (e.g., List<int>, List<string>, List<CutomeType>).
* Dynamic Sizing: Automatically resize itself, offering more flexibility that traditional arrays.
* Zero Based Index: Like arrays, lists use Zero-Based indexing.
* Strongly Typed: Ensures type safety. You can’t add an int to a list of strings.
* Capacity and Count:
  + Count: Is the number of elements actually in the list.
  + Capacity: Is the number of elements the list can store before resizing.
* Thread Safety: It is not thread-safe. For thread – safe collections, consider using ConcurrentBag or other collections.

**Conclusion:**

It is a versatile and powerful collection class, suitable for a wide range of applications. Its dynamic nature, coupled with the powerful features provided makes it a go-to choice for storing and manipulating collections of objects.

**Working with List:**

Sample code in the folder inside the List solution there is a project named list.

**Code explanation:**

1. Initializing: A List<int> named numbers is created to store integers.
2. Adding Elements: The Add method is used to add elements to the list.
3. Count Property: This one is used to get the total number of elements in the list.
4. Index-Based Access: Elements in the list are accessed using their indices.
5. Modifying Elements: The value of an element at a specific index is modified.

**Conclusion:**

This lesson demonstrated the basic using of List<int> in C#. understanding how to create lists, add items, access and modify elements, and utilize properties like Count are fundamental skills for working with collections.

**Inserting Elements into a List:**

In this lesson, we’ll delve into the process of inserting elements into List.

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> InsertingElements (Project).

**Code Explanation:**

1. Adding an Element at the End:
   1. The Add method append an element to the end of the list.
2. Inserting an Element at a Specific Position:
   1. The Insert method inserts an element at the specified index.
3. Inserting Multiple Elements:
   1. The InsertRange method allows inserting multiple elements from another collection at a specified index.

**Conclusion:**

This lesson covered various methods for inserting elements into a List. Understanding how to add elements at specified position or multiple elements at once allows for more sophisticated list manipulation and is essential for effective programming.

Time and Space Complexity:

* Insert:
  + Worst Case: when inserting at the beginning, needs to shift all existing elements O(n).
  + Best Case: when inserting at the end O (1).
  + Only needs a constant extra space.
* insertRange:
  + O(n + m).
  + The n is the number of existing elements that need to be shifted.
  + The m is the number of elements being inserted
  + Space complexity O(m) size of the collection being inserted.

Both operations may trigger array resizing if capacity is exceeded. Inserting at the end is more efficient than at the beginning.

For frequent insertion at the beginning, consider using LinkedList.

Internal array resizing can occasionally make the operation more expensive.

**Remove Items from List:**

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> RemoveItems (Project).

**Code Explanation:**

1. Removing Items by Value:
   1. The Remove method removes the first occurrence of a specified object from the list.
   2. Worst case time complexity is O(n).
2. Removing Item by Index:
   1. The RemoveAt method removes item at a specified index.
   2. Worst case time complexity is O(n).
3. Removing Multiple Items:
   1. The RemoveAll method removes all the elements that matches the conditions defined by the specified predicate.
   2. Worst case time complexity is O(n).
4. Removing range of items:
   1. The RemoveRange remove the items from the start index to the end of range index (last item not included in the range).
   2. Worst case time complexity is O(n).

All remove operations require shifting remaining elements, however,

RemoveAt is faster than remove when you know the index.

Note: Remove operation don’t reduce the capacity of the list.

**Looping Through a List:**

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> LoopingThrough (Project).

**Code Explanation:**

List.ForEach: A method provided by the list class that takes an action (in this case, a lambda expression) and applies it to each element in the list.

**Conclusion:**

Looping through lists is a common operation in C#. this lesson covered three primary methods to iterate over a list using a for loop, foreach loop and the List.ForEach method. Understanding these methos is crucial for performing operations on each element.

**Aggregating List Data Using LINQ:**

In this lesson, we focus on using Language Integrated Query (LINQ) to perform aggregation operations on the list. LINQ is a powerful feature in .NET that provides a convenient and efficient way to query and manipulate data in collections.

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> LinqAggregation (Project).

**Filtering Data with LINQ:**

In this lesson we will delve into LINQ for filtering data within a list. LINQ provides a flexible and powerful way to query collections. We will explore various filtering techniques using the given list.

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> LinqAggregation (Project).

**Concluson:**

This lesson demonstrates the versatility of LINQ for filtering data. With LINQ complex queries can be executed with concise readable code, making it an invaluable tool for data manipulation.

**Sorting List:**

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> SortingList (Project).

**Explanation:**

List.Sort (): Uses introspective sort (hybrid of quicksort, heapsort and insertion sort) time and space complexity O (n log n).

List.Reverse (): Swaps element from both ends toward the middle, time complexity O(n).

OrderBy and OrderByDescending: time complexity O(n log n), space complexity O(n) – creates a new sequence rather than sorting in place.

Key Differences:

1. In-place vs new sequence:
   1. List.Sort: modifies the original collection.
   2. LINQ’s OrderBy: Returns a new sequence without modifying the original.
2. Stability:
   1. LINQ’s OrderBy: Is stable (preserve order of equal elements).
   2. List.Sort: are not guaranteed to be stable.
3. Deferred Execution:
   1. LINQ operation uses deferred execution (only evaluated when enumerable).
   2. Direct sort methods execute immediately.
4. Memory usage:
   1. LINQ methods generally use more memory as they create new sequences.
   2. Direct sort methods modify in – place, using less memory.

For performance – critical code with large datasets, in-place sorting is typically more efficient, while LINQ offers more flexibility and cleaner syntax for complex sorting scenarios.

**Conclusion:**

This lesson showed various methods to sort a List, ranging from the straightforward Sort method to more complex custom sorting logic. Understanding these sorting techniques is crucial for data manipulation and presentation in software development.

**Contains, Exists, Find, FindAll, and Any:**

* Contains: Check if the list contains specific element.
* Exists: Checks if the any element in the list matches a specified condition.
* Find: Finds the first element the matches a condition. If no match is found, it returns the default value for the type.
* FindAll: Retrieves all elements that matches a specific condition.
* Any: Checks if any of the elements in the list satisfy a given condition. It’s similar to Exists but is a LINQ method.

Code Example:

Inside the List solution -> BuiltInFunctions (Project).

**Conclusion:**

This lesson provides an overview of various methods for querying List. These methods are crucial for effective data manipulation and querying within collections.

**Working with a list of objects:**

**Code example:**

Inside the List solution -> CustomObjects (Project).

**Converting a List to an Array:**

This conversion is a common operation in programming, especially when you need to pass list data to a method that only accepts arrays of when interfacing with APIs or libraries that require array inputs.

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> ListAndArray (Project).

**Converting Array to List:**

This operation is commonly needed when you’re working with APIs that return arrays, or when you need the dynamic features of a list after starting with a fixed-size array.

**Code Example:**

Inside the List solution -> ListAndArray (Project).

**Explanation:**

Using List constructor

One of the most straightforward method to convert an array to a list Is using the list’s constructor the accepts array.

**Exists vs Any:**

Both of them are methods used for collection manipulation, typically with lists or arrays. However, they are associated with different classes and serve slightly different purposes:

**Exists:**

* Is a method provided by Lists class.
* It takes a predicate delegate as an argument and returns a Boolean value indicating whether any element in the list satisfies the condition specified by the predicate.

**Example:**

List<int> numbers = new List<int> { 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 };

bool exists = numbers.Exists(n => n > 3); // Returns true because there is at least one element greater than 3

**Any:**

* It is a LINQ extension method available for any collection implementing the IEnumerable<T> interface, including arrays, lists, dictionaries, etc.
* It also takes a predicate delegate and returns a Boolean value indicating whether any element in the collection satisfies the condition specified by the predicate.

**Example:**

int[] numbers = { 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 };

bool any = numbers.Any(n => n > 3); // Returns true because there is at least one element greater than 3

**key Differences:**

* Exists is specified to List and is available directly on instances of List.
* Any is a LINQ extension method available for any collection implementing IEnumerable<T>.
* Both method serve similar purposes, but Exists is more specialized for lists, while Any is more versatile and can be used with any enumerable collection.
* Exists is more efficient than Any for lists because it directly operates on the list without the overhead of LINQ . however, for collections other than lists, Any is often the only option.

**Hash Table**

**What is Hashtable:**

It is a data structure that you can use to store data in key-value format with direct access to its items in constant time.

Hash tables are said to be associative, which means that for each key, data occurs at most once. Hash tables let us implement things like phone books or dictionaries in them, we store the association between a value (like a dictionary definition of the word ‘chair’) and its key (the word ‘chair’ itself).

We can use hash tables to store, retrieve and delete data uniquely based on their unique key.

A **Hashtable**, also known as a hash map, isa data structure that implements an associative array abstract data type, a structure that can map keys to values. It uses a hash function to compute an index into an array of buckets or slots, from which the desired value can be found. Ideally, the hash function will assign each key to a unique bucket, but most hash table designs assume that hash collisions (two keys that are different but have the same hash value) are inevitable and must be accommodated in some way.

**Here are the key features of hashtables:**

* Efficient Access: Hashtables provide very efficient average time complexity for insert, delete and search operations, ideally in O(1) time, which means the time to perform these operation is constant and does not grow with the size of the data.
* Dynamic Resizing: To maintain efficient operations and a good load factor (the ratio of the entries to the number of buckets), hashtables may dynamically resize. Thid involves creating a larger array and rehashing all existing entries into the new array.
* Use Cases: Hashtables are widely used in many computer applications, including database indexing, caching, symbol tables in compilers and implementing associative arrays in programming languages.

In summary, hashtables are powerful data structures for efficiently managing key-value pairs, allowing for quick data retrieval, addition and removal.

**Introduction:**

It is a collection that store key-value pairs, organized based on the hash code of the key. It resides in the System.Collections namespace and is designed for scenarios where quick searches, additions and deletions are crucial. Unlike generic collections, Hashtable allows for keys and values of any type, adding versatility but requiring careful handling of data types.

**Key Features:**

* Non-Generic: Operates on object of any type, requiring casting when retrieving elements.
* Efficient Lookups: Utilizes hash codes for keys, optimizing search operations.
* Uniqueness: Keys must be unique, though values may repeat.
* Order: Does not maintain a predictable order of stored elements.

**Conclusion:**

Hashtable is a powerful, if somewhat dated, collection type in C# that excels in scenarios requiring quick access to elements by key. While newer generic collection like Dictionary<TKey, TValue> offer type safety and potentially better performance, understanding how to use Hashtable is still valuable, especially for working with legacy code or APIs the require it.

**Working with Hashtable Basic Operations:**

To use a Hashtable, start by adding using System.Collections at the beginning of your file. Here's how to declare and populate it:

Hashtable myHashtable = new Hashtable();

myHashtable.Add("key1", "value1");

myHashtable.Add("key2", 100); // Mixed value types allowed

myHashtable.Add("key1", "value3");

**Accessing Elements**

Retrieve elements using their keys, remembering to cast the result:

string value = (string)myHashtable["key1"];

Console.WriteLine(value); // Expected: value1

**Modifying and Removing**

Change values directly or remove them with Remove:

myHashtable["key1"] = "newValue1"; // Update

myHashtable.Remove("key2"); // Delete

**Iteration**

Loop over the collection with foreach:

foreach (DictionaryEntry entry in myHashtable)

{

    Console.WriteLine($"Key: {entry.Key}, Value: {entry.Value}");

}

**Conclusion:**

Hashtable is a powerful, if somewhat dated, collection type that excels in scenarios requiring quick access to elements by key. While newer generic collection like Dictionary<TKey, TValue> offer type safety and potentially better performance, understanding how to use Hashtable is still valuable, especially for working with legacy code or APIs the require it.

**Dictionary**

It is a collection of key-value pairs that provides fast retrieval based on the key. It is part of the System.Collections.Generic namespace and is widely used in situations where quick lookups are necessary.

**Introduction to Dictionary:**

* Key – Value Pairs: Stores data as pairs of keys and values. Each key must be unique.
* Fast Lookups: Provide very efficient retrieval of values based on keys.
* Generic Collection: Allows specifying types for both keys and values.
* Dictionary is like a MAP in C++.

**Conclusion:**

It is a powerful and efficient collection for storing and retrieving data based on keys. It is essential in scenarios where quick data access and retrieval are critical.

**Dictionary vs Hashtable:**

In C#, both Dictionary and Hashtable are collection types used to store key-value pairs. However, they are designed to cater to different needs and scenarios based on their features and implementations. Understanding the differences between them is crucial for choosing the appropriate collection type for a given situation.

Dictionary:

Dictionary<TKey, TValue> is generic collection introduced in .NET 2.0. it resides in the System.Collections.Generics namespace and provides fast lookups to manage collections of keys and values. The key features of Dictionary include:

* Generic: Allows for type – safe data storage, ensuring that both keys and values are a specified type which helps to prevent runtime errors and eliminates the need for casting when retrieving values.
* Performance: Offers fast access to elements based on keys. The performance of searching for a key is close to O(1), making it highly efficient for lookups.
* Order: Doesn’t guarantee the order of elements. The order in which elements are returned during enumeration may not match the order in which they were inserted.
* Thread Safe: Not thread – safe. If multiple threads access it concurrently, you must implement you own synchronization mechanism.

**Hashtable:**

It is part of the System.Collections namespace, is a non-generic collection available since .NET 1.0. it can store keys and values of any types because it works with the object type. Key characteristics of Hashtable include:

* Non – Generic: Keys and values are of type object, which means they can store any data type. This flexibility comes at the cost of type safety, as it requires casting when retrieving values and increase the chance of runtime errors.
* Performance: It also provides fast access to elements. How ever the need for boxing and unboxing when working with values types can affect performance.
* Order: Doesn’t maintain the order of stored elements, similar to Dictionary.
* Thread Safety: Provides some thread safety features, such as synchronized (thread-safe) wrappers obtained through the Hashtable.Synchronized method. However, for full thread safety with multiple writers, external synchronization is recommended.

**Comparison Summary**

* **Type Safety**: Dictionary is strongly typed, whereas Hashtable requires casting for non-object types.
* **Performance**: Both provide fast lookups, but Dictionary can be more performant due to type safety and the lack of boxing/unboxing for value types.
* **Version Compatibility**: Hashtable is available from the first version of .NET, making it suitable for legacy applications. Dictionary was introduced later and is preferred for new development due to its generic nature.
* **Thread** **Safety**: Hashtable offers basic thread safety features, but neither collection is fully thread-safe for concurrent modifications without external synchronization.

**Choosing Between Dictionary and Hashtable:**

* Used Dictionary when you need strong type safety, better performance with value types, and are working with .NET 2.0 or later.
* Consider Hashtable if you are maintaining legacy code or need a collection that accepts key and values of any type without specifying their data types upfront.

Int modern .NET applications, Dictionary is generally preferred due to its type safety and performance advantages. However, understanding Hashtable is still valuable for working with existing codebases that use it.