Hello, everyone.

This week we’re asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the equals() method, as well as, what can be an alternative to it.

Firstly, let’s take a look at what the equals is used for. The equals method is used to check if the contents of a string is the same as the current string, if the contents are the same it will return true, else it returns false. Nonetheless, this method is overridden in the object class, however, it still does the same, except it is used on objects, and not just plain strings (Eck, 2019). Now that we understand what the equals method is used for, we can have a look at what it’s advantages are.

One advantage could be that the equals() method of the class String compares the contents of two strings and not if the location in memory is the same as --‘==’ -- would do, or the object equals method of the object class that the String class inherits from. Furthermore, another advantage could be the fact that if a result returns null then it would throw a NullPointerException, and not just return false if the check failed, making your program a little more robust.

The disadvantages of using the equals method from the class object might be that sometimes you’ll need to override it for a specific class you are implementing. Which, in my opinion, would not be a good idea unless you absolutely know what you’re doing.

Alternatively, one could use a number of different methods that can produce the same result in a different manner. However, in this example I am only going to discuss one of them. Therefore, I would suggest as an alternative to use the compareTo() method that you can get from the interface class Comparable. Unlike the equals method that is of type boolean, compareTo() returns 0 “if and only if the two strings being compared are equal”, otherwise it will return an arbitrary integer (Eck, 2019).

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**References**

Eck, J, D. (2019). *Introduction to Programming Using Java.* Hobart and William Smith Colleges.